

Jeffrey P. Hergan

ST. ALBERT
THE
GREAT'S
THEORY
OF THE
BEATIFIC
VISION



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Chapter One

The Parisian Condemnation of 1241

The Condemnation and its Sources

On 13 January 1241 the Bishop of Paris (William of Auvergne) and the Chancellor of the University of Paris (Odo de Castro Radulfi) officially condemned the proposition that "the divine essence itself will not be seen by either a man or an angel."

This error we condemn and we excommunicate those who assert or defend it by authority of William, Bishop. We firmly believe and assert that God in His essence or substance will be seen by angels and all the saints, and it is seen now by all glorified souls.¹

¹ This was the first of ten propositions condemned. For the Latin text see H. Denifle and E. Chatelain, *Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis* (Paris: Delalain, 1889-1897) I, 170-1: "Isti sunt articuli reprobati contra theologiam veritatem et reprobati a cancellario Parisiensi Odone et magistris theologie Parisius regentibus anno Domini MCCXL, dominica secunda post octabas Natalis Domini. Primus, quod divina essentia in se nec ab homine nec ab angelo videbitur. Hunc errorem reprobamus et assertores et defensores auctoritate Wilhelmi episcopi excommunicamus. Firmiter autem credimus et asserimus, quod Deus in sua essentia vel substantia videbitur ab angelis et omnibus sanctis et videtur ab animabus glorificatis." Also see Leo Sweeney, S. J., *Divine Infinity in Greek and Medieval Thought* [hereafter: *DI*] (New York/Bern: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1992), ch. 16, 352. For an English translation of the condemnation see L. Thorndike, *University Records and Life in the Middle Ages* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1948), pp. 47-48.

Also instrumental in formulating the Condemnation of 1241 was Alexander of Hales. See Sweeney, S.J., *DI*, ch. 16, 349-350, footnotes 22 and

In the wake of this condemnation anyone who proposed a theory of the beatific vision and who wished to avoid excommunication was forced to contend with the claim that the divine essence itself is seen by angels and saints in Heaven. This study will examine key texts in which St. Albert the Great, in light of the Parisian Condemnation of 1241, expresses his theory of the beatific vision.

As an introduction to the study of Albert's theory let us examine the sources of the condemned proposition. One source frequently mentioned by Albert is the scripture text of *John* 1, 18: "No one ever sees God."² A similar message is found in *I Timothy* 6, 15–16:

He is the blessed and only ruler, the King of kings and the Lord of lords who alone has immortality and who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no human being has ever seen or can see.

Again, in *Ephesians* 3, 8 Paul makes reference to the "unfathomable riches of Christ." These texts from sacred scripture are used by those espousing the condemned proposition that neither angels nor saints behold the divine essence itself in the beatific vision.³

Besides such texts from sacred scripture, the thirteenth century theologians who held the condemned proposition also cited John Chrysostom (c. 349–407), Dionysius the Areopagite (fl. 485–533), and St. Augustine of Hippo (354–430) for support, as is clear from the information St. Albert furnishes in the *videtur quod non's* of the *Quaestio de Visione Dei in Patria*. For example, in *videtur quod non* #1 after quoting *John* 1, 18, Albert quotes Chrysostom, who claims that not even the highest orders of angels, the cherubim and seraphim, will ever see God: "Super ilud dicit Chrysostomus in originali: 'Nec ipsae caelestes essentiae,

23 where Bonaventure's *In II Sen.*, 23, 2, 3 ad 7 is cited naming the formulators of the condemnation. For information on William of Auvergne and Odo de Castro Radulfi see Sweeney, *DI*, ch. 16, 350–1, footnote 24.

2 For example, see *Quaestio de Visione Dei in Patria: videtur quod non* #1—Alberti Magni Opera Omnia (Fries, ed.), *Tomus XXV*, Pars II: *Quaestiones* (Monasterii Westfalorum in Aedibus Aschendorff, 1993 [Hereafter: Cologne ed.]) p. 96, l. 10.

3 Other scripture texts that seemingly support the condemned position on the beatific vision include *Exodus* 33, 20; *John* 6, 46; *Matthew* 11, 27; *I Corinthians* 2, 11; and *Romans* 11, 33–34.

ipsa dico Cherubim et Seraphim, ipsum umquam ut est videre potuerunt."⁴ Later, in *videtur quod non* #9 Albert quotes Dionysius who claims that the sheer excess of supersubstantial light pouring forth from the divine essence makes that essence inaccessible or invisible to created intellects:

Dicit Dionysius in *Epistula ad Dorotheum*: "Divina caligo inaccessible lumen est, in qua habitare deus dicitur, et invisibilis existens propter excedentem claritatem, et inaccessibleis idem propter excessum supersubstantialis luminis effusionis."⁵

Last, in *videtur quod non* #14 Albert cites St. Augustine who

in his book *On Seeing God* says "God is invisible by nature, and just as He is both incorruptible and never corruptible, likewise He is always invisible and never visible." Therefore not even in Heaven will He be able to be seen through [the divine] essence.

Augustinus in *Libro de Videndo in Deo*: "Deus natura invisibilis est, sicut et incorruptibilis et numquam corruptibilis, ita semper invisibilis et numquam visibilis;" ergo nec in patria poterit videre per essentiam.⁶

Thus, Augustine can be cited as supporting the condemned proposition, even though elsewhere in *De Videndo Deo* he seemingly holds that some angels and humans do see God as He is and thus, presumably, do see the divine essence.⁷

4 Cologne ed., vol. XXV, p. 96, ll. 10–13. An English translation: "Not even the heavenly essences, I mean the Cherubim and Seraphim, are ever able to see God Himself as He is." St. Bonaventure likewise singles out St. John Chrysostom as the source of the position that no created intellect will ever see the divine essence—see L. Sweeney, *DI*, ch. 16, 353.

5 Cologne ed., vol. XXV, p. 97, ll. 42–47. An English translation: "Dionysius says in his *Epistle to Dorotheus*—'The divine darkness is that unapproachable light in which God is said to live and it is invisible because of a superabundant clarity, and that light cannot be approached because of the outpouring of supersubstantial light.'"

6 Cologne ed., vol. XXV, p. 98, ll. 16–20. *De Videndo Deo* is the title given to Augustine's *Letter* 147.

7 See A. L. Goldbacher, *S. Aureli Augustini Epistulae*, vol. xxxxi of *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*, pp. 296–7: "Proinde narrante unigenito, qui est in sinu patris, narratione ineffabili creatura rationalis munda et sancta impletur dei uisione ineffabili, quam tunc consequemur, cum aequales angelis facti fuerimus Eo autem modo, quo uidetur, sicuti est,

Proponents of the Condemned Proposition

Having presented some of the Greek and Latin sources for the condemned proposition, let us turn to authors possibly holding that proposition just prior to the condemnation. Hugh of Saint-Cher (c. 1200–1263) was a Dominican who taught at the University of Paris from 1230 to 1235 and hence may be a suspect. In commenting on the first book of Lombard's *Sentences* Hugh came across the following statement of St. Augustine: "Itaque illa tria et a se invicem determinari videntur et in se infinita sunt."⁸ How did Hugh interpret that statement?

"Itaque quia illa tria," id est, tres: Pater, Imago, Munus.

"Determinari," id est, distingui per haec alia tria, scilicet aeternitatem, speciem, usum.

"In se infinita sunt," id est, respectiva vel incomprehensibilia vel non finita, i.e., in natura sua indifferentia."⁹

nunc fortasse uideatur a quibusdam angelis, a nobis autem tunc ita uidebitur, cum eis facti fuerimus aequales." For an English translation see Sister Wilfrid Parsons, *Saint Augustine: Letters* (New York: Fathers of the Church, Inc., 1953) III, 191: "Thus, when the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, declares Him with an indescribable utterance, the rational being, pure and holy, is filled with the indescribable vision of God, which we shall attain when we have become like the angels In that way in which He is seen as He is, He is seen now, perhaps, by some of the angels; He will be seen thus by us when we have become like them."

For additional authors holding the condemned position on the beatific vision see A. Michel, "Intuitive (Vision)" in *Dictionnaire de Theologie Catholique*, tome VII, part 2, cols. 2365–2369, where the author mentions St. Basil (c. 329–379), his brother Gregory of Nyssa (c. 335–394) and Theodoret of Cyr (c. 393–before 466), all of whom argued for the incomprehensibility of the divine essence in their refutations of Eunomius, who claimed that the human person can comprehend the divine essence through the natural powers of the intellect. See M. J. Redle, "Beatific Vision" in *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1967), II, 186 and P. Canivet, *ibid.*, XIV, 20–22.

⁸ See W. J. Mountain, *Sancti Aurelii Augustini De Trinitate* (Turnholt: Typographi Brepols Editores Pontificii, 1968) vol. 50, VI, 10, ll. 47 sq.

⁹ *Commentarium in I Sent.*, d. 31 (Cod. Vat. lat., 1098, 29vb)—see Leo Sweeney, S.J., *Christian Philosophy: Greek, Medieval, Contemporary Reflections* [Hereafter: CP] (New York/Bern: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1997), ch. 9, 236.

In Sweeney's paraphrase:

The word, "three," in the phrase "itaque illa tria," Hugh began, stands for Father, Image and Gift (the last two terms refer ... in Hilary's and Augustine's texts to the Son and the Holy Spirit). The word, "determinari," Hugh added, means, are distinguished by eternity, beauty and joy (which also Hilary and, after him, Augustine set up as properties of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit). The word, "infinita," in the phrase, "In se infinita sunt," can be understood in a twofold manner. If applied to the divine persons qua persons, it is synonymous with "incomprehensible." If applied to them [qua divine—inasmuch as they have identically one and the same divine nature] it means "not-finite, that is, not-different in their nature."¹⁰

Although the second meaning of "infinita" as indicating the divine persons to be identical in nature need not suggest Hugh held the proposition condemned, the first meaning of "infinita" might have been a preparation for the proposition if "incomprehensible" is taken as "invisible" and if applied not only to the three persons but to the divine essence itself. Thus Hugh might have been interpreted as saying that the divine essence cannot be seen even by the angels and saints in Heaven.

Guerric of Saint-Quentin, who taught at the University of Paris from 1233–1242, also might be among those holding the condemned position prior to 1241.¹¹ When asked whether the divine essence will be seen by the blessed in Heaven, Guerric responded that the divine essence will be seen not as essence but as power. "Essentia videbitur ... Sed non videbitur ut essentia quia essentia non erit ratio intelligendi, sed potentia."¹² But if divine power will be the object of the beatific vision of saints and angels, then the divine essence need not be seen in itself—the

¹⁰ See Leo Sweeney, S.J., CP, ch. 9, 236. On Hugh's interpretation of God as infinite, see R. McCaslin, "Divine Infinity in Some Texts of Hugh of St. Cher," *The Modern Schoolman* XLII, (November 1964): 47–69, where infinity is interpreted as incomprehensibility.

¹¹ Guerric was Albert's master at the University of Paris from 1243 or 1244 to 1245 and so his thought on the beatific vision is particularly relevant for a study on Albert's theory. See J. A. Weisheipl, "The Life and Works of St. Albert the Great," in *Albert Magnus and the Sciences* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1980), pp. 23–4.

¹² *Quaestio Quodlibetalis*, I, 83–5. See Sweeney, DI, ch. 19, 418.

position condemned in 1241.¹³ A third who may have held the condemned proposition in the years prior to 1241 was Alexander of Hales, who helped formulate the condemnation.¹⁴ In his *Glossa in Quatuor Libros Sententiarum Petri Lombardi* (written around 1225)¹⁵ he explains "Essentia Dei a nullo plene videbitur:"

Tripliciter est videre essentiam: per se, per speciem per similitudinem. Primo modo videt solum Deus essentiam divinam; est enim lux inaccessibilis. Lux autem dupliciter sumi potest: ut est in aere vel ut est in sole. Ut est in sole, invisibilis est; ut est in aere, pati potest oculus eius aspectum. Sic divina essentia in se est invisibilis; ut autem in unoquoque nostrum per gloriam est, sic est visibilis, et hoc appellatur species. Vel potest videri per similitudinem quae est creatura.¹⁶

One might interpret Alexander's statement that "insofar as the divine essence is in any one of us through glory, it is visible" to mean that the divine essence itself is seen through a *species*. But the claim that only God sees the divine essence as it is in itself seems to nullify that interpretation. Moreover, Alexander later adds "Sed hoc ipsum quod est Deus, nec angeli neque archangeli vident."¹⁷ If angels and archangels and, presumably, beatified souls do not see *what* God is, then the *species* (or glory) by which God is visible is not the divine essence itself. Consequently angels and beatified souls would not see the divine essence itself in a beatific vision, a proposition Alexander helped to condemn fifteen years after he wrote his *Glossa*.

13 This position Guerric will retract following the 1241 condemnation, replacing it with the proposition that "the divine essence is seen in itself God is beheld in Himself, directly in His very substance." "Ipsa essentia in se ipsa videbitur [Deus] videbitur in se ipso, in sua substantia nuda," *Quaestio Quodlibetalis*, III, 79, 82–3. See Sweeney, S.J., *DI*, ch. 19, 419.

14 See above footnote 1.

15 See Sweeney, *DI*, ch. 16, 360–1.

16 *Ibid.*

17 Quaracchi ed., p. 79, l. 5 sq. See Sweeney, S.J., *DI*, ch. 16, 361: "[Alexander is] apparently paraphrasing Chrysostom's statement that 'Neither prophets nor angels nor archangels have seen or are now seeing That Which is God. The Son and the Holy Spirit alone see him, for how can a created nature see the Uncreated?' (Chrysostom, *Hom. XV in Joan.*, I, 2)."

An Immediately Subsequent Author: Richard of Fishacre

Having considered theories of the beatific vision prior to the condemnation, let us turn to those formulated in the years following 1241. One such is that of Richard Fishacre, who taught at the University of Oxford from 1236 to 1248. How does Richard approach the topic of the beatific vision? In his *Commentarium in Librum I Sententiarum*, he devotes four questions to divine infinity: is God infinite; if so, in how many ways can He be described as infinite; how is His infinity to be reconciled with His absolute simplicity; and finally, how is a rational creature with only finite power capable of seeing that infinite object?¹⁸ Let us examine Richard's response to the first question.

Richard begins by demonstrating that God is infinite in power, wisdom and goodness.¹⁹ According to Sweeney, Richard's argument for God's infinite power begins with the axiomatic statement that the power of a maker is as great as the distance between what is made and what it is made from. But since God has made prime matter from nothing, and since this is a case in which there is an infinite distance between what is made and what it is made from, the power of the maker is infinite.²⁰

While identifying power with simplicity,²¹ Richard distinguishes two types of the virtually infinite by comparison with two ways in which one can speak of an increase in *virtus*. On the one hand, power may be increased by way of addition. If so, the virtually infinite is an agent whose power has been strengthened an infinite number of times. Thus understood, infinity is incompatible with simplicity.²²

Infinitum autem virtualiter intelligi potest dupliciter, sicut et plus et

18 See Sweeney, S.J., *DI*, ch. 18, 387. The Latin text is found in C. J. Ermatinger, "Commentarium in Librum I Sententiarum [Hereafter: *Commentarium*]," *The Modern Schoolman* XXXV (March 1958): 216.

19 C.J. Ermatinger, *Commentarium*, q. 1, ll. 7–30, p. 216.

20 For Richard's handling of how God is infinite in wisdom and goodness see Ermatinger, *quaestio* 1, ll. 20–23 and ll. 24–30. Also see Sweeney, S.J., *DI*, ch. 18, 391.

21 The topic of *quaestio* 3 is the compatibility of divine simplicity and infinity.

22 See Sweeney, S.J., *DI*, ch. 18, 399–400.

minus de virtute. Plus enim de virtute intelligimus, cui additum est aliquid de virtute. Et tunc infinitum virtualiter est cui additum est de virtute infinities. Et de sic intellecto infinito virtualiter verum concludunt dictae quinque rationes. Tale enim infinitum virtuale non compatitur secum simplicitatem.²³

On the other hand, power may be increased by way of its being separated or elongated from matter, the factor which impedes it and causes it to be more in potency and less in act. Thus understood, a virtually infinite agent is one who is absolutely removed or elongated from impediments and from matter, and infinity is compatible with simplicity.

Aliter autem intelligitur plus de virtute non facta additione ad virtutem, sed potius ea elongata ab impediēte et faciente eam in potentia et minus in actu; et hoc est a materia Si ergo dicatur infinitum virtualiter non propter infinitam additionem virtuti, sed propter infinitam elongationem ab impediētis et a materia, patet quod sic infinitum virtualiter non repugnat, immo congruit magis simplicitati.²⁴

Richard summarizes his conclusions regarding the compatibility of divine infinity and simplicity thus:

God is simple in Himself and is not part of any composite in His freedom from composition with all else. Accordingly, He is virtually infinite not because His power has been extrinsically strengthened an infinite number of times but rather because He is infinitely removed from impediments and from matter as a completely separate substance.²⁵

Quia ergo Deus in se simplex est et carens compositione cum alio, ut sit pars compositi, patet est infinitus virtualiter, non propter additiones virtutis factas in infinitum, sed potius quia in infinitum elongatus est ab impediētis et materia, cum sit substantia omnino separata.²⁶

Richard's explanation of the virtual infinity of God as being compatible with divine simplicity prepares one to answer the fourth question listed above: How is a rational creature with only

finite power capable of seeing an infinite God?²⁷ After considering why such a vision is impossible²⁸ and then why such a vision is possible,²⁹ and after reflecting upon both considerations,³⁰ Richard concludes that the created intellect of a *beatus* does see the infinite divine reality, although not as perfectly as God Himself does and only with God's intervention and help.³¹

Richard takes up this last point in a separate *quaestio* (within his *solutio* to q. 4), where he elaborates that the capacity of the finite intellect to behold the infinite divine essence is located in the soul itself, which possesses an innate power for such an attainment; and in the infinite power of God, who elevates the created soul and actuates its power. As an indication of God's ability to cause that actuation, Richard explains that if God can cause fire, which has no innate ability to act on spiritual substances, to punish sinners in hell, He certainly can more easily raise the human soul to an act of vision to which its nature ordains it.³²

Sed nunc restat dicere quomodo virtutis finitae intellectiva creata possit ad Deum, qui est absolute infinitus Unum est quod ipsa est creata possibilis ad huius infiniti apprehensionem. Unde Augustinus, Confessionum libro I, in principio: "Fecisti nos ad te, et inquietum est cor nostrum, donec requiescat in te." Alterum autem est, quod educitur de potentia in actum hunc adiutorio eiusdem virtutis infinitae. Nimirum cum ignis corporalis non sit possibilis creatus ad agendum in spiritum, tamen Deus utitur eo ad cruciandum eum, efficiens ipsum potentem ad id quod non est natus; quanto magis educet animam in actum ad quem est nata?³³

For Richard, then, the beatific vision of a finite intellect is possible only because of God's infinite power, which elevates that intellect and actuates its innate power to apprehend the divine essence. This appeal to God's infinite power

23 C.J. Ermatinger, *Commentarium*, ll. 292–297.

24 C.J. Ermatinger, *Commentarium*, ll. 298–300 and 322–5.

25 Sweeney, S.J., *DI*, ch. 18, 400.

26 C.J. Ermatinger, *Commentarium*, ll. 327–31.

27 C.J. Ermatinger, *Commentarium*, ll. 5–6.

28 *Ibid.*, ll. 196–215.

29 *Ibid.*, ll. 216–260.

30 *Ibid.*, ll. 410–419, 443–450 and 454–465.

31 Sweeney, S.J., *DI*, ch. 18, 403.

32 *Ibid.*

33 C.J. Ermatinger, *Commentarium*, ll. 528–9 and 531–9.

suggests that the problem of the beatific vision has not only occasioned his investigating infinity but may also have dictated the thought-development and emphasis within the investigation itself.³⁴ In the beatific vision one basic factor which must be accounted for is the infinite distance between the finite intellect of a creature and the infinite perfections of God. Within his investigation the arguments he uses to establish the infinity of God's power, which is given precedence over both wisdom and goodness, are those based on *distancia*—the infinite distance between good and evil, between the state of grace and that of guilt and, especially, between something and nothingness The same divine and infinite power which has in creation bridged the infinite gap between nothingness and something is surely capable of escorting a human soul across the infinite distance separating it from the apprehension of God.³⁵

Key Texts in Albert the Great on the Beatific Vision

Obviously Richard, in his interpretation of the beatific vision, differs from Hugh, Gueric and Alexander who had no such interpretation and may have been subject to the 1241 condemnation. But what of Albert the Great (c. 1200–1280) who took up the controverted topic of whether the saints and angels see God's essence possibly as early as 1243 in *Quaestio de Visione Dei in Patria*³⁶ and continued as late as 1268 (perhaps even 1274) in his *Summa Theologiae* (*Summa de Mirabili Scientia*)?³⁷ And what of Albert's treatises written between those two *termini*? Are key texts to be found there? Yes, as the following list demonstrates:

Key Text A: Alberti Magni, *Opera Omnia* (Cologne edition), Vol. XXV, pt. 2: *Quaestio de Visione Dei in Patria*, pp. 96–101.

³⁴ Might not the condemnation and its declaration that the divine essence itself is seen in the beatific vision have had a similar influence on the investigations and thought-development within Albert's texts on the beatific vision, particularly since Albert was at the University of Paris at the time of the repetition of the condemnation in 1244?

³⁵ Sweeney, S.J., *DI*, ch. 18, 403–4.

³⁶ For information on the date of composition of Albert's *Quaestio de Visione Dei in Patria* see Cologne ed., vol. XXV "Prolegomena," p. xxii.

³⁷ For information on the date of composition of Albert's *Summa Theologiae*, see Cologne ed. vol. XXXIV, pt. 1: "Prolegomena," pp. xvi–xvii.

Key Text B: *De Resurrectione*, *ibid.*, vol. XXVI, art. 9: "De Visione per Speciem," *Quaestio* 3: "In quo differat haec visio ab aliis visionibus," pp. 330–331.

Key Text C: Alberti Magni, *Opera Omnia* (Borgnet edition), vol. XXX: *Commentarium In IV Librum Sententiarum Petri Lombardi*, Bk. IV, dist. 49, art. 5: "Quid sit Videre per Speciem," p. 670.

Key Text D: Alberti Magni, *Opera Omnia* (Cologne edition), vol. XXIV: *Summa Theologica* (*Summa de Mirabili Scientia*), pt. 1.

Tractatus 3, *Quaestio* 13: "De cognoscibilitate Dei ex parte cognoscibilis;" ch. 4: "Quid sit Deum cognoscere facie ad faciem," pp. 44–48.

What will be the procedure for examining each of the above-mentioned key texts? Each key text will occupy one chapter of this study. Each chapter will begin with an introduction on the nature of Albert's treatise there studied, its date of composition and other preliminary information. Next I shall provide the contexts needed to understand the key text from within the same treatise. Then comes the key text itself in Latin and translation, followed by commentary, which in turn is followed by summary and conclusions concerning the insights into the theory of the beatific vision presented therein. The final chapter contains a general summary and conclusions regarding the influence of the 1241 condemnation on the theory of the beatific vision of St. Albert the Great as contrasted with that of his student, St. Thomas Aquinas and their contemporary, St. Bonaventure.

Chapter Two

Quaestio de Visione Dei in Patria

First Context: A Sketch of Albert's Life Prior to his Arrival in Paris

The earliest text expressing St. Albert's theory of the beatific vision is Key Text A: *Quaestio de Visione Dei in Patria* (Cologne ed., XXV, part 2, pp. 96–101).¹ He composed this *quaestio* within a year or so of the reissuing of the condemnation of 1241 which occurred in 1244 during his stay in Paris. Consequently this text is St. Albert's earliest effort to explain the first proposition affirmed to be true in the condemnation of 1241: "angels and beatified souls do see the divine essence itself in the beatific vision."² To

1 *Quaestio de Visione Dei in Patria: Alberti Magni Opera Omnia* (A. Fries, ed.), Tomus XXV, Pars II: *Quaestiones* (Monasterii Westfalorum in Aedibus Aschendorff, 1993 [hereafter: Cologne ed., vol. XXV, pt. 2]), pp. 96–101.

2 See L. Thorndike, *University Life and Records in the Middle Ages* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1948), pp. 47–48 for an English translation of the condemnation. For the Latin text of the condemnation see H. Denifle and E. Chatelain, *Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis* (Paris: Delalain, 1889–1897), I, 170–1: "Isti sunt articuli reprobati contra theologiam veritatem et reprobati a cancellario Parisiensi Odone et magistris theologie Parisius regentibus anno Domini MCXXI, dominica secunda post octabas Natalis Domini. Primus, quod divina essentia in se nec ab homine nec ab angelo videbitur. Hunc errorem reprobamus et assertores et defensores auctoritate Wilhelmi episcopi excommunicamus. Firmiter autem credimus et asserimus, quod Deus in sua essentia vel substantia videbitur ab angelis et omnibus sanctis et videtur ab animabus glorificatis."

provide context for this text I shall trace the major events in Albert's life from his birth until his arrival in Paris.

Albert was born around the year 1200 in Lauingen, a small town in Schwaben, which then was a part of Bavaria and now is part of Germany. During his liberal arts studies at the university in Padua in the summer of 1223, Albert, moved by the preaching of Jordan of Saxony, joined the Dominican order.³ He was sent to Cologne where he studied theology for four years and by 1228 he had become a *lector*.⁴ In the next fifteen years (until 1243) Albert served as *lector* in Hildesheim, Freiberg, Regensburg and Strasbourg. He lectured at least twice on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard and he wrote his earliest known treatise, *De Natura Boni*.⁵ Albert arrived at the University of Paris approximately in 1244 to lecture on Lombard's *Sentences* under Dominican Regent Master Gueric of Saint-Quentin and there he became a master of the theology in Spring, 1245.⁶ Shortly thereafter Albert composed his *Quaestio de Visione Dei in Patria*.

3 See J. A. Weisheipl, "The Life and Works of St. Albert the Great [hereafter: "Life and Works"]," in *Albertus Magnus and the Sciences* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1980), pp. 17–19.

4 Weisheipl, "Life and Works," pp. 19–20: "The task of the *lector*, whose importance in the house was second only to that of the prior, was to give theological lectures on some book of the Bible to the entire community, including the prior ... no one could be appointed *lector* unless he had studied theology for at least four years."

5 Weisheipl, "Life and Works," pp. 20–21. Weisheipl adds that "in this 'somewhat devotional work,' he [Albert] cites explicitly at least ten works of Aristotle."

6 See Weisheipl, "Life and Works," pp. 23–25: "[Albert] came to lecture on the *Sentences* under the Dominican Master Gueric of St.-Quentin, who had been Regent Master at the Priory of Saint-Jacques in the Dominican chair for 'externs' (Dominicans not from the Province of France) since 1233 Previous to becoming a master, every student in every medieval university had to be enrolled under a specific master. In Albert's case, his master was Gueric of St.-Quentin: in this matter he had no choice, since he was a 'foreigner.' When Albert became a master in Spring of 1245, he succeeded Gueric as the 'third Dominican Regent Master' in that chair. Both Dominican chairs were at the priory of St.-Jacques, just as the Franciscan chair was at their Great Convent of the Cordeliers. The most certain fact we know about Albert in this period is that he taught as Regent Master at Paris for three consecutive years As Regent Master (*magister actu regens*) Albert had clearly defined duties to perform: to lecture as master on some

Second Context: The Nature and Date of *Quaestio de Visione Dei in Patria*

But what, precisely, is a *quaestio disputata*? According to Sweeney, the question-method

aimed at formulating a conclusion on some topic or other only after many other possible answers had been considered. Accordingly, its purpose was not only to attain as accurate a conclusion as possible but also to guide the students in thinking, evaluating and then deciding as intelligently as possible.⁷

There are two stages of a *quaestio disputata*.⁸ The first is open to all members of the university and consists of five components. First, the master formulates the question itself (e.g., in *Quaestio de Visione Dei in Patria*, St. Albert asks "*Utrum Deus per essentiam videatur?*"). Next, members of the audience formulate *videtur quod non*'s (which, in our example, demonstrate why the divine essence itself is not seen in *patria*). Other members then propose reasons supporting an affirmative answer to the master's question (i.e., *sed contra*'s). After listening to both *videtur quod non*'s and *sed contra*'s the student then formulates and defends his own solution to the question. Finally, he answers the *videtur quod non*'s and *sed contra*'s in light of his *solutio*.

The second stage of a *quaestio disputata* occurs on a subsequent day when the master goes through the same five steps with only his own students present. He repeats the *quaestio* itself (e.g., "*Utrum Deus per essentiam videatur?*") as well as the *videtur quod non*'s and *sed contra*'s he considers to be most relevant and helpful. He then offers his *solutio* to the problem and applies it to the *videtur quod non*'s and *sed contra*'s. It is most likely that the *Quaestio de Visione Dei in Patria* resulted from the procedure

approved text (*legere*), to preside at public disputations and resolve 'questions' he himself had raised (*disputare*), and to preach to the academic community on certain days (*praedicare*)."

7 Leo Sweeney, S.J., *Christian Philosophy: Greek, Medieval, Contemporary Reflections* [hereafter: CP] (New York/Bern: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1997), ch. 12, 283.

8 J.A. Weisheipl, *Friar Thomas d'Aquino: His Life, Thought and Work*, [Hereafter: *Friar Thomas*] (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974), pp. 126–8.

just outlined and is thus Albert's final, edited presentation of this *quaestio*.

But when, precisely, did Albert write his final draft of the *Quaestio de Visione Dei in Patria*? The fact that St. Albert was presiding over a *quaestio disputata* assures us that it had to have been written after Spring of 1245 when he became a master.⁹ Moreover, the *Quaestio de Visione Dei in Patria* was most likely written prior to *De Resurrectione*, which is clearer and more precise regarding the beatific vision.¹⁰ But *De Resurrectione* was written prior to Albert's *Summa de Homine* and *Summa de Bono*, which were written prior to Albert's completion of his commentary on the second book of Lombard's *Sentences* in summer, 1246.¹¹ Thus it appears that Albert wrote his final draft of the *Quaestio de Visione Dei in Patria* in the second half of 1245 or the first half of 1246, during the first of his three years as "third Dominican Regent Master" in the chair for foreigners.¹²

Key Text A

Having sketched the context for understanding Key Text A, let us turn now to the text itself. Albert's *Quaestio de Visione Dei in Patria* begins with sixteen *videtur quod non*'s, which are followed by Albert's own *solutio* and responses to the problems raised in each of the sixteen *videtur quod non*'s.¹³ First what is Albert's position as explained in the *solutio* to the question of whether God is seen through His essence in the beatific vision?

Albert begins his *solutio* by affirming:

a. God will be seen by angels and saints in Heaven through His essence, which will not present itself to glorified intellects mediately through some *species* functioning as a likeness, but as the divine essence presents itself through itself. For, as Augustine says, we use likenesses of this sort by way of a certain dispensation while we are in this life, which at

9 Weisheipl, "Life and Works," p. 23.

10 "Prolegomena," Cologne ed., vol. XXV, pt. 2, p. xxii.

11 "Prolegomena," Cologne ed., vol. XXVI, p. x.

12 Weisheipl, "Life and Works," p. 23.

13 Albert does not include any *sed contra* arguments.

the end of our life will not be necessary.¹⁴ For as Blessed Bernard says, "Why would it be necessary to have a ladder for someone already holding the sun?" For just as nothing can be a medium in creation, so (as Hugh of St. Victor says) nothing in Heaven assists us to gain God, who beatifies us through Himself just as He created us through Himself.

Dicendum, quod deus in patria videbitur per essentiam ab angelis et sanctis, quam non mediantibus aliquibus speciebus ut similitudinibus intellectibus gloriosis obiciet, sed sicut sibi ipsi se obicit. Sicut enim dicit Augustinus, huiusmodi "similitudinibus dispensatione" quadam, sed in via utimur, quae in termino viae necessariae non erunt. "Quid enim necesse est scalis tenenti iam solium," ut dicit beatus Bernardus. Sicut enim nihil esse potuit medium in creatione, ita, ut dicit Hugo de St. Victor, nihil in gloria nos sistet usque ad deum, qui per se beatificat, sicut ipse per se creavit.¹⁵

Next Albert examines corporeal vision in order to clarify how the divine essence functions in the beatific vision.

b. However, in order to gain evidence for what is said above, [one must say] that for corporeal vision two media are required, namely, one from the part of the thing which is its *species* received in the eye, through which such things are seen. The other is from the part of the one seeing. And this [medium from the part of the one seeing] is again two-fold: it is both intrinsic and extrinsic. That intrinsic medium is the light which belongs to the very composition of the pupil of the eye and is said to be an efficient medium, as mediating the visual power and the act of seeing, and if the eye is deprived of such a light that visual power is not able to produce the act of seeing because of an indisposition of the visual organ, and according as a light of this sort is definitely there [in the visual organ] the visual power is strengthened in its act of seeing. The extrinsic medium, however, is light which is in the surrounding air and makes the colors actually visible.

Sciendum tamen ad horum evidentiam, quod ad visionem corporalem duplex medium exigitur, scilicet unum a parte rei visae, quod est species ipsius recepta in oculo, sub qua res videntur; alterum est ex parte videntis. Et hoc iterum est duplex, scilicet intrinsecum et extrinsecum; intrinsecum, sicut est lux, quae est de compositione pupillae et

14 St. Augustine, *De Trinitate*, I, ch. 8, #16.

15 Albert the Great, Cologne ed., vol. XXV, pt. 2, *solutio* p. 90. I am indebted to Leo Sweeney, S.J., Francis J. Catania, Ph.D., and Louise French, B.V.M., for their careful suggestions regarding my translations of Albert's texts.

dicitur medium effective, quasi medians potentiam visivam ad actum videndi; si enim tali luce privaretur oculus, potentia visiva non potest producere actum videndi propter indispositionem organi, et secundum quod huiusmodi lux certificatur, confortatur virtus visiva in suo actu. Extrinsicum vero medians est lux quae est in circumferente aere faciens colores actu visibiles.¹⁶

Next Albert explains the roles of each medium in determining the content of knowledge.

c. And this two-fold medium on the part of the one seeing makes no distinction in knowing [what] a thing [is] because it is one and the same light through which a human person and a stone and any other thing which is actually visible is seen. But the medium from the part of what is seen determines the cognition of a thing since each and every thing is seen through its own *species*.

Et per medium quidem quod est ex parte videntis utroque modo dictum, non fit distinctio in cognitione rei, quia sub eadem luce videtur homo et lapis et aliud quodcumque visibile. Sed medium ex parte rei visae determinat cognitionem rei, cum unumquodque sub propria specie videatur.¹⁷

Now Albert applies his theory to intellectual knowledge.

d. Likewise, even in our natural intellectual seeing the medium from the part of what is seen is the *species* itself which is received into the possible intellect and through which there is gained a proper and determinate cognition of some thing. But the medium from the part of the one seeing is the light of the agent intellect which has the power of both an intrinsic and extrinsic light, because it makes what is intelligible only potentially to be intelligible in act and it also illumines the possible intellect by strengthening it in its [act of] seeing. And that two-fold light does not determine the content of what is known because that light is common to all intelligibles.

Similiter etiam in intellectuali visione naturali medium ex parte rei visae est species ipsa recepta in intellectu possibili, per quam habetur propria et determinata cognitio alicuius rei. Medium vero ex parte videntis est lumen intellectus agentis habens virtutem lucis intrinsecae et extrinsecae, quia et intelligibilia in potentia facit intelligibilia actu et

illustrat intellectum possibilem confortans ipsum in sua visione. Et hoc lumine non determinatur cognitio alicuius, cum sit commune ad omnia intelligibilia.¹⁸

Albert goes on to discuss intelligible objects beyond those within the natural grasp of the created intellect: the articles of faith.

e. But because there are some intelligible objects of which our natural cognition is not capable of knowing, a stronger light is infused into the soul which strengthens the intellect to know [= to assent to] those things, and this is the light of faith, which determines not what is believed, but that we can assent to the first truth which is above all [= God], and it can convince the intellect of anything. But the special articles [of faith] determine one's faith to either this or that article of faith as a [an objective] medium from the part of what is seen.

Sed quia sunt quaedam intelligibilia, ad quae non potest cognitio naturalis, ideo infunditur animae aliud lumen fortius, quo roboratur ad illa percipienda intellectus, et hoc est lumen fidei, quod non determinat aliquod creditum, sed assentiendum esse primae veritati super omnia, in quocumque convenit intellectui. Sed speciales articuli determinant fidem ad hoc vel illud creditum velut medium ex parte rei visae.¹⁹

Finally Albert discusses the beatific vision itself.

f. But because this light [of faith] does not yet sufficiently strengthen the intellect to have a vision of the divine essence without the medium of a *species*, because God is seen in that kind of medium [a *species*] through the mirror of creatures and the enigma of scripture,²⁰ therefore there is added above and beyond [the light of faith] another light, namely [the light] of glory, [which] strengthens the intellect in order that it may see the divine essence itself without any *species* as a medium. But the divine essence itself will determine the cognition of itself. And such a light Dionysius calls a theophany which is the medium in our heavenly vision not as though there were a species emanating into our intellect from God in which as an object the cognition of God would be received but as a medium strengthening the one seeing. There is no extrinsic light needed however since what is seen is the highest and "true

16 Albert the Great, Cologne ed., vol. XXV, pt. 2, *solutio*, p. 98.

17 Albert the Great, Cologne ed., vol. XXV, pt. 2, *solutio*, p. 98–9.

18 Albert the Great, Cologne ed., vol. XXV, pt. 2, *solutio*, p. 99.

19 *Ibid.*

20 An allusion to I Corinthians 13, 12.

light which illumines everyone coming into this world.”²¹

Sed quia hoc lumen non adhuc sufficienter confortat intellectum ad visionem divinae essentiae sine medio specierum, quia in ipso videtur deus per speculum creaturarum et aenigma scripturarum, ideo superadditur aliud lumen, scilicet gloriae, confortans intellectum, ut divinam ipsam essentiam videre possit sine aliqua specie mediante. Sed ipsa divina essentia determinabit sui ipsius cognitionem. Et tale lumen vocat Dionysius “theophaniam,” quae est medium in visione patriae, non sicut species emanans in intellectu a deo, in qua ut obiecto accipiatur eius cognitio, sed sicut medium confortans videntem. Non enim exigitur aliqua lux extrinseca, cum ipsum visibile sit summa et “vera lux, quae illuminat omnem hominem venientem in hunc mundum.”²²

Let us reread the final portion of #f: “The divine essence will determine the cognition of itself.” How? Will the divine essence itself serve as the *species* of the created intellect and be the content-determining cause in the beatific vision, as the passage cited suggests? Or does Albert hold that the divine essence does not serve as the *species*, but only as the source of the *lumen gloriae* which strengthens the created intellect to efficiently cause the beatific vision, as the following suggests: “And such a light Dionysius calls a theophany, which is the medium in our heavenly vision, not as though there were a *species* emanating into our intellect from God, but as a medium which is strengthening the one seeing.” What is Albert’s position?

Movement of Thought in Key Text A

Let us begin with his *solutio* to the question “*utrum [Deus] videatur per essentiam*” by charting the movement of thought in the key text.

Albert first takes a stand against (in #a) the condemned proposition by stating that

God will be seen by angels and saints in Heaven through His essence, which will not present itself to glorified intellects mediately through

21 The text quoted by Albert is *John* I, 9.

22 Albert the Great, Cologne ed., vol. XXV, pt. 2, *solutio*, p. 99.

some *species* functioning as a likeness, but as the divine essence presents itself through itself.²³

Why not through such a likeness? Because according to St. Augustine a likeness is needed only in this life. Why? Because as St. Bernard says, “someone already holding the sun” has no need of a ladder. And just as God needs no medium in creating us (according to Hugh of St. Victor), likewise He beatifies us through His essence somehow.

Next (in #b) Albert examines corporeal vision in order to clarify how the divine essence functions in the beatific vision. Corporeal vision requires two media, one of which is on the part of the thing seen, the other is on the part of the one seeing and this latter is two-fold: intrinsic and extrinsic. The intrinsic medium is the light of the pupil of the eye and is the necessary efficient medium by which the eye sees. The extrinsic medium is the light in the air which makes the colors actually visible.

Albert further explains (see #c) that this two-fold medium on the part of the one seeing has no influence on what is seen and known because it is by one and the same light that a stone and a human person and anything else is seen. But the medium from the part of the object seen determines what is seen because each thing is somehow seen through its own *species*.

Albert next (see #d) applies this theory to intellectual knowledge, where the medium (with reference to the object seen) is the *species* received in the possible intellect, through which one gains a proper and determinate knowledge of the object. But the medium with reference to the one seeing is the light of the agent intellect, which is both an intrinsic and extrinsic light: by its intrinsic light it makes the potentially intelligible be actually intelligible, by its extrinsic light it illumines and thereby strengthens the possible intellect in its knowing. But the two-fold light of the agent intellect does not determine the content of what is known because it is common to all intelligible objects.

However, some of these are beyond our natural cognition (see #e) and hence a stronger light is infused into the soul for such objects. This is the light of faith, which does not as such determine

23 See footnote 15 above.

what we believe but enables us to assent with conviction to God who *is* Truth. The individual articles of faith determine what we assent to (e.g., there is one God, who is three distinct persons, who created Heaven and Earth, and so on).

If such is the function of the light of faith, why is there the light of glory? Albert's answer (see #f) is that this light is not needed to see God as creator (because we can use creatures for that) or as author of the scriptures. But it is needed to see the divine essence itself without a *species* as a medium. Why? Because the divine essence itself determines that seeing, not through a *species* emanating into the human intellect from God but as a light strengthening that intellect with the result that Pseudo-Dionysius calls it a theophany—i.e., a “divine revelation.” But no extrinsic light is needed because what is seen is the “true light illumining every human being coming into this world.”

Comments

What points does that movement of thought show as needing additional clarification?

a.²⁴ Precisely how does the divine essence beatify us?

b–c. How do Albert's statements concerning our physical activity of seeing (namely, two mediums, one on the part of the object seen [the *species*] and one on the part of the one seeing, which is itself two-fold: the intrinsic component is the light of the pupil itself and the extrinsic component is the light in the surrounding air) apply to the object seen? Moreover, Albert claims that each object is somehow seen through its own *species*. He adds that the two-fold medium from the part of the one seeing does not determine the content of one's vision. But precisely how does the object seen affect the activity of seeing?

d. Here Albert concentrates on intellection which also involves two media, one of which is the *species* in the recipient intellect, the other is the agent intellect itself which is both an intrinsic light (by which it converts the potentially intelligible into what is actually intelligible) and an extrinsic light (by which it illumines and strengthens the recipient

intellect when knowing). Albert claims the agent intellect does not determine the content of what is known because it illumines everything which is intelligible. But might not the agent intellect also determine the content of what the recipient intellect knows in and through the recipient intellect? Why is the agent intellect only a light and not a determinant of what is known?

e–f. Here Albert speaks of two *lumina*: the light of faith enables us to assent to the creed itself, the other light is an illuminating emanation and revelation of God to a created intellect so as to enable it to see the divine essence itself. Does that *lumen gloriae* enable a saint or an angel actually to see the divine essence by that essence functioning as the actuation #a₃ of their intellects?²⁵ Or is Albert here speaking only of saints and angels as efficient causes of the beatific vision and not of the content of that vision, namely, the divine essence itself?

Let us take up each of those questions in order. First, [a] *precisely how does the divine essence beatify us?* The last sentence in section #a of Albert's *solutio* provides a clue: *God beatifies us through Himself just as He created us through Himself*. How, then, did God create us? According to the opening verses of the “Prologue” to *John* (part of

25 I adopt the term “actuation #a₃” in order to call to mind Thomas' epistemology and use of the word *species* which, as we shall see below in Chapter Five, are rather different than Albert's. Using the term “actuation #a₃” helps to distinguish Thomas' epistemology from that of Bonaventure (among others) who uses the word *species* in his Trinitarian theology: i.e., the knower first knows the *species* and only then the external thing. Thus the *species* is a representation distinct from the knower and the thing known. Hence, the *species* is similar to the second person of the Trinity (the Word) and thus distinct from the first person (the Father). See Leo Sweeney, S.J., “Chapter 21: Preller and Aquinas: Second Thoughts on Epistemology,” in *Christian Philosophy: Greek, Medieval and Contemporary Reflections* (New York/Bern: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1997), ch. 21, 525–28.

For Aquinas, and unlike Bonaventure, the *species* is not a representation. Rather, the *species* brings about the formal identity of the knower and the known which occurs in the knower through a single actuation of both knower and known, since the thing known is the act of the cognitive powers. Thus the content of the *species* is formally identical with the external object and so knowledge concerns what is beyond the intellect and its content so that the external thing is known. Hence, I shall often translate *species* by “actuation #a₃.” In addition I shall refer when appropriate to the knowledge that results from this non-cognitive union of knower and known as “actuation #b₃.” See Sweeney, *ibid.*, pp. 528–39.

24 Each question corresponds to the particular segment of Albert's *solutio* indicated by the bold-face letters.

which Albert quotes in the last line of his *solutio*, section #f)

In the beginning was the Word; and the Word was in God's presence and the Word was God. He was present to God in the beginning. Through Him all things came into being and apart from Him nothing came to be And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us ... and the Word was the true light which illumines everyone coming into this world (I, 1–3, 9 and 14).

Therefore God created all things through the Word.²⁶ Can we expect, then, that God will also somehow beatify us through the Word? Yes, because the Word *is* God and *is* the divine essence (as also are the Father and the Holy Spirit). Hence, the Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit, as the *divine essence*, can be the actuation #a₃ of our human intellects in the beatific vision.

But what of the Word as incarnate, the Word as Christ? In *ad primum* Albert states that “Nothing created—not even the very soul of Christ—in receiving it [i.e., in knowing the divine essence] is made equal to it.”²⁷ Why? Because no creature's intellect, not even the intellect of Christ, has the power necessary to cause knowledge of the divine essence without divine aid—only God has that power. But Christ, Who possesses two natures, both human and divine, is one with the divine essence because His human and divine natures are united in the Word. Hence Albert presents this delightful enigma: the Word as Christ sees the divine essence because Christ—as Word—is the divine essence, which thus functions as the actuation #a₃ or *species* of Christ's human intellect.²⁸ But since Christ is unique (in His identity with

the Word), what is Albert's explanation of precisely how other intellectual creatures are united to the divine essence (so that they may know the divine essence)? How is God essentially present to created intellects in their beatific visions? We shall return to these questions below after considering Albert's explanations of physical and intellectual vision.

How do Albert's statements concerning the physical act of seeing apply to the object seen? Albert claims (in #b–c) that the two-fold medium on the part of the knower (namely, the light in the air and the light involved in the composition of the pupil of the eye) makes no distinction in seeing [a color, for example] because it is the same light through which every color is seen. Later, however, in his response to *videtur quod non* #7 he states that

There are three²⁹ causes of falsity and only one cause of truth. [The first is] if the seer would be illumined so as to see something and some of the contents existing in it, that seer would not see anything with respect to which it was not illumined.

Habet enim tres causas falsitatis, et unam tantum veritatis. Si enim videns esset illustratus ad videndum rem illam et aliqua existentia in ipsa, non videret alia, ad quae non esset illustratus.³⁰

Here Albert acknowledges that if the light in the air (= the extrinsic medium from the part of the knower) is insufficient, one would see only part of the content. If one were to take that partial

26 We will discuss Albert's theory of creation more explicitly in Chapter Five, Part Three, section 1 below.

27 "... et nihil creatum nec etiam ipsa anima Christi in suscipiendo ipsum aequatur sibi." Cologne ed., vol. XXV, pt. 2, *ad primum*, p. 99.

28 This is not to say that Christ's human soul was beatified in this life. Rather, Christ is revealed in scripture as having at least some immediate knowledge of the divine essence (and therefore, for example, of the Father's will). Such knowledge is at least implicitly explained by Albert's understanding that the divine essence (as the Word) was present to the soul of Christ in a unique and essential manner in this life. However, Albert's concern (in the passage cited above) regards the difference between the *manner* in which God knows Himself and the *manner* in which creatures know God—namely, unlike God, creatures, even the soul of Christ, need the aid of the *lumen*

gloriae to see the divine essence. The essential presence of that essence to the soul of Christ is explained through His unity with the Word. But how is the divine essence present to other creatures in their beatific visions? Albert seems unconcerned with this problem, which raises the following question: why does he not explain the essential presence of the divine essence to created intellects in the beatific vision? Stated differently, why does Albert attend only to the efficient cause of the beatific vision and not its content-determining cause (or are they one and the same)? We shall return to these questions in subsequent chapters, where Albert explicitly takes up this problem. For now, we should at least take notice that St. Albert does not acknowledge a need to explain the content-determining cause of created intellects' beatific visions.

29 The third cause of falsity is omitted because it does not directly pertain to the problem at hand.

30 Albert the Great, Cologne ed., vol. XXV, pt. 2, *ad septimum*, p. 100.

content to be the entire content, one's judgment would be false. Moreover,

even if that person should be illumined so as to see all the contents which however were not ordered to a definite unity, everything there would not necessarily be seen simultaneously.

Item, si esset illustratus ad omnia, et illa non haberent ordinem ad aliquid unum, non necessario omnia simul viderentur.³¹

The second cause of falsity (Albert explains) also concerns the medium from the part of the seer. He considers that if the efficient cause of vision (the intrinsic medium from the part of the person seeing) were too weak (even if the entire contents of something were illumined), one's vision would be false insofar as one would not be able to achieve a simultaneous and unified vision of the entire object and if one took the partial vision as if it were total. Hence, although Albert claims that the two-fold medium from the part of the one seeing *makes no distinction in seeing a thing because it is the same light through which anything visible is seen*, it is evident that such insufficiency in that two-fold medium can cause vision to be false and thus can be included as a determining factor in seeing.

Nonetheless Albert claims in *solutio* #c that the object seen determines the activity of seeing through its own *species*. *How, precisely, does the species determine that activity?* Does Albert furnish any further information on how the object seen determines the content of vision? Or does he limit his remarks concerning the content of vision to the detrimental effects of an insufficient medium on the part of the knower (namely, falsity caused by too little light or insufficient strength of the efficient cause of vision—see the two preceding paragraphs)?

One passage in which Albert considers the object of corporeal vision is *videtur quod non* #9 and his response which faces the claim that certain sense-objects can blind the eyes because of their excellence.

Just as the excellence of the various sense-objects can harm the senses,

31 Albert the Great, Cologne ed., vol. XXV, pt. 2, *ad septimum*, p. 100.

so also the excellence of the light which is the divine essence can harm the human intellect so that that intellect cannot see God Himself.

Quod sicut excellentiae sensatorum corrumpunt sensus, ita excellentia luminis, quod est divina essentia, corrumpat intellectum, ita quod ipso non possit videri.³²

Thus a human person has insufficient power to efficiently cause the vision of, for example, the sun, which exceeds their capacity. Albert's silence regarding this claim in his answer (*ad nonum*) suggests he acknowledged this rather mundane observation (which anyone who has glanced at the sun has experienced first-hand). Albert does not speak here about precisely how the object seen determines the activity of seeing but instead discusses only the role of the one seeing (primarily as the efficient cause of vision).

The one remaining passage in which Albert discusses corporeal vision, *videtur quod non* #3, claims that

when something is received in another and that reception is diversified from the part of the one receiving, that diversity is not there from the part of what one is seeing but from the part of the recipient. In the same way light according to the diversity of those receiving it is received by some according to brightness, but by others according as it is red, and by still others according to the diverse dispositions of the eye.

Quando aliquid recipitur in altero et diversificatur receptio a parte recipientis, non propter hoc ponitur diversitas penes ea quae sunt a parte recepti, sed penes ea quae sunt ex parte recipientis; sicut lux propter diversitatem recipientium ab aliquo videtur secundum diversam dispositionem oculi.³³

In this answer Albert concedes that the efficient cause of vision determines whether one sees light as "red" or "bright" or otherwise. But what of the role of the *species*? Albert leaves that question unanswered.³⁴ Will he give a fuller explanation of the

32 Albert the Great, Cologne ed., vol. XXV, pt. 2, *videtur quod non* #7, p. 97.

33 Albert the Great, Cologne ed., vol. XXV, pt. 2, *videtur quod non* #3, pp. 96–7.

34 If one applies Albert's statement in *solutio* #c that *it is the same light through which anything visible is seen* to, for example, seeing the green of a leaf in the sunlight, one can infer that Albert means not only that the sunlight is the same wherever it is, but that the actual content of what is seen is the same in every vision. How so? Because the color green that the leaf causes one to see

role of the *species* in intellectual vision?

As in his discussion of corporeal vision, Albert distinguishes two media required for intellectual vision: one from the part of the object (= the *species*) and one from the part of the person seeing (which is the two-fold light of the agent intellect). Again he claims that the *species* alone determines the cognition of a thing. But *why does Albert claim that the agent intellect is merely a light and not a determinant of what is known?* Might not the agent intellect also somehow determine the content of knowledge?

For further information let us again turn to Albert's response to another *videtur quod non* that he included in *Quaestio de Visione Dei in Patria*. In *videtur quod non* #6 someone presents the following obstacle:

if something would be known in a way other than what it itself is, it would be necessary that that diversity would be grounded upon something which is added to what is known. But an addition cannot be made to the divine essence. Therefore it seems that the divine essence would not be seen but rather something would be seen which would cause a diversity in the manner of knowing. And this makes the same point that was made above.

Praeterea, si alio modo cognosceretur, quam sicut est, oporteret istam diversitatem fundari super aliquid additum in illo modo cognoscendi; sed divinae essentiae non potest fieri additio; ergo videtur, quod divina essentia non videretur, sed aliquid quod causaret diversitatem in modo cognoscendi, et sic idem quod prius.³⁵

How does Albert reply?

is merely a limited reflection of the sun's light. Consequently, when one sees a green leaf, the content of that vision is the sunlight itself, as restricted and reflected in a limited way by the leaf. Thus one might infer that, for Albert, the role of the *species* in corporeal vision is to limit the (blinding) light of the sun so that the human eye can efficiently cause vision (of that light, in limited ways). Moreover, the content of vision would always be the light as determined by each visible object. In this scenario, the medium from the part of the knower is very much responsible for determining the content of knowledge. For a similar interpretation of Albert's theory of corporeal vision see L. Kennedy, "The Nature of the Human Intellect According to St. Albert the Great," *The Modern Schoolman* 37 (1960): 120–37 and "St. Albert the Great's Doctrine of Divine Illumination," *The Modern Schoolman* 40 (1962): 23–38.

³⁵ Albert the Great, Cologne ed., vol. XXV, pt. 2, vol. XXV, *videtur quod non* #6, p. 97.

To the sixth one must say that although nothing is added to the divine essence, something is added to the one seeing, not as a *species* of what is seen but as the light elevating that intellect to see the divine essence without a veil.

Ad sextum dicendum, quod licet nihil addatur essentiae divinae, additur tamen aliquid videnti, non sicut species rei visae, sed sicut lux elevans intellectum ad divinam visionem sine velamine.³⁶

In his answer to *videtur quod non* #6 while refusing that the agent intellect determines the content of knowledge he affirms that the light illuminating the intellects is the *lumen gloriae* (see *solutio* #f above). Does he furnish additional information?

Yes, in his answer to *videtur quod non* #2. In that *videtur quod non* Albert presents Chrysostom's argument that if the divine essence, which is simple and immutable, were seen, it would be seen identically by all and consequently, praised identically by all. But according to sacred scripture God is praised diversely and therefore the divine essence is not seen. How does Albert handle this argument?

God does not present Himself to all in an equal fashion but to each one as He wills and therefore they praise Him in diverse ways according as they are illumined concerning diverse features in the divine essence in their seeing.

Et sic non aequaliter se omnibus obicit, sed unicuique, ut vult. Et ideo diversimode ipsum laudant, secundum quod illustrantur ad diversa in ipso videndum.³⁷

So, in answering *videtur quod non* #2 he speaks of the *light of glory* as illumining created intellects concerning diverse features of God according as He wills and thus they praise Him diversely.³⁸ Thus Albert maintains that the agent intellect does

³⁶ Albert the Great, Cologne ed., vol. XXV, pt. 2, *ad sextum*, p. 100.

³⁷ Albert the Great, Cologne ed., vol. XXV, pt. 2, *ad secundum*, pp. 99–100.

³⁸ Albert repeats this explanation in his answer to *videtur quod non* #4. While his explanation of the diverse praise given by the blessed and angels to God in *patria* helps to accommodate Sacred Scripture, Albert still leaves unanswered the question as to precisely how those created intellects know the divine essence directly and immediately.

not determine what one knows but rather that the *light of glory* illumines each created intellect in the beatific vision regarding different features or aspects of the divine essence according to the divine will.

Finally, what of the question raised by *solutio* #e and #f—namely, *does the divine essence function as the actuation #a₃ in the intellects of saints and angels in the beatific vision or are those intellects merely efficient causes of the beatific vision?* Let us turn first to *videtur quod non* #15 and then to Albert's answer for further help in understanding Albert's position.

In *videtur quod non* #15 we find the following argument:

Again, everything which is apprehended only insofar as it is a cause is never completely seen in its essence. But God is always apprehended insofar as He is a cause, either efficient or formal or final, or after the manner of an object. Therefore never will God be seen in His essence.

Ad idem: Omne quod apprehenditur solum in ratione alicuius causae, numquam in essentia sua videbitur absolute; sed deus apprehenditur semper in ratione alicuius causae ut efficientia vel formalis vel finalis; ergo numquam in essentia sua videbitur.³⁹

How does Albert answer?

To the fifteenth one should say that although God is at least apprehended as an object it is not necessary however that the one seeing Him be converted to Him as an object. Rather, in apprehending God one is first led to the essence of God and then subsequently to those attributes which surround that essence, just as the *species* of a stone leads one to cognition of a stone without considering the *species*.

Ad decimum quintum dicendum, quod licet deus apprehendatur ad minus in ratione obiecti, non tamen oportet, quod fiat semper conversio videntis ad ipsum ut obiectum; sed per talem apprehensionem primo ducitur in essentiam, et ex consequenti in ea quae circumstant essentiam ipsam, sicut apprehendens speciem lapidis ducitur in cognitionem lapidis sine aliqua consideratione speciei.⁴⁰

39 Albert the Great, Cologne ed., vol. XXV, pt. 2, *videtur quod non* #15, p. 98. The words "vel etiam in ratione obiecti" are omitted from the Latin text since they express an alternative not developed in the *videtur quod non*.

40 Albert the Great, Cologne ed., vol. XXV, pt. 2, *ad decimum quintum*, p. 101.

According to Albert, then, although in the beatific vision a created intellect is not identical with God, nonetheless His essence functions as the *species* present to the created intellect in a manner parallel to the manner in which the *species* of a stone causes a human person's knowledge of a stone, an actuation one becomes aware of through subsequent reflection upon the knowledge that one has gained.⁴¹

Summary and Conclusions

How can one summarize Key Text A? Albert's answer to the question "Is God seen through His essence in the beatific vision?" is affirmative: God will be seen by angels and saints in *patria* through the divine essence (see *solutio* #a). But how precisely will the divine essence beatify saints and angels in *patria*? Through the divine essence presenting itself without a medium (just as God created all things without a medium—see *solutio* #a). Complicating an already difficult statement, Albert admits that the divine essence can be the actuation #a₃ of created intellects (see pp. 24–25) as he illustrates with Christ: The Word as Christ sees the divine essence because Christ as Word is the divine essence which thus functions as the actuation #a₃ of Christ's human intellect.⁴²

But does Albert say anything more regarding the created intellect's capacity to see the divine essence itself? With regard to corporeal vision he remarks that insufficiency on the side of the efficient cause of knowledge can lead to partial knowledge and false judgment (see pp. 25–26). Moreover, due to the insufficient strength of our visual powers certain objects (because of their excellence) can blind the one seeing (see pp. 27–28). Beyond those limited remarks Albert is silent on the role of the object in

41 Yet it is not exactly clear precisely how Albert defines *species*. If, for example, a *species* is merely a factor limiting the light entering the eye or the intellect (as footnote 33 above suggests) then Albert may only be affirming that the divine essence (and will) will determine and limit the knowledge creatures achieve in the beatific vision.

42 In fact it is only because Christ is God that His human soul is capable of seeing the divine essence in the beatific vision.

determining what one knows, except for his claim (in *solutio* #c and #d) that the content of vision is determined by the *species* of what is seen. Nonetheless, he holds that a person's seeing a light as "red" or as "bright" or in some other way is determined by the efficient cause and not by the *species*.

As to the question of whether the agent intellect might also determine the content of knowledge, Albert's answer is "no": intellects will be illumined by the *lumen gloriae* (see p. 19) in such a way that different people are illumined diversely (see p. 30).

But does the divine essence also function as the actuation #a₃ of the created intellect or is the intellect merely an efficient cause of the beatific vision? According to Albert's reply to *videtur quod non* #15, the divine essence does function as the actuation #a₃ of the human intellect's knowledge in the beatific vision, just as the *species* of a stone causes the actuation #a₃ in my knowing a stone (see pp. 30–31).

The summary in the preceding paragraphs presents several difficulties. In the first, Albert affirms that the divine essence will be present to created intellects without a medium. Second, he affirms that what we see is determined by the *species* of the thing seen, even though one's seeing a light as "red" or "green" is determined by the one seeing and not by the *species*. In applying this to the beatific vision Albert claims that the divine essence functions as the *lumen gloriae* as a consequence of *John* 1, 19: "and the Word was the true light illumining everyone coming into this world." But Albert adds that this illumination varies according as God wills it to be greater or less in individual people (see p. 36).

Another consideration is Albert's attentiveness to the efficient cause of vision (corporeal, intellectual and beatific) inasmuch as the object of one's knowledge in the beatific vision results from the amount and kind of illumination given to each. A further problem is how to reconcile Albert's repeated statement that the divine essence does and does not function as a *species* in the beatific vision (see p. 16 and pp. 30–31). Moreover, what is the precise function of the *species* in Albert's epistemology? Finally, why should not knowing all the contents of something cause false judgments? Does this entail that our knowledge of the divine essence will be false insofar as we do not see the entire divine essence itself?

Such are questions which subsequent texts will answer, the next of which is Key Text B: *De Resurrectione, Tractatus* IV, *Quaestio* 1, article 9: *De Visione per Speciem*, section 3: *In Quo Differat Visio Beatifica ab Aliis Visionibus*, pp. 330–331.

Chapter Three

De Resurrectione

Introduction

St. Albert's second major expression of his theory of the beatific vision occurs in *De Resurrectione*, *Tractatus IV*, *Quaestio 1*, article 9, section 3, pp. 330–331: *In quo differat haec visio ab aliis visionibus*¹ which he completed² by Summer, 1246. Because this text is not an independent *quaestio* (as was the previous key text) but rather is part of the larger *Summa de Creaturis* let me introduce it by briefly discussing the nature of this *summa* and charting the movement of thought leading up to Key Text B.

In this volume (Cologne ed., XXVI) one first finds *De Sac-*

1 *De Resurrectione: Alberti Magni Opera Omnia* (W. Kubel, ed.), Tomus XXVI: *De Sacramentis, De Incarnatione, De Resurrectione* (Monasterii Westfalorum in Aedibus Aeschendorff, 1958 [hereafter: Cologne ed., vol. XXVI]).

2 See J. A. Weisheipl, "The Life and Works of St. Albert the Great," in *Albertus Magnus and the Sciences* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1980), p. 22: "By the time Albert was writing Book II [of his commentary on Lombard's *Sentences* in the Summer of 1246] he had also written a substantial part of another *Summa* to which he constantly refers. This *Summa* Pelster identified with a huge *Summa de creaturis*, which is sometimes called the *Summa Parisiensis*. This *Summa*, whatever its name, originated in Albert's public disputations as master in the University of Paris, and has the following order: (1) *De Sacramentis*, (2) *De Incarnatione*, (3) *De Resurrectione*, (4) *De IV Coaequavis*, (5) *De Homine*, (6) *De Bono* All of these parts were completed by the time Albert was composing Book II of the *Sentences* in 1246." Also see "Prolegomena," Cologne ed. vol. XXV, pt. 2, p. xxii which explains that regarding the beatific vision *De Resurrectione* is clearer and more accurate than *Quaestio de Visione Dei in Patria* and therefore is likely to have been written later.

ramentis ("Part One" of Albert's *Summa De Creaturis*) in which he takes up the seven sacraments (Cologne ed., pp. 1–170). The second part, *De Incarnatione* (pp. 171–234), concerns (1) the necessity of the incarnation, (2) the annunciation and birth of Christ, (3) the union of the divine and human natures of Christ, (4) the consequences of that union for Christ Himself and (5) for other human persons, and finally (6) the passion and death of Christ as the goal of that union. In the third part of *Summa de Creaturis*, *De Resurrectione* (pp. 237–353), Albert discusses the resurrection itself. *De Resurrectione* consists of four treatises, the first of which is on the resurrection with reference to the head of the mystical body and to its members. *Treatise II* considers the resurrection with reference to Christ only. The third treatise concerns those in hell and those in purgatory. Finally, *Treatise IV* (in which our key text is located) discusses the resurrection with reference to those who are saved and includes five Questions. *Quaestio 1* concerns "gift" (*dos*). *Quaestio 2* examines what eternal life consists in. *Quaestio 3* concerns eternal happiness itself and is followed by a *quaestio* concerning the effects of that happiness. Finally, *Quaestio 5* takes up spiritual sensible enjoyment.³

Key Text B is within the first *quaestio*, *De Dotibus*, which itself comprises seventeen articles. Articles 1–8 concern gifts in common. Articles 9–12 take up each gift one by one. Last, articles 13–17 concern corporal gifts. Article 9 is further divided into three sections, the third of which is the key text itself. But as further preparation let us examine three passages from within its first two sections which serve as contexts for understanding Albert's theory of the beatific vision.

First Context: *An Visio Sit Dos*

The first context is Albert's *solutio* to the question "whether [the beatific] vision is a 'gift,' " which includes 7 *videtur quod non*'s arguing that it is not, 9 *sed contra*'s which Albert concedes, his own *solutio*, and responses to each of the *videtur quod non*'s. Let us

3 Here Albert is concerned not with the initial resurrection of the soul immediately following death but with that after the final judgment, when the soul will be reunited with the body.

begin by reviewing Albert's solution to the question "Is the beatific vision a gift?"

[I] We concede what is said above—namely, that we will see God in Heaven as He is. [Why?] For as God sees Himself without a medium, so He will offer Himself to us also without a medium. And this vision will be a gift to the soul.

Quod concedimus dicentes, quod videbimus deum in patria, sicuti est. Sicut enim deus seipsum videt sine medio, ita sine omni medio offeret se nobis. Et haec visio erit dos animae.⁴

Next Albert draws a distinction concerning the content of the beatific vision.

[II] However one must distinguish between seeing *that* God is and seeing *what* God is, just as it is one thing to see *that something is* and another thing to see *what something is*. For to see of something *that it is* is to see the being of that thing or its essence. To see *what something is* is to see the proper definition including all the attributes of that thing.

Sed tamen distinguendum est, quod aliud est videre deum, ut est, et aliud est videre, quid est deus, sicut aliud est videre rem, ut est, et aliud videre, quid est res. Rem enim videre ut est, est videre esse rei sive essentiam rei; videre autem, quid est res, est videre propriam diffinitionem includentem omnes terminos rei.⁵

In what follows he explains what the knowledge *that* something is and the knowledge *what* something is entail.

[III] And those two differ according as the questions to which they are answers differ. [Why?] Because inquiring simply or without complexity, we first ask if the thing is and the question ends there since we know that that thing is and that it has a being which is the effect of the first cause, for the first cause does not put there anything except *that it is* and adds no difference over and beyond that. With that in mind, therefore, we ask *what* a thing is and wish to know the perfect definition of a thing through the terms which comprehend the entire being of a thing so that there is nothing of that being left outside those terms of the definition.

4 Albert the Great, *De Resurrectione*, Tr. IV, q. 1, art. 9, sec. 1, *solutio* (Cologne ed., vol. XXVI, p. 328).

5 *Ibid.*

Et ista duo differunt, secundum quod differunt quaestiones de ipsis. De simplici enim sive incomplexo quaerentes primo quaerimus, si est res, et terminatur quaestio ista, cum cognoscimus, quod res illa est et habet esse causatum causae primae; causa enim prima non ponit nisi esse et nullam differentiam addit super illud. Cognoscentes ergo hoc quaerimus, quid est res, volentes cognoscere rei perfectam diffinitionem per terminos claudentes totum esse rei, ita quod nihil sit de esse extra terminos illos.⁶

Albert now contrasts the manner in which one achieves knowledge *that* and knowledge *what* something is.

[IV] It belongs to the understanding of the first question merely to reach a thing intellectually. But it belongs to the understanding of the second question to comprehend a thing truly, according as comprehension is the intellect's grasp of the definition of a thing.

Et intellectui primae quaestionis non competit nisi attingere rem secundum intellectum. Intellectui autem secundae quaestionis competit comprehendere rem vere, secundum quod comprehensio est contactus intellectus super terminos rei.⁷

Finally Albert affirms that beatified souls will know *that* God is but will not comprehend *what* God is in any way, citing Augustine and Damascene as authorities.

[V] Thus we say concerning God that we intellectually attain an initial awareness of the being of Him without a medium, but in no way do we comprehend Him. And that is what Augustine⁸ says—namely, that we can see God by our mind but in no way can we comprehend Him. And Damascene says that “that indeed is circumscribable that is comprehended either in place or time or knowledge. However that which escapes all circumscription is contained by none of these. Therefore God alone is truly incircumscribable, a being without beginning and without end, containing everything and yet contained by no comprehension. For He alone is incomprehensible and unending, known by no one, but He alone is contemplator of His very self.”⁹

6 Albert the Great, *De Resurrectione*, Tr. IV, q. 1, art. 9, sec. 1, *solutio* (Cologne ed., vol. XXVI, p. 328).

7 *Ibid.*

8 St. Augustine, *Sermo* 117, ch. 3, n. 5 (*PL*, 38, 663) and *Epistula* 147: *De Videndo Deo*, ch. 9, n. 21 (*PL*, 33, 606).

9 The text Albert quotes is John Damascene, *De Fide Orth.*, bk. 1, ch. 13 (*PG*, 94, 853b).

Sic dicimus de deo, quod attingimus esse ipsius sine medio per intellectum, sed nequaquam comprehendimus. Et hoc est quod dicit Augustinus, quod videre deum mente possumus, comprehendere vero minime, et Damascenus in I libro XVII cap.: “Circumscriptibile quidem est, quod loco vel tempore vel comprehensione comprehenditur, incircumscriptibile vero, quod nullo horum continetur. Igitur incircumscriptibilis quidem est solus deus, sine principio et sine fine ens et omnia continens et nulla comprehensione contentus. Solus enim est incomprehensibilis et interminabilis a nullo cognitus, ipse vero solus sui ipsius est contemplator.”¹⁰

What is Albert's movement of thought in the above *solutio*? In answering the question of whether the beatific vision is a gift (*dos*) Albert proceeds in the following manner.

A. We will see God in Heaven without a medium and this vision is a divine gift—see [I].

B. But to see *that* God is differs from seeing *what* God is. To see *that* God is is to see something of God's being (*esse*) or essence. But to see *what* God is is to see the definition of God including all the divine attributes—see [II].

C. Indeed, knowledge *that something is* and knowledge *what something is* are answers to two different questions. The first answers the question *whether something is*, an inquiry which ends with the knowledge *that a thing is* and has a being caused by God (Who causes no difference beyond that thing's *esse*). But having achieved knowledge *that something is* we then ask *what a thing is* with the goal of defining it so that none of its attributes escape the definition—see [III].

D. How are these two types of knowledge achieved? Knowledge *that something is* is attained through the intellect's initial awareness of a thing. But knowledge *what something is* is attained by comprehending a thing or grasping its proper definition—see [IV].

E. How does this apply to our knowledge of God in the beatific vision? Then we will know *that* God is but will not comprehend *what* God is. But why can we not comprehend God? Because He neither begins nor ends, cannot be defined by any creature and He alone contemplates and thus comprehends Himself—see [V].

10 Albert the Great, *De Resurrectione*, Tr. IV, q. 1, art. 9, sec. 1, *solutio* (Cologne ed., vol. XXVI, p. 328).

How has this summary aided our understanding the key text? The first part provides a concise statement of Albert's theory of the beatific vision: we will see God in Heaven directly, a vision which is "gift." Next, by distinguishing between knowledge *that* something is and knowledge *what* something is, Albert here offers the following insight into his theory of the beatific vision: our knowledge of God will not be comprehensive but will entail only minimal knowledge of the divine essence, because, as Damascene affirms, that essence is neither finite¹¹ nor comprehensible.¹² How is that limited knowledge achieved? By our intellectually knowing the divine being (*esse*) directly and without a medium but without in any way comprehending it. Such are the positive insights into Albert's theory of the beatific vision gleaned from the first context. But this context is also informative insofar as it raises questions with which Albert will eventually have to contend. For example, what exactly does Albert mean when he claims that we will see God without a medium? Does it imply, as in the first key text, that

11 In his reply to *videtur quod non* #1 Albert argues that according to Chrysostom the finite mind cannot know the infinite *qua* infinite, but it can know the infinite insofar as the infinite is somehow finite. Why? The substance of God can be considered in two ways, namely, according to *what it is* and according to *that it is* (*esse*). The divine substance is not made finite by our intellect but *that God is* is known through any attribute because each such attribute is the essence of God (but known without our seeing all the attributes simultaneously).

But if one knows the divine *esse* through the divine attributes why wouldn't they also know the entire divine substance (which is simple)? Because it is infinite, i.e., it is without *termini*. In Albert's own words: "Et ex his patet solutio primarum Chrysostomi. Ad rationes autem eius dicimus quod intelligit Chrysostomus, quod finitum non potest in infinitum, secundum quod illud est infinitum, sed potest in ipsum, secundum quod aliquo modo est finitum. Est enim substantiam dei considerare duobus modis, scilicet secundum 'quid est' et secundum esse, ut dictum est. Secundum 'quid est' non finitur a nostro intellectu, sed secundum esse attingitur per quodlibet attributum, quod est essentia dei." See Cologne ed., vol. XXVI, p. 328.

12 Albert further characterizes the beatific vision in his response to *videtur quod non* #3: "For the most perfect cognition of God is the vision of His being as the recognition of the impossibility of attaining *what He is*. For only thus is being (*esse*) known as that which is above every thought and mind [i.e., as non-being]." "Est enim perfectissima cognitio dei visio esse ipsius cum recognitione impotentiae attingendi 'quid est.' Sic enim cognoscitur esse super omnem cognitionem et mentem." See Cologne ed., XXVI, p. 328.

the divine essence will be seen without a *species* through the *lumen gloriae* (which Albert, following Dionysius, calls a *theophany*)? How precisely is the divine essence present to a created intellect in the beatific vision and how can such an intellect rise to knowledge of that essence? Perhaps the second context will provide answers to these perplexing questions.

Second Context: *An Visio Sit Dos, ad sextum*

Let us interpret Albert's response to *videtur quod non* #6 in light of his position in the first context (in Article 9, section 1, *solutio* just studied), where he distinguishes between *that* something is and *what* something is. Knowing *that* something is entails knowing its being and essence whereas knowing *what* something is entails the comprehension of being and essence. In the beatific vision we know but do not comprehend God's being and essence, a conclusion confirmed by both Augustine and Damascene.

What new information does Albert add in the second context? Let us proceed by first examining *videtur quod non* #6 to which Albert will respond.

If there should be an intellectual vision, it is necessary that the thing known be assimilated to the intellect, for all intellection is through assimilation. Therefore, either the intellect will be assimilated to God according to its substance or according to a habit, i.e., some formal *species*. Clearly, it is not going to happen in the first way, because the intellect will not be God. But if it is the second way (by habit or *species*) the conclusion is that He is not seen unless in theophanies. For the form, or light, received by the intellect is not God but something in which and through which God is known.

Item, si debeat esse visio secundum intellectum, necesse est intellectum assimilari rei intellectae; omnis enim intellectus est per assimilationem. Aut igitur intellectus assimilabitur deo secundum substantiam vel secundum habitum sive speciem aliquam formalem. Constat, quod non primo modo, quia intellectus non erit deus. Si autem secundo modo, datur [sequitur], quod non est visio nisi in theophaniis; forma enim, sive lumen, recepta ab intellectu non est deus, sed aliquid in quo et per quod cognoscitur deus.¹³

13 Albert the Great, *De Resurrectione*, Tr. IV, q. 1, art. 9, sec. 1, *videtur quod non*

Albert responds to *videtur quod non* #6 in the following manner:

[I] Corresponding to what has been said above, God is in the intellect essentially and is intimate to it and containing it. Thus, since an intellect can turn to what is above itself without a medium, it can turn to God without a medium.

Similiter habitum est, quod deus est in intellectu essentialiter et intimus ipsi et continens eum. Et sic, sicut intellectus convertitur supra se sine medio, ita convertitur in deum sine medio.¹⁴

[II] How this occurs is shown by Hugh of Saint-Victor by means of a simile: "Just as these are two—namely, light and the body which receives the light—these two produce a single illuminated surface, and that surface itself is in some way or other an image and a likeness of light insofar as that surface produces light as though it were light itself.

Et hoc qualiter sit ostendit magister Hugo de S. Victore per simile dicens: "Sicut duo sunt: lumen et, quod per suscipit lumen, corpus, et ex his duobus unum efficitur lucens, et ipsum lucens imago quodammodo est et similitudo luminis in eo quod lucet sicut ipsum lumen."¹⁵

[III] So also God is our light and is true light and rational souls that are clean and pure conceive that light itself and from the fact that (they conceive that light) they are made luminous. They are not an image of that light by the fact that they are, but by reason of the fact that they are luminous because of the light, just as the light itself is luminous."

Ita et deus noster lumen est et verum lumen est, et ipsum lumen rationales animi mundi puri concipiunt et ex eo lucentes fiunt et non sunt ipsi imago luminis in eo quod sunt, sed in eo quod lucent ex lumine, sicut ipsum lumen lucet."¹⁶

What does Albert propose in his answer to *videtur quod non* #6? His proposal consists of three parts:

A. The divine essence is present in all created intellects essentially and therefore such intellects can know God directly or without a medium—see above [I].

#6 (Cologne ed., vol. XXVI, p. 327).

14 Albert the Great, *De Resurrectione*, Tr. IV, q. 1, art. 9, sec. 1, ad [*videtur quod non*] sextum (Cologne ed., vol. XXVI, p. 329).

15 *Ibid.*

16 *Ibid.*

B. How does the intellect efficiently cause such knowledge in its beatific vision? Hugh of St. Victor explains through the following simile: light and the body receiving it produce a single illuminated surface which is like (but not equal to) light and thus can efficiently produce light—see above [II].

C. Now Hugh applies this to God. The souls receiving divine light are illuminated so that they become like the divine light and can efficiently produce that light. Therefore such souls are the efficient causes of their directly knowing God in the beatific vision—see above [III].

That movement of thought accounts for two of the three crucial factors necessary for the beatific vision. First it tells what is seen in the beatific vision—God—Who is present essentially to created intellects. Second, it describes the efficient cause—the created intellect—which is strengthened by divine light (the *lumen gloriae*?). But what about the third factor, namely, the noncognitive, formal determination of the created intellect (the *species intelligibilis* or actuation #a₃)¹⁷ which enables it then to efficiently cause vision of the divine essence in the beatific vision? Albert says nothing here explicitly of that *species*—the ground has been prepared for it but the seed has not been sown.¹⁸

Third Context: *Quid Sit Dos, solutio*

The third context is Albert's solution to Article 9, section 2: *Quid sit Dos?* which consists of two *videtur quod*'s, Albert's own solution and his responses to the *videtur quod*'s. Let us begin by examining his *solutio* to the question *what is "gift"?*

[I] We say that the vision which is "gift" is a vision of the object loved and attained without a medium in order to achieve glory. Insofar as it is without a medium it is said to be face to face. Insofar as it is without a symbol and enigma it is said to be through a *species*. [Why?] Because a *species* is here said [to be] God's own nature insofar as a *species* is the principle for knowing the divine substance with regard to *what it is*.

17 See above ch. 2, footnote 25.

18 Albert's silence is suspect given that the precise question to which he is responding is "how is the created intellect assimilated to the divine essence so that it may know that essence in the beatific vision?"

Dicimus, quod visio *dos* est visio amati et habiti sine medio ad glorificandum. Et inquantum est sine medio, dicitur facie ad faciem; inquantum autem est sine symbolo et aenigmate, dicitur visio per speciem; species enim dicitur hic propria natura dei, secundum quod est principium ad cognoscendum suam substantiam secundum "quid est."¹⁹

[II] And we derive this from the authority of Maximus who says: "The death of His saints is precious in the eyes of the Lord"²⁰ and is the precious transition of the souls who are most purified into the intimate contemplation of truth, which indeed is true happiness and eternity. This is the death by which those living religiously, seeking piously and chastely their God, have already in this mortal life died seeing God whom they sought in a mirror and enigmatically.

Et hoc accipitur ex quadam auctoritate Maximi dicentis: "Pretiosa in conspectu domini mors sanctorum eius" est pretiosus purgatissimarum animarum in intimam veritatis contemplationem, quae vere vera beatitudo est et aeternitas, transitus. Et haec est mors, qua religiose viventes, pie casteque deum suum quaerentes, adhuc in hoc mortali vita constituti moriuntur, in speculo et in aenigmate, quod quaerunt, videntes.²¹

[III] In the future indeed they will have returned to the pristine dignity of the divine image according to which they have been made. Then they will see God face to face inasmuch as it is possible for a creature whose knowledge now is restricted to the comprehensible and the intelligible to see the incomprehensible and unintelligible cause of everything. This cause we will see face to face when we are exalted above everything. As the apostle Paul says, "We see now darkly as in a mirror—then however, face to face."²² And here "face" designates as comprehensible to the human intellect the appearance of the divine truth which can be seen by no creature through its own power.

In futuro vero in pristinam divinae imaginis dignitatem, ad quam facti sunt, reversuri, ipsum deum facie ad faciem, quantum creaturae comprehensibili et intelligibili possibile est, incomprehensibilem et inintelligibilem universalitatis causam super omnia exaltati facie ad faciem visuri sunt. Sicut ait Apostolus: "Videmus nunc per speculum in

aenigmate, tunc autem facie ad faciem," faciem appellans comprehensibilem humano intellectui divinae veritatis, quae a nulla creatura per seipsam perspicitur, apparitionem."²³

What is Albert's movement of thought in that *solutio*? In [I] he begins with a statement of his basic solution: the vision which is "gift" is vision of the object loved and attained without a medium for the sake of achieving glory. He then explains that insofar as the beatific vision is without a medium it is considered "face to face." Insofar as such vision is neither symbolic nor enigmatic it is vision through a *species*. Why? Because here the *species* is that of the divine essence itself as that by which *what God is* is known.

As the source of the explanation just given Albert quotes Maximus (in [II] above) who states that the deaths of those saints who are purified in this life by the intimate contemplation of truth—which itself is true happiness, eternity and a sort of dying—is precious in the eyes of the Lord. In this life, however, we see God through creatures but enigmatically and as in a mirror.

But (see [III] above) those saints in Heaven, where they will have returned to the content of God's knowledge according to which he created them, will see God face to face insofar as it is possible for a creature whose knowledge now (*in via*) is limited to what is comprehensible and intelligible to know what is incomprehensible and unintelligible. How is this possible? By the created intellect being exalted above everything (presumably through the *lumen gloriae*), for, as Paul says, we will see God face to face *in patria*. Here "face" means "the appearance of divine truth which is comprehensible and which cannot be seen without divine aid."

What may we conclude from the above (pp. 53–56)? *Dos* is a vision of an object loved and attained without a medium in order to achieve or attain glory. "Without a medium" means face to face and yet this vision is achieved through a *species*. Therefore a created intellect can know *what God is* in a limited way. When do saints attain that *species* which enables them to know God's own essence? They attain it after death. Before death they see God only enigmatically and as in a mirror, even though in this life the saints

19 Albert the Great, *De Resurrectione*, Tr. IV, q. 1, art. 9, sec. 2, *solutio* (Cologne ed., vol. XXVI, p. 329).

20 Gloss on Dionysius' *Ecclesiastic Hierarchy*, ch. 3, #9 (PL 3, 437c).

21 Albert the Great, *De Resurrectione*, Tr. IV, q. 1, art. 9, sec. 2, *solutio* (Cologne ed., vol. XXVI, p. 329–330).

22 1 Corinthians 13, 12.

23 Albert the Great, *De Resurrectione*, Tr. IV, q. 1, art. 9, sec. 2, *solutio* (Cologne ed., vol. XXVI, p. 330).

are purified by the contemplation of truth. Here their knowledge is restricted to what is comprehensible whereas in Heaven they know what transcends comprehension and intelligibility. Why? Because a created intellect is elevated (presumably through the *lumen gloriae*) in such a way that a creature sees God face to face and knows Him to a degree, but only with divine aid (see [III]).

Albert again has the opportunity (particularly in [I] and [III]) to explain the third factor involved in the beatific vision, namely, the *species intelligibilis* or actuation #a₃ by which the divine essence formally and non-cognitively determines the possible intellect thus causing the content of that vision. But as in the previous context Albert does not comment adequately on the *species*. In [I] above he states that the *species* involved in the beatific vision is that through which *what the divine essence is* is known but he fails to account for the origin or nature of that *species*—is that *species* the divine essence itself? And in [III] Albert only emphasizes that created intellects must be elevated above everything and strengthened (efficiently) so that they can see the apparition of divine truth which is comprehensible to such intellects. But is that appearance of divine truth caused by the divine essence itself acting as the *species* or actuation #a₃ of the created intellect? Again Albert in the *solutio* has tilled the soil but refuses to sow the seed.

Does Albert provide additional information in his replies to the *videtur quod*'s? In his reply to the first *videtur quod* Albert has another opportunity to explain knowledge as a vision of God's substance.²⁴ Before examining his reply let us first review *videtur quod* #1 itself:

If it is said that this vision is to see face to face, then one must ask *what is such vision?* [Why?] Because a simple substance does not have a face. If one says that because such vision is knowledge of His substance then His substance is seen because we do see Him face to face (because even we have some knowledge of His substance—especially since it is said in *Genesis* 33, 30: "I have seen the Lord face to face").

Si dicitur, quod est videre facie ad faciem, tunc quaeritur, quid sit illud; simplex enim substantia non habet faciem. Si dicitur, quod hoc est cognitio suae substantiae, tunc etiam videtur, quod nos videamus facie ad faciem, quia etiam nos habemus aliquam cognitionem suae substan-

tiae, praecipue cum dicatur in *Gen.*: "Vidi dominum facie ad faciem," etc.²⁵

Albert responds in the following manner:

Even here we say that there is a seeing face to face—namely, that which happens rapturously and in rapture. Therefore this is not a gift because gift is a quiet perpetual possession.

Ad hoc ergo quod obicitur, quod etiam hic est videre facie ad faciem, dicimus, quod hoc fit raptim et in raptu. Et ideo non est dos, quia dos est possessio quieta perpetua.²⁶

In his reply to the first *videtur quod* Albert obviously has an opportunity to explain knowledge as a vision of God's substance, both here (because of *Genesis* 32, 30) and hereafter. Instead he merely interprets "face to face" vision as a temporary rapture and thus it is not technically "gift," which is a quiet and permanent possession of God. Here again he does not account for the formal determination (the *species*) of the created intellect in the beatific vision (and in the vision of God in rapture). Perhaps the key text itself will provide insight into this aspect of Albert's theory of the beatific vision.

Key Text B: *In quo differat haec visio ab aliis visionibus*

Albert begins "section 3" by more fully stating the question he will answer in the *solutio*. "How," he asks, "does the beatific vision differ from other visions, particularly the visions which follow upon faith, prudence, science, counsel, intellection and wisdom?" But before his solution he makes two statements: first, vision through a *species* follows faith and is a "gift" (*dos*); second, what follows wisdom seems to be cognition of the divine substance because, as Augustine states, wisdom is cognition of divine realities.

Next, what is Albert's solution to the question of how the beatific vision differs from other visions? He begins by affirming a

25 Albert the Great, *De Resurrectione*, Tr. IV, q. 1, art. 9, sec. 2, *videtur quod* #1, (Cologne ed., vol. XXVI, p. 329).

26 Albert the Great, *De Resurrectione*, Tr. IV, q. 1, art. 9, sec. 2, *ad primum* (Cologne ed., vol. XXVI, p. 330).

24 The second *videtur quod* is unhelpful in this regard and will be omitted.

two-fold difference between the beatific vision and other visions:

[I] In answering we say (while remaining open to a more satisfactory reply) that these visions differ from one another in two ways, namely, on the part of the one seeing and on the part of the object seen. And in order that this be fittingly understood one must point out the similarity in the visual power in the eye of an animal.

Ad quod dicimus sine praeiudicio, quod istae visiones duobus modis differunt a se invicem, scilicet ex parte videntis et ex parte rei visae. Et quod hoc debite intelligatur, ponendum est simile in virtute visiva, quae est in oculo animalis.²⁷

One such power is that in the eye as strengthened by the light which is in the eye itself but which is compacted, dense and unified, as is true of the visual power of a lynx.

Quaedam enim est virtus visiva in oculo confortata per lumen, quod est in ipso oculo, calcatum et densum et adunatum, sicut est virtus visiva in oculo lynxis.²⁸

Again, there is a visual power which does not have sufficient light in the eye itself, but which needs an exterior light according to Chalcidius' commentary on Plato's *Timaeus*²⁹ that our vision is perfected when the ray of light is sent forth by the interior light which is in the eye—a ray which is joined to that of the exterior light so that our visual power in seeing is perfected by the help of that two-fold light.

Est iterum quaedam virtus visiva, non habens in oculo sufficiens lumen, sed indigens lumine exteriori, secundum quod dicit Chalcidius super Platonem, quod visio nostra perficitur ex emissionem radii ab interiori lumine quod est in oculo, qui scilicet radius coniungitur radio exterioris luminis, ut sic duorum luminum adminiculo perficiatur virtus visiva in videndo.³⁰

And the coalescence and condensation of that light is more and less in

27 Albert the Great, *De Resurrectione*, Tr. IV, q. 1, art. 9, sec. 3, *solutio* (Cologne ed., vol. XXVI, p. 330).

28 *Ibid.*

29 For further information on Chalcidius (c. end of 3rd to beginning of 4th century) see Etienne Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, (New York: Random House, 1955), pp. 103–104, 140, and 586–7.

30 Albert the Great, *De Resurrectione*, Tr. IV, q. 1, art. 9, sec. 3, *solutio* (Cologne ed., vol. XXVI, p. 330).

diverse animals. For in an eagle, as the Philosopher says,³¹ that coalescence is more and therefore the eagle looks at the disk of the sun itself, whereas the situation is different in a human person who cannot look directly at the sun but sees in the light of the sun as diffused in the air.

Et coadunatio et condensatio illius luminis secundum plus et minus est in diversis animalibus. In herodio enim, ut dicit Philosophus, est ut multum, et ideo aspicit solem in rota; in homine autem non sic est, et ideo non potest aspicere solem sic, sed videt in lumine solis, quod diffunditur in aere.³²

Also, in some eyes the light is not thickened but is unified as in the eye of an owl, which accordingly is repelled by too much light, but the owl sees directly in light when mixed with darkness, such as occurs in twilight and at night.

In quibusdam etiam oculis non est densum, sed tamen adunatum, sicut in oculo noctuae, et ideo reverberatur a multo lumine, sed directe videt in lumine permixto umbris, sicut est lumen vespertinum et lumen noctis.³³

And there is an eye with a visual power which has a weak and un-unified light and this needs the cover of darkness in order that the visual not be repelled as happens in the mole which has eyes under the hide as Aristotle says and therefore the mole³⁴ lives the greater part of its life underground.

Et quaedam est virtus visiva in oculo cum lumine debili nonadunato, et hoc indiget velo tenebroso ad hoc, ut non reverberetur, sicut est virtus visiva in oculo talpae, quae habet oculos sub pelle, ut dicit Philosophus,

31 Aristotle, *History of Animals*, Bk. I, ch. 9, 491b 28.

32 Albert the Great, *De Resurrectione*, Tr. IV, q. 1, art. 9, sec. 3, *solutio* (Cologne ed., vol. XXVI, p. 330).

33 *Ibid.*

34 See James J. Scanlan, M.D., "Introduction" to *Albert the Great: Man and the Beasts—De Animalibus* (Books 22–26) (Binghamton, NY: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1987), p. 24: "The common mole was thought to be blind and deprived of optical organs; Albert's skepticism prompted him to search through the fur on the head of moles until he found small denuded areas in the expected location of the eyes; then, by dissection he uncovered dark beadlike structures that contained a fluid; with the aid of magnification he might have been able to resolve the question of the mole's eyes."

et hoc ideo, quia in maiori parte habitatio eius est sub terra.³⁵

[II] Again, one must note that a sensible form in the sense-faculty is to be understood in a two-fold way: there is a form through which something is seen without that form itself being seen in the act of vision, and the Philosopher speaks of this when he says that "the sense faculty receives sensible *species* without matter," because the sensible thing is present. [Why?] Because the image which is in the eye is that through which but not that in which we see the thing. But the image which is in the mirror is that in which we see the thing.

Item, notandum, quod forma sensibilis accepta in sensu duobus modis est. Est enim quaedam per quam videtur res, sed non in ea videtur. Et de hac dicit Philosophus, quod "sensus est susceptivus sensibilibus specierum sine materia" re praesente; idolum enim, quod est in oculo, est, per quod videmus, sed non, in quo videmus rem. Sed idolum, quod est in speculo, est, in quo rem videmus.³⁶

[III] These things having been stated let us proceed to distinctions. Hence I say that the vision of faith in this life is like a vision through a light which is not coalesced but which is concentrated as happens when we see something in a mirror. For as light is in the eye, so the habit of faith is in the intellect and as the visual power is in the eye so the intellective power is in the intellect. And like the image in a mirror in which something is seen and which leads to the thing seen, so is the symbolic and mystical mirror of the creature, in which the first truth, which is God, is seen because it leads to that truth.

His habitis procedamus ad distinctionem. Dico ergo, quod visio fidei in via est sicut visio coniuncta lumini noncoadunato et condensato, percipiens visibile ut in speculo. Sicut enim lumen est in oculo, ita habitus fidei est in intellectu, et sicut virtus visiva in oculo, ita virtus intellectiva in intellectu, et sicut idolum in speculo, in quo videtur res, in quam ducit idolum, ita speculum creaturae symbolicum vel mysticum, in quo videtur prima veritas, quae est deus, quia ducit in illam.³⁷

[IV] That which follows upon faith is like condensed and coalesced light from the part of the one seeing and is like the thing seen from the part of what is seen. The vision of wisdom is like the experiential knowledge which a human person has in himself of divine gifts, here through grace

and in the future through glory.

Id autem quod succedit fidei, est sicut lumen condensatum et coadunatum ex parte videntis et sicut res ipsa ex parte rei visae. Visio autem sapientiae est sicut cognitio experimentalis ex his quae habet homo in seipso de donis divinis hic per gratiam, in futuro per gloriam.³⁸

But an intellectual vision of a gift is like a light issuing from illuminations accepted either through doctrine or through revelation. Hence Gregory says³⁹ that understanding occurs when what one hears illumines the mind.

Sed visio intellectualis doni est sicut lumen generatum ex illuminationibus per doctrinam vel revelationem acceptis. Unde dicit Gregorius, quod intellectum dat, dum de auditis mentem illustrat.⁴⁰

But the light which follows upon counsel is like a light joined to the objects of such counsel. For what all those counsels are is illumined through grace or through glory when it is a question of things to be done which exceed the precepts of the church [its commandments] and this light will be in Heaven elevating the intellect so that it understands the divine meaning of those counsels and is glorified in it.

Sed lumen, quod succedit consilio, est sicut lumen coniunctum rationi consiliorum; ratio enim omnium consiliorum est illuminatio per modum gratiae vel gloriae de operabilibus supra praeceptum existentibus. Et hoc lumen erit in patria elevans intellectum, ut videat ipsam divinam rationem consiliorum et glorietur in illa.⁴¹

What follows upon the gift of knowledge is a light for perfectly knowing God inasmuch as He is the principle of those divine works which orders the mutual dealings of human persons.

Id autem quod succedit scientiae dono, est lumen perfectum ad cognitionem dei, inquantum ipse est principium operabilium illorum quae ordinant conversationem hominum inter se.⁴²

Similarly, the light which follows upon prudence is a light which

35 Albert the Great, *De Resurrectione*, Tr. IV, q. 1, art. 9, sec. 3, *solutio* (Cologne ed., vol. XXVI, p. 330-331).

36 Albert the Great, *De Resurrectione*, Tr. IV, q. 1, art. 9, sec. 3, *solutio* (Cologne ed., vol. XXVI, p. 331).

37 *Ibid.*

38 Albert the Great, *De Resurrectione*, Tr. IV, q. 1, art. 9, sec. 3, *solutio* (Cologne ed., vol. XXVI, p. 331).

39 Gregory, *Moral.* Book 1, ch. 32, n. 44 (PL 75, 547a).

40 Albert the Great, *De Resurrectione*, Tr. IV, q. 1, art. 9, sec. 3, *solutio* (Cologne ed., vol. XXVI, p. 331).

41 *Ibid.*

42 *Ibid.*

perfectly joins the intellect to God insofar as in God there shines forth the reason for all choices concerning virtuous acts.

Similiter lumen, quod succedit prudentiae, est lumen perfectum coniungens intellectum deo, inquantum in ipso fulget ratio omnium eligibilium ad opera virtutis.⁴³

[V] And note that the situation in the eternal vision is not as it is here on earth. For here over and beyond the light which strengthens our visual power, we need to have a likeness through which we see the thing. But in Heaven we will see [God] without a likeness and without a medium through the light which replaces the graces spoken of above. But the light of the gift of vision differs from all these in that it is a light given from above to a spouse, not to replace any power which we had in this life, but in order to complete the most noble joining of the lover with the beloved.

Et nota, quod non sic est in visione aeterna, sicut est in visione viae; in via enim praeter lumen, quod confortat potentiam visivam, oportet nos habere similitudinem, per quam videamus rem. Sed in patria videbimus sine similitudine et immediate rem sub lumine, quod succedit gratis praedeterminatis. Lumen autem visionis dotis differt ab omnibus his in hoc quod est lumen datum desuper sponsae, non succedens alicui virtuti, quam habuit in via, et datur ei ad complendam coniunctionem nobilissimam amantis cum amato.⁴⁴

[VI] But if someone should object that all these considerations concern the vision of God and thus that one consideration is operative in all the above, one must reply that the kind of an act at issue is taken from what the object is and from who is the agent. Hence although a single object is seen, namely God, that seeing in individual persons does not arise in the same way as is clear from what has been said above. Likewise, God is not seen from the same light and therefore what results will not be a single but a multiform vision.

Si autem aliquis obiciat, quod in omnibus his est visio dei et ita videtur una res esse in omnibus his, dicendum est, quod actus trahitur in speciem ex ratione obiecti actus et ex ratione eius a quo est actus. Licet ergo res una sit visa, scilicet deus, non tamen sub eadem ratione, ut patet ex praedictis; similiter non ex eodem lumine, et ideo non erit visio una, sed multiformis.⁴⁵

43 Albert the Great, *De Resurrectione*, Tr. IV, q. 1, art. 9, sec. 3, *solutio* (Cologne ed., vol. XXVI, p. 331).

44 *Ibid.*

45 *Ibid.*

Movement of Thought

Before proceeding to commentary let us first chart the movement of thought in this key text. What is Albert's explanation of how the beatific vision differs from other visions, namely, that of faith, prudence, knowledge, counsel, science and wisdom?

A. He is convinced (see *solutio* [I]) that the difference between the visions is two-fold: the first is on the part of the one seeing, the second on the part of the object seen. To illustrate the first difference he turns to the visual powers in animals—for example, a lynx, an eagle, a human, an owl and a mole.

B. In what follows (see *solutio* [II]) he contrasts what happens when the sensible object seen is present and when it is seen in a mirror. In the first case the *species* itself is not seen. In the second, the *species* itself is seen as that in which we see the thing mirrored.

C. Next (see *solutio* [III]), he compares seeing in a mirror with the vision of faith in this life: just as an image in the mirror in which something is seen leads to our seeing that object, so God is seen in a creature as in a symbolic and mystical mirror.

D. In subsequent lines (see *solutio* [IV]) he contrasts the vision from faith with the vision encountered in wisdom, understanding, counsel, knowledge and prudence.

E. But all such visions, Albert contends (in *solutio* [V]), differ from the eternal vision [= the beatific vision]. How so? In this life we need not only a light strengthening our visual power but also a likeness (a *species intelligibilis* or actuation #a₃) through which we see the thing. But in Heaven we will directly see God without a likeness and through the *lumen gloriae* [the light which replaces the graces spoken of above]. This latter light is like a light given to a spouse, not replacing what we had in this life but as completing the most noble union of lover with the beloved.

F. In conclusion (see *solutio* [VI]) Albert states that the nature of vision [= the act at issue] involves both object and agent. Thus, although God is solely *what* is seen in the beatific vision, individual persons will see Him each in her or his unique way. In this manner, then, the beatific vision will not be one but manifold with respect to those seeing God.

Comments and Conclusion

What does the above movement of thought expose as requiring further clarification?

1. Albert observes a two-fold difference between the beatific vision and other visions. To illustrate the difference arising from the part of the one seeing he describes (in [I]) the visual powers of various animals. But what are the differences Albert describes?
2. According to Albert the second difference between the beatific vision and other visions arises from the thing known. What is his explanation of this second difference (in [II])?
3. How does Albert (in [III]) apply the two-fold distinction to his description of the vision of faith in this life?
4. How does he apply it (in [IV]) when he describes the other visions mentioned above (namely, wisdom, prudence, counsel, science, intellection, etc.)?
5. What is the two-fold difference between the beatific vision and other visions according to Albert?
6. Finally, why does Albert include the final objection (see [VI])?

In reply to question #1, let us set forth in detail the information Albert provides through his various examples. First he compares the visual power of a lynx, which has strong vision (a strong light in the visual power) and therefore does not require external light to the eye of a human being which has weaker vision and needs an external light in order to see. Second, he contrasts the eye of an eagle, which has a great capacity to receive and incorporate light (and thus can look directly at the sun) to the human eye which has less such capacity (and thus cannot look at the sun itself but sees things in the reflected light of the sun). Third, he notes that some eyes have a weak light (or visual power) but also have a great capacity to receive and incorporate light. Such is the eye of the owl which is repelled by too much light but sees well with little external light. Last Albert describes an eye that is neither strong nor able to incorporate light, that of the mole, which spends most of its life underground, avoiding the light. Such are the distinc-

tions Albert makes concerning the efficient cause of vision.

Now let us take up question #2: what differences does Albert find among the objects seen in various visions? When the object seen is present the *species* is that through which the object is seen (although the *species* itself is not seen) but when the object is seen through a reflection in a mirror the *species* in the mirror is that in which the object is seen (and the *species* itself is seen).

But (question #3) how does he apply the above distinctions in his account of how the beatific vision differs from other visions? He first explains the vision of faith in this life, which he compares (on the side of the one seeing) to a vision through a strong visual power which, however has little capacity to incorporate light. With respect to the object of that vision Albert likens it to that of an object seen in a mirror. He further explains the light of faith: the vision of faith in this life is a vision through a light which does not become one with the intellect, which latter itself is weak and which sees its object (the various articles of faith) as though in a mirror (because creatures are the symbolic and mystical mirror in which God is seen in this life and which lead to God).

Next (in [IV]) Albert applies the two-fold distinctions enumerated in [I] and [II] (see question #4 above) to those gifts which follow faith, all of which (from the part of what is seen) are seen as something present (and not as a reflection in a mirror) and (from the part of the efficient cause) through a strong power which is capable of coalescing with or incorporating the illumination it receives. He then describes the visions mentioned earlier (wisdom, prudence, science, counsel and intellection) particularly with regard to the illumination each vision requires. The vision of wisdom is like experimental knowledge of divine gifts attained here through grace and in Heaven through glory. The gift of intellectual vision is like a light issuing from the illumination of doctrine or revelation. The light which follows counsel is like a light joined to the objects of such counsel. What follows upon the gift of knowledge is like a light for knowing God perfectly as the principle of the divine works which order the interactions of people. Likewise the light which follows upon prudence is a light which joins the intellect to God as the source of all the reasons for virtuous acts.

The next point requiring clarification brings us to the heart of Albert's explanation of how the beatific vision differs from other

visions: what is the difference between the beatific vision and other visions (see question #5)? Unlike all other visions, which require a likeness through which the object is seen, the beatific vision requires no likeness. Instead God will be seen through the *lumen gloriae*, which differs from all of the other illuminations described in that this light is a light given to a spouse. It does not strengthen the intellect to know some created likeness through which God would be seen as in a mirror, symbolically and enigmatically. Rather it completes the most noble joining of lover to the beloved so that the created intellect thus united with God can know God directly.

In the last area requiring clarification (see question #6) Albert considers the following objection: because all of the visions considered above have God as their object, one vision is operative in all of them. How does Albert respond? Reflecting on the replies to those areas needing clarification suggests that Albert's position is as follows. The beatific vision requires an efficient cause, which is the saint herself or himself using his or her intellect—see #1—here to assent to God through faith and in Heaven to see God. Another requirement is that with reference to the object seen (i.e., God) a *species intelligibilis* or actuation #a₃ is needed for that seeing. Here that *species* is the actuation #a₃ of the intellect, produced by the object as content-determining cause of the intellect. But *in patria* the *species* is possibly the divine essence itself, although Albert as yet has not explicitly spoken of it sufficiently.⁴⁶

After speaking at length of faith with reference to its object and light (see #3) and of wisdom, prudence, science, counsel, and intellection (see #4) he then takes up the beatific vision which requires the *lumen gloriae* to enable the saint to efficiently cause that vision (see #5). Finally he suggests perhaps that the *species* or actuation #a₃ in that vision is the divine essence itself.⁴⁷ That sug-

gestion is of crucial importance in understanding Albert's reaction to the condemnation of 1241. But is that suggestion based on Albert's own texts? Let us proceed to key text C: *In IV Sententiarum*, distinction 49, article 5: *Quid sit videre per speciem?*

knowing God. However, insofar as it is aided by illuminations or theophanies descending from God a proportion is made, not for seeing what God is but for seeing Him by attaining to His substance insofar as He presents Himself through this or that attribute." "Intellectus creatus secundum naturalia sua non habet proportionem ad cognoscendum deum, secundum tamen quod iuvatur per illuminationes sive theophanias descendentes a deo, efficitur proportionatus, non quidem ad videndum, quid est deus, sed ad videndum ipsum attingendo substantiam eius, secundum quod ipse se obicit sub tali vel tali ratione." *Super Dionysium De Divinis Nominibus: Alberti Magni Opera Omnia* (P. Simon, ed.), *Tomus XXXVII* (Monasterii Westfalorum in Aedibus Aeschendorff, 1972 [hereafter: Cologne ed., vol. XXXVII]), p. 11. Unfortunately that text offers no new insights into Albert's theory that would aid in answering precisely how he explains the content-determining cause of the beatified intellect. It does, however, reintroduce the notion of theophany (which is defined by Pseudo-Dionysius himself as a created likeness of God presented to created intellects by angels—in *Celestial Hierarchy*, ch. 4, 180c) mentioned in the first key text. Does Albert, with Pseudo-Dionysius, hold that the substance of God is not seen directly in the beatific vision but rather is seen only through likenesses? Or does Albert have another explanation as yet undiscovered?

46 As Aquinas has. See Chapter Five regarding Aquinas' *Summa Contra Gentiles* III, 51.

47 He suggests at least that the divine essence is what is seen in the beatific vision. The question remains as to whether the divine essence acts as the *species* or the actuation #a₃ of the created intellect or if Albert has another explanation for the content of beatific visions. According to his commentary on the *Divine Names* of Pseudo-Dionysius (completed around 1250) "the created intellect has no proportion by virtue of its natural powers for

Chapter Four

Commentary on Lombard's *Sentences*

Introduction

The next Key Text comes from Albert's commentary on Peter Lombard's *Sentences*, Book IV, distinction 49, article 5 (*Quid sit videre per speciem*). In our treatment of this text we first will briefly speak of Lombard himself and his *Sentences*, to be followed by general comments on Albert's own acquaintance with and use of Lombard's *Sentences*, which will then lead into our study of Albert's key text itself.

According to E. M. Macierowski, Peter Lombard (c. 1095–1160) composed his "collection of authoritative theological texts ... in 1155–1158."¹ This collection of "*Sententiae* served as the background text for the advanced professional training of generations of theologians" of whom Albert the Great is one.² He thereby became one of those hundreds of theologians "from the thirteenth to the seventeenth centuries" for whom Lombard's *Sentences* constituted a highly regulated scholastic exercise in the

1 E. M. Macierowski, *Thomas Aquinas' Earliest Treatment of the Divine Essence* [hereafter: *TA's Earliest Treatment*], (Binghamton, NY: Binghamton University Press, 1998) p. 10. Also see Jean-Pierre Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas—Volume One: The Person and His Work*, trans. Robert Royal, (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1996), pp. 39–45 and J. A. Weisheipl, "The Life and Works of St. Albert the Great," in *Albertus Magnus and the Sciences* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1980), pp 21–25.

2 E.M. Macierowski, *TA's Earliest Treatment*, p. 10.

Sentences constituted a highly regulated scholastic exercise in the normal program of studies for professional theologians.

Normally, the theologian-in-training would first spend two years lecturing on all of Holy Scripture in a cursory fashion (*cursorie*), pausing only long enough to clarify the literal meaning, to resolve textual and exegetical difficulties, and to note the opinions of glossators and the Church Fathers. Only after having been certified as a Master Theologian would he be entitled to lecture on Sacred Scripture in his own right (*ordinarie*), adding to his explanation of the text personal thoughts on the problems of advanced theology and speculations arising from the text. Between these two stages of apprentice-theologian and Master Theologian he would need to become acquainted with the chief problems of theology proper; it is here where Peter Lombard's collection of *Sentences* comes into play. Under supervision of already certified Masters, the journeyman-theologian would lecture on Lombard's handbook, thereby familiarizing himself with the main outlines of the theological tradition; these lectures were taken down in stenographic reports (*reportationes*) that he might, after his promotion to Master Theologian, publish when the appropriate university officials had exercised quality control.³ By applying the historical data on Lombard furnished in the previous quotation we can now treat Albert's key text by using the following as contexts: (a) Lombard's own discussion when studying the state and condition of saints after their judgment (*De statu et conditione bonorum post iudicium*) as to how celestial and infernal mansions differ (*De differentia mansionum in caelo et in inferno*);⁴ and (b) Albert's discussion of light in the beatific vision.⁵

First Context: Lombard's Own Text

Let us begin our study by translating Peter Lombard's text:⁶

3 E. M. Macierowski, *TA's Earliest Treatment*, p. 11.

4 B. Alberti Magni Opera Omnia [hereafter: Borgnet ed., vol XXX], S. Borgnet, ed. (Paris: Vives, 1894) vol. 30, p. 665.

5 *Ibid.*, dist. 49, art. 4 (Borgnet ed., vol. XXX, pp. 669–70).

6 The text from Lombard's *Sentences* upon which Albert comments in the second context and in the Key Text is included in B. Alberti Magni Opera

1. [According to Augustine] "when after the resurrection the final judgment has occurred and been carried out the two cities will have reached their terms: one of Christ and the other of the devil, one of those who are good and the one of those who are evil, although each society will consist of angels and humans. Those in the first group cannot sin or die but will live happily for all eternity, whereas the second group will be without any happiness whatsoever for all eternity. But among those enjoying eternal happiness, some will be more pre-eminently so while among those who are miserable some will suffer more than others [but both will suffer] permanently."

"Post resurrectionem vero facto universo impletoque iudicio, suos fines habebunt civitates duae: una Christi, alia diaboli; una bonorum, altera malorum, utraque tamen Angelorum et hominum. Istis voluntas, illis facultas non poterit esse peccandi, vel ulla conditio moriendi. Istis in aeterna vita feliciter viventibus, illis infeliciter in aeterna morte sine moriendi potestate durantibus; quoniam utrique sine fine. Sed in beatitudine isti, alius alio praestabilius; in miseria vero illi, alius alio tolerabilius permanebunt."

2. From what has been said it is apparent that just as the good will differ in glory (some more, some less) so the evil souls in hell will differ in their punishment (some more, some less).

Ex his apparet, quod sicut boni differenter glorificabuntur, alii magis, alii minus; ita et mali differenter in inferno punientur.

3. [Why so? According to Chrysostom] "Just as there are many mansions in the kingdom of heaven, so there are many mansions in gehenna corresponding to the different punishments persons in hell are undergoing."

Sicut enim in domo Patris, id est, in regno coelorum mansiones multa sunt, id est, praemiorum differentiae; ita et in gehenna diversae sunt mansiones, id est, suppliciorum differentiae.⁸

4. But all the damned will suffer eternal punishment whereas all the elect will have the same reward which the owner of the vineyard (according to *Matthew* 20,9) gave to all who worked in it—here the reward spoken of is eternal life: God Himself in whom all rejoice but unequally so.

Omnia, S. Borgnet, ed. (Paris: Vives, 1894) vol. XXX, p. 665–6. It includes Parts #1–7 on pp. 61–62.

7 St. Augustine, *Enchiridion*, ch. 3, (Minge, ed., *PL*, 40, 284); *CCL*, 46, 109.

8 John Chrysostom, *ad Theodorum Lapsium*, I, *ad finem*, (*PG*, 47, 307–308).

Omnes tamen aeternum poenam patientur, sicut omnes electi eundem habebunt denarium, quem paterfamilias dedit omnibus qui operati sunt in vinea. Nomine denarii aliquid omnibus electis commune intelligitur, scilicet vita aeterna; Deus ipse quo omnes fruuntur, sed impariter.

5. For just as bodies will differ in degrees of illumination so also souls will differ in glory, for as star differs from star and the elect differ from the other elect these latter differ in mental and corporal illumination. For some more than others are closer to God and hence will contemplate the *species* of God more clearly and this diversity of contemplation constitutes the diversity among mansions.

Nam sicut erit differens clarificatio corporum, ita differens gloria erit animarum. Stella enim a stella, id est, electus ab electo differt in claritate mentis et corporis. Alii enim aliis vicinius clariusque Dei speciem contemplabuntur; et ipsa contemplandi differentia diversitas mansionem vocatur.

6. Hence although the heavenly kingdom is one and an equal wage was given to all the workers there is diversity in the mansions arising from differing degrees of clarity even though the supreme good is one, namely, God Himself, Who constitutes the happiness and life of all. All the elect will enjoy that supreme good, but some more fully than others.

Domus ergo est una, id est, denarius est unus; sed diversitas est ibi mansionum, id est, differentia claritatis; quia unum est et summum bonum beatitudo vita omnium, id est, Deus ipse. Hoc bono omnes electi perfruuntur, sed alii aliis plenius.

7. Even so, that good will consist in seeing God through a *species* and not as now in a mirror and darkly. For to have life is to see Life and to know God in a *species*. Hence Truth, speaking through John the Evangelist, says "This is eternal life, that they should know you as true God and Jesus Christ Whom You have sent" to be the one and only true God. Life consists in this: to know not merely that You are but through knowledge to have the good which You are, namely, that You *are* life.

Perfruuntur autem videndo per speciem, non per speculum in aenigmate. Habere ergo vitam, est videre vitam, id est, cognoscere Deum in specie. Unde veritas dicit in Evangelio: *Haec est vita aeterna: ut cognoscant te verum Deum, et quem misisti, Jesum Christum, esse unum et solum verum Deum*; hoc est habere vitam, id est, cognoscere te non est ipsa cognitio, quae tu est, sed per cognitionem habere bonum, quod tu es, id est, vita.

What is Peter Lombard's movement of thought in the above?

He begins his discussion (#1) of the differences in mansions in both Heaven and hell with a passage from St. Augustine, who says that after the resurrection there will be two societies, each consisting of angels and humans: (a) the society of Christ and the good who will be unable to sin or die but will forever live happily and (b) the society of the devil and the wicked who will be unendingly deprived of any happiness. Among the good, some will enjoy greater degrees of happiness while among the damned some will endure more suffering than others. From this it follows, according to Lombard (see #2), that the good will differ in glory and the evil in their punishments. Why? Because, according to Chrysostom, there are many mansions in Heaven and in hell (see #3). But all the damned suffer eternal punishment just as all the saved enjoy the same reward, eternal life, which is God Himself in Whom all rejoice but unequally so (see #4).

How does Lombard explain the inequality in the degrees of happiness of those in heaven? According to #5 just as bodies will be illuminated to greater and lesser degrees, likewise in glory some will receive greater mental and corporeal illumination. This greater degree of illumination is caused by nearer proximity to God and results in more clear contemplation of the *species* of God. The diversity of contemplation, Lombard explains, is called a *diversity in mansions*. In summary (see #6) he then explains that although the kingdom of heaven is one (as Augustine says) and the reward is equal (according to Matthew) there is a diversity of mansions (according to Chrysostom) because of differing degrees of clarity—even though what is seen is the same, namely, God Who is the source of life and is the object of happiness of everyone. Therefore all the elect will enjoy the same supreme good, God, but some more fully than others. Finally (see #7) Peter contrasts the seeing we have here, which is dark and as in a mirror (according to I Corinthians 13, 12) with seeing God through a *species*, and this seeing "God in a *species*" is, according to John, eternal life: to know the triune God and Jesus Christ as the one true God and also through that knowledge to possess God as subsistent life.

Before taking up the second context let me list from Lombard the data which will prove helpful in understanding Albert's commentary on him, in which Albert will stress these two points:

claritas and *species*. According to #5 the saints will possess illumination and *claritas* which will enable them to contemplate the divine *species* (some more, some less) and thereby to be dwelling in different mansions. But what does *species* mean (see #7)? In contrast with seeing God indirectly (i.e., as in a mirror and darkly) to see the divine *species* is directly to know Him and to possess Him and thereby to share in the divine life itself. Perhaps the "second context" will help us understand *claritas* more fully and prepare for Albert's own treatment of *species* in the key text itself.

Second Context: *Quid sit claritatis animae*

Let me begin by paraphrasing the first few lines of "Article IV" which, according to Albert, concerns Lombard's statement that "To have life is to see life, etc."⁹ Albert then asks two questions: first, what is the clarity of the soul of which Lombard speaks; second, what is "seeing in *species*?"¹⁰

Deinde quaeritur de hoc quod dicit, Paulo ante finem: *Habere vitam, est videre vitam, etc.* Quaeruntur enim hic duo. Primo Quaeritur, quid sit claritas animae de qua loquitur in *Littera*? Et secundo, quid sit videre in *specie*? de quo etiam facit mentionem in *Littera*?¹¹

Next Albert includes four *videtur quod non*'s:

[First] nothing is made clear by seeing it; hence clarity is not vision as Lombard seem to say.

Videndo nihil efficitur clarum: ergo claritas non est visio, ut videtur dicere in *Littera*.¹²

[Second] clarity consists in light permeating and illuminating (*illustrante*) the body's substance and not in seeing the light. Similarly, a

9 See Borgnet ed., vol. XXX, p. 666, ll. 5–6 and p. 78, #7.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 665, ll. 15–17. This second question is the topic of the key text itself—namely, Albert's *responsio* to article 5.

11 Albert the Great, *In IV Sent.*, dist. 49, art. 4, (Borgnet ed., vol. XXX, p. 669).

12 Albert the Great, *In IV Sent.*, dist. 49, art. 4, *videtur quod non* #1, (Borgnet ed., vol. XXX, pp. 669).

soul's clarity consists in a spiritual light and therefore Lombard's discussion of vision is irrelevant.

Item, claritas in corpore consistit in lumine penetrante et illustrante substantiam corporis, et non in visione luminis: ergo similiter consistit claritas animae in lumine aliquo spirituali: et ita nihil est quod dicit de visione.¹³

[Third] a soul's obscurity is two-fold: from sin and from the fact that it [has come into being] from nothing and it is mutable. Hence it needs a two-fold glorification if it is to become happy. But neither of them is removed through vision and thus the clarity of a soul in no way consists of vision.

Item, anima de se obscura est dupliciter, scilicet ex peccato, et ex hoc quod est de nihilo et mutabilis: ergo duplici indiget glorificativo, si debeat fieri beata: sed neutrum horum tollitur per visionem: ergo claritas animae nullo modo consistit in visione.¹⁴

[Fourth] Angelic clarity is other than an angel's intellectual vision and the same will be true in a beatified soul.

Item, in Angelis est alia claritas, quam visio intelligentiae: ergo et in anima erit.¹⁵

What information can be gleaned from those *videtur quod non*'s? Clarity is not to be equated with vision (*videtur quod non* #1). Rather, just as the clarity of something physical is caused by light permeating and illuminating its body, likewise a soul's clarity is caused by spiritual light (i.e., the *lumen gloriae*) and is not vision (*videtur quod non* #2). Why? Because vision can remedy neither the darkness of the soul caused by sin nor that caused by its creation from nothing and its mutability (*videtur quod non* #3). Therefore, just as clarity is other than vision for angels, it will be other than vision for beatified souls (*videtur quod non* #4).

How does Albert respond in his *solutio*?

I well concede that clarity will be in the soul and also in its substance, as

13 Albert the Great, *In IV Sent.*, dist. 49, art. 4, *videtur quod non* #2, (Borgnet ed., vol. XXX, pp. 669).

14 *Ibid.*, *videtur quod non* #3, (Borgnet ed., vol. XXX, p. 669).

15 *Ibid.*, *videtur quod non* #4, (Borgnet ed., vol. XXX, p. 669).

the objections prove. But what Lombard says has to do with causality. Because through vision the soul receives the clarity [and the light] of wisdom which permeates the entire soul so as to glorify it. And one can imagine it in this way, that if one by seeing light would take light into themselves through the eyes and that illumination would make the entire being be clear.

Bene concedo, quod claritas erit in anima etiam in substantia, sicut objectiones probant: sed quod dicitur in *Littera*, dictum est per causam: quia per visionem accipitur claritas sapientiae, quae totam animam glorificando penetrat; et hujus imaginatio est, sicut si quis videndo lumen, in se per oculos traheret lumen, quod ingressum in ipsum totum faceret clarum.¹⁶

Clarity can be considered in two ways: as constituting the soul's substance or with respect to the cause of clarity. With reference to the second way here is Albert's explanation: vision is the means by which wisdom permeates, clarifies and glorifies the entire soul so as to make the soul be light.

In summary, the *degree* of clarity (according to Lombard)¹⁷ results from the soul's proximity to God: the nearer the proximity, the greater clarity of contemplation (of the divine essence). But clarity and light illumine the created intellect so as to enable it [through the light of glory?] to cause the beatific vision. Thus Albert has here touched upon the created intellect as a cause of the beatific vision but has not produced any further explanation of how the divine essence itself (according to the condemnation of 1241) is the content-determining cause of that vision. Therefore let us proceed to the Key Text, where Albert directly takes up the question of the role of the *species* in the beatific vision of a saint or angel.

Key Text C: *Quid sit videre per speciem*

We shall begin our treatment of the key text (Albert's *solutio*) by reviewing the *videtur quod non*'s and *sed contra*'s he includes prior to it.

16 Albert the Great, *In IV Sent.*, dist. 49, art. 4, *responsio*, (Borgnet ed., vol. XXX, pp. 669–670).

17 See Borgnet ed., p. 665, ll. 15–19 (translated above, p. 62, #5).

[1] Every intellection requires a formal determination and therefore one needs a formal determination to understand God. Therefore if God ought to be seen by the intellect it is necessary that the *species* of God be present in the intellect as a form is in a subject, and as what the soul undergoes in the intellect. Therefore it seems that God is not seen through a *species* which is Himself, but through a *species* which is received from God.

Ad omnem enim intellectum exigitur informatio: ergo ad intellectum Dei; ergo si Deus intellectu videri debeat, oportet speciem Dei esse in intellectu sicut formam in subjecto, et sicut passionem quamdam animae in intellectu; ergo videtur, quod Deus non videatur per speciem quae ipse est, sed per speciem ab ipso acceptam.¹⁸

In this first *videtur quod non* Albert is confronted with the following obstacle to the beatific vision: all intellection requires a formal determination of the intellect. But, Albert argues, if God is seen by a created intellect some sort of *species* is needed to be present in that intellect as a form received by it and what is seen acting upon the soul and its faculty. What does Albert mean here by "*species Dei*?" Is it an intelligible *species* or an actuation #a₃ which may be the divine essence itself? Or is it rather a *species* which is received from God and not God Himself?

What information does *videtur quod non* #2 furnish?

[2] If you say that there are certain things that are in the soul through themselves, such as God and the intellect and other such things, and in those cases abstraction is not needed.

Si dicas, quod quaedam per se sunt in anima, sicut Deus, et intellectus ipse, et hujusmodi; et in illis non exigitur hujusmodi abstractio.¹⁹

These lines contend that no actuation #a₃ or *species intelligibilis* is required for knowledge of those things already present substantially in the intellect and hence no abstraction is needed. This line of reasoning is followed by two counter-arguments from Aristotle. First

18 Albert the Great, *In IV Sent.*, dist. 49, art. 5, *videtur quod non* #1 (Borgnet ed., vol. XXX, p. 670).

19 Albert the Great, *In IV Sent.*, dist. 49, art. 5, *videtur quod non* #2 (Borgnet ed., vol. XXX, p. 670).

[contra 1] The Philosopher says that the intellect knows itself as it knows other intelligibles. But these others the intellect knows through abstraction [and therefore it knows itself through abstraction].

Contra. Philosophus dicit, quod intellectus intelligit se, sicut alia intellectibilia; sed alia intelligit per abstractionem; ergo et seipsum.²⁰

[contra 2] According to Aristotle it is one thing to be in the soul as a part of the soul is in the whole [soul] and another thing to be in the soul as what is known is in the intellect. [Why so?] Because in the first way what is in the soul is not necessarily known, but in the second way whatever is in the intellect is necessarily known. Therefore it does not follow that what is in the soul essentially is necessarily known [but only what is in the intellect is necessarily known]. Hence that doesn't seem to be a solution.

Item, aliud est secundum Philosophum esse in anima sicut partem animae in toto, et aliud esse in anima sicut intellectum in intellectu. Primo enim modo non necessario intelligitur quod est in anima, sed secundo modo necessario intelligitur. Ergo non sequitur, quod illa necessario intelligantur quae per essentiam sunt in anima. Ergo illa solutio nulla esse videtur.²¹

Following Aristotle's claim in *contra* #1 that abstraction is necessary to know intellectually the intellect itself and other intelligibles, the originator of this *contra* #2 reaffirms that even if something is essentially present to the intellect, such a thing (e.g., the soul itself) is not necessarily known.

Finally,

In contrast to what has just been said, it is impossible for the intellect to receive a universal *species* [or actuation #a3] from that which has no universal *species*. But God does not have a universal *species*. Therefore it is impossible for the intellect to receive His universal *species*. Therefore it seems that there is nothing in the intellect from him because the *species* which is received in the intellect is universal.

In contrarium hujus est, quod impossibile est illius accipere speciem universalem quod nullam habet; sed Deus nullam habet speciem universalem; ergo impossibile est accipere suam speciem universalem; ergo ab eo nihil est in intellectu, ut videtur, quia species accepta per intel-

20 Albert the Great, *In IV Sent.*, dist. 49, art. 5, *sed contra* #1 (Borgnet ed., vol. XXX, p. 670).

21 *Ibid.*, *sed contra* #2 (Borgnet ed., vol. XXX, p. 670).

lectum est universale.²²

But in contrast it is not possible to receive a universal *species* of something which has no universal *species*. But there is no universal *species* of God. Therefore it is impossible to receive such a *species* from God. Hence nothing of God would be in the intellect because an intellect needs such a universal *species* to know God [and therefore abstraction is necessary to know God].

Confronted with those obstacles to explaining the beatific vision of the divine essence itself, Albert gives his own *responsio*:

I reply as follows: here one can say that God in Heaven is in the soul differently than God is present in the soul here in this world and in all else. [Why?] Because in Heaven He is in the intellect by the light of glory and fills the entire soul and pours eternal life into the soul, according as God is the object of beatitude, as was said above [in Lombard's text]. And by reason of that clarity [or illumination] the soul is immediately turned towards God, not by receiving anything from God which is other than what He Himself is. But the intellect as united in one spirit to God in that manner will understand Him. And therefore for this kind of understanding a formal assimilation by a *species* is not necessary when God is substantially present within.

Responsio. Hic potest dici, quod Deus in patria aliter est in anima, et aliter in via et in omnibus; quia in patria est in intellectu lumine gloriae replens totam animam, et vitam eternam sibi influens, secundum quod beatitudinis est objectum, ut supra dictum est; et sub illa claritate anima convertitur immediate in Deum, non accipiendo aliud ab ipso quam ipse sit; sed hoc modo unita ei in uno spiritu intelligit eum; et ideo ad hunc intellectum non est necessaria speciei assimilatio formalis quando substantialiter inest.²³

Next Albert replies to the two *sed contra*'s.

To both statements of Aristotle one must say that his statements speak the truth with reference to the material [recipient] intellect, which proceeds from potency to act. Nor can one understand what they say differently, provided that a human person knows what Aristotle says or

22 Albert the Great, *In IV Sent.*, dist. 49, art. 5, *videtur quod non* #3, (Borgnet ed., vol. XXX, p. 670).

23 Albert the Great, *In IV Sent.*, dist. 49, art. 5, *responsio*, (Borgnet ed., vol. XXX, p. 670).

understands. But in Heaven it will not be thus. For there that incomprehensible light of the deity which is God Himself, is united to the agent intellect and thus it is substantially poured out upon the entire soul and fills that soul. And in this way the soul will be filled by God Himself, Who is the soul's beatitude. And this is what the philosophers have said obscurely, that if the soul after death would be conjoined to the first mover this would be because of the first mover's generosity. Through this the solution to all the objections is clear.

Ad contra #1 and contra #2 dictum autem utriusque Philosophi dicendum, quod ipsi verum dicunt de intellectu materiali, qui de potentia ad actum egreditur; nec aliud quam ipsi dicunt intelligi potest, dummodo sciat homo quid dicat aut intelligat. Sed in patria non erit sic; ibi enim incircumscriptum lumen deitatis quod est Deus ipse, unitur intellectui agentis, et sic effunditur substantialiter super totam animam et implet eam; et hoc modo anima plena erit ipso Deo qui est sua beatitudo. Et hoc est quod obscure dixerunt Philosophi, quod si anima post mortem primo motori continuaretur, hoc esset ratione sua prosperitatis. Et per hoc patet solutio ad omnia objecta.²⁴

Comments

The *responsio*, which constitutes this Key Text, terminates Albert's reflecting on two *videtur quod non*'s, the second of which issues into two counter-arguments, the last of these two is followed by a third *videtur quod non*, which immediately precedes the Key Text itself. In that Key Text, what relevant information has Albert provided?

[A] In Heaven, God as the object of happiness is in the intellect by the light of glory and fills the entire soul with eternal life. [B] That illumination turns the soul toward God and [C] unites the human intellect with God Who is substantially present to the soul and intellect but not through a *species*. [D] Next Albert takes up counter-arguments #1 and #2 by speaking first on how our recipient intellect here moves from potency to act. But in Heaven the recipient intellect is the efficient cause of intellection, whereas the agent intellect is possibly the cause of *species* [i.e., actuation #a₃]. [E] But in Heaven will the recipient intellect receive the divine

essence as a *species* or actuation #a₃ and thereby also know the divine essence? [F] If so, what role does the agent intellect play? Not the role of an efficient cause, because the recipient intellect efficiently causes the beatific vision. As abstracting the divine essence? No, because the divine essence is intelligible without any abstraction.

Concluding Questions

Hence these questions now confront us: In Albert's position are the recipient intellect and the agent intellect one and the same (as, for example, in Scotus)? If so, have their functions become one and the same and thus Albert presents a monism of functions and intellectual faculties? Maybe it would be helpful to ask whether Albert has a theory of participation and if so, what does it consist in? This question may prove useful in determining whether or not he really is a monist who holds that to be real is to be *light*.

Why is that last question relevant to our study of the beatific vision? Because three factors are necessary for a creature's direct vision of the divine essence itself. First, the divine essence must be *what* is seen. Second, the created intellect must be strengthened in order for it to cause knowledge of the divine essence. Finally, the created intellect must be assimilated to the divine essence (and nothing less) for that essence to act as the content-determining cause of the beatific vision. Albert's explanation of the first two factors is explicit: he clearly acknowledges that the divine essence itself is seen in the beatific vision and that the created intellect requires the light of glory to elevate it above its natural capacity to know. But what of the third factor? If Albert's position is indeed a monism of light, he need not be concerned with explaining the assimilation of knower and known in the beatific vision because the divine essence would already be present to created intellects as an essential constituent of all creatures. Hence Albert claims that, in the beatific vision, the created intellect will not be perfected by the divine essence acting as an intelligible *species*. Rather a different *manner* of knowing will perfect the created intellect. Through the essential infusion of the light of glory, the intellect is turned toward (*convertitur*) God (Who *in via* is seen only indirectly

24 Albert the Great, *In IV Sent.*, dist. 49, art. 5, *ad sed contra* #1 and #2, (Borgnet ed., vol. XXX, p. 670).

through the mirror of creatures), and also is elevated above the natural status of every creature because the essential presence of God, through the light of glory, makes the creature be a much stronger light than it was *in via*. Hence we are also confronted with this question: does Albert hold that God is essentially present (more so *in patria* than *in via*) as a constituent in creatures? If so, is God's essential and constitutive presence to created intellects the reason why Albert merely affirms that *God is in all things essentially* and that therefore no further assimilation to God is required for direct knowledge of His essence? These questions will be explored in depth in Chapter Five and Chapter Six. Hence let us study Key Text D which may provide the answers we seek.

Chapter Five

Summa Theologiae

Albert's *Summa Theologiae*

Albert began to write his (unfinished)¹ theological synthesis, the *Summa Theologiae*, after 1268.² Although controversy existed regarding the authenticity of this *summa*, the most recent historical analysis includes it among the authentic works of St. Albert the Great.³ At the same time Albert was composing the *Summa Theologiae*, St. Thomas Aquinas was working on his own (and likewise unfinished) *Summa Theologiae*. Let us briefly compare the structures of these two great theological syntheses so as to gain a better understanding of the nature of St. Albert's own *summa*.

Introduction

At the University of Paris in the thirteenth century one requirement for attaining the level of *magister* was that the student become acquainted with the chief problems of theology proper; it is here where Peter Lombard's collection of *Sentences* comes into play. Under supervision of already certified Masters, the journeyman-theologian would lecture on Lombard's handbook, thereby

1 See E. Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages* [hereafter: *History of Christian Philosophy*], (New York: Random House, 1955), p. 668 footnote 2.

2 See "Prolegomena," *Summa Theologiae: Alberti Magni Opera Omnia* (Dionysius Siedler, ed.), Tomus XXXIV, Pars I (Monasterii Westfalorum in Aedibus Aschendorff, 1978 [hereafter: Cologne ed., vol. XXXIV, pt. 1]), pp. xvi-xvii.

3 See "Prolegomena," Cologne ed., vol. XXXIV, p. xvi.

familiarizing himself with the main outlines of the theological tradition; these lectures were apparently taken down in stenographic reports (*reportationes*) that he might, after his promotion to Master Theologian, rework and publish after the appropriate university officials had exercised quality control.⁴

Lombard wrote his *Sentences* between 1155 and 1158 and by 1223 Alexander of Hales had adopted them as the basic textbook for his theological teaching at the University of Paris.⁵

The *Sentences* remained the standard theological textbook at Paris (as noted above in Chapter Four) for more than three centuries, partly because Lombard's purpose in writing it was to assemble in a single volume the different opinions (*sententiae*) of the Fathers of the Church on the diverse subjects that theology addresses ... [and] quotes the texts themselves at great length for the convenience of masters and students.⁶

Such a compilation of the opinions of the Church Fathers together with extensive excerpts from their texts undoubtedly was a valuable source for instruction and research in the thirteenth through fifteenth centuries. But using Lombard's *Sentences* as a textbook was not without its downside.

Aquinas, after abandoning his frustrating efforts to express his own theological views via a reworking of his own *In Sententias* in 1265–6, began his *Summa Theologiae* in about 1267.⁷ Rather than following Lombard's *Sentences* in his theological synthesis, he created a new approach which he justifies as follows:

We have considered that students in this doctrine have not seldom been hampered by what they have found written by other authors, partly on account of the multiplication of useless questions, articles, and arguments, partly also because those things that are necessary for them to know are not taught according to the subject-matter, but according as the plan of the book might require, or the occasion of disputation offer,

4 E. M. Macierowski, *Thomas Aquinas' Earliest Treatment of the Divine Essence* [hereafter: *TA's Earliest Treatment*], (Binghamton, NY: Binghamton University Press, 1998), p. 11.

5 J.-P. Torrell, *St. Thomas Aquinas: The Person and His Work, Volume One* [hereafter: *TA Person and Work*], trans. Robert Royal (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1996) p. 40.

6 *Ibid.*

7 J.-P. Torrell, *TA Person and Work*, p. 144.

partly too, because frequent repetition brought about weariness and confusion to the minds of readers. Endeavoring to avoid these and other like faults ...⁸

Thomas consequently abandons Lombard's approach and instead he tries briefly and clearly to set forth whatever is involved in sacred theology.⁹

In contrast, St. Albert's *Summa Theologiae* closely follows the plan of Lombard's *Sentences*. Like Lombard, Albert begins (in Tractate I) with a discussion of the nature and object of sacred theology. In Tractate II Albert continues in the footsteps of Lombard by treating *uti* and *frui*, after which in Tractate III he takes up the questions of whether God can be known, named or demonstrated to exist. Consequently whereas Thomas (who will be shown below to have a coherent and unified theory of the beatific vision) rejects Lombard's approach as confusing and disorganized, Albert (whose philosophy and consequent theory of the beatific vision is a complex of various and sometimes contradictory elements) accepts Lombard's *Sentences* as the model for his major theological synthesis.

Before treating Key Text D, let us first study three contexts which will prepare us for the key text itself.

First Context

The fourth question asks *what is knowing God face to face?* But what is the setting for this question within Albert's *Summa Theologiae*? Albert divides his *summa* into Tractates, which are further divided into Questions, which themselves are divided into Chapters (*membra*). Each chapter is structured as a *quaestio disputata* and therefore typically includes *videtur quod non*'s and *sed contra*'s, Albert's own *solutio* followed by responses to the *videtur quod non*'s. Our first context is Albert's response to the first *videtur quod non* presented in chapter 4. Therefore let us first

8 St. Thomas Aquinas, *Prologue to the Summa Theologiae*, [Great Books of the Western World, vol. 19] trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1952), p. 1.

9 *Ibid.*

examine *videtur quod non* #1 itself:

It seems that this [knowing God face to face] is to know by means of the essence and immediately, because Augustine says in his book *De Trinitate*¹⁰ while treating *Genesis* 32, 30: "I have seen the Lord face to face," that "face" is "nature," inasmuch as the Son "did not cling to His equality with the Father [but emptied Himself to assume the condition of a slave,]" according to *Phillipians*, 2, 6. Therefore to see God face to face is to see God in the unity of the nature of the three persons.

Et videtur, quod hoc sit cognoscere per essentiam et immediate, quia dicit Augustinus in libro *De Trinitate*, tractans illud *Gen.* 32, 30: "Vidi dominum facie ad faciem," quod facies est natura, in qua filius "non rapinam arbitratus est esse se aequalem patri," *Phil.* 2, 6. Ergo videre deum facie ad faciem est videre deum in unitate naturae trium personarum.¹¹

In reply to this first *videtur quod non* Albert concedes that to know God "face to face" is to know God immediately by means of the divine essence itself ("Quod ergo primo obicitur [i.e., *videre deum facie ad faciem est videre deum in unitate naturae trium personarum*], concedendum est.")¹² This concession Albert makes by accepting *videtur quod non* #1 to be accurate—that is, Augustine, commenting on *Genesis*, 32, 30 is accurate in saying "face is nature," a definition confirmed by *Phillipians*, 2, 6. Therefore to see God face to face is to see the three divine persons in the unity of their one essence.

Here Albert interprets "face to face" vision of God as immediate vision of the divine essence and thereby he rejects the first proposition condemned in 1241 and again in 1244—namely, the divine essence itself will not be seen by angels and saints in *patria*.¹³ But Albert does not further explain how the created intellect knows the divine essence itself without a medium. Perhaps the second context, Albert's reply to *videtur quod non* #3, may prove helpful in this regard.

10 St. Augustine, *De Trinitate*, bk 2, ch. 17, n. 28 (PL 42, 863; CC 50, p. 117, v. 6–7).

11 Albert the Great, *Summa Theologiae*, Tr. 3, q. 13, ch. 4, *videtur quod non* #1, (Cologne ed., vol. XXXIV, pt. 1, p. 44).

12 *Ibid.*, ad *videtur quod non* #1, p. 47.

13 See "Introduction," p. 1, footnote 1.

Second Context

In this second context Albert expands his interpretation of "face to face" in response to *videtur quod non* #3:

Moreover, in saying "face to face" two faces are indicated—namely, the face of the one seeing and the face of what is seen, and both faces mentioned are related to one another without a medium. Therefore it seems that to see God face to face is the same as seeing God without a medium, both from the part of what is seen and from the part of the one seeing. It seems therefore that a pure intellect without the mediation of grace and glory and vestige and image is one face, which is of the one seeing. And the other face, on the part of the one seen, is that of God representing [Himself] through the divine essence and not in some form of likeness. Therefore to see God face to face is for the pure and bare intellect to see the pure and bare divine essence.

Adhuc, cum dicitur "facie ad faciem," duae facies significantur, scilicet facies videntis et facies visi, et utraque facies significatur sine medio se habere ad alteram. Ergo videtur quod videre deum facie ad faciem est idem quod videre deum sine medio et ex parte visi et ex parte videntis; videtur ergo quod purus intellectus sine medio gratiae et gloriae et vestigii et imaginis sit facies una, quae est videntis, et repraesentantis dei per essentiam divinam et non in aliqua forma similitudinis sit facies alia ex parte visi. Videre ergo deum facie ad faciem est puro et nudo intellectu videre puram et nudam essentiam divinam.¹⁴

This *Videtur quod non* #3 objects that "face to face" indicates two faces related immediately to each other and therefore to see God face to face is to see God without a medium. Consequently it seems that a created intellect can see the divine essence itself without the aid of grace or glory or any other factor.

How does Albert handle the objection presented in *videtur quod non* #3?

One must reply that, in truth, according to the manner of signifying, two faces—which are bare and confront one another—are referred to in the way we speak about this. Hence, most properly speaking, "face to face" the bare intellect sees only the bare divine essence. That is to say, it sees without a medium differing from [that essence] or reflecting [that essence] or signifying [that essence] after the manner of an intention;

14 Albert the Great, *Summa Theologiae*, Tr. 3, q. 13, ch. 4, *videtur quod non* #3, (Cologne ed., vol. XXXIV, pt. 1, p. 44–45).

and it does so without a visible helping medium nor with a deterring medium. But [the one seeing] does not see without a medium helping the one seeing. For this medium does not stand nor is it interposed between the one seeing and what is seen, but rather perfects the one seeing to enable the act of seeing, and therefore [this medium] is not opposed to the immediacy of seeing.

Ad tertium dicendum quod in veritate secundum modum significandi duae facies nudaee et sibi invicem obiectae significantur in sermone; et ideo propriissime facie ad faciem non videt nisi nudus intellectus nudam essentiam divinam, hoc est sine medio differente vel reflectente vel intentionaliter significante et sine medio coadiuvante visibile et sine medio prohibente, sed non sine medio coadiuvante videntem; hoc enim non interstat sive interponitur videnti et viso, sed perficit videntem ad videndum, et ideo non opponitur immediatae visioni.¹⁵

In his reply here to *videtur quod non* #3 Albert concurs that the term "face to face" indicates two faces—namely, that of the bare created intellect and the face of the bare divine essence which is seen. How does a created intellect achieve such vision? Not through a medium which reflects or intentionally signifies (and which is other than) the divine essence but through that essence itself and immediately. But, Albert adds, there is a medium which enables the one seeing to see.

In Albert's view, therefore, the divine essence itself must be the medium aiding created intellects to see by perfecting them so that they may immediately see God in the beatific vision. But is Albert here speaking of the divine essence as seen through theophanies, as previous texts suggested?¹⁶ Or is he here speaking of the divine essence as the actuation #a₃ or *species intelligibilis* of an intellectual creature's recipient intellect? Or might the divine essence perform some other function in the beatific visions of creatures?¹⁷

15 Albert the Great, *Summa Theologiae*, Tr. 3, q. 13, ch. 4, *ad videtur quod non* #3, (Cologne ed., vol. XXXIV, pt. 1, p. 47).

16 For examples, see ch. 2, p. 19 and ch. 3, footnote 47.

17 In *videtur quod non* #5 Albert writes "as regards intelligible objects it is impossible for the intellect to immediately know something through a medium, because this would go on infinitely, as Aristotle proves in *Posterior Analytics*, I, 3, 72b." [Sed in intelligibilibus immediata impossibile est per medium accipere secundum intellectum; abiret enim in infinitum, ut probat Aristoteles in I *Posteriorum*.] Albert thereby at least implicitly acknowledges that in some sense the created intellect must become what it knows (through

Let us examine *videtur quod non* #7 prior to studying the key text itself.

Third Context

In the preceding context (Albert's reply to *videtur quod non* #3) he affirmed that the divine essence itself should somehow act as the medium enabling created intellects to know God face to face. Now Albert in *videtur quod non* #7 quotes three texts from the *Old Testament* so as to further explain "face to face" vision:

Moreover, *Numbers*, 12, 8 says that Moses "sees God openly and not in riddles." And *Isaiah*, 6, 1 "I saw the Lord seated on a high and lofty throne." And *Exodus* 33, 11: "The Lord used to speak with Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend."

Adhuc, *Num.* XII (8): "Palam et non per aenigmata deum videt." Adhuc, *Is.* VI (1): "Vidi dominum sedentem super solium excelsum." Adhuc, *Exod.* XXXIII (11): "Loquebatur dominus cum Moyse facie ad faciem, sicut solet homo loqui ad amicum suum."¹⁸

Here Albert continues the argument from *videtur quod non* #6 that if face to face vision is the immediate vision of the divine essence itself, then such vision does not occur in this life, a conclusion controverted by sacred scripture texts such as *Genesis* 32, 30: "I have seen the Lord face to face."¹⁹ But in his reply to *videtur quod non* #7 Albert quotes three more passages from sacred scripture as evidence that face to face vision of God also occurs in this life.

In his response how will Albert interpret face to face vision in light of those quotations?

the possible intellect brought into act by an actuation #a₃?) in order for knowledge to terminate in the thing known and not in something intermediate.

18 Albert the Great, *Summa Theologiae*, Tr. 3, q. 13, ch. 4, *videtur quod non* #7, (Cologne ed., vol. XXXIV, pt. 1, p. 45).

19 See Albert the Great, *Summa Theologiae*, Tr. 3, q. 13, ch. 4, *videtur quod non* #6 (Cologne ed., vol. XXXIV, pt. 1, p. 45): "In contrarium huius est, quod si hoc est videre facie ad faciem, tunc non contingit in hac vita deum facie ad faciem videre, quod falsum videtur: *Gen.* 32, 30: 'Vidi Dominum facie ad faciem.' "

In solving the objection about Moses, Augustine²⁰ says that to see clearly is to see by intellectual vision, which however comes about through intelligible *species*. To see through enigmas is to see through corporeal or imaginary *species*. But to see clearly is to see through an intentional medium which descends from God into the intellect through *beholding* and *manifestations* and this sort of seeing is not in the most proper sense to see "face to face."

The same solution is applicable to the text from *Isaiah*, for granted that the Lord says through *John* 12, 41 that this is what *Isaiah* means when one sees the glory of God—namely, he calls the glory of God a glorious and higher manifestation of the divine presence in theophanies and theories, which are perfected through intelligible *species*.

Ad id quod obicitur de Moyse, solvit Augustinus, quod palam videre est intellectuali visione videre, quae tamen per species intelligibiles fit. Non per aenigmata videre est non per corporales vel imaginarias species videre. Sic autem palam videre est per medium intentionale videre, quod a deo descendit in intellectum in theoriis et theophaniis; et hoc modo videre non est facie ad faciem propriissime loquendo videre.

Per idem solvitur ad sequens de Isaia. Licet enim dominus dicat *Ioh.* XII (41), quod haec dixit Isaia, quando vidit gloriam dei, gloriam dei vocat gloriosam et altiore manifestationem divinae praesentiae in theophaniis et theoriis, quae per species intelligibiles perficiuntur.²¹

Albert, when responding to Moses through Augustine, states that achieving clear intellectual vision occurs through intelligible *species* and not through corporeal or imaginary *species*. But this clear intellectual vision occurring through theories and theophanies²² is not most properly speaking "face to face." How does he interpret *Isaiah* 6, 1? By repeating the interpretation of *John* 12, 41 that the glory of God indicates a higher manifestation of the divine presence occurring through theophanies and theories when perfected through intelligible *species*.

What has his exegesis of those scripture texts indicated? That clear intellectual seeing is through intelligible *species* and also through theophanies and theories only when the latter are assisted by intelligible *species*. Has Albert here rejected face to face

20 Augustine, *De Genesis ad litteram*, bk. 12, ch. 11.27, n. 22.54 sq. (PL 34, 462.476 sq.; CSEL 28, 1, p. 392, v. 25, p. 420, v. 9, p. 422, v. 17).

21 Albert the Great, *Summa Theologiae*, Tr. 3, q. 13, ch. 4, *ad videtur quod non* #7, (Cologne ed., vol. XXXIV, pt. 1, p. 47).

22 See ch. 2, p. 19 above for an earlier and somewhat different use of *theophany*.

vision of God even when the blessed or the angels *in patria* are perfected by such intelligible *species*? His reply is affirmative because most properly speaking face to face vision occurs without the medium of a *species*.²³

Key Text D

Thus prepared by the three preceding contexts, let us translate the Key Text itself, Albert's *solutio* to the following question: what is knowing God "face to face"?

To this and similar arguments, one must say that the face of God is said in multiple ways—namely, commonly, properly and most properly.

Ad haec et huiusmodi dicendum, quod facies dei dicitur multipliciter, communiter scilicet et proprie et propriissime.²⁴

IA. Taken commonly, "face" means all that in which God appears evidently, knowably and presently either as a cause or in His own right. And according to this manner of [taking "face" according to its common

23 Albert stated this same position in Key Text B, *De Resurrectione*, Tractatus IV, Question 1, article 9, section 3: *In quo differat haec visio ab aliis visionibus*, (Cologne ed., vol. 26, pp. 330–331), ch. 3, p. 65: "And note that the situation here on earth is not as it is in the eternal vision. For here over and beyond the light which strengthens our visual power, we need to have a likeness through which we see the thing. But in Heaven we will see God without a likeness and without a medium through the light [of glory]." ["Et nota, quod non sic est in visione aeterna, sicut est in visione viae; in via enim praeter lumen, quod confortat potentiam visivam, oportet nos habere similitudinem, per quam videamus rem. Sed in patria videbimus sine similitudine et immediate rem sub lumine."] This earlier statement (completed by Summer, 1246—see ch. 3, p. 35, footnote 2) is however rather ambiguous in that Albert uses the word "*similitudinem*" which may be understood as being either a *species intelligibilis* or merely a representation of what is known—namely, God. However since Albert also uses *similitudinem* with reference to corporeal and intellectual vision in this life, and in light of his relatively clear statements in Context C we may conclude that even in that early period of his career Albert held that the divine essence is not seen through any *species* in the beatific vision.

24 Albert the Great, *Summa Theologiae*, Tr. 3, q. 13, ch. 4, *solutio*, (Cologne ed., vol. XXXIV, pt. 1, pp. 46–7).

meaning] "face" means vestige and image, because, as *Wisdom* 13, 5 says "In [creatures] God appears knowably." And Ambrose says that God is present everywhere,²⁵ for His presence appears in every creature, because, as Augustine says, through all His works there are references to His significance.²⁶ And Lombard says in *I Sent.* dist. 3, ch. 1 that a human person is doubly assisted in recognizing God—namely, from his nature which was rational and from the works made by God and which manifest Him as their maker. Ambrose also says that God, whose nature is invisible, in order that He could be known from visible effects, produced a work which visibly manifests its maker.²⁷ And thus, "face" is said to be the presence of God manifested in a vestige or in an image. Plato also says this in the last part of the *Timaeus* that this sensible world came from the archetypal world.²⁸ And Boethius says this in *The Consolation of Philosophy*: "Being Yourself most fair a fair world in Your mind You bear, forming it in the same likeness."²⁹ And *Psalms* 49, 11 also says "The beauty of the fields is with Me."

Communiter dicitur facies omne illud in quo deus evidenter apparet et cognoscibiliter et praesentialiter velut causa vel secundum seipsum. Et hoc modo vestigium dicitur facies et imago, quia, sicut dicitur Sap. XIII (5): "in illis cognoscibiliter apparet." Et sic dicit Ambrosius, quod ubique praesens est. In omnibus enim creaturis praesentialitas eius apparet, quia, sicut dicit Augustinus, per omnia opera sua significationis suae sparsit indicia. Et sic dicitur in Sententiis I Libro, dist. III, quod "duobus iuvabatur homo ad agnitionem dei, scilicet a natura, quae rationalis erat, et ab operibus a deo factis factorem manifestantibus." Hoc etiam dicit Ambrosius, quod "Deus, qui natura invisibilis est, ut a visibilibus posset sciri, opus fecit, quod visibilitate sui opificem manifestavit." Et sic facies dicitur praesentia dei in vestigio vel in imagine manifestata. Sic etiam Plato dicit in ultima parte *Timaei*, quod ab archetypo mundo iste mundus sensibilis exivit. Et Boethius in *De Consolatione Philosophiae*: "Mundum mente gerens pulchrum pulcherrimus ipse, similique imagine formans." Et *Psalmus* 49, 11: "pulchritudo agri mecum est."³⁰

Having already considered "face" as it is commonly under-

25 Ambrose, *Expos. Ev. sec. Luc.*, bk. 1, n. 27 (PL 15, 1624c; CSEL 32, 4, p. 27, v. 22–23): "Et cum absens putatur, videtur; et cum praesens est, non videtur."

26 See Cologne ed., vol XXXIV, p. 22.

27 Pseudo-Ambrose, *In Epist. Pauli Rom.* 1, 19 (PL 17, 59bc; CSEL 81, 1, p. 38, v. 28–30).

28 Plato, *Timaeus*, 28ab.

29 Boethius, *De Cons. Phil.*, bk. 3, metr. 9 (PL 63, 758b–759a; CSEL 67, p. 63, v. 23–4).

30 Albert the Great, *Summa Theologiae*, Tr. 3, q. 13, ch. 4, *solutio*, (Cologne ed., vol. XXXIV, pt. 1, p. 46).

stood, Albert next discusses the "proper" definition of "face."

IB. Properly, "face" means the presence of God which is evident through the effect of grace either helping us to do something or protecting us. In each case the presence of God appears by way of knowledge. As in *Exodus* 33, 14 the Lord says to Moses, "My face will precede you," that is, the effect of My grace, in which the power of My majesty will appear so that He can be known. [B1] And in this manner "face" is more properly applied to corporeal presence in which God appeared so that He can be known. [B2] This is what "face" means in *Psalms* 79, 4: "Show us Your face and we will be saved." *Daniel* 3, 41 [says]: "We follow You wholeheartedly and we seek Your face." [B3] And this manner differs from the first [see A above] as nature differs from grace. For the first manner says nothing except the shining forth of the divine author in the work itself made by Him or spoken of in sacred scripture. [B4] And this is what "face" means in *Psalms* 104, 4: "Always seek His face." For Aristotle,³¹ Avicenna³² and Averroes³³ say that things are in the intellect or the divine mind as His products manifest Him, just as the products manifest any producer.

Proprie dicitur facies dei praesentia evidens per effectum gratiae adjuvantis ad aliquid vel protegentis, in quo cognoscibiliter dei apparet praesentia, sicut *Exod.* XXXIII (14) dixit dominus ad Moysen: "Facies mea praecedet te," hoc est effectus gratiae meae, in quo cognoscibiliter potentia meae maiestatis apparebit. Et illo modo magis proprie dicitur facies praesentia in carne, in qua cognoscibiliter deus apparuit, et sic dicitur facies in *Psalm* (LXXIX, 4): "Ostende nobis faciem tuam, et salvi erimus." *Dan.* III (41): "Sequimur te in toto corde nostro et quaerimus faciem tuam." Et ille modus difert a primo, sicut natura differt a gratia. Primus enim modus non dicit nisi resplendentiam auctoris in ipso opere a se facto vel in scripturis. Et hoc modo dicitur facies in *Psalm* (CIV, 4): "Quaerite faciem eius semper." Dicit enim Philosophus, Avicenna et Averroes, quod res sunt in intellectu sive mente divina sicut opera artificis in artifice et manifestant ipsum, sicut opera artificis manifestant ipsum.³⁴

Finally, Albert gives the "most proper" definition of "face"—namely, God manifesting Himself immediately to a creature in the beatific vision:

31 Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, bk. 1, ch. 2 (983a4–9).

32 Avicenna, *Metaphysics*, tr. 8, ch. 7 (f. 100vb).

33 Averroes, *Metaphysics*, bk. 11 (12) comm. 36.

34 Albert the Great, *Summa Theologiae*, Tr. 3, q. 13, ch. 4, *solutio*, (Cologne ed., vol. XXXIV, pt. 1, p. 46).

IC. But most properly "face" means the essential presence of God, shown and manifested without a medium; in this way He manifests Himself to the blessed in Heaven. And in this way *Job* says: "You will see His face in jubilation"; because Augustine says that no one sees the face of God in this way without unspeakable joy;³⁵ *Psalms* 15, 11: "You will fill me in joy with Your countenance." Whence *Isaiah* 26, 10: "Let the impious person be removed lest he see the glory of God."

Propriissime autem dicitur facies essentialis praesentia dei sine medio demonstrata et exhibita, hoc modo quo se exhibet beatis. Et hoc modo dicit octavo *Iob*.: "Videbis faciem eius in iubilo," quia dicit Augustinus, quod nemo hoc modo videt faciem dei sine gaudio inenarrabili, *Psalms* (XV, 11): "Adimplebis me laetitia cum vultu tuo." Unde dicitur *Is.* XXVI (10): "Tollatur impius, ne videat gloriam dei."³⁶

After giving those three definitions of "face to face" Albert discusses the various types of media spoken of with regard to the immediate vision of the divine essence.

IIA. Moreover, medium is spoken of in multiple ways, as Anselm says.³⁷ [Why?] For a medium shows the intention of the object which is shown, so that intelligible or sensible *species* are the media by which the intelligible and sensible objects are shown to the intellect and to the sense.

Adhuc, medium dicitur multipliciter, ut dicit Anselmus. Est enim medium ostendens per hoc quod est intentio eius quod ostenditur, sicut species intelligibiles vel sensibiles media sunt, quibus intellectui et sensui ostenditur intelligibile et sensibile.³⁸

IIB. Moreover, medium differs as does an illumined object in a visible medium. [B1] And Avicenna³⁹ divides a medium in two ways—namely, that which differs by being in one location (and this is said to be a simple difference) and that which differs by being in two or more locations (and this is called a reflecting medium) an example of which is that which is seen in a mirror. [B2] There is also a medium which aids or perfects one's seeing and this occurs in two ways—namely, from the

35 Augustine, *Sermo* 171, ch. 9, n. 9 (PL 38, 931–2).

36 Albert the Great, *Summa Theologiae*, Tr. 3, q. 13, ch. 4, *solutio*, (Cologne ed., vol. XXXIV, pt. 1, p. 46–7).

37 Anselm, *de Lib. Arb.*, c. 3 (PL 158, 495a; Schmitt, ed., I, 231, v. 16–19).

38 Albert the Great, *Summa Theologiae*, Tr. 3, q. 13, ch. 4, *solutio*, (Cologne ed., vol. XXXIV, pt. 1, p. 46).

39 Avicenna, *Liber VI Nat.*, pars 3, c. 1.1 (ed. Van Riet, p. 172–3, pp. 254–5).

part of the visible object and from the part of the one seeing. From the part of the visible object, light helps and perfects color in order that the object be seen; from the part of the one seeing, the clarity of the eye and the correct position of the humors and eyelids and figures and intersecting lines which intersect the spheres and the circles of the lids of the eyes and other such factors perfect the eye to see without hindrance. [B3] But these last two are not properly called media, but rather the acts and perfections of the one seeing and what is seen.

Et est medium differens, sicut perspicuum illuminatum est in visu medium. Et hoc dividit Avicenna in duo scilicet in id quod sub uno situ differt, et hoc dicitur simpliciter differens, et in id quod sub duobus vel pluribus sitibus differt, et hoc vocatur medium reflectens, sicut est id quod videtur in speculo. Est etiam medium coadiuvans sive perficiens ad videndum, et hoc duobus modis, scilicet ex parte visibilis et ex parte videntis, et ex parte visibilis, sicut lux adiuvat et perficit colorem, ut actu videatur, ex parte videntis, sicut claritas oculi et recta positio humorum et tunicarum et figurae et intersecatorum, qua intersecant se sphaerae et circuli tunicarum oculi, et limpiditas oculi et cetera huiusmodi, quibus perficitur oculus ad videndum sine impedimento. Sed haec duo ultima non proprie dicuntur media, sed actus et perfectiones videntis et visibilis.⁴⁰

IIC. Also Anselm adds to that [previous sort] a medium which he calls non-preventive,⁴¹ as if between me and something which otherwise could be seen there is a wall which would be a hindering medium. Hence the removal of the wall would be a non-hindering medium.

Ponit etiam Anselmus adhuc iuxta illud medium, quod vocat non prohibens, sicut si inter me et rem, quae possit videri, paries esset, esset medium prohibens, unde remotio parietis esse medium non prohibens.⁴²

IID. Hence, since seeing face to face means to see without a medium, one must distinguish. For if one is speaking of seeing without a differing or reflecting medium then the statement is true. Moreover, if one is speaking of the absence of an intentional medium which is not the object seen but its intention or similitude, then seeing face to face most properly speaking is to see without such a medium.

40 Albert the Great, *Summa Theologiae*, Tr. 3, q. 13, ch. 4, *solutio*, (Cologne ed., vol. XXXIV, pt. 1, p. 46).

41 Anselm, *de Lib. Arb.*, c. 3 (PL 158, 495a; Schmitt, ed., I, 213, v. 18: "medium non impediens").

42 Albert the Great, *Summa Theologiae*, Tr. 3, q. 13, ch. 4, *solutio*, (Cologne ed., vol. XXXIV, pt. 1, p. 46).

Unde cum "facie ad faciem videre" dicatur "sine medio videre," distinguui debet. Si enim dicatur sine medio differente vel reflectente, tunc verum est. Adhuc, si dicatur sine medio intentionalis, quod res visa non sit sed intentio eius vel similitudo, tunc adhuc propriissime facie ad faciem videre est sine medio tali videre.⁴³

IIE. But if one speaks of a cooperating medium from the part of the visible object, then not every such visible object uses such a medium. For light is what is first visible, whether light be sensible or intellectual—and light is visible without any cooperating medium. But light is visible by itself and is the act of every visible object. If this were not so it would be necessary to go to infinity with reference to those cooperating factors and with reference to the objects seen by those factors. Thus again to see God face to face in the most proper fashion is to see God without a medium.

Si autem dicatur medium coadiuvans ex parte visibilis, tunc non omne visibile utitur tali medio. Visibile enim primum, quod est lux, sive sensibilis sive intellectualis, non fit visibile aliquo coadiuvante, sed seipso visibile est et omnis visibilis actus; aliter enim oporteret, quod iretur in infinitum in coadiuvantibus et coadiuvatis. Et sic iterum facie ad faciem deum videre propriissime est sine medio videre.⁴⁴

IIF. But if a cooperating medium is spoken with reference to the one seeing, then since no one seeing sees perfectly unless he is perfected in that seeing, to see face to face never occurs without a medium. [F1] For if one sees by natural vision, he needs to be perfected by natural media in order to see. But if someone sees through artistic or scientific means these are the habits of art and of science. If someone sees by a gratuitous vision he needs to be perfected by the habits of grace, which are wisdom, understanding, grace and faith.⁴⁵ If he sees by the vision of glory he needs to be perfected by the habits of glory and happiness. [F2] These media, however, do not conceal or put aside or put at a distance the one seeing and the object seen but they strengthen and perfect the visual power in its seeing. Hence to see thus through a medium is not opposed to seeing immediately but agrees with it.

Si autem medium sit ex parte videntis coadiuvans, tunc cum omnis videns perfecte non videat, nisi perfectus sit ad videndum, facie ad faciem sic videre numquam est sine medio videre. Si enim videt visione naturali, oportet eum esse perfectum mediis naturalibus ad visum. Si

videt visione artis vel scientiae, oportet eum esse perfectum mediis, hoc est habitibus artis et scientiae. Si videt visione gratuita, oportet eum esse perfectum habitibus gratiae, sicut sunt sapientia et intellectus et gratia et fides. Si videt visione gloriae, oportet eum esse perfectum habitibus gloriae et beatitudinis.

Haec tamen media non tegunt vel deferunt vel distare faciunt videntem et visibile, sed visivam potentiam confortant et perficiunt ad videndum. Et ideo sic per medium videre non opponitur ad immediate videre, sed stat cum ipso.⁴⁶

IIG. Moreover, if one speaks about a non-preventive medium, then, as Gregory says in the beginning of his commentary on *Job*: "A medium which prevents vision [of God] is the body, behind which the gaze of our mind stands like a body behind a wall, lest we see God in a revealed vision,"⁴⁷ as *Wisdom* 9, 14–16 says: "The thoughts of mortals are timid and our providences uncertain. For our corruptible body aggravates our mind and our earthly dwelling drowns our senses with many thoughts. And with difficulty we judge the things of this earth and what is within our view we labor to find. But when things are in heaven, who will search them out?" And thus to see without a medium is to see once one has put aside our corruptible flesh and this is the same as to see face to face—and that is for the nude soul to be presented to the divinity without a medium.

Adhuc, si accipiatur medium non prohibens, tunc, sicut dicit Gregorius super *Iob* in principio, medium prohibens visionem corpus est, post quod sicut post parietem acies stat mentis nostrae, ne deum videre possit revelata visione, sicut dicitur *Sap.* IX (14–16): "Cogitationes mortalium timidae, et incertae providentiae nostrae; corpus enim, quod corrumpitur, aggravat animam, et terrena inhabitatio deprimit sensum multa cogitantem. Et difficile aestimamus, quae in terra sunt, et quae in prospectu sunt, invenimus cum labore, quae autem in caelis sunt, quis investigabit?" Et sic sine medio videre est deposita carne corruptibili videre, et idem est facie ad faciem videre, hoc est nudam animam sine medio praesentari deitati.⁴⁸

But from the foregoing the solution to almost all previous problems is clear—namely, what seeing "face to face" consists in and what is seeing "without a medium," which was the initial

43 Albert the Great, *Summa Theologiae*, Tr. 3, q. 13, ch. 4, *solutio*, (Cologne ed., vol. XXXIV, pt. 1, pp. 46–47).

44 *Ibid.*, p. 47.

45 See Albert the Great, *Cologne ed.*, vol. XXXIV, p. 81.

46 Albert the Great, *Summa Theologiae*, Tr. 3, q. 13, ch. 4, *solutio*, (Cologne ed., vol. XXXIV, pt. 1, p. 47).

47 Gregory, *Moral. epist. missoria*, c. 5 (PL 75, 515b–516a).

48 Albert the Great, *Summa Theologiae*, Tr. 3, q. 13, ch. 4, *solutio*, (Cologne ed., vol. XXXIV, pt. 1, p. 47).

question.

Ex his iam patet solutio fere omnium. Patet enim, quid sit "facie ad faciem" videre et quid sit "sine medio" videre, quod fuit primo quaesitum.⁴⁹

Movement of Thought

Despite its length Albert's "*Solutio*" is carefully constructed and relatively clear. Here is the movement of thought. In its part I after having distinguished three manners of speaking of God's "face"—namely, commonly, properly and most properly, he takes up each of those distinctions separately. [A] In its common meaning "face" signifies "vestige" and "image" and here Albert gives reference to *Wisdom* 13, 5; Ambrose (twice), Augustine, Lombard, Plato, Boethius and *Psalms* 49, 11. [B] In its proper meaning "face" signifies the presence of God made evident through grace, and hence Albert gives reference to *Exodus* 33, 14; *Psalms* 79, 4; *Daniel* 3, 41; *Psalms* 104; Aristotle, Avicenna, and Averroes. [C] In its most proper meaning "face to face" seeing occurs when God is present to the blessed in heaven without a medium and hence Albert cites Augustine's reference to *Job*; *Psalms* 15, 11; and *Isaiah* 26, 10.

In part II Albert gives "medium" multiple meanings. After having in [A] set forth its common signification of intelligible and sensible *species* as the medium between intelligible and sensible objects and their faculties, in [B] Albert begins to show how media differ—for example, with regard to place, with regard to the object and to the one seeing. In [C] he distinguishes between hindering and non-hindering media. In [D] he contrasts seeing face to face with and without an intention or similitude. In [E] he speaks of light, whether sensible or intelligible, as itself needing no medium and thus seeing God face to face is without a medium. But with reference to a cooperating medium from the part of the one seeing in [F] he distinguishes these as natural, artistic or scientific, and gratuitous (for example, grace itself and its habits of wisdom, understanding and faith—in fact, glory and happiness in the

⁴⁹ Albert the Great, *Summa Theologiae*, Tr. 3, q. 13, ch. 4, *solutio*, (Cologne ed., vol. XXXIV, pt. 1, p. 47).

beatific vision itself). Finally in [G] he speaks again of a non-preventive medium by referring to Gregory's comment on *Job*, and to *Wisdom* 9, 14–16. He concludes by stating how seeing without a medium in Heaven occurs after our death and thereby our seeing God face to face is without a medium.

What areas of Albert's movement of thought above require further explanation? In *solutio* part I [A] he claims that "face" taken commonly means everything in which God, Who is present everywhere, appears knowably and presently—a claim he supports by referring to the end of Plato's *Timaeus* where one finds the doctrine that the sensible world came from the changeless world of forms. But nowhere do we find any evidence that Albert held, as did Plato, a theory of participation which would help him to explain the real transcendence and immanence of God seemingly required for a Christian theory of creation. Instead he adopts the neo-platonic image of creatures flowing from God, their cause, in his own accounts of creation. How then does Albert explain the immanence and transcendence of God with respect to creatures, or is he a monist who holds that all reality is made up of only light?

Next in I [B] Albert sets forth the proper definition of "face"—namely, the presence of God as evident and knowable through the effect of grace. Indeed, the proper definition of "face" differs from the common definition as grace differs from nature. But how does grace differ from nature? Does Albert hold that every genuine cognition requires an illumination (or grace) from God (Whom Albert describes as the universally agent intellect)?

When at last he speaks directly of the beatific vision in I [C] Albert says that "face" most properly understood is the presence of God manifesting Himself without a medium to the blessed in heaven. But how precisely is the divine essence known by the blessed and the angels in their beatific visions? If Albert's position is indeed a neo-platonic monism of light, might that monism be one contributing factor why Albert seems unconcerned here about how the created intellect is assimilated to and therefore able to know the divine essence immediately?

These last questions Albert begins to answer in *solutio* part II, which itself is not however entirely without ambiguity. For example, in II [A] he gives a common definition of "medium" as the *species sensibilis vel intelligibilis* showing the *intention* of the object to the

senses or the intellect. But Albert has heretofore insisted that the beatific vision occurs without such *species*. By what means, then, is the created intellect assimilated to the divine essence in the beatific vision so that it may know God?

Albert provides a hint to the answer to that last question when he describes in II [B2] the two-fold medium aiding and perfecting the one seeing so as to enable them to see. From the part of what is seen, light perfects color—namely, light makes the *species* of, for example, *blue* be actually visible (and light itself is what is seen under that *species*). From the part of the one seeing a visible object, the medium assisting and perfecting the seer is nothing other than the proper physical structure, composition and disposition⁵⁰ of the organs (the eyes, the eyelids, the pupils, etc.). But how does Albert's description of sensible light as visible in itself and as making the various *species* of colors be visible apply to intellectual vision, particularly that of the divine essence itself in the beatific vision?

In II [D] he applies the various definitions of "medium" (given in II [A to C]) to "face to face" vision of God in the beatific vision, which will not entail a reflecting or differing medium. But referring to the broad definition of medium given in II [A]—namely, *species intelligibilis vel sensibilis*—he reaffirms that the "face to face" vision in the beatific visions of saints or angels occur without such *species*.⁵¹ So how will created intellects know the divine essence immediately in the beatific vision, if not through the divine essence itself acting as the *species intelligibilis* or actuation #a₃ of the created intellect?

In *solutio* II [E] Albert describes sensible or intellectual light itself as the first visible, which is visible in itself without the aid of any cooperating medium (or *species*—see II [A and D]) and is the act of every visible object. He then concludes that if "without a medium" means "light itself seen without the mediation of a *species*" then the beatific vision occurs immediately. Here again one may ask whether the statement that everything sensibly or intellectually visible is light, coupled with Albert's belief that God

50 "Disposition" calls to mind Avicenna's theory that the *dator formarum* constantly pours forth forms into that which is properly disposed to receive them.

51 A *species* as defined in II [D] is an intentional medium which is not the object seen but its intention or similitude.

is true light, implies a monism of light? And how does he explain the assimilation of knower and known in the beatific vision if light is seen but not through an actuation #a?⁵² Finally, if clear intellectual vision occurs through intelligible *species* and the beatific vision involves no such *species*, do the angels and blessed have a clear vision of the divine essence in their beatific visions?

In *solutio* II [F] he explains that on the part of the one seeing, every "face to face" vision requires a cooperating medium (which he identifies as the composition, structure and disposition of the organs in II [B2] regarding corporeal vision). Is he implying that the composition, disposition and efficient capabilities of the created intellect (as strengthened by the *lumen gloriae*, of which Albert spoke in Key Text #C) are the cooperating media on the part of the one seeing? His reply in II [F1 and F2] is affirmative: the created intellect is (efficiently) perfected and strengthened in the beatific vision by the habit of glory so that it may intellectually see the divine light itself without the mediation of a *species*.

What positive insights into Albert's theory of the beatific vision have we gained by the above questions and clarifications? Albert holds that the divine essence itself is seen immediately in the beatific vision. But that essence is not seen through a *species* from the part of the divine essence, because what is seen is light, which requires no *species* as a medium in order to be actually visible (whereas every other visible object needs light in order to be seen through a *species*). Instead the grace (which Albert here and in prior texts) called the *lumen gloriae* is itself divine light which directly illumines not only the recipient intellect but also the entire soul,⁵³ and strengthens intellect so that it may efficiently

52 See also Albert's *De Resurrectione*, *Tractatus* IV, *Quaestio* 1, article 9: *De Visione per Speciem*, section 1: *An Visio Sit Dos, ad sextum* (Cologne ed., p. 329), ch. 3, p. 42, where Albert quotes Hugh of St. Victor who holds that God is essentially present in the soul and contains it, like a light which becomes one with and illuminates a physical body.

53 See ch. 4, p. 66: "... through vision the soul receives the clarity [and the light] of wisdom which permeates the entire soul so as to glorify it. And one can imagine it in this way, that if one by seeing light would take light into themselves through the eyes and that illumination would make the entire being be clear." ["... quia per visionem accipitur claritas sapientiae, quae totam animam glorificando penetrat; et hujus imaginatio est, sicut si quis videndo lumen, in se per oculos traheret lumen, quod ingressum in ipsum

cause knowledge of God Who *is* the light present to the intellect and is therefore *per se* visible without the mediation of a *species*.

But those insights into Albert's theory of the beatific vision arising from our reading of his *Summa Theologiae* raise two crucial questions. *First*, Albert contends that the divine essence is not seen through a *species intelligibilis* in the beatific visions of the angels and blessed in Heaven because what is seen *is* light, which requires no *species* in order to be visible. While Albert's use of the word *species* suggests the influence of Aristotle and his followers, the statement that God is seen without a *species intelligibilis* because He *is* light suggests the influence of neo-platonism and of Pseudo-Dionysius in particular. To what extent is Albert's epistemology Aristotelian and to what extent does it exhibit the influence of neo-platonism? Does Albert hold that the agent and recipient intellects are really distinct or are they, as for Scotus,⁵⁴ one and the same? *Second*, Albert holds that God is essentially present to souls which He contains and which He illumines in the beatific vision. Yet he furnishes no evidence in the texts studied in this dissertation⁵⁵ that he himself held a theory of participation, an aspect of his own thought which testifies perhaps to the influence

[totum faceret clarum.]"

54 For further information on Scotus' distinction between recipient and agent intellect see Allan Wolter (trans.) *John Duns Scotus Philosophical Writings*, (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., 1962) pp. 181-2. E. Gilson also adds helpful information in *The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy* [hereafter: *Spirit of Medieval Philosophy*], trans. A.H.C. Downes, (Notre Dame/London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), pp. 444-5: "Others consider that the simplicity of a created essence cannot be [of the same type as that of the divine essence and so they] admit a distinction between the soul and its faculties ... but this distinction is reduced to a minimum For Hugh of St. Victor they are accidents According to Duns Scotus the distinction between the soul and its faculties is not real but only formal. According to St. Thomas there is a *real* distinction between the substance and its faculties, and he makes them accidents not, as Hugh of St. Victor does, to mark that they are hardly distinguishable, but to emphasize the reality of the distinction." Does Albert, under the influence of Hugh, eliminate or minimize the real distinction between the soul and its faculties and between the faculties themselves (e.g., between the agent and recipient intellects)?

55 Nor does one find evidence elsewhere that Albert holds a theory of participation. See E. Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy*, p. 668, footnote 34; p. 669 footnote 7; p. 670 footnotes 9 and 10; p. 671 footnote 12; and p. 672 footnote 13.

of Aristotle on Albert's metaphysics. But how then does Albert explain God's presence to and containment of human souls? Moreover, when he explains that the *lumen gloriae* is a light which unites the soul to God as to a spouse and that thereby the soul becomes light, does he imply that the soul is substantially united to God or even that the soul *is* God on a lower level? Is Albert's metaphysics again revealed to be a monism of light?

How shall we answer those questions dealing with the source and nature of Albert's epistemology and metaphysics as they relate to his theory of the beatific vision? Our approach will be to study the thought of another—namely that of Albert's student, St. Thomas Aquinas, whose own theory of the beatific vision is both clear and consistent with his metaphysics and epistemology. After doing so we shall compare the two approaches so as to highlight the differences and similarities between them. Therefore let us now study Aquinas' theory of the beatific vision as presented in *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Book III, ch. 51.

Thomas Aquinas as a Contrast to Albert

Aquinas speaks of the beatific vision from the beginning to the end of his career. Let us choose a text from its mid-point, namely, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, III, ch. 51: "*Quomodo Deus Per Essentiam Videatur*,"⁵⁶ which will be an informative contrast to Albert's approach.

56 The *Summa Contra Gentiles* was most likely written between 1261 and 1264. That Thomas began writing this treatise around 1261 is supported by his citation of Aristotle's *De Generatione Animalium* in Book I, chs. 21, 88 and 89. Prior to December, 1260, Aristotle's treatise on animals was available only under the general title *De Animalibus*. On December 23, 1260 William of Moerbeka completed his Greek/Latin translation of Aristotle's *De Animalibus* and made available the original titles of the five sections of Aristotle's treatise: *De Historiis Animalium*, *De Partibus Animalium*, *De Generatione Animalium*, *De Causa Motus Animalium*, and *De Progressu Animalium*. Thus, Aquinas' quotation of William of Moerbeka's text makes it impossible for the SCG to have been begun prior to 1261. While it is probable that the SCG was completed by 1264, controversy remains regarding the precise date. On the chronology of Thomas' writings see I. T. Eschmann, "A Catalogue of St. Thomas's Works," in Etienne Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*, trans. L. K. Shook, C. S. B., (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of

Introduction

But first we must ask what sort of treatise is the *Summa Contra Gentiles*? According to St. Thomas himself, it concerns the main (= *Summa*) truths of the Catholic faith⁵⁷ defended against Moslems, Jews and pagans (= *Contra Gentiles*).⁵⁸ In light of the diversity of his opponents, how will Aquinas proceed? "Mahumetistae" and "pagani" accept neither the *Old* nor the *New Testaments*; the "Judaei" accept only the *Old Testament*; and, the "heretici" (whom Thomas also mentions) accept only the *New Testament*.⁵⁹ Hence in this treatise he will have recourse to natural reason, to which all are forced to give their assent.⁶⁰

What, then, is Thomas' procedure? First, he seeks in Books I–III "to make known that truth which faith professes and reason investigates," after which he seeks to make known "that truth which surpasses reason" in Book IV.⁶¹ Book I considers God in Himself, Book II "the coming forth of creatures from God," and Book III

Notre Dame Press, 1994), especially pp. 385–6. Eschmann also provides an account of the title (*Summa Contra Gentiles*) traditionally attributed to this untitled work. He recounts the testimony of Peter Marsilio who claimed (in 1313) that Aquinas wrote the SCG at the request of Raymond of Penafort, a Dominican missionary who was working to convert the Spanish and required a defense of Catholic truths against the attacks of unbelievers.

57 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles* [hereafter: Leonine ed.], (Romae: Apud Sedem Commissionis Leoninae, 1934), I, c. II, p. 2: "Assumpta igitur ex divina pietate fiducia sapientis officium prosequendi, quamvis proprias vires excedat, propositum nostrae intentionis est veritatem quam fides Catholica profitetur, pro nostro modulo manifestare errores eliminando contrarios" For English translation see *Summa Contra Gentiles, Book One: God* [hereafter: Pegis ed.], trans. Anton C. Pegis (Notre Dame/London: University Of Notre Dame Press, 1975), I, ch. 2, #2, p. 62.

58 Leonine ed., I, c. II, p. 2; Pegis trans., I, ch. 2, #2–3, p. 62.

59 Leonine ed., I, c. II, p. 2; Pegis trans., I, ch. 2, #3, p. 62.

60 Pegis trans., I, ch. 2, #3, p. 62; Leonine Ed., I, c. II, p. 2: "Unde necesse est ad naturalem rationem recurrere, cui omnes assentire coguntur."

61 Pegis trans., I, ch. 9, #3, p. 78; Leonine ed., I, c. IX, p. 8: "... primum nitemur ad manifestationem illius veritatis quam fides profitetur et ratio investigat Deinde ut a manifestioribus ad minus manifesta fiat processus, ad illius veritatis manifestationem procedemus quae rationem excedit [lib. IV]."

"the ordering of creatures to God as to their end."⁶² The text concerning the beatific vision fits within Book III.

As a further preparation, let me indicate briefly the structure of each of those books. In Book I, after stating the general goal and method of SCG, St. Thomas speaks of the demonstration of God's existence (chs. 10–13) and God's attributes (chs. 14–102). In Book II, chapters 1–5 are introductory, chapters 6–45 discuss God as the cause of creatures' existence and distinctions, and chapters 46–101 concern the natures of creatures themselves. Book III consists of chapters 1–63, which discuss God as the end of all creatures, chapters 64–110, God's government of creation in general, and chapters 111–163, God's government of rational creatures. Obviously, the text on the beatific vision fits within that first discussion in Book III on God as the goal of all creatures.

In Book III, after having shown that good and not evil is the end of creatures (chs. 1–16), that God is the end of both physical and intellectual creatures (chs. 17–25), and that happiness is not carnal pleasures, honors, riches and so on (chs. 26–36), Aquinas contends that happiness is the contemplation of God (ch. 37), but not through human reasoning (chs. 38–39), not through faith (ch. 40), not through our knowledge of separate substances (ch. 44),⁶³ not by humans in this life (chs. 47–48), and not by angels in knowing their own essences (chs. 49–50). How, then, is the divine essence itself contemplated? St. Thomas' answer is Book III, chapter 51. My approach will be first to sketch its context, a sketch which illumines that chapter 51 and which consists of *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Book I, ch. 53.

Context: *Summa Contra Gentiles*, I, ch. 53

Let us first locate ch. 53 within Book I. In Book I, chs. 44–71, he

62 Pegis trans., I, ch. 9, #4, p. 78; Leonine ed., I, c. IX, p. 8: "... primo occurrit consideratio de his quae Deo secundum seipsum conveniunt; secundo vero, de processu creaturarum ab ipso [lib. II]; tertio autem, de ordine creaturarum in ipsum sicut in finem [lib. III]."

63 On this topic, Aquinas considers and refutes Alexander of Aphrodisias and Averroes in chapters 42–46.

considers God's intelligence.⁶⁴ Thomas writes that God is intelligent (ch. 44), that God's understanding and essence are one (ch. 45), and that God understands Himself (chs. 46–47) and all things through the divine essence itself (chs. 48–55). From those chapters Aquinas concludes that God understands multiple objects through one intelligible *species* which is the divine essence itself, yet this does not compromise the claim that God is simply one.

But how will chapter 53 prepare us for Thomas' text on the beatific vision (Book III, ch. 51)? For Aquinas if there are many intellectual objects in the divine intellect, one must investigate the manner in which these objects are many.⁶⁵ Why is this necessary? Because to posit a multitude of intellectual objects possessing a distinct being within the divine essence is either to undermine the claim that God is one, or to claim that there are accidents in God.⁶⁶ Since both consequences contradict Aquinas' previous findings,⁶⁷ he challenges the premise that God's ideas have a distinct being in Him by examining the mode of existence of intellectual objects within the human intellect.⁶⁸ In so doing, he provides insights crucial to our understanding his discussion of how intellectual vision of the divine essence is possible. Let us turn now to the movement of thought in Book I, ch. 53 to see what information

64 I will limit myself to chs. 44–55 since these are directly relevant to our understanding of the context.

65 Leonine ed., I, c. LI et LII, p. 48–9: "Sed ne multitudo intellectuum in intellectum divinum compositionem inducat, investigandus est modus quo ista intellecta sint multa." Pegis trans., I, ch. 51–2, #1, p. 185.

66 Leonine ed., c. LI et LII, p. 49: "Non autem haec multitudo sic intelligi potest quasi multa intellecta habeant esse distinctum in Deo. Ist enim intellecta aut essent idem quod essentia divina: et sic in essentia Dei poneretur aliqua multitudo quod supra [capp. 18, 20, 42] multiplicatur est remotum. Aut essent superaddita essentiae divinae: et sic esset in Deo aliquod accidens, quod supra [cap. 23] impossibile esse ostendimus." Pegis trans., I, ch. 51–2, #2, p. 185.

67 See SCG, I, chs. 18, 20 and 42 which exclude multiplicity from God's essence, and SCG, I, ch. 23 which excludes accidents from God.

68 Leonine ed., I, c. LIII, p. 49: "Praemissa autem dubitatio faciliter solvi potest si diligenter inspicatur qualiter res intellectae in intellectu existant. Et ut ab intellectu nostro ad divini intellectus cognitionem, prout est possibile, procedamus ..." Pegis trans., I, ch. 53, #1–2, p. 187–8. Aquinas will utilize his observations on the mode of existence of intellectual objects in human intellection when he examines this same question with regard to divine intellection in chs. 54–58.

Aquinas provides there. After the two introductory sentences of chapter 53 Aquinas begins his examination of human intellection by considering "the fact that an external thing understood by us does not exist in our intellect according to its own nature."⁶⁹ Why? Because the nature of, for example, a birch tree, is to be a composite of prime matter, forms (substantial and accidental), and the act of existence. The tree itself exists independently of the human intellect; and its being known by a human intellect is an accidental perfection both of it and the human intellect. Such an object cannot exist in the intellect according to its natural, material existence.

How is such an object present in the human intellect? Aquinas replies as follows: the *species* (actuation #a₃)⁷⁰ caused by the external thing must be in the intellect as that by which the intellect comes to be formally in act. This actuation is the formal determination of the knower's cognitive powers (i.e., external senses, internal sense and recipient intellect) occurring in the knower but caused by the external object. Thus understanding is of the thing known because the content of the *species* (actuation #a₃) is

69 Pegis trans., I, ch. 53, #2, p. 188; Leonine ed., I, c. LIII, p. 49: "... considerandum est quod res exterior intellecta a nobis in intellectu nostro non existit secundum propriam naturam."

70 I adopt the term actuation #a₃ because it distances Thomas' epistemology from that of Bonaventure (among others) who uses the word *species* in his Trinitarian theology: i.e., the knower first knows the *species* and only then the external thing. Thus the *species* is a representation distinct from the knower and the thing known. Hence, the *species* is similar to the second person of the Trinity (the Word) and thus distinct from the first person (the Father). See Leo Sweeney, S.J., "Chapter 21: Preller and Aquinas: Second Thoughts on Epistemology," in *Christian Philosophy: Greek, Medieval and Contemporary Reflections* [hereafter: *Christian Philosophy*], (New York/Bern: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1997), pp. 525–28.

For Aquinas, and unlike Bonaventure, the *species* is not a representation. Rather, the *species* brings about the formal identity of the knower and the known which occurs in the knower through a single actuation of both knower and known, since the thing known is the act of the cognitive powers. Thus the content of the *species* is formally identical with the external object and so knowledge concerns what is beyond the intellect and its content so that the external thing is known. Hence, I shall continue to translate *species* by actuation #a₃. In addition I shall refer when appropriate to the knowledge that results from this non-cognitive union of knower and known as actuation #b₃. See Sweeney, *ibid.*, pp. 528–39.

identical with the content of the thing known.⁷¹

... sed oportet quod species eius sit in intellectu nostro, per quam fit intellectus in actu. Existens autem in actu per huiusmodi speciem sicut per propriam formam, intelligit rem ipsam: Non autem quod ipsum intelligere sit actio transiens in intellectum, sicut califacio transit in calefactum, sed manet in intelligente: sed habet relationem ad rem quae intelligitur, ex eo quod species praedicta, quae est principium intellectualis operationis ut forma, est similitudo illius.⁷²

Thomas next considers that the recipient intellect, now formally actuated, efficiently causes intellection itself,⁷³ which is either a concept or judgment by which the intellect knows the material existent.

We must further consider that the intellect, having been informed by the species of the thing, by an act of understanding forms within itself a certain intention of the thing understood, that is to say, its notion, which the definition signifies.⁷⁴

Uterius autem considerandum est quod intellectus, per speciem rei formatus, intelligendo format in seipso quandam intentionem rei intellectae, quae est ratio ipsius, quam significat definitio.⁷⁵

Next, what corresponds in divine intellection to actuation #a₃ in human intellection? Aquinas replies, "the divine intellect understands by no *species* other than the divine essence":

"Intellectus autem divinus nulla alia specie intelligit quam essentia sua."⁷⁶

Thus the divine essence itself functions as actuation #a₃ in divine intellection, which itself is actuation #b₃.⁷⁷ What corresponds to the latter is for Thomas the Word by which God knows Himself

71 Pegis trans., I, ch. 53, #2, p. 188.

72 Leonine ed., I, c. LIII, p. 49–50.

73 This is actuation #b₃.

74 Pegis trans., I, ch. 53, #3, p. 188.

75 Leonine ed., I, c. LIII, p. 50.

76 Pegis trans., I, ch. 53, #5, p. 189. Leonine ed., I, c. LIII, p. 50. For Aquinas' demonstration of this point see SCG, I, ch. 46.

77 Pegis trans., I, ch. 53, #5, p. 189.

and all creatures:

Thereby it follows that the conception of the divine intellect by which God understands Himself and which is the Word, is the likeness not only of God Himself as understood, but also of all those things of which the divine essence is the likeness.⁷⁸

Per hoc ergo sequitur quod conceptio intellectus divini, prout seipsum intelligit, quae est verbum ipsius, non solum sit similitudo ipsius Dei intellecti, sed etiam omnium quorum est divina essentia similitudo.⁷⁹

Why does SCG, I, ch. 53 prepare for our understanding Thomas' text on the beatific vision in Book III, ch. 51? Because in the latter Thomas explains that the divine essence itself is the actuation #a₃ in the beatific vision of the angels and saints in Heaven.

"Quomodo Deus Per Essentiam Videatur"

Thomas' concern in SCG, III is with the question "What is the end of creatures?" His answer is "God" and, more precisely, with reference to intellectual creatures that end is the contemplation of God.⁸⁰

In SCG III, ch. 51, Aquinas first shows that it must be possible for intellectual creatures to contemplate God's essence and then he examines how that contemplation occurs.⁸¹ His reply is two-fold. The first is found in previous treatises: created intellects require the *lumen gloriae* or light of glory, a grace which gives the created intellect the power necessary efficiently to cause the vision

78 *Ibid.* In Book I, ch. 54 Aquinas will argue that since the divine essence is the likeness of all creatures, God understands all things.

79 Leonine ed., I, c. LIII, p. 50.

80 See SCG, III, ch. 25: Leonine ed., pp. 251–3; For English translation see *Saint Thomas Aquinas: Summa Contra Gentiles, Book Three, Part One—Providence* [hereafter: Bourke trans.], trans. Vernon J. Bourke, (Notre Dame/London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975), pp. 97–103. This will turn out to be the contemplation of the divine essence itself in SCG, III, ch. 51.

81 That Thomas concludes beatific vision is possible is inevitable given the Condemnation of 1241 which proclaimed it heresy to profess (among other articles) that the divine essence itself is not seen in the beatific vision of the angels and saints. See ch. 1, p. 1.

of the divine essence.⁸² But what is Thomas' second reply? It constitutes SCG III, ch. 51—namely, that the divine essence itself must be the actuation #a3 in the beatific vision.

Let us now present the Key Text itself followed by the movement of thought therein.

[#1] Chapter 51 begins with Thomas' demonstration that beatific vision is possible for both angels and humans because they both naturally desire it.⁸³ But it is impossible for a natural desire to be inane, and this would be the case if it were not possible intellectually to see the divine substance because all minds naturally desire that vision. Therefore it is necessary that God's substance can be seen by the intellects of both angels and human souls.

Cum autem impossibile sit naturale desiderium esse inane, quod quidem esset si non esset possibile pervenire ad divinam substantiam intelligendam, quod naturaliter omnes mentes desiderant, necesse est dicere quod possibile sit substantiam Dei videri per intellectum, et a substantiis intellectualibus separatis, et ab animabus nostris.⁸⁴

[#2] But how is the divine essence seen in the beatific vision? For Thomas the mode of this vision ought to be apparent from what has already been demonstrated⁸⁵—namely, that the divine essence cannot be seen through any created actuation #a3. Therefore if the divine essence is seen in beatific vision, the created intellect must see the divine essence by means of that essence so that the divine essence must not only be what is seen but also be the actuation #a3 by which it is seen.

Modus autem huius visionis satis iam ex dictis qualis esse debeat, apparet. Ostensum est supra [cap. 49] quod divina substantia non potest videri per intellectum aliqua specie creata. Unde oportet, si Dei essentia videatur, quod per ipsammet essentiam divinam intellectus ipsam videat: ut sit in tali visione divina essentia et quod videtur et quo

82 E.g.: *In Sent.*, 14, a.1, sol. 3; *De Veritate*, 8, 3 resp.; *Questiones Quodlibetales*, 7, 1, a.1. Thomas will repeat this answer in SCG III, ch. 53.

83 See Thomas' *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics*, Book I, lesson 1, #1–5 (pp. 2–3, Dumb Ox ed.).

84 Leonine ed., III, c. LI, p. 282; Bourke trans., III, ch. 51, #1, p. 175. In tracing Thomas' movement of thought in SCG III, 51, my translation and paraphrasing are based on Bourke's translation but correct the latter when necessary.

85 See bk. III, ch. 49, #6–8 for Aquinas' demonstration that the divine essence cannot be seen by means of a created species because the former is infinite, incomprehensible and subsistent.

videtur.⁸⁶

[#3] To clarify this astonishing statement (that the divine essence is the actuation #a3 by which it is seen) Aquinas examines the following objection: since it is impossible for the intellect to understand any substance unless it is put into act by an actuation #a3 that informs it and which is a likeness of the thing understood, it may seem impossible that the created intellect is able to see the divine substance through the divine essence itself, as an actuation #a3. [Why?] Because the divine essence is something that subsists through itself; and in Book I, ch. 26ff. it was shown that God cannot be the form of anything else.

Cum autem intellectus substantiam aliquam intelligere non possit nisi fiat actu secundum aliquam speciem informantem ipsum quae sit similitudo rei intellectae, impossibile videri potest alicui quod per essentiam divinam intellectus creatus possit videre ipsam Dei substantiam quasi per quandam speciem intelligibilem: cum divina essentia sit quiddam per seipsum subsistens; et in Primo [I, ch. 26] ostensum sit quod Deus nullius potest esse forma.⁸⁷

[#4] How, then, can the divine essence be the form of the created intellect in beatific vision? For Thomas a substance is either a form only or a composite of matter and form. A composite of matter and form cannot be the form of something else because the form in the composite is already limited to [and individuated by] its matter, making it impossible for it to be the form of another thing. But, Thomas adds, a being which subsists in such a way that it is solely form can be the form of another, provided its being is such that it could be participated by that other thing, as we showed concerning the human soul in Book Two [ch. 68].⁸⁸

Considerandum est quod substantia quae est per seipsam subsistens, est vel forma tantum, vel compositum ex materia et forma. Illud igitur quod ex materia et forma compositum est, non potest alterius esse forma: quia forma in eo est iam contracta ad illam materiam, ut alterius rei forma esse non possit. Illud autem quod sic est subsistens ut tamen solum sit forma, potest alterius esse forma, dummodo esse suum sit tale quod ab aliquo participari possit, sicut in Secundo [cap. 68].⁸⁹

[#5] But, if the existence of a substance that is solely form were such that it could not be participated by another thing [e.g., an angel], the substance could not be the form of another thing. [Why?] Because it

86 Leonine ed., III, c. LI, p. 282; Bourke trans., III, ch. 51, #2, p. 175.

87 *Ibid.*

88 Bourke trans., III, ch. 51, #4, pp. 175–6.

89 Leonine ed., III, c. LI, p. 282.

would be "determined within itself by its own being, just as material things are by matter."⁹⁰

Si vero esse suum ab altero participari non posset, nullius rei forma esse posse: sic enim per suum esse determinatur in seipso, sicut quae sunt materialia per materiam.⁹¹

[#6] But now one must now apply what one finds in the substantial or natural realm [as to how one substance can be the form of another] is also to be found in the intelligible realm. Since the perfection of our intellect is what is true, the intelligible which is truth itself will solely be form in the intelligible order.⁹²

[#7] But subsistent intelligibility, truth and form can be said only of God: since true follows upon being, that alone is its own truth which is its own being and this is proper only to God (see Book II, ch. 15).

Hoc autem, sicut in esse substantiali vel naturali invenitur, sic et in esse intelligibili considerandum est. Cum enim intellectus perfectio sit verum, illud intelligibile erit ut forma tantum in genere intelligibilium quod est veritas ipsa. Quod convenit soli Deo: nam, cum verum sequatur ad esse [I a *Metaph.*, I, 5; 993b], illud tantum sua veritas est quod est suum esse, quod est proprium soli Deo, ut in Secundo [cap. 15] ostensum est.⁹³

Aquinas next contrasts God and creatures.

[#8] Therefore other subsistent intelligibles exist not as pure forms in the intelligible order but as subjects possessing form. [Why?] Because such an intelligible is true but not truth itself, just as each is a being but not existence itself.

Alia igitur intelligibilia subsistentia sunt non ut pura forma in genere intelligibilium, sed ut formam in subiecto aliquo habentes: est enim unumquodque eorum verum, non veritas; sicut et est ens, non autem ipsum esse.⁹⁴

[#9] Hence it is clear that the divine essence can be related to a created intellect [and serve] as the intelligible *species* [= actuation #a₃] by which such an existent knows—a service which the essence of no other

separate substance can perform.

Manifestum est igitur quod essentia divina potest comparari ad intellectum creatum ut species intelligibilis qua intelligit: quod non contingit de essentia alicuius alterius substantiae separatae.⁹⁵

But Thomas now adds additional clarification:

[#10] However, the divine essence cannot be the form of something else according to its natural being, for it would follow that once joined to that other thing, it would make up one nature; but this could not be since the divine essence is perfect in its own nature. But an intelligible *species* [= actuation #a₃], united with an intellect, does not make up a nature; rather, it perfects the intellect for the act of understanding, and this is not incompatible with the perfection of the divine essence.⁹⁶

Nec tamen potest esse forma alterius rei secundum esse naturale: sequeretur enim quod, simul cum alio iuncta, constitueret unam naturam, quod esse non potest, cum essentia divina in se perfecta sit in sui natura. Species autem intelligibilis, unita intellectui, non constituit aliquam naturam, sed perficit ipsum ad intelligendum: quod perfectioni divinae essentiae non repugnat.⁹⁷

Thus far in SCG III, 51 Aquinas has been answering the objection that God cannot be the actuation #a₃ needed by created intellects in their beatific visions because the divine essence is self-subsistent and thus cannot be the form of anything else.⁹⁸ His answer is that the divine essence, even though self-subsistent existence, can serve as the actuation #a₃ in beatific vision because God also is self-subsistent truth and thus is and can be the actuation #a₃ of created intellects whose very object is truth. Thus an angel's or a saint's vision of God is immediate inasmuch as there is no medium between such created intellects and God except the divine essence itself.

[#11] Now Thomas confirms his interpretation of beatific vision through St. Paul's expression of seeing God "face to face," interpreted not corporeally but spiritually:

90 Bourke trans., III, ch. 51, #4, p. 176.

91 Leonine ed., III, c. LI, p. 282.

92 Such a form is unlike a composite of form and matter (see #4) and unlike an angelic form (see #5).

93 *Ibid.*

94 *Ibid.*

95 See #5.

96 Bourke trans., III, ch. 51, #4, p. 176.

97 Leonine ed., III, c. LI, p. 282–3.

98 See #3.

This immediate vision of God is promised us in Scripture: "We see now through a glass in a dark manner; but then face to face" (I Cor. 13:12). It is wrong to understand this in a corporeal way, picturing in our imagination the Divinity as having a corporeal face, since we have shown that God is incorporeal. Nor is it even possible for us to see God by using our bodily sight, which resides in our face, for the power of corporeal vision, which is associated with our face, can only apply to corporeal things. Thus, we shall then see God face to face, in the sense that we shall see Him without a medium, as is true when we see a man face to face.⁹⁹

Haec igitur visio immediata Dei repromittitur nobis in Scriptura, I Cor. 13:12: Videmus nunc per speculum in aenigmate: tunc autem facie ad faciem. Quod corporali modo nefas est intelligere, ut in ipsa divinitate corporalem faciem imaginemur: cum ostensum sit [lib. I, cap. 27]. Deum incorporeum esse; neque etiam sit possibile ut nostra corporali facie deum videamus cum visus corporalis, qui in facie nostra residet, non nisi rerum corporalium esse possit. Sic igitur facie ad faciem Deum videbimus, quia immediate eum videbimus, sicut hominem quem facie ad faciem videmus.¹⁰⁰

[#12] Now Thomas concludes that through the beatific vision we are maximally assimilated to God and are participants in His own happiness. [Why?] Because God Himself understands His substance through His essence and this understanding [and vision] is His happiness, as one reads in I John, 3:2: "When He shall appear, we shall be like to Him, because we shall see Him as He is."¹⁰¹ Therefore they who eat and drink at the table of God enjoy the same happiness by which God Himself is happy by seeing Him in the same manner in which He sees Himself.¹⁰²

Secundum autem hanc visionem maxime Deo assimilamur, et eius beatitudinis participes sumus: nam ipse Deus per suam essentiam suam substantiam intelligit, et haec est eius felicitas. Unde dicitur I Ioan. 3:2: "Cum autem apparuerit, similes ei erimus, et videbimus eum sicuti est." Super mensam ergo Dei manducant et bibunt qui eadem felicitate fruuntur qua Deus felix est, videntes eum illo modo quo ipse videt seipsum.

99 Bourke trans., III, ch. 51, #5, p. 176–7, which I have modified.

100 Leonine ed., III, c. LI, p. 283.

101 Thomas next utilizes Luke, 22: 29–30 and Proverbs, 9, 5 to picture the beatific vision as a heavenly banquet.

102 Bourke trans., III, ch. 51, #6, p. 177.

Movement of Thought

Let us now chart the movement of thought in SCG III, ch. 51: "*Quomodo Deus Per Essentiam Videatur*" which consists of five major points.

- a. The beatific vision is shown to be possible because all created intellects naturally desire to see the divine substance (see #1 above).
- b. In the beatific vision the divine essence is the actuation #a3 of the created intellect (see #2 above).
- c. Next, Thomas examines this objection: how can the divine essence function as actuation #a since that essence is self-subsistent and thus cannot be the form of anything else (see #3 above)?
- d. He replies: the divine essence is not only subsistent existence but also subsistent truth, which is the very object of the created intellect (see #4–#10 above).
- e. Thomas concludes: the beatific vision of an angel or saint is immediate because the divine essence is itself, as actuation #a, the medium between God and created intellects, which thereby participate in the very happiness of God Himself and in the vision which God has of Himself—a participation confirmed by Scripture (see #11 and #12 above).

Having charted the movement of thought in Thomas' text, let us now clarify his notion of truth as applied to God and to creatures.

Thomas Aquinas on Truth

Since Aquinas' notion of truth as applied to God and creatures is necessary for our understanding his astonishing claim that *God can be the form of the created intellect in the beatific vision, even though He is subsistent existence*, and since the information he provides in SCG III, 51 needs supplementing, let us see whether his discussions of truth elsewhere in the *Summa Contra Gentiles* illumine this topic. We shall consider two passages there where Thomas provides relevant information on truth.

The first of these passages is SCG I, ch. 60: "*Quod Deus Est Veritas*" where Thomas demonstrates that God is truth in three ways. According to the first demonstration truth is a perfection of the understanding or, more precisely, of its intellectual operation.

But God's intellection is His substance. Hence the divine substance is truth itself.

Veritas enim quaedam perfectio est intelligentiae, sive intellectualis operationis, ut dictum est [cap. praec.]. Intelligere autem Dei est sua substantia [cap. 45] Relinquitur igitur quod divina substantia sit ipsa veritas.¹⁰³

In the second demonstration Aquinas argues that truth is a goodness of the intellect; but God is His own goodness and thus He is His own truth.

Item. Veritas est quaedam bonitas intellectus, secundum Philosophum [VI Ethic., II, 3; 1139 a]. Deus autem est sua bonitas, ut supra [cap. 38] ostensum est. Ergo est etiam sua veritas.¹⁰⁴

Third, nothing can be predicated of God by participation since He *is* existence and thus involves no participation. But truth is in God; therefore truth is predicated of Him not by participation but essentially and so God is truth.

Praeterea. De Deo nihil participative dici potest: cum sit suum esse, quod nihil participat [cap. 23]. Sed veritas est in Deo, ut supra [cap. praec.] ostensum est. Si igitur non dicatur participative, oportet quod dicatur essentialiter. Deus ergo est sua veritas.¹⁰⁵

But what, more precisely, does truth mean? Thomas takes up this question in the following paragraph of ch. 60 where he contrasts the truth of the intellect and the truth of a thing, so as again to demonstrate that God is truth. Although truth (he observes) is properly not in things but in the mind, a thing is sometimes said to be true according as it properly and actually achieves its proper nature. Thus, Avicenna says that "the truth of a thing is what is proper to its being established [and being caused] to be what it is." The result is that the thing itself can cause knowledge which is true. Also, the thing can cause true knowledge inasmuch as it imitates what it is in the divine intellect. But God is His essence. Therefore God is truth, whether the word is taken as

the truth of knowledge or the truth of things [insofar as God causes things to be what they are in their proper natures].¹⁰⁶

Amplius. Licet verum proprie non sit in rebus sed in mente, secundum Philosophum [V *Metaph.*, iv, 1; 1027b], res tamen interdum vera dicitur, secundum quod proprie actum propriae naturae consequitur. Unde Avicenna dicit, in sua *Metaphysica* [Tract. VIII, vi], quod veritas rei est proprietas esse uniuscuiusque rei quod stabilitum est ei, in quantum talis res nata est de se facere veram aestimationem, et in quantum propriam sui rationem quae est in mente divina, imitatur. Sed Deus est sua essentia. Ergo, sive de veritate intellectus loquamur sive de veritate rei, Deus est sua veritas.¹⁰⁷

What information has Aquinas provided that is helpful precisely for our understanding how God as subsistent truth can function as the actuation #3 in the beatific vision of created intellects? The first three demonstrations that God is truth anticipate III, ch. 51 by establishing that God is subsistent truth—namely, truth is a perfection of knowledge, it is the good which is the intellect's goal, and it is the divine essence.

But what does truth mean? This topic Aquinas takes up in *Summa Contra Gentiles*, I, ch. 61: "*Quod Deus Est Purissima Veritas*," which amounts to asking whether God can involve any falsity. Thomas' negative answer in paragraph 7 ("*Adhuc. Scientia*") is especially relevant to our purposes since it concentrates on what falsity itself consists in by considering knowledge, both human and divine.¹⁰⁸ How (Thomas asks) does human knowledge come about? It is to a certain extent caused by the things that determine its content. Thus, truth is present in human knowledge when the intellect judges that something is what it really is and not conversely [i.e., human knowledge does not determine the thing itself nor its truth].¹⁰⁹ But, Thomas adds, the divine intellect is the cause of things through knowledge. Thus, God's knowledge is the measure of things just as a person's art is the measure of her or his

¹⁰³ Leonine ed., I, c. LX, p. 56.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ Pegis trans., I, ch. 60, #5, pp. 204–5.

¹⁰⁷ Leonine ed., I, c. LX, p. 56.

¹⁰⁸ In paragraphs 1–6 Thomas demonstrates that there can be no falsity in divine truth.

¹⁰⁹ Because the thing actually is what it is, it is able to determine the content of true knowledge.

artifacts, each of which is perfect to the extent that it conforms to that art. Hence, the divine intellect is related to things in the same way that things are related to the human intellect.

Adhuc. Scientia intellectus humani a rebus quodammodo causatur: unde provenit quod scibilia sunt mensura scientiae humanae; ex hoc enim verum est quod intellectu diiudicatur quia res ita se habet, et non e converso. Intellectus autem divinus per suam scientiam est causa rerum. Unde oportet scientia eius sit mensura rerum: sicut ars est mensura artificiorum, quorum unumquodque in tantum perfectum est in quantum arti concordat. Talis igitur est comparatio intellectus divini ad res qualis rerum ad intellectum humanum.¹¹⁰

What [Thomas asks] does falsity in human knowledge consist in? It is the lack of equality [or conformity] of the human intellect with the things known—an inequality which is not in the things themselves but in the intellect. Therefore, if there were not complete conformity of the divine intellect with things, falsity would be in the things and not in the divine intellect. But there is no falsity in things because every thing is true to the extent that it exists. Consequently there is no inequality between the divine intellect and things [since God causes and sustains each thing's existence]. It follows that there can be no falsity in the divine intellect [and thus God is subsistent truth, totally unmixed with any falsity].

Falsitas autem causata ex inaequalitate intellectus humani et rei non est in rebus sed in intellectu. Si igitur non esset omnimoda adequatio intellectus divini ad res, falsitas esset in rebus, non in intellectu divino. Nec tamen in rebus est falsitas: quia quantum unumquodque habet de esse, tantum habet de veritate. Nulla igitur inaequalitas est inter intellectum divinum et res; nec aliqua falsitas in intellectu divino esse potest.¹¹¹

How has Aquinas' total exclusion of falsity from God illumined his notion of truth as applied to God and creatures and assisted our understanding how the divine essence can serve as the actuation #a₃ of created intellects in the beatific vision? First, by reaffirming that truth in human knowledge is the conformity of that knowledge with things known, which are the content-deter-

mining causes of knowledge.¹¹² Second, by clarifying that truth in divine knowledge is the identity between God's being and His knowledge of Himself and all creatures. Finally, by demonstrating that God is subsistent truth. With this last statement we return to Aquinas' position presented in SCG III, 51: namely, because God is truth the divine essence can serve as the actuation #a₃ of an angel's or saint's intellect in the beatific vision without thereby constituting a new nature (i.e., in such a way that God remains God and the creature remains a creature).

Questions Revisited

Let us now return to the two questions issuing from our reading of Albert's Key Text D by using Aquinas' position as a contrast. Albert's first question (which entails two parts) asked to what extent is Albert's epistemology Aristotelian and to what extent does it exhibit the influence of neo-platonism? Does Albert hold that the agent and recipient intellects are really distinct or are they, as for Scotus,¹¹³ one and the same? Albert's second question asked how he explains God's presence to and containment of human souls without recourse to a theory of participation? Moreover, when he explains that the *lumen gloriae* is a light which unites the soul to God as to a spouse and that thereby the soul becomes light, does he imply that the soul is substantially united

112 In SCG I, ch. 62, #4 Aquinas explicates that the cause of truth in the human intellect (= that of which truth is primarily and intrinsically predicated) is the unity of knower and known (= actuation #a). Truth is predicated of knowledge (= the effect of that unity) through intrinsic denomination, but secondarily. Truth is predicated of things through extrinsic denomination, i.e., things are true only insofar as they are related to an intellect which knows them, and without such a relation the word truth would have no application to things whatsoever (see p. 106–108 above). A concise and explicit discussion of truth as applied to God and creatures occurs in *De Veritate*, I, 1 resp. For an explanation of the terms "extrinsic denomination" and "intrinsic denomination" see Leo Sweeney, S.J., *Authentic Metaphysics in an Age of Unreality*, Second Edition (New York/Bern: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1993), p. 88, footnote 35; and *Divine Infinity in Greek and Medieval Thought*, p. xiv, footnote 2.

113 See footnote 54.

110 Leonine ed., I, c. LXI, p. 57.

111 *Ibid.*, p. 56.

to God or even that the soul *is* God on a lower level? Is Albert's metaphysics a monism of light?

We shall begin with the first question, which concerns the nature of Albert's epistemology, by reviewing the elements of Thomas' epistemology contained in our treatment of his *Summa Contra Gentiles*.

Aquinas begins his examination of human intellection with the observation that a thing known by a human person does not exist in the intellect substantially. Rather, the *species* or actuation #a₃ caused by the external thing must be in the intellect as that by which the intellect comes to be formally in act, an actuation which pre-cognitively unites the knower with what is known. This actuation is the formal determination of the knower's cognitive powers (i.e., external senses, internal sense and recipient intellect) occurring in the knower but caused by the external object. Understanding thus remains connected to the thing known insofar as the content of the *species* (actuation #a₃) is identical with the content of the thing known. When the recipient intellect is brought into act by an actuation a₃, it efficiently causes intellection itself, which is either a concept or judgment by which the intellect knows the material existent.

How does Aquinas utilize his explanation of human knowledge in his theory of the beatific vision? He acknowledges that for a human person to know God in the beatific vision, the recipient intellect must be brought into act by an actuation #a₃. If the intellect is to have knowledge of the divine essence itself, that essence must serve as the actuation #a₃ (or *species intelligibilis*) in the beatific vision of the human intellect. But because the possible intellect is not naturally capable of efficiently causing knowledge of the divine essence (actuation #b₃), it must be strengthened, a function performed by the *lumen gloriae*, a grace that causes the human intellect to participate in God's own power of knowing.

Let us observe that these epistemological requirements for human knowledge of the divine essence itself in the beatific vision are in accord with Thomas' understanding of truth, God and the human person. How so? The first and most proper definition of truth for Thomas is the correspondence between knower and known as occurs through actuation #a₃. God *is* first truth because in God there is perfect correspondence of knower and known, for

God knows all things through the divine essence itself. Because the ultimate end of any intellectual creature is the contemplation of truth itself, which is God, it is most fitting that the human intellect have as its ultimate end the contemplation of God through an actuation #a₃ which is none other than the divine essence itself.

In contrast, rather than holding that the created intellect must be assimilated to the divine essence through an actuation a₃ or *species*, Albert denies the need for a *species* in the beatific vision because what is seen is light, which he says is visible *per se*.¹¹⁴ He recognizes however that the created intellect must be assimilated to God in some manner in order that knowledge in the beatific vision terminate in God and not in something intermediate. This assimilation of knower to known occurs through light (the *lumen gloriae*) which acts not only on the intellect but on the entire soul, which it makes *be* light. Indeed, Albert in Key Text D never distinguishes between the agent and recipient intellects, leaving open the possibility that for him there is no real distinction between agent and recipient intellect, a theory embraced (at least implicitly) by Hugh of St. Victor before him and later by Scotus. Hence, whereas Thomas' explanation of the beatific vision in *Summa Contra Gentiles* is concerned primarily with how God can become the form of the created intellect *without* the creature undergoing substantial change, Albert seems to hold that in order to know the light which is God, the soul must *be* that light. These factors, together with the fact that for Albert every intellection requires a divine illumination,¹¹⁵ lead to the conclusion that although Albert sometimes employed the terminology of the peripatetics, his theory of knowledge is predominantly neo-platonic in character.

This brings us to the second question: is Albert a monist (as was, for example, Pseudo-Dionysius, the primary influence on

¹¹⁴ Thomas would perhaps agree that light is visible *per se* but might add that because of the nature of the human person and their faculties of knowing we know light through an actuation #a. Albert's theory regarding light seems more concerned with the nature of God as light than with what conditions would be necessary for a human person to know God. Does he emphasize God as light because his position is a monism in which to be real is to be light?

¹¹⁵ See above footnote 54.

Albert)¹¹⁶ who holds that to be real is to be light? Again, as a contrast let us turn to Aquinas, for whom God is first and foremost *esse* and not light. What information can the *Summa Contra Gentiles* furnish regarding Thomas' metaphysics?

The most obvious metaphysical concern for Aquinas (in SCG III, 51) is that in the beatific vision the creature must not be thought to be substantially united to God, for otherwise the creature would not remain creature and God would undergo change. Why is this an important concern? Perhaps because for him God is *esse*. Whose proper effect in creation is the actual existence of the creatures He makes and sustains and which are really distinct from and other than God.¹¹⁷ Consequently the highest perfection of any creature is its existence itself (and not some or other essence). Perhaps Thomas' keen awareness of existence itself as the component or perfection making creatures be real was also what made him see the need to ensure in his theory of the beatific vision that that same perfection (i.e., a creature's actual existence) not be destroyed through assimilation to God. Moreover, because God is *esse* He involves no potency and therefore could not undergo change of the type that would occur if a creature were substantially united to God. Again one can see that Thomas' explanation of the divine essence serving as the actuation #a₃ of created intellects in the beatific vision flows coherently from his own metaphysical position of God as *esse* (and consequently, also of God as Truth).

In fact Thomas, who was concerned with safeguarding the distinction between creature and creator¹¹⁸ early in his *Summa*

Contra Gentiles (Book One, chapter 26), names four¹¹⁹ reasons why some theologians erroneously hold that God is the formal being of all things. The first is that certain authors (whom Thomas does not name) misinterpret Pseudo-Dionysius' claim that "The being of all things is the super-essential divinity."¹²⁰ From that quotation some infer that God is a constituent of all things, an inference Thomas rejects as a misinterpretation of Pseudo-Dionysius' thought. The Fourth reason Thomas gives explaining why authors hold the erroneous position that God is present as a constituent in all things is that such authors misunderstand the meaning of the expression *God is in all things*. They fail to understand that God is not in all things as a constituent, but rather is present to things as a cause is present to its effect. Thus Thomas concludes that "we do not say that a form is in matter as a sailor is in a ship,"¹²¹ because the forms within matter are constituents of creatures. Does Albert show a similar awareness of that misinterpretation of Pseudo-Dionysius, the primary influence on his thought? Does he show an awareness of the problem involving the claim that *God is in all things*?

Like Thomas' theory, Albert's theory of the beatific vision seems also to flow from his own metaphysics. Consider, for example, that for Albert creation is a process of emanation, i.e., of creatures flowing from their source like water from a fountain or like rays of light from the Sun.¹²² This alone would be reason to believe that Albert's position is a monism of light, but what contributes to the inevitability of that conclusion is the fact that Albert, following Aristotle on this point, has no theory of participation¹²³ by which to ensure the transcendence as well as the immanence of God to creatures. Consequently it appears that God is simply immanent wherever reality is found—that is, God

116 See Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy*, p. 672.

117 See E. Gilson, *Spirit of Medieval Philosophy*, pp. 444-5: "The whole synthesis of creationist metaphysics, including its principle, which is being and its actuality, is contained in the following few lines [from Aquinas]: 'Whatever belongs to a subject *per se* inheres necessarily in that subject, as rationality in man and upward movement in fire. Now the actual production *per se* of any effect whatever belongs to the being in act, for every agent acts as much as it is in act. Therefore every being in act can make something actually to exist. But God is being in act as has been shown (SCG, Book I, ch. 16). Therefore it belongs to Him to produce actual being and to be the cause of its existence.' SCG, II, 6."

118 The first reason Thomas gives for denying that God is the formal being of all things is that if this were so, all things would be absolutely one. Hence, his first concern is to avoid a metaphysical monism.

119 We will only discuss the first, and fourth reasons, which are most relevant to our understanding Thomas and Albert. It should at least be noted, however, that the third reason he mentions is the divine simplicity, a concern which Albert mentions in his first *videtur quod non* in his *Quaestio de Visione Dei in Patria*.

120 Pseudo-Dionysius, *De caelesti Hierarchia*, IV, 1 (PG, 3, col. 177d). Might Thomas have had his own teacher, Albert, in mind?

121 See SCG I, 26, #13 (Pegis ed., p. 133). Note that for Albert the human soul is present in the body as a sailor in a ship.

122 L. Sweeney, S.J., *Christian Philosophy*, pp. 406-410.

123 See footnote 55.

(Light) is alone what is real.

But if that interpretation of Albert's metaphysics is correct, we should also find evidence of his monism in his theory of creation. Such evidence is found, for example, in his *Liber de Causis et Processu Universitatis*, where Albert describes the causality involved in creation as a "flow" of creatures from God, just as a brook flows from a spring and is one with it (inasmuch as both are constituted by the same water). Thus the causality involved in creation is univocal insofar as both God and creatures consist of the same perfection—namely, light.¹²⁴ Here Albert's description of creation as such a flow of creatures from God implies that his metaphysics is monism of light since whatever is, is one and the same light.

To be sure, Albert speaks of creatures as "other" than God and thus one encounters evidence in Albert's texts that his position may not be a monism. However, when explaining the difference between Creator and creature, Albert explains that creatures involve potency whereas God does not. Yet, Albert does not define "potency" as a constitutive factor in things, but rather "potency" is the distance at which a creature stands in relation to its source.¹²⁵ Hence, what differentiates the rays of light which constitute creatures and the light constituting the creator is only the distance creatures have emanated from their source, i.e., God. Here again, Albert's explanation of creation at least implies a monism (of light).

Finally, texts can be found in Albert's *Liber de Causis et Processu Universitatis* wherein Albert explicitly declares that God is formally (or essentially) present as a constituent in whatever He creates: "the agent cause [and here Albert is referring to God as the universal agent intellect Whose light constitutes everything] is

formally present in that which it produces and constitutes."¹²⁶ While a comprehensive study of Albert's texts on creation would be necessary to judge accurately whether he somehow counteracts this tendency to describe reality as a monism of light (in his theory of creation), for now we may conclude from our brief reflections on the *Liber de Causis et Processu Universitatis*, that at least some clear evidence exists to surmise that Albert's metaphysics is a monism of light.

Is there evidence that a monism of light is operative in Albert's theory of the beatific vision in Key Text D? Yes, in *solutio* #I [A] he claims that God is present everywhere and is immanent to all creatures, citing Plato and Augustine as evidence for this view but himself not accepting or even mentioning the theories of participation on which Plato's and Augustine's own theories depend. So how is God present everywhere? Albert describes God as the Universal Agent Intellect and claims that in the realm of intelligible being a divine light is required for every genuine human cognition, and light itself is the act of everything corporeally or intellectually visible (see *solutio* II A and D). Albert's view, then, is that God is light and functions as a universal agent intellect (much like Avicenna's *dator formarum*)¹²⁷ continuously emitting divine rays of light which proceed from Him, and which ultimately return to Him in the beatific vision as light returning to light.

Now let us summarize the previous chapters and then set forth conclusions to our study.

¹²⁴ See Albert the Great, *Liber de Causis et Processu Universitatis* [Hereafter: *de Causis*], (Cologne ed., vol XVII, part 2), Book I, Tractate 4, Chapter 1, p. 42b: "Non enim fluit nisi id quod unius formae est in fluente et in eo in quo fit fluxus, sicut rivus ejusdem formae est cum fonte a quo fluit et aqua in utroque est ejusdem speciei et formae Similiter enim idem est fluere quod univocae causare." Excerpt from L. Sweeney, S.J., *Christian Philosophy*, p. 406.

¹²⁵ See L. Sweeney, S.J., *Christian Philosophy*, p. 409, who refers to Albert the Great, *de Causis*, II, 1, 14, 78b; I, 4, 8, 55d; II, 2, 5, 98cd; II, 2, 14, 107bc; and II, 4, 1, 156ab as texts affirming Albert's theory of potency as distance.

¹²⁶ Albert the Great, *de Causis*, II, 2, 29, 122d: "Causa agens formaliter est in eo quod agit et constituit." Cited in L. Sweeney, *Christian Philosophy*, p. 347.

¹²⁷ See E. Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy*, p. 214: "Below the sphere of the moon is the sublunary world, with its four elements, its common matter and the unending succession of its forms. This is the reason why sublunary beings are ceaselessly coming to be and passing away. The various influences exercised upon matter by celestial bodies have for their effect that certain portions of matter are fittingly disposed to receive certain forms. Below the separate Intelligence that presides over the sphere of the moon there is another one ceaselessly radiating all possible forms and causing them to exist in proportionate matters, or to be known by intellects. In this sense it can be called 'Giver of Forms' [*dator formarum*]."

See also L. Sweeney, S.J., *Christian Philosophy*, p. 349, who directs the reader to *de Causis*, II, 2, 21, 115a-d, where Albert speaks of the universal agent intellect as *plena formis* and refers to both Plato and Avicenna.

Chapter Six

Retrospect

Overview

This study of St. Albert the Great's theory of the beatific vision began with the aim of discovering his reaction to the first proposition condemned at Paris in 1241 and again in 1244—namely, “the divine essence itself will not be seen by either a man or an angel,” and its corresponding affirmation “that God in His essence or substance will be seen by angels and all the saints, and it is seen now by all glorified souls.”¹ The proclamation that the very essence of God is seen in the beatific visions of the angels and blessed in Heaven leaves unexplained how that essence is seen by those finite intellects. For example, is the divine essence seen only as power with the result that what God is remains unknown to creatures in their beatific visions?² Or is the vision of God caused by divine light uniting the creature to God, Who functions as the efficient cause of the beatific vision, and Who, as True Light³ is visible *per se*?⁴ Or does the divine essence itself function as the actuation #a₃ of creatures' recipient intellects in the beatific vision, while He efficiently strengthens those intel-

1 See ch. 1, footnote 1.

2 See the following paragraph for one author holding this position. St. Albert, in his first attempt at explaining the beatific vision in *Quaestio de Visione dei in Patria*, is primarily concerned with the efficient capacity of the created intellect to cause the vision of the divine essence *in patria*.

3 See *John* 1, 6–9.

4 This is Albert's own interpretation and will be considered in depth below.

lects through the grace called the *lumen gloriae*?⁵ In view of such possible interpretations, this study traced in chronological order the key texts in which Albert offers his various explanations of the functions of the divine essence and created intellects in the beatific vision.

Chapter One: Introduction

Precisely *how the divine essence can be known by created intellects in the beatific vision* is a question whose philosophical importance is made evident by a brief review of those theologians holding the condemned proposition prior to 1241—namely, Hugh of Saint-Cher, Guerric of St. Quentin, and Alexander of Hales. For example, Hugh defined “divine infinity” as “incomprehensibility,” and therefore he can be interpreted as holding that the divine essence cannot be seen because of the nature of the divine essence (i.e., infinite and incomprehensible) and also because of his equation of intelligibility with determination and finitude.⁶ Albert’s own Master at the University of Paris, Guerric of St. Quentin also held that the divine essence would not itself be seen but rather God’s power⁷ would be the object of saints’ and angels’ beatific visions—a view he retracted following the condemnation.⁸ And Alexander of Hales, who claimed that God is inaccessible light, likewise can be interpreted as denying that the divine essence itself is ever seen in the beatific vision.⁹

What is evident, even after briefly reviewing those three interpretations of the beatific vision, is that each theory of the beatific vision implicitly or explicitly draws from the theolo-

5 The position of Aquinas, as found, for example in *Summa Contra Gentiles*, III, 51–53 and *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 12, articles 5 and 6.

6 See ch. 1, “Introduction”, p. 1 and L. Sweeney, S.J., *DI*, ch. 16, 354.

7 As we shall see below the importance of power or the efficient capacity to cause knowledge plays a crucial role in Albert’s theory of angelic locution and in his theory of the beatific vision. This may be one sign of the influence Guerric had on Albert during the brief period that he was his master at Paris.

8 See ch. 1, footnote 1.

9 *Ibid.*, p. 6.

gian’s epistemology, metaphysics and theory of human nature. For Hugh, for example, where intelligibility is wedded to finitude, a God Who is infinite cannot but be incomprehensible and unknowable, particularly with regard to a finite intellect. But because Hugh was writing prior to the condemnation of 1241, he was seemingly unaware of the problem of how the divine essence itself would be seen in the beatific visions of angels and saints and so never gave further explanation. Guerric, however, was so strongly influenced by the condemnation that he retracted his previous position in deference to the proposition affirming that the divine essence itself will be seen, although it is difficult to ascertain whether this retraction was attended also by a change in his own metaphysical position.¹⁰ Last, Alexander’s definition of God as “inaccessible light” attests to neo-platonic metaphysical influence,¹¹ perhaps that of Pseudo-Dionysius, from which flows a theory of the beatific vision in which the divine essence cannot itself be seen. Why does Albert’s theory of the beatific vision reach the opposite conclusion if he, like Alexander, was heavily influenced by the writings of Pseudo-Dionysius? One reason may be that Albert had the benefit of the Parisian Condemnation of 1241 when he wrote on the beatific vision, whereas Alexander (in his early writings) did not. Moreover, Alexander ultimately changed his theory of the beatific vision to conclude that the divine essence is seen by the blessed in heaven and, in fact, helped to write the

10 Because of a lack of availability of his writings.

11 For a concise and accurate explanation of what constitutes “neo-platonism” see Leo Sweeney, S.J., *Christian Philosophy: Greek, Medieval, Contemporary Reflections* [hereafter: *Christian Philosophy*], (New York/Bern: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1997), pp. 398–99, where “neo-platonism” is defined as a monism possessing three essential traits—namely, it posits a transcendent One/Good as the primal reality with the result that both being and becoming are unreal and unity alone (or the One) is real; it grants the existence of beings other than the One, but which are identical to the One insofar as they are real, and thus are not really distinct from the One; and it describes two types of causality operative in reality—spontaneous emanation from the One and return to the One through contemplation and (ultimately) through complete identification with the One. If Albert is a neo-platonist, might we also expect that his theory of the soul’s return to God involves a complete identification of the soul with God in the beatific vision?

condemnation. These brief reflections on Albert and Alexander suggest that perhaps there is nothing intrinsically contradictory in holding the neo-platonic view that *reality is an all-perfect One whose emanations are arrayed in descending levels of perfection* and holding that *the divine essence itself is seen in the beatific vision*. However, such a view of reality may affect a theologian's account, for example, of the assimilation of the created intellect to the divine essence in the beatific vision, as well as their account of creation, intellection, and so forth.

Manifestly an author's (in this case, a theologian's) metaphysics, understanding of the nature of God and of the human person, and epistemology provide the context and (to a large extent) the content of his or her theory of the beatific vision. Therefore when an author such as Albert presents his own theory of the beatific vision, he presents not only the revealed theological issues he endeavors to explain, but also—at least implicitly—his philosophy, which grounds the intelligible account of those aspects of the beatific vision available to human reflection and thought. Thus, although Albert is concerned with explaining an article of faith (to be more precise, the position affirmed to be true in the first proposition of the Condemnation of Paris of 1241 is not merely a matter of faith but was also considered by some philosophers and theologians to be a philosophically inevitable conclusion)¹²—that the divine essence will be seen in the beatific vision—his explanation rests on data obtained from reflection on experience and is therefore

12 That the ultimate end of intellectual creatures is the direct contemplation of the divine essence itself is not, strictly speaking, a matter of faith alone, since it can be attained with recourse only to natural reason, as Aquinas indicates in his *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics*: "The third reason [why all people naturally desire knowledge] is that it is desirable for each thing to be united to its source, since it is in this that the perfection of each thing consists Now it is only by means of his intellect that man is united to separate substances, which are the source of the human intellect ... [and] it is for this reason too that the ultimate happiness of man consists of this union." St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics*, trans. John P. Rowan (Notre Dame, IN: Dumb Ox Books, 1995), p. 3. Yet evidently many (e.g., Hugh of St. Cher, Gueric, Alexander—and quite few before them) did not reach this conclusion and so it became necessary for the Bishop of Paris to make an official statement of the correct position.

philosophical.¹³

Therefore what is truly at issue in the foregoing study of Albert the Great's theory of the beatific vision is not only how he explains a created intellect's vision of the divine essence, but also what implications does his rational explanation of this theological doctrine have for an understanding of his philosophy?¹⁴

13 Thomas's SCG III is another example of how the proof for the existence of and nature of the beatific vision can be demonstrated from reason without the inclusion of content from faith (regarding Aquinas' proof see above ch. 5, pp. 99–100). The condemnation of 1241 and its strong affirmation in its first proposition may have acted as the event causing Thomas' and Albert's reflections, but those reflections themselves use data obtained from concrete experience as their evidence and are therefore philosophical in nature. Indeed, in SCG III, 25 Thomas furnishes 13 arguments demonstrating that the ultimate end of intellectual creatures must be knowledge of the divine essence and none of his demonstrations rely on content from revelation or faith. He goes on (in chapters 26–50) to demonstrate that beatitude does not consist in bodily or worldly pleasure, nor in knowledge of separate substances (as Aristotle held), nor in any knowledge occurring *in via*. Rather, Thomas concludes in SCG III, 51, beatitude must consist in knowledge of the divine essence itself. Whether Thomas arrived at his conclusion regarding the beatific vision solely through natural reason remains problematic since clearly he had knowledge of the 1241 condemnation and also of sacred scripture (e.g., *Matthew*, 5, 8: "Blessed are the single-hearted, for they shall see God.")

14 One possible interpretation of Albert's texts on the beatific vision is that his explanation is simply negative theology which denies (under the influence of the 1241 condemnation) that anything comes between the created intellect and God in the beatific vision, and which does not positively affirm anything about the nature of (or factors involved in) that vision. But if this were so, that is, if Albert's theory of the beatific vision were merely a piece of negative theology, how would we make sense of his use of the analogies of vision and of light in his explanations? I propose that Albert affirms that *God is light* and that he uses that affirmation to rationally explain how the divine essence is seen by created intellects. That affirmation enters into the very content of the premises of his explanation (namely—God is light and therefore the vision of His essence does not involve any external light, to cite one example) and therefore cannot be described as negative theology. Moreover, if Albert were primarily concerned with the difficulty of meaningfully naming God, we would find clear evidence that this was so, for example, in the *videtur quod non's* he includes surrounding each Key Text. Instead we find Albert's first concern (at least, the concern he most often mentions first in the *videtur quod non's*)

Let us begin to answer those questions by first summarizing the insights into his theory of the beatific vision furnished by the four Key Texts.

Chapter Two: Key Text A

In his initial treatment of the beatific vision Albert refers almost *verbatim* to the first proposition of the condemnation of 1241, stating that the divine essence will indeed be seen through the divine essence itself and not through a *species*. That statement issues into two questions: first, what does Albert mean by *species*; and second, how is the divine essence seen if not through a *species* as, for example, Aquinas holds?¹⁵

In reply to the first and epistemological question, Albert provides what appears to be an Aristotelian account of human knowing.¹⁶ He explains (*solutio* #d) that from the part of what is seen a *species* is received in the possible intellect and determines (in an as yet unexplained manner) one's knowledge of something. At the same time the light given by the divine light to the agent intellect performs the two-fold function of giving content to the *species*¹⁷ and directly and efficiently strengthening and illuminating the possible intellect. While his account of the *species* and the possible intellect is somewhat in accord with Aristotle's own position, Albert's description of the agent intellect's function clearly is not. How so? Because rather than the agent intellect acting directly on the phantasm to produce an actuation # a3, in Albert's view the agent intellect acts not on the phantasm but on the *species* itself by giving it content and thus makes it actually intelligible; and also on the possible intellect, which the divine light of the agent intellect efficiently strengthens.¹⁸

regards how the divine essence, which is simple, can cause diverse visions in diverse beatified intellects.

15 See ch. 5, p. 100.

16 For an interpretation of Aristotle's epistemology see Appendix: L. Sweeney, S.J., *Christian Philosophy*, ch. 21, "Preller and Aquinas: Second Thoughts on Epistemology," pp. 528–38.

17 And for Albert, the only thing actually visible is light itself.

18 See ch. 2, p. 18 where, in his *solutio* to the *Quaestio de Visione Dei in Patria*,

This last statement implies that for every act of genuine human knowing there must be an accompanying divine illumination strengthening the possible intellect to efficiently cause knowledge, an element of Albert's epistemology that marks a departure from that of Aristotle and Aquinas.¹⁹ But does Albert share their definition of *species intelligibilis*? No, because for him the *species* has no intelligible content except from the divine light itself. Rather the content in the *species* itself as a determining factor which limits the light of the agent intellect, comes from divine illumination. Thus what is known through the *species intelligibilis* is not the external object but is the light of the agent intellect limited in a particular way by the *species* residing in the possible intellect.²⁰

Albert writes that the "agent intellect ... has both the power of an intrinsic [*re* content] and extrinsic [*re* efficient strengthening] light, because it makes what is intelligible only potentially to be intelligible in act, and it also illumines the possible intellect by strengthening it in its act of seeing."

19 For corroboration of this interpretation see E. Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, (New York: Random House, 1955), p. 671, footnote 10: "A text of the *Commentary on the Sentences* clearly shows that Albert added a divine illumination over and above the natural light of the agent intellect. In order to know, man needs 'a more abundant light than that of the agent intellect, such as a beam of the divine light or of an angelic revelation.' In short, in a sense, every true cognition presupposes a sort of grace," *Sent.*, I, 2, 5." Gilson adds that Albert never retracted this doctrine, which he considered his own, but which Albert himself associates with the doctrine that nothing is seen except in the divine light (as *per* Augustine and Pseudo-Dionysius) and with Avicenna's claim that even for habitual knowledge the created intellect must be illumined by uncreated light.

For a similar interpretation of Albert's theory of intellection see L. Kennedy, "The Nature of the Human Intellect According to St. Albert the Great," *The Modern Schoolman* 37 (1960): 120–37 and "St. Albert the Great's Doctrine of Divine Illumination," *The Modern Schoolman* 40 (1962): 23–38.

20 See L. Kennedy, "The Nature of the Human Intellect," pp. 136–7: "Averroes held: (a) that the agent intellect directly perfects and illumines the possible intellect; (b) that the agent intellect and the intelligible constitute one intelligible object; (c) that the agent intellect can become *man's* form after the possible intellect has been perfected by intelligibles; (d) (implicitly) that the role of the intelligible species is merely to differentiate the agent intellect's light. St. Albert accepted all of these teachings and added: (a) that an intelligible is simply the light of the agent intellect seen in a certain way; (b) that the agent intellect contains in itself all intelligibles in an undivided simplicity; (c) (explicitly) that the role of the species is merely to differentiate the

Having explained Albert's use of the term "*species*" it remains to consider how the divine essence itself is seen in the beatific vision if not through a *species*? He tells us (*solutio* #f) that the light of glory strengthens the created intellect so that it can see the divine essence directly and without the determination of a *species*, a vision which needs no external light (e.g., as a book in a dark room needs a reading lamp) to be seen, because what is seen is light, True Light according to John I, 6–9, and is visible *per se*. Moreover, light is the act of everything visible, that is, whenever something is intellectually or sensibly seen, what is seen is nothing but light determined in one way or another (by a *species* if the vision is in this life and by the divine essence and the will²¹ of God Himself in the beatific vision). Hence it seems that the light of glory will act directly on the possible intellect, strengthening that intellect to see True Light which is God.

Albert even gives us an example of an intellect that directly knows the divine essence (that of Christ) through Whom he presents this enigma—the Word as Christ sees the divine essence because Christ, as Word, is the divine essence.²² So whereas Albert was found in the preceding paragraph to omit any explanation of how the created intellect is assimilated to the divine essence in the beatific vision (which is explained in Aquinas' theory *via* the actuation #a₃ or *species*), here he presents the following paradigm: in order to know the divine essence, one must *be* the divine essence, as is true of Christ. Christ is the True Light and so He (the human intellect of Christ) can know the divine essence itself.²³

Consequently even in his earliest effort Albert reveals ele-

agent intellect's light; (d) that the agent intellect is its light (thus explaining *how* the agent intellect can become the form of the possible intellect)."

21 See, ch. 2, p. 29 where Albert says: "God does not present Himself to all in an equal fashion but to each as He wills and therefore they praise Him in diverse ways insofar as they are illumined concerning diverse features in the divine essence in their seeing."

22 See *ibid.*, p. 24.

23 Again, this is not to say that Christ's human intellect was beatified *in via*, but rather affirms that Christ's human intellect had some knowledge of the divine essence because Christ possessed a divine and a human nature which are united in the Word.

ments of his theology, epistemology and metaphysics that (as we shall see) he relies on in each of his attempts to explain the beatific vision. His primary description of God as light, the theory that light itself is the act of every visible object, the description of an agent intellect which is always in need of divine aid and which itself, as divine light, provides the content of knowledge and strengthens (through illumination) the possible intellect itself—all of these factors play familiar roles in Albert's explanations of the beatific vision across the span of his lengthy career.

Chapter Three: Key Text B

Not long after writing the *Question of the Vision of God in Heaven* Albert made a second effort to explain the beatific vision in *De Resurrectione*, completed by Summer, 1246. What developments did his theory of the beatific vision undergo during that brief period? Three in particular merit further consideration. First, in his answer to *how the beatific vision differs from other visions* Albert draws a crucial distinction between knowing *what* God is and having an awareness *that* God is. Second, he explains how the creature is assimilated to God in the beatific vision and is thereby enabled to know God. Third, he reintroduces the word *species*, only now he claims that the divine essence is seen through a *species* (in contrast to his theory in the first key text) which may be the divine essence itself.

Let us begin with Albert's distinction between knowing *what* God is and knowing *that* God is, which aims at demonstrating that although created intellects know *that* God exists and may even know something of what He is, they do not comprehend the divine essence, which is infinite and incomprehensible. Thus he quotes Augustine and Damascene as authorities who also hold that in the beatific vision we attain an initial awareness of God's being but in no way do we comprehend the divine essence, which is known by no creature through that creature's own power.²⁴

24 See ch. 3, p. 38.

The claim that no creature knows God through its own power brings us to the second development in Albert's theory—namely, his explanation of how the created intellect is assimilated to the divine essence so that it may know God immediately. In the *videtur quod non* at issue here²⁵ Albert is given two choices: either the created intellect will be substantially assimilated to God (and thus will no longer remain a creature) or the divine essence will be seen through created likenesses which are not the divine essence itself. Albert's response (in #I) is that God is in fact present essentially in the created intellect and contains the intellect. How so? Albert allows Hugh of St. Victor to speak for him on this difficult question—in the same way that a light falling on a physical body creates a single illuminated object, likewise the blessed see God Who is true light and they become one with that light.²⁶ As a result of this illumination and assimilation beatified souls can efficiently cause the beatific vision.²⁷

Albert's selection from the two choices given in the *videtur quod non* to which he is replying is that God is substantially present to and is one with the creature in the beatific vision, in the same way that light is substantially present to and one with an illuminated surface.²⁸ Hence Albert leaves us with this dilemma:

25 See ch. 3, p. 41.

26 In Hugh's words (see ch. 3, p. 42), "So also God is our light and is true light and rational souls that are clean and pure conceive that light itself and from the fact that (they conceive that light) they are made luminous. They are not an image of that light by the fact that they are, but by reason of the fact that they are luminous because of the light, just as the light itself is luminous." Therefore souls illumined by the Light of Glory become that Light and thus share (insofar as it is God's will) in the divine power to know the Light which is God Himself.

27 See ch. 3, p. 42.

28 Albert's Key Text C reaffirms this interpretation as we shall see below in our summary of it. Moreover, Albert's theory of angelic locution confirms the interpretation that the creature must be substantially united to God for vision of the divine essence to occur. How so? According to F. J. Kovach's "The Enduring Question of Action at a Distance in St. Albert the Great," in *Albert the Great: Commemorative Essays*, eds. F. J. Kovach and R. W. Shahan (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980), pp. 218–9, for one angel to speak with another nothing is required except that the one angel wills to reveal something of itself to another. How is this possible? One necessary factor is that

either God is not seen in the beatific vision or those who see God in the beatific vision do so at the price of their own substance being assimilated to the divine substance. If Albert chooses the second option the consequence is that final goal of every rational creature is to exist no longer as a creature and instead to become completely, substantially united to God in the beatific vision. Do the blessed and angels see the divine essence only if they become one with that essence? His answer is affirmative.²⁹

But perhaps Albert's new use of the term *species* (the third development mentioned earlier), which he now applies to the divine essence itself,³⁰ will avert his theory of the beatific vision from those dire consequences. How so? Because he claims that insofar as the beatific vision is not enigmatic or symbolic it is said to occur through a *species*. Why? Because here the word "*species*" refers to the divine essence as the principle for knowing *what* God is.

each angel is an intellectual light, and so is intelligible by its very nature. In addition, each angel, because it is light, possesses a natural ability to know everything intelligible. Consequently, in Albert's theory of angelic locution nothing (i.e., no *intelligible species* or other actuation) is transmitted from one angel to the other. Therefore, angelic locution is possible due to *will* (one angel must will that another see it), *nature* (each angel must be intelligible light) and *power* to know (each angel has a natural power to know everything intelligible because it is itself intelligible light).

29 This interpretation is further confirmed by Albert's statement (see above ch. 3, p. 44) that beatified souls "will have returned to the pristine dignity of the divine image according to which they were made ... [and] will see God face to face ... when [they] are exalted above everything." Is Albert here implying that each beatified soul will substantially be reunited with the divine exemplar by which it was created, particularly since he explicitly names as a condition for face to face vision of God that a creature be exalted above everything, i.e., above every creature—a status reserved for God alone? One possible reply is that Albert is only implying that a creature will be elevated above what is proper to creatures—namely, mediate knowledge of God. However, that fact Albert specifies that a *beatus* is "elevated above every creature," and not "elevated above a creature's natural intellectual power" goes against that reply. Moreover, Albert relies on the substantial unity of creature and creator to explain the content of what is known in the beatific vision—God is essentially present as a constituent of the creature and can therefore be known in the beatific vision without the need for any further assimilation (as, for example, occurs through actuation #a₃ in Thomas' account).

30 See ch. 3, pp. 45–46.

Is Albert here saying that the divine essence acts as the actuation #a₃ of the created intellect and becomes the intelligible form of the intellect, which then can efficiently cause the beatific vision? No, because in his solution (#V) to the question *how the beatific vision differs from other visions* he explains that although we require a *species* for all other knowledge, the knowledge of the divine essence in the beatific vision occurs without a likeness through the light of glory. Hence it seems that here Albert uses the term *species* to refer to the content of the illumination which God Himself is willing for each beatified person to see. Therefore *species* can be said of God insofar as its content is God Himself determining my cognition of Himself by willing the content of certain illuminations.

In fact, Albert's description of the *lumen gloriae* itself comes only after a lengthy explanation of the manner in which various graces (all of which are illuminations) perfect the soul. What is his explanation? Those illuminations strengthen the intellect efficiently to achieve wisdom, counsel, understanding, prudence and they unite the soul to God. For example, the light/grace of prudence perfects the intellect not only by joining it to God precisely insofar as God is the source and reason for all virtuous acts (and not, for example, insofar as God is, say, wise or triune), but also by efficiently strengthening that intellect to know God as the source and reason for all virtuous acts. Consequently the grace of prudence is an illumination which makes the intellect *be* one with God (in a limited and therefore intelligible manner) and which therefore perfects the intellect so that it may actually become prudent. If the soul were not united to God through an illumination limited and determined by the divine will, the intellect would be unable to have any determinate knowledge of God (Who is incomprehensible and without any limits). But since the graces of which Albert speaks all unite the soul to God through the content of determinate illuminations, they also efficiently perfect that soul by making God's power present there in a likewise determinate manner. Hence when Albert says that "insofar as the beatific vision is without symbol and enigma it is through a *species*" he means only that the will of God determines the contents of the illumination each person receives and not that the

divine essence acts as the actuation #a₃ of the intellect.³¹

Finally, what is his description of the light of glory? It is a light given to a spouse which "completes the most beautiful joining of lover to beloved." And like the other graces mentioned above, this light substantially unites the intellect to God in a manner determined by the divine will, thus strengthening the intellect efficiently to know God Who is the very light that the created intellect has become and the intellectual power that the creature therefore possesses.

Will this interpretation be further supported by Albert's texts on the beatific vision? In answering let us next reconsider Key Text C from his commentary on Lombard's *Sentences*.

Chapter Four: Key Text C

Albert's theory of the beatific vision in the third key text is characterized by his preoccupation with Lombard's concept of clarity.³² The clarity of a beatified intellect's view of the divine essence is the result of the illumination received from that essence. The greater the illumination, the greater the clarity of vision. In addition, Lombard says that to see the divine *species* is to know and possess God and to share in the divine life itself.

What is Albert's comment? He holds that clarity is not merely a characteristic of vision but rather clarity pertains to the very substance of the soul. Through intellectual vision the light of God permeates the entire soul to glorify it—namely, to empower it to have beatific vision. To illustrate this opaque statement he provides this example—clarity is substantially infused into the

31 Here, as in Albert's explanation of angelic locution, we find three factors necessary to see the divine essence: (1) God must *will* for a creature to have vision of Himself; (2) the creature must *be* intelligible light (which means that the creature must *be* God, even if such being is somehow limited by God's will); and (3) the creature must possess the *power* to cause vision of the divine essence, a power accounted for by the creature's illumination and assimilation to God through the Light of Glory which, because it substantially makes the creature one with God also invests the creature-now-united-with-God with a divine power to know.

32 See ch. 4, pp. 65–66.

soul like a light which would be taken into the body through the eyes with the result that the entire body would thereby become illumined (and transparent, or clear).³³ Indeed, Albert there concedes that the soul's [intellectual] darkness arises both from sin and from the fact that it was created from nothing and is mutable.³⁴ Therefore two remedies are required if a soul is to see God in the beatific vision.³⁵ Is the illumination and clarity of the soul Albert's two-fold remedy for the soul's darkness?

The following excerpt from Albert's *solutio* (Key Text C) provides his answer:

One can say that God is in the soul differently in Heaven than God is present here in this world in the soul and in all else. [Why?] Because in Heaven He is in the intellect by the light of glory and fills the entire soul and pours eternal life into the soul, according as God is the object [and content] of beatitude, as was said above [in Lombard's text]. And by reason of that clarity the soul is immediately turned towards God, not by receiving anything from God which is other than what He Himself is. But as the soul is united in one spirit to God, so in that manner it will understand Him. And therefore for this kind of understanding a formal assimilation by a *species* is not necessary when God is substantially present within.³⁶

Here Albert reaffirms that the light of glory does not act as an actuation #a₃ of the recipient intellect but rather fills the entire soul and pours eternal life into it. The result is that the soul is made one with God by becoming the content of the very light which is God Himself present through the *lumen gloriae*. The soul thus united to God as light which is visible *per se* can know God Who is light and this capacity for knowing Albert identifies with "clarity." Therefore it seems that the *lumen gloriae* does perform a two-fold function. It unites the creature to God and (as a consequence of that unity) it empowers the soul to see the divine essence.

33 See ch. 4, pp. 65–66.

34 See ch. 4, p. 65.

35 Those two remedies correspond for Aquinas to the divine essence acting as the actuation #a₃ of the created intellect and also its providing the *lumen gloriae*. For Albert those remedies seem to be the soul's becoming one with God and thus becoming efficiently capable of seeing what God Himself reveals to them.

36 See ch. 4, p. 69.

But Albert continues in his *solutio* to describe the roles of the various factors involved in the beatific vision by claiming that in Heaven

that incomprehensible light of the deity which is God Himself is united to the agent intellect and thus it is substantially poured out upon the entire soul. And in this way the soul will be filled by God Himself, Who is the soul's beatitude.³⁷

Thus in the beatific vision the creature's agent intellect is united with the *lumen gloriae*, that is, with God Himself, Who thus substantially fills the entire soul and Who is the soul's beatitude. Again it seems undeniable that for Albert the soul must be substantially united to God in the beatific vision in order for that vision to occur.

Moreover, Albert's claim that the *lumen gloriae* is united to the agent intellect is directly at odds with Aristotle's account of intellection. How so? Because the function of the agent intellect for Aristotle is to abstract the universal and intelligible actuation #a₃ from the phantasm caused by a sensible thing as content-determining object.

But for Albert God's essence (which is intelligible in itself) neither causes a phantasm in the human knower nor requires the abstractive function of the agent intellect. Here again we discover that for him the functions of the agent intellect are to provide the content of the intelligible light which constitutes *what is known*, and efficiently to strengthen the intellect to cause knowledge with the help of the content of divine illumination which illumines the possible intellect itself. Nowhere in this Key Text C does Albert suggest that the divine essence must become the actuation #a₃ of the intellect, perhaps because his neo-platonic metaphysics do not necessitate such an actuation.³⁸

37 See ch. 4, pp. 69–70.

38 See L. Sweeney, S.J., *Christian Philosophy*, ch 16, 406–410. Another possibility: Albert doesn't mention the intelligible *species* or actuation #a₃ because he wishes to place *nothing* between the created intellect and God in his theory of the beatific vision. While it is true that Albert wished to place *nothing* between creature and creator in the beatific vision, one reason to refuse such a limit on our interpretation is that

Chapter Five: Key Text D

In the final Key Text we compare St. Albert's theory of the beatific vision with that of his celebrated student St. Thomas in order to more precisely understand Albert's thought. That comparison is informative because it identifies the three crucial factors both authors deem necessary for a created intellect to know God Himself in the beatific vision—first, the divine essence itself must be *what* is seen and, secondly, it must somehow be immediately *united* with the created intellect; thirdly, the intellect, due to its weakness, must also be *strengthened* by God in order to actually know Him. The comparison shows us how each author's explanation of those three factors emerges from his own metaphysical and epistemological concerns. Thus let us summarize Albert's and Thomas' accounts in Chapter Five of the three factors underscored above.

Let us begin with Albert's explanation of *what* is seen in the beatific vision. When asked, "What is knowing God 'face to face' [in the beatific vision]?" he concedes:

It seems that this [knowing God face to face] is to know by means of the essence and immediately, because Augustine says in his book *De Trinitate*³⁹ while treating Genesis 32, 30: "I have seen the Lord face to face," that face is nature, inasmuch as the Son "did not cling to His equality with the Father [but emptied Himself to assume the condition of a slave,]" according to *Phillipians*, 2, 6. Therefore to see God face to face is to see God in the unity of the divine nature of the three persons.⁴⁰

when directly confronted with the question *how the created intellect is assimilated to God in the beatific vision*, Albert's reply (found in Chapter Three, part III, above) is that "God is in the soul essentially and intimately and containing it." Therefore, no actuation #a₃ is needed because God is already substantially present to created intellects. Moreover, Albert's description of creation as emanation and the absence of a theory of participation in his texts suggest that God is essentially present to created intellects as a constituent of the creature and not as an efficient cause is present to its effect (as Thomas holds). Hence, Albert's theory of the beatific vision (at least) implies that his metaphysics is a monism in which reality is equated with light.

39 St. Augustine, *De Trinitate*, bk 2, ch. 17, n. 28 (PL 42, 863; CC 50, p. 117, v. 6–7).

40 See ch. 5, p. 76.

That account of *what* is seen by created intellects in the beatific vision is quite clear: God Himself is seen in the unity of the divine essence of the three Persons. Evidently Albert is here following in the footsteps of St. Augustine⁴¹ and of those who held that *God Himself will be seen by the blessed in Heaven*,⁴² the first proposition affirmed to be true in the Condemnation of 1241.

Next, what is Albert's account of the second factor—the immediate *union* of the created intellect with the divine essence (which accounts for the content of the creature's vision)? He affirms the immediacy of the beatific vision (as in the passage quoted above) by giving multiple meanings to "medium." If "medium" means "vestige" or "reflection" or "*species intelligibilis*" or "something hindering vision" then God is not seen through such media in the beatific vision.⁴³ But if medium means "a cooperating medium" then the beatific vision does require such a medium. Is the cooperating medium an actuation #a₃ caused by the divine essence itself?

In reply let us first see how Albert defines "cooperating medium" (*i.e., medium coadiuvans*). He claims that the cooperating medium

from the part of the one seeing, [is] the clarity of the eye and the correct position of the humors and eyelids and figures and intersecting lines which intersect the spheres and the circles of the lids of the eyes and other such factors perfect the eye to see without hindrance. [B3] But these last two are not properly called media, but rather the acts and perfections of the one seeing and what is seen.⁴⁴

Through that analogy of corporeal vision Albert explains that the medium from the part of the one seeing is the healthy and unhindered eye itself. And while one might expect that in the beatific vision what corresponds to the eye in Albert's analogy is

41 To whom Albert frequently refers. For one example, see ch. 5, p. 80, footnote 20.

42 See ch. 1.

43 See ch. 5, pp. 84–87.

44 See ch. 5, p. 84, #B.

the recipient intellect,⁴⁵ instead what corresponds to the eye is the entire soul.⁴⁶ Therefore the union of the created intellect with God in the beatific vision occurs through an actuation of the entire soul. But what is the nature of that actuation uniting the knower and known?

First, it is not a *species intelligibilis* caused by the divine essence itself.⁴⁷ Instead, the union of the created intellect with God occurs through the light of glory, the content of which is God Himself. This light unites the soul with God just as light illumining any surface becomes inseparable from and one with it. Hence Albert explains the assimilation of knower and known through the light of glory, the content of which illumines the entire soul and makes it one with the divine light, which is God Himself.

That assimilation helps Albert explain how a creature, whose natural intellectual capabilities are insufficient for seeing the divine essence itself, efficiently causes the knowledge of God that results from its assimilation to the divine essence through the content of the *lumen gloriae*. Why so? Because the soul is strengthened by that light of glory. Let us examine that response in detail.

Albert has already shown that the only medium involved in the beatific vision (which cannot properly be called a "medium" but is both an *act* and *perfection* of the knower) is the soul itself. Indeed he calls that medium a "cooperating medium" and uses as his example the eye itself (when healthy, properly disposed, unhindered). But no one, Albert claims, sees anything without a

45 Why would one have such an expectation? Because in corporeal vision it is through the eye itself, which receives the light, that one sees—not through an actuation of one's entire body. Likewise in intellectual vision one would expect that it is the recipient intellect which receives intelligible light and not the entire soul. These reflections on corporeal vision provide occasion to discuss the role of the body in Albert's theory of the beatific vision. Albert himself does not address the body's role in the beatific vision. I would only add that if indeed his is a monism of light, any reality the body involves would itself be identified with light. Therefore there would be no inherent contradiction in identifying the light which constitutes the creature's body and soul with (emanations of) the divine light. Nor would it be necessarily contradictory to say that a creature is one with God in the beatific vision.

46 See ch. 5, p. 87, #G.

47 See ch. 5, pp. 85–86, #D.

cooperating medium on the part of the soul of the one knowing.⁴⁸ He explains: eyes are required for corporeal vision and the soul's eye or intellect is required for intellectual vision.

Then Albert adds a second function to a cooperating medium on the part of the knower. Besides *actually being the knower* (e.g., in corporeal vision it is the eye, in intellectual vision it is the intellect) the light of glory strengthens the knower through habits. For scientific knowledge the intellect must be perfected by the habit of scientific thinking. For a gratuitous vision, one needs the habits of grace. And for the beatific vision one needs to be perfected by the habits of glory and happiness.⁴⁹

How shall we interpret those remarks from Key Text D? The content of the light of glory performs a two-fold function in the beatific visions of creatures. First, it assimilates them to the divine essence and makes the entire soul be one with God. In this sense, the soul, which has become the light of glory, is the cooperating medium required from the part of the knower in the beatific vision. And it is in this sense that the light of glory itself becomes the *medium coadiuvans* from the *part of the knower* and becomes the *act* and reality of the soul.

Once assimilated to God by the content of the light of glory, the soul is prepared to be strengthened or *perfected* through the *habits* of glory and happiness—the second function of the cooperating medium *from the part of the knower*. Because the soul has no natural power for knowing the divine essence directly, Albert holds that the soul must be substantially united to God so that it may also be perfected by His habits of glory and happiness and thereby to possess God's own power to know.

How does Albert's theory compare with Aquinas' explanation of the same three factors—namely, the divine essence itself must be *what* is seen and must somehow be immediately *united* with the created intellect, which, due to its weakness, must also be *strengthened* by God? On the first point they agree: the divine essence itself is *what* is seen in the beatific visions of

48 See ch. 5, pp. 86–87, #F.

49 *Ibid.*

angels and saints in Heaven.⁵⁰ But it is here that their agreement ends.

In his account of how the created intellect is assimilated to God in the beatific vision, Aquinas is quite clear: the divine essence itself is not only what is seen, but it also functions as the very actuation #a₃ of creatures' recipient intellects.⁵¹ This actuation is not an actuation which substantially unites the creature to God (as is the case for Albert, for whom God is Light). God does not become the substantial form of the creature but rather He becomes the intelligible form of the recipient intellect by which that intellect knows what God is. Thomas' explanation is thus grounded in his theory that God is His *esse* and therefore *is* Truth, which is the object and goal of every intellect.

Thirdly, Thomas' explanation of how creatures can efficiently cause knowledge of the divine essence in the beatific vision is similarly straightforward. Created intellects require the light of glory, a grace by which they come to participate in God's own power to know (without thereby becoming God) and which therefore efficiently strengthens the possible intellect to cause actuation #b₃—knowledge of the divine essence itself.⁵²

In conclusion, Thomas' explanation of the beatific vision follows from his position that to be real is to actually exist. God is His existence and, because truth corresponds to being, God is Truth. God can thus act as the intelligible form of a creature's recipient intellect in the beatific vision, without constituting a new nature, a function He performs because as Truth He is the final goal of every intellectual creature. He can likewise strengthen such intellects by allowing them to participate in His own power of knowing without thereby substantially uniting the entire creature to God.⁵³ Therefore the highest perfection of a created intellect is to be united to God as to Truth itself and to thereby share in God's own happiness, which is contemplation of Himself. In this scenario a creature's own reality, its own existence and nature remain intact.

50 *Ibid.*, p. 76 and p. 100.

51 *Ibid.*, p. 100.

52 See ch. 5, pp. 100–101.

53 See Aquinas, SCG III, 53, especially #6.

For Albert God is Light. He is the source of everything through His continuous outpouring of illuminations that proceed from Him (in neo-platonic emanation) in creation and return to Him in the beatific vision. This neo-platonic monism of light cannot adequately incorporate Aristotelian epistemology and consequently although Albert uses the terms "agent" and "possible" intellects and "*species intelligibilis*," he is obliged to define these terms so as to accommodate them to his own metaphysical monism. Thus for Albert *species* is merely a limiting or determining factor as to the content of what is known whereas what is actually known and thus provides the content of knowledge is light entering the mind through the creature's own agent intellect (itself a light) strengthened by angelic and divine illuminations. Also, the agent intellect acts not only through *species*, which determine the content of the agent intellect's light, but also acts on the recipient intellect itself, which it strengthens through illumination. As a consequence of Albert's eclectic neo-platonism, the final goal of intellectual creatures is their return to their source in the beatific vision in which they actually become solely light by becoming one with the God Who is the True Light.

A Final Comparison: Albert and Bonaventure

It is evident from the comparison of St. Albert and St. Thomas that although they sometimes use the same terminology, they hold divergent views on the nature of God and the human person in their theories of the beatific vision, which consequently also differ greatly. And while I suggest above that St. Thomas' theory is rather more coherent and satisfactory in its explanation of the beatific vision, St. Albert was by no means alone in describing God primarily as Light under the neo-platonic influence of such authors as Plotinus, St. Augustine, Pseudo-Dionysius, Avicenna and others. Therefore let us study one last theory of the beatific vision, that of St. Bonaventure, whose thought will illumine Albert's position not because of the radical differences between them, but instead because of their striking similarities.

How shall we proceed? Let us introduce this brief study of

Bonaventure's theory of the beatific vision by first providing biographical data on him and by giving the rationale for choosing *The Journey of the Mind to God* as the text to be studied. Next, we shall examine two contexts, the first of which reveals crucial elements of St. Bonaventure's metaphysics and, secondly, the general character of his epistemology. Thus prepared, we shall study Bonaventure's theory of the beatific vision textually and shall conclude with summary and conclusions by drawing attention to the similarities between these two philosophical and theological giants of the thirteenth century.

Introduction to Bonaventure⁵⁴

St. Bonaventure was born in Bagnoregio, a small town in central Italy, in 1217. He was sent to study in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Paris in 1234, at the age of seventeen. In 1243 (approximately the same time Albert came to study at the University of Paris) Bonaventure entered the Franciscan Order, studying under Alexander of Hales, to whom he was greatly devoted, until 1245. As bachelor from 1250 until 1252 he lectured on Lombard's *Sentences*, after which he was incepted as Master in theology in 1253 or 1254. He taught in Paris until 1257 at which time he was elected minister general of the Franciscan order, a position he maintained until his death in 1274.

Early into that seventeen-year period as minister general St. Bonaventure wrote (probably beginning at the end of 1259) *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* (*The Journey of the Mind to God*) which was inspired by his meditation on a spiritual vision had by St. Francis. Bonaventure describes the origin and nature of *The Journey of the Mind to God* thus:

It happened that, thirty-three years after the death of the Saint [Francis], about the time of his passing, moved by a divine impulse, I withdrew to Mount Alverno, as to a place of quiet, there to satisfy the yearning of my soul for peace. While I dwelt there, pondering on certain spiritual

54 For my introduction see Ewert Cousins, trans., *Bonaventure: The Soul's Journey into God; The Tree of Life; The Life of St. Francis*, [Hereafter: *Soul's Journey*] (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), "Introduction," pp. 2-10.

ascents to God, I was struck, among other things, by that miracle which had happened in this very place to the blessed Francis, that is, the vision he received of the winged seraph in the form of the Crucified. As I reflected on this marvel, it immediately seemed to me that this vision might suggest the rising of Saint Francis into contemplation and to point out the way by which that state of contemplation may be reached. The six wings of the seraph can be rightly understood as signifying the six progressive illuminations by which the soul is disposed, as by certain grades or steps, to pass over to peace through the ecstatic transports of Christian wisdom.⁵⁵

Contigit ut nutu divino circa Beati ipsius transitum, anno trigesimo tertio ad montem Alvernae tanquam ad locum quietum amore quaerendi pacem spiritus declinarem, ibique existens, dum mente tractarem aliquas mentales ascensiones in Deum, inter alia occurrit illud miraculum, quod in praedicto loco contingit ipso beato Francisco, de visione scilicet Seraph alati ad instar Crucifixi. In cuius consideratione statim visum est mihi, quod visio illa praetenderet ipsius patris suspensionem in contemplando et viam, per quam pervenitur ad eam. Nam per senas alas illas recte intelligi possunt sex illuminationum suspensiones, quibus anima quasi quibusdam gradibus vel itineribus disponitur, ut transeat ad pacem per ecstaticos excessus sapientiae christianae.⁵⁶

By Bonaventure's own account, *The Journey of the Mind to God* is his own interpretation of St. Francis' vision of a six-winged Seraph as symbolizing the stages of the soul's ascent through illumination to God in Whom the soul rests in the beatific vision itself. Consequently this work provides rich material for understanding Bonaventure's theory of the beatific vision and its similarities to Albert's own theory.

Hence let us next examine the first section of his *Prologue* to *The Journey of the Mind to God* as a context for understanding Bonaventure's thought on the beatific vision of the blessed in Heaven.

55 St. Bonaventure, *The Journey of the Mind to God* [hereafter, *Mind's Journey*], trans. Philotheus Boehner, (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1993), p. 1.

56 Bonaventure, *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, in *Tria Opuscula—Seraphici Doctoris S. Bonaventurae: Breviloquium, Itinerarium Mentis in Deum, et De Reductione Artium ad Theologiam* [hereafter: *Itinerarium Mentis*], Editio quinta cum critica editione collata, (Quaracchi: Ex Typographia Collegii S. Bonaventurae, 1938), pp. 290-291.

First Context: *The Journey of the Mind to God, "Prologue"*

Bonaventure begins his account of the soul's ascent to God with the following petition:

In the beginning, I call upon the First Beginning [*principium*], From Whom all enlightenment flows, the *Father of Lights*, from Whom is *every best and perfect gift*, that is, upon the Eternal Father through His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, that, through the intercession of the most Blessed Virgin Mary, mother of the same God and our Lord Jesus Christ, and through that of blessed Francis, our guide and father, he *may enlighten the eyes of our mind to guide our feet into the way of that peace which surpasses all understanding*.⁵⁷

In principio primum principium, a quo cunctae illuminationes descendunt tanquam a *Patre luminum*, a quo est *omne datum optimum et omne donum perfectum*, Patrem scilicet aeternum, invoco per Filium eius, Dominum nostrum Iesum Christum, ut intercessione sanctissimae Virginis Mariae, genitricis eiusdem Dei et Domini nostri Iesu Christi, et beati Francisci, ducis et patris nostri, *det illuminatos oculos mentis nostrae ad dirigendos pedes nostros in viam pacis illius, quae exsuperat omnem sensum*.⁵⁸

What is the movement of thought in that context? Bonaventure petitions God, Who is the first principle from whom everything good or perfect flows as illuminations from the Divine Light which is God. What is his request of God and St. Francis? That they enlighten the eyes of the mind so as to guide him to the peace which surpasses understanding, i.e., the beatific vision.

Three items in that movement of thought call for brief

57 Bonaventure, *Mind's Journey*, "Prologue," p. 1. The italicized portions refer respectively to the following Scripture texts. *James*, 1, 17: "Every worthwhile gift, every genuine benefit comes from above, descending from the Father of the heavenly luminaries, who cannot change and is never shadowed over." *Ephesians*, 1, 18: "May He enlighten your innermost vision, that you may know the great hope to which He has called you, the wealth of His glorious heritage to be distributed among the members of His Church." *Luke*, 1, 79: "To shine on those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace." *Phillipians*, 4, 7: "The God's own peace, which is beyond all understanding, will stand guard over your hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus."

58 Bonaventure, *Itinerarium Mentis*, p. 289.

comment. The first is that Bonaventure begins the "Prologue" with a prayer requesting illumination. Why does he begin in that manner? He explains that

Dionysius, in his book, *Mystical Theology*,⁵⁹ wishing to instruct us in the transports of the soul, opens first with a prayer. Let us, therefore, also pray and say to the Lord, our God: *Lead me in your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth; let my heart rejoice that it may revere your name*.⁶⁰ Ideo Dionysius in libro de *Mystica Theologia*, volens nos instruere ad excessus mentales, primo praemittit orationem. Oremus igitur st dicamus ad Dominum Deum nostrum: *Deduc me, Domine, in via tua, et ingrediar in veritate tua; laetetur cor meum, ut timeat nomen tuum*.⁶¹

Under the admitted influence of Pseudo-Dionysius, then, Bonaventure begins with a prayer so as to receive divine illumination regarding the soul's ascent to God.

This reference to illumination calls attention to the second item needing clarification in Bonaventure's "Prologue"—namely, his description of God as first principle and as the Father of Lights from Whom everything good and perfect comes, since God is Light and is the source of all light.

Bonaventure's use of the word *principium* suggests that he is considering God in relation to creatures. How does God function as *principium* or, in Christian terms, as creator? He is the Father of Lights from Whom all lights descend as rays of light emanating from an illuminating source. By identifying God with Light, assigning Him the role of first principle, and describing what He produces (namely—every "good and gift") as illuminations, Bonaventure outlines what appears (at least in this very limited sketch) to be a neo-platonic monism of light, perhaps due in part to the influence of Pseudo-Dionysius.⁶²

Of course, for the accuracy of that conclusion we must also examine his description of the nature of creatures, which were identified above as illuminations descending from God, the

59 The reference is to the *Mystical Theology*, ch. 1, v. 1.

60 Bonaventure, *Mind's Journey*, ch. 1, p. 5.

61 Bonaventure, *Itinerarium Mentis*, p. 294.

62 See footnote #10 regarding neo-platonism. Regarding Pseudo-Dionysius see Etienne Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, (New York: Random House, 1955), pp. 81–85.

Father of Lights. Are creatures really distinct from God? In answering, Bonaventure asserts that in our ascent to God we must start at the bottom, "setting the whole visible world before us as a *mirror* through which we may pass over to God."⁶³ This description of creatures as reflections of divine light in a mirror plays an important role throughout

The Soul's Journey into God [which] expresses the Franciscan awareness of the presence of God in creation; the physical universe and the soul are seen as mirrors reflecting God and as rungs in a ladder leading to God. Bonaventure expresses here, in his own way, Francis' joy in the sacrality and sacramentality of creation, and in so doing, he captures an essential element in Franciscan spirituality There is a natural link between the Franciscan attitude toward material creation, as sacramentally manifesting God, and the Franciscan devotion to the incarnation as the fullness of this manifestation.⁶⁴

Accordingly, creatures are the rays of light emitted by the Father of Lights as reflections of those mirrored illuminations. Hence, Bonaventure sees all of creation as sacramentally manifesting God, whose sacred light is what is reflected in the mirror of creation. In Bonaventure's own words,

The greatness of things also ... clearly portrays the immensity of the power, wisdom and goodness of the Triune God, Who, uncircumscribed, exists in all things by His power, presence and essence.⁶⁵

Magnitudo autem rerum ... manifeste indicat immensitatem potentiae, sapientiae et bonitatis trini Dei, qui in cunctis rebus per *potentiam*, *praesentiam*, et *essentiam* incircumscribitur existit.⁶⁶

God, whose essence is Light, exists therefore in all creatures not only by power and presence, but also as light: indeed as the very light which the creature itself *is*— because the creature is merely a reflection of divine light. Consequently his position appears to be a monism of divine light. And although the claim that creation is a manifestation of God's sacred and sacramental presence in all

63 Bonaventure, *Mind's Journey*, ch. 1, #9, p. 8.

64 Ewert Cousins, "Introduction," to *Soul's Journey*, p. 13.

65 Bonaventure, *Mind's Journey*, ch. 1, # 14, p. 9.

66 Bonaventure, *Itinerarium Mentis*, p. 301.

things suggests that creatures are valuable and important in themselves, the fact that creatures *are* reflections of divine light suggests that creatures are valuable and real only insofar as they are identified with the divine light itself and not in themselves. Will that interpretation be supported by Bonaventure's epistemology?

The answer is to be found in the second context which takes up his theory of human knowledge in Chapter Two of *The Journey of the Mind to God*.

Second Context: "On Contemplating God in His Vestiges in the Sense World"

Chapter Two contains the second context where Bonaventure explains the second stage in the soul's ascent to God—namely, the contemplation of God in His vestiges in this world. All physical things, he explains,

are vestiges in which we can perceive our God. For, since the perceived species is a similitude generated in the medium and then impressed on the organ itself, and through this impression it leads us to its starting-point, that is, to the object to be known, this process manifestly suggests the Eternal Light begets from Itself a Likeness, a coequal consubstantial, and coeternal Splendor. We can perceive that He Who is the *image of the invisible God* [Col. 1, 15] and *the brightness of His glory and the image of His substance* [Hebrews, 1, 3], Who is everywhere by His first generation like an object that generates its similitude in the entire medium, is united by the grace of union to the individual of rational nature as the species is united with the bodily organ, so that through this union He may lead us back to the Father, as to the Fountainhead and Object. If, therefore, all knowable things must generate a likeness of themselves, they manifestly proclaim that in them, as in mirrors, can be seen the eternal generation of the Word, the Image, and the Son, eternally emanating from God the Father.⁶⁷

Haec autem omnia sunt vestigia, in quibus speculari possumus Deum nostrum. Nam cum species *apprehensa* sit similitudo in medio genita et deinde ipsi organo impressa et per illam impressionem in suum principium, scilicet in obiectum cognoscendum, ducat; manifeste insin-

67 Bonaventure, *Mind's Journey*, ch. 2, #7, pp. 13–14.

uat, quod illa lux aeterna generat ex se similitudinem seu splendorem coaequalem, consubstantialem et coaeternalem; et quod ille qui est *imago invisibilis Dei et splendor gloriae et figura substantiae eius*, qui ubique est per primum sui generationem, sicut obiectum in toto medio suam generat similitudinem, per gratiam unionis unitur, sicut species corporali organo, individuo rationalis naturae, ut per illam unionem res reduceret ad Patrem sicut ad fontale principium et obiectum. Si ergo omnia cognoscibilia habent sui speciem generare, manifeste proclamant, quod in illis tanquam in speculis videri potest aeterna generatio Verbi, Imaginis et Filii a Deo Patre aeternaliter emanantis.⁶⁸

Here Bonaventure discloses his theory of human knowledge of material things. He explains that in addition to the object of the sense (for example, the thing seen) and the visual organ (the eye itself) there must be a third factor—namely, the content of the *species* impressed on the sense organ. He likens the generation of *species* on the occasions of sense objects to the generation of the Word from the Father.⁶⁹ Although the Word is consubstantial with the Father, as one of the three divine Persons He is really distinct from the Father and the Holy Spirit. In Bonaventure's explanation of human knowledge the fact that we know through a *species* really distinct from the object producing its content is a symbol of the eternal generation of the Son from the Father. Consequently, the creature as such and the knowledge it causes are of relatively little importance. What is important for Bonaventure is that the nature and role of the *species* in human knowledge is a symbol of God the Father's generation of the Son, a generation reflected through the mirror of creatures and which leads us to contemplate God, just as the human embodiment of the Word in Christ leads us back to the Father.

Bonaventure adds another factor to his theory of knowledge when he later claims (citing Augustine as a source for this doctrine) that a human person cannot judge

with certainty except by that Eternal Art, which is not only the form that produces all things, but also the form which conserves and

68 Bonaventure, *Itinerarium Mentis*, pp. 308–309.

69 See L. Sweeney, S.J., *Christian Philosophy*, ch. 21, 527 for additional texts from Bonaventure and a similar interpretation.

differentiates them, for this is the Being that contains the form in all creatures, and is the rule that directs the form in all things.⁷⁰

Et ideo nec certitudinaliter iudicari possunt nisi per illam [arte aeterna] quae non tantum fuit forma cuncta *producens*, verum etiam cuncta *conservans* et *distinguens*, tanquam ens in omnibus formam tenens et regula dirigens, et per quam diiudicat mens nostra cuncta⁷¹

Therefore human knowledge can only occur when the divine ideas, the very forms by which God creates, sustains, distinguishes and directs all things, illumine the human intellect. In fact the first six chapters of *The Journey of the Mind to God* correspond to "the six successive progressive stages of enlightenment to the quiet contemplation [in the beatific vision itself].⁷² Therefore Bonaventure held that all human knowledge requires illumination, i.e., the presence within the soul of the divine ideas by which truth is known.

Without delving further into Bonaventure's epistemology let me conclude my comments on the second context with two remarks. First, he defines a *species* as the content of a medium which represents the object known and impresses itself on the knower. Therefore what is known is not the external object but is the content of the medium itself. Second, *The Journey of the Mind to God* is filled with references to the need for illumination if the soul is to make any progress in its journey, and therefore God, Who is the Father of Lights, must be present to and enlighten the minds of individual human beings in order for them to have any sort of knowledge.

Let us now examine the Key Text itself, in which Bonaventure gives his own theory of the beatific vision.

Bonaventure on the Beatific Vision

Having explained the first six stages of the soul's ascent to God in chapters one through six, Bonaventure in chapter seven explains

70 Bonaventure, *Mind's Journey*, ch. 2, # 9, p. 15.

71 Bonaventure, *Itinerarium Mentis*, p. 310.

72 Bonaventure, *Mind's Journey*, ch. 1, #5, p. 6.

the soul's coming to rest in God in the beatific vision itself.⁷³ His explanation in the Key Text is brief. In the soul's passing over into God

if it is to be perfect, all intellectual activities ought to be relinquished and the loftiest affection transported to God, and transformed into Him.⁷⁴

... si sit perfectus, oportet quod relinquatur omnes intellectuales operationes, et apex affectus totus transferatur et transformetur in Deum.⁷⁵

This text begins with a description of the beatific vision as a "passing over" of the creature to God. What is involved in that "passage?" The creature must leave everything behind, even its highest operations of intellectual activity, so that it can be transferred to and transformed into God.

This transferal and transformation require no clarification but rather clearly indicate that in Bonaventure's theory of the beatific vision a creature is transformed into God not intellectually but therefore substantially. Why so? Because as Fr. Sweeney insightfully observes

Fully real or complete distinctions are rare in his [Bonaventure's] *Weltanschauung*, wherein reality is light. God is supreme light; all creatures—angels, human souls, animals, plants, minerals—participate in the divine light in varying degrees and thus, are also lights, arranged on descending levels of perfection. Human psychological processes ... are all lights, too, as sharings in the divine light. But there is no separation or full distinction (for instance) between sunlight and the light of a candle set outdoors on a clear August day: although they differ, they fuse together and cannot be separated.⁷⁶

Final Comparison

The similarities between the broad sketches of Bonaventure's and

73 That the issue is not merely mystical visions *in via* is demonstrated by Bonaventure's acknowledgement (see Bonaventure, *Mind's Journey*, ch. 7, #6, p. 39) of Exodus 32, 20: "No man shall see me and live."

74 Bonaventure, *Mind's Journey*, ch. 7, #4, p. 38.

75 Bonaventure, *Itinerarium Mentis*, p. 346.

76 L. Sweeney, S.J., *Christian Philosophy*, ch. 3, 70–71.

Albert's theories are apparent. In what follows I will therefore only briefly juxtapose their metaphysics, epistemologies and theories of the beatific vision.

For Albert as for Bonaventure, God is primarily described as Light. In Albert God is called the Universal Agent Intellect who continuously pours forth divine illumination giving reality and intelligibility to everything emerging from Him. Bonaventure describes God as the Father of Lights whose rays of light are the creatures He produces and orders in descending levels of perfection and illumination. Both metaphysical positions are monisms in which to be real is "to be light."

Are those monisms evident in the epistemologies of Albert and Bonaventure? Yes, because for both knowledge is only possible when the created intellect actually becomes the divine illumination required for knowledge of anything. Both reject Aquinas' interpretation of *species* or actuation #a₃ as the intelligible form caused in content by the object used by the agent intellect to actuate the recipient intellect. Instead they hold that for the intellect to know light it must be illumined by and substantially become the content of light.

Finally, both Albert and Bonaventure conclude that creatures must be substantially assimilated to God in order to know Him in the beatific vision, but each has his own explanation. For Albert the light of glory constitutes that substantial assimilation. For Bonaventure subsistent Love constitutes it. Evidently, their positions flow directly from the metaphysical and epistemological theories each holds.

Sadly, the consequence of those theories is that the highest goal of a human being is achieved only by transcending human knowledge and human being. In the somewhat negative words of Pseudo-Dionysius:

But you, my friend, concerning mystical visions, with your journey more firmly determined, leave behind your senses and intellectual activities, sensible and invisible things, all nonbeing and being; and in this state of unknowing be restored, insofar as is possible, to unity with Him who is above all essence and knowledge. For transcending yourself and all things, by the immeasurable and absolute ecstasy of a

pure mind, leave behind all things, and freed from all things, you will ascend to the superessential ray of the divine darkness.⁷⁷

Tu autem, o amice, circa mysticas visiones, corroborato itinere, et sensus desere et intellectuales operationes et sensibilia et invisibilia et omne non ens et ens, et ad unitatem, ut possibile est, inscius restituere ipsius, qui est super omnem essentiam et scientiam. Etenim te ipso et omnibus immensurabili et absoluto purae mentis excessu ad super-essentialem divinarum tenebrarum radium, omnia deserens et ab omnibus absolutus, ascendes.⁷⁸

Conclusion

After our comments on Bonaventure let us return now to Albert. The conclusion that St. Albert the Great is a monist who identifies reality with light helps to clarify his description of the precise functions of the divine essence and created intellects in the beatific vision. But that conclusion comes only after witnessing Albert define creatures as mirrored reflections of light, sensible and intellectual powers as lights, the human soul as a light, form as light, knowledge as illumination (through the intellect's assimilation to light), grace as light, separate substances (angels) as light, and God as the light-source whose emanating rays constitute the very reality of all that is. Even so, the claim that Albert is a monist who identifies reality with light raises numerous philosophical and theological difficulties. For example, how can Albert consistently hold a theory of creation if creature and creator consist of the same light? Clearly he speaks of creatures as different from God, but what constitutes their difference for Albert? Did Albert *the Great* fail to recognize the inconsistencies involved in, for example, holding a theory of creation and a monism of light?

One possible reply is to deny the conclusion that Albert's metaphysics is a monism of light. For example, someone might object that Albert's discussions of the beatific vision are not directly concerned with his theory of reality and so the impli-

77 Pseudo-Dionysius, *Mystical Theology*, I, 1, excerpted from *Soul's Journey*, ch. 7, pp. 114–115.

78 Bonaventure, *Itinerarium Mentis*, p. 347.

cations of his theory of the beatific vision do not extend to his metaphysics. Consequently the conclusion that Albert holds a monism of light need not be taken seriously unless it is shown that Albert's explicit discussions of metaphysics corroborate that conclusion.

But there are two convincing reasons to believe that Albert's discussions of the beatific vision entail genuine expressions of his metaphysics. First, the condemnation of 1241 at the University of Paris affirmed in its first article that the divine essence itself will be seen by the blessed in heaven. This is an astonishing statement because it affirms that a finite created intellect can know the infinite essence of God. But the question remains as to *how* a created intellect can know that essence. It was generally conceded in Albert's time that knowledge can only occur through an assimilation of the intellect and what is known. But by what means does an assimilation to God's essence occur? The answer, already given in the affirmation of the first article of the Condemnation of 1241, is that the divine essence itself (and nothing less, i.e., nothing created) is the means by which God is known to the blessed in heaven. Hence, the issue confronting those theologians discussing the nature of the beatific vision after 1241 was precisely *metaphysical* because it concerned not only the nature of the divine essence, but also the nature of human beings and their knowledge of reality both *in via* and *in patria*. Therefore the metaphysical positions, implicit and explicit, in Albert's theory of the beatific vision are genuine expressions of his theory of reality, wherein he is shown to hold a monism of light.

The second reason to concede that Albert's discussions of the beatific vision entail genuine expressions of his metaphysics is that the proofs he gives for his theory have their foundation in the concrete realities he experienced and drew evidence from. Reflecting upon corporeal vision of material things, Albert equates creatures with lights reflected in a symbolic and mystical mirror. He defines the power to see as a light and the vision that results from that power as lights. He then compares corporeal vision to intellectual vision with the result that again, every important factor involved in intellection, including the person knowing, is defined as a light. Likewise his description of the various gifts of grace identifies grace with light. Finally, when

Albert discusses the beatific vision itself, not only does light account for the assimilation of knower and known, but also for the created intellect's power to know. And it is only because God is light (which is visible in itself) that the essence of God can manifest itself without the aid of a (created) medium. If Albert's discussions of the beatific vision did not involve a genuine expression of his metaphysics it would not be possible for him to explain *any* vision, and certainly not the *beatific vision*.

Another reason one might deny Albert holds a monism of light is that perhaps he never had *any* encompassing and synthetic overview of reality, as, for example, his student Thomas did. As evidence for such an interpretation one might cite the various types of language Albert uses in the various contexts within which he discusses the beatific vision. But on the contrary, the fact that Albert speaks about the beatific vision differently in different texts and contexts helps affirm that his position is a monism of light. Why? Because in *every* text, the one crucial factor that does not differ is Albert's overwhelming preoccupation with light. From his earliest text to his latest, whether the topic be the beatific vision, the trinity, the incarnation or creation, Albert constantly answers epistemological, metaphysical and theological problems through recourse to the nature of light and through the identification of everything real with light. Albert may not have accounted for the apparent inconsistencies between a metaphysical monism of light and the views he was trying to defend, but given his consistent and omnipresent identification of *everything* with light, it seems most unlikely that he can be fairly accused of not having a synthetic overview of reality. Unfortunately, the theory of reality he holds is a monism in which reality is identified with light.

I say "unfortunately" because whenever a metaphysician identifies reality with some essence or other, everything that is other than that essence is unreal and unimportant. Thus, a human person *as such* or a beautiful waterfall *as such* is unreal and unimportant because *as* "human" or *as* "beautiful" or even *as* "being" they are other than light. And one can see this unfortunate influence of Albert's monism in his theory of the beatific vision, wherein the entire soul is assimilated to the divine light and then only knows God's essence through God's power of

knowing. Thus, in Albert's theory of the beatific vision, the role of the human person *as such* is negligible, if not absent.

Albert certainly maintains that creature and Creator will somehow remain distinct in the beatific vision. Likewise he claims that creation results in creatures that are other than God. But can he consistently hold these views? Perhaps the fact that Albert's is a monism of light and not a monism of unity allows him to consistently hold that reality consists only of light but, like light which has many colors and shades and intensities, reality has diverse features accounting for real distinctions, even within a monism. Certainly Albert does not hesitate to make recourse to a metaphysics of light in his explanations of the central articles of the Christian faith he was trying to advance. And perhaps he saw no reason to hesitate.

The *Gospel* of Matthew (5, 8) proclaims: "Blessed are the single-hearted, for they shall see God." St. Albert the Great was single-hearted. He sought and found God, "the true light," everywhere and in everything, in fact, so much so that he neglected to adequately distinguish Creator and creature in his monism of light. Precisely whether and how that monism bears on other areas of Albert's thought remains as a crucial problem for anyone endeavoring to understand the philosophy and theology of this great saint.

Amen

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