

GOD:

HIS KNOWABILITY, ESSENCE, AND ATTRIBUTES A DOGMATIC TREATISE

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

BY

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AUTHORIZED ENGLISH VERSION WITH SOME ABRIDGEMENT AND ADDED REFERENCES

BY

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SECOND EDITION

*TYPED INTO MICROSOFT WORD BY ROBERT ENGLAND
2011*

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED

ST. LOUIS, MO., 1914
PUBLISHED BY B. HERDER
17 SOUTH BROADWAY

FREIBURG (BADEN) B. HERDER	LONDON W.C. 68, GREAT RUSSELL STR.
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NIHIL OBSTAT.

Sti. Ludovici, die 26 Febr. 1914
F. G. Holweck,
Censor Liborum.

IMPRIMATUR.

Sti. Ludovici, die 27 Feb. 1914
+*Joannes J. Glennon,*
Archbishop Sti. Ludovici.

Printed in USA

First edition 1911.
Second edition 1914.

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No table of contents entries found.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO DOGMATIC THEOLOGY

Notion, Rank, and Division of Dogmatic Theology

1. GENERAL DEFINITION OF THEOLOGY. —Dogmatic theology forms an essential part of theology in general, and to define it correctly, therefore, we must have an adequate notion of the latter. Theology, then, generally speaking, is the science of faith (*scientia fidei*).

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

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

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

¹ Cfr. Hebrews 11:1: “*Fides*

² Summa Theol., 12, qu. I, art. 2.

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

transfigured by supernatural faith. It was in this sense that the Fathers⁴ insisted on the proposition: “*Gnosis super fidem aedificatur*,” just as Scholasticism was founded on St. Anselm’s famous axiom, “*Fides quaerit intellectum*.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁵ In Boëth. De Trin., qu. 2, art. 2, ad 7.

⁶ 1 Corinthians 2:9

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

God, the nobler, the sublimer, and the more useful it necessarily is. But can any science lead more directly to God than theology, which treats solely of God and things divine?

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

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

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

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

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

⁸ Romans 12:3.

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

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

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

c) Another division of dogmatic theology, that into *positive* and *Scholastic*, regards method rather than substance. Positive theology, of which our catechisms contain a succinct digest, limits itself to ascertaining and stating the dogmatic teaching contained in the sources of Revelation. Among its most prominent exponents we may mention: Petavius, Thomassin, Liebermann, Perrone, Simar, and Hurter.¹² Thomassin, and especially Petavius, successfully combined the positive with the speculative method. When positive theology assumes a polemical tone, we have what is called *Controversial Theology*, a science which Cardinal Bellarmine in the seventeenth century developed against the so called reformers.

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

The great mediaeval Scholastics, notably St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Bonaventure, treated what are called dogmatic truths as generally known data; — a safe procedure in those days because collections of Biblical and Patristic proofs for each separate dogma were then in the hands of every student.¹⁴ As the most useful instrument for the speculative treatment of dogma, they seized upon, not the Platonic philosophy, but the system elaborated by the great Stagirite. In preferring Aristotle, Scholasticism did not, however, antagonize the Fathers and early ecclesiastical writers, who, as is well known, had a strong penchant for Plato. Both Plato and Aristotle may be said to lean on their common master, Socrates, who had grasped with rare acumen the fundamentals of natural religion, wherefore Socratic philosophy,

¹¹ *Dogmatik*, I, 3; Wilhelm-Scannell, *A Manual of Catholic Theology Based on Scheeben's "Dogmatik,"* I, I sqq., London 1899.

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

¹³ Cfr. J. Kleutgen, *Theologie der Vorseit*, and ed., V, I sqq. Munster 1874.

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

despite its incompleteness, has justly been extolled as the “*Philosophia perennis*.”¹⁵ It cannot be denied, however, that theology in all its branches, owes a wholesome impulse to modern philosophy, which, especially since Immanuel Kant (d. 1804), sharpened the critical spirit in method and argumentation, deepened the treatment of many dogmatic problems, and made “theoretical doubt” the starting point of every truly scientific inquiry. Since the Protestant Reformation threw doubt upon, nay even denied the principal dogmas of the Church, dogmatic theology has been compelled to lay stress upon demonstration from positive sources, especially from Holy Writ. A fusion of the positive with the Scholastic method of treatment was begun as early as the seventeenth century by theologians like Gotti and the Wirceburgenses, and their example has found many successful imitators in modern times (Franzelin, Scheeben, Chr. Pesch, Billot, and others). To the works of these authors must be added the commentaries on the writings of Aquinas by Cardinal Satolli, L. Janssens, and Lepicier. For reasons into which it is not necessary to enter here, the series of dogmatic textbooks of which this is the first, while it will not entirely discard the speculative method of the Scholastics, which postulates rare proficiency in dialectics and a thorough mastery of Aristotelian metaphysics, as developed by the Schoolmen, will employ chiefly the positive method of the exact sciences.¹⁶

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

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

The first part may again be subdivided into two sections, one of which treats of God considered in the unity of His Nature (*De Deo Uno secundum naturam*), the other of the Trinity of Persons (*De Deo Trino secundum personas*). His operation *ad extra* God manifests as Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier, and Consummator. Divine Revelation, so far as it regards the created universe, includes the creation of nature, the establishment of the supernatural order and the fall from that order of the rational creatures—*i. e.*, men and angels. The treatise on the Redemption (*De Verbo Incarnato*) comprises, besides the revealed

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

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

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

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

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

²⁰ Cfr. Kleutgen, *l. c.*, pp. 24 sq.

teaching on the Person of our Saviour (Christology), the doctrine of the atonement (Soteriology), and of the Blessed Mother of our Lord (Mariology). In his role of Sanctifier, God operates partly through His invisible grace (*De gratia Christi*), partly by means of visible, grace-conferring signs or Sacraments (*De Sacramentis, in genere et in specie*). The dogmatic teaching of the Church on God the Consummator, is developed in Eschatology (*De Novissimis*). Into this framework the entire body of special dogma can be compressed.

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

**GOD
HIS KNOWABILITY, ESSENCE,
AND ATTRIBUTES**

PREFATORY REMARKS

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

PART I
THE KNOWABILITY OF GOD
CHAPTER I
HUMAN REASON CAN KNOW GOD

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

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

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

SECTION 1
MAN CAN GAIN A KNOWLEDGE OF GOD FROM THE PHYSICAL UNIVERSE
ARTICLE 1
THE POSITIVE TEACHING OF REVELATION

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

1. THE ARGUMENT FROM SACRED SCRIPTURE.— a) Indirectly the possibility of knowing God by means of His creatures can be shown from Rom. II, 14 sqq.: “*Cum enim gentes, quae legem non habent,³ quae legem non habent, naturaliter ea, quae legis sunt, faciunt⁴, eiusmodi legem non habentes, ipsi sibi sunt lex: qui ostendunt opus legis,⁵ scriptum in cordibus suis, testimonium reddente illis conscientia ipsorum, et inter se invicem cogitationibus,⁶ accusantibus aut etiam defendentibus, in die cum iudicabit Deus occulta hominum secundum Evangelium meum, per Iesum Christum.*—For when the Gentiles, who have not the law, do by nature those things that are of the law; these having not the law are a law to themselves: who shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing

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

² *Sess. III, de Revel., can. i.*

³ ἔθνη τὰ μὴ νόμον ἔχοντα

⁴ φύσει τὰ τοῦ νόμου ποιῶσιν

⁵ ἔργον νόμου

⁶ τῶν λογισμῶν

witness to them, and their thoughts among themselves accusing, or also defending one another, in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.”

The “law” (*lex*, νόμος) of which St. Paul here speaks, is identical in content with the moral law of nature;⁷ the same which constituted the formal subject matter of supernatural Revelation in the Decalogue. Hence, considering the mode of Revelation, there is a well defined distinction, not to say opposition, between the moral law as perceived by unaided human reason, and the revealed Decalogue. When it follows, against the teaching of Estius, that “*gentes*,” in the above quoted passage of St. Paul, must refer to the heathen, in the strict sense of the word, not to Christian converts from Paganism. For, one who has the material content of the Decalogue “written in his heart,” so that, without having any knowledge of the positive Mosaic legislation, he is “a law unto himself,” being able, consequently, to comply “naturally” with the demands of the Decalogue, and having to look forward on Judgment Day to a trial conducted merely on the basis of his own conscience,—such a one, I say, is outside the sphere of supernatural Revelation.⁸

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

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

α) After denouncing the folly of those “in whom there is not the knowledge of God,”⁹ the Book of Wisdom continues (13:5 sq.): “*A magnitudine enim speciei et creaturæ¹⁰ cognoscibiliter¹¹ poterit creator horum videri.¹² ... Iterum autem nec his debet ignosci; si enim tantum potuerunt scire, ut possent aestimare sæculum,¹³ quomodo hujus Dominum non facilius¹⁴ invenerunt?*—For by the greatness of the beauty, and of the creature, the creator of them may be seen, so as to be known thereby. ... But then again they are not to be pardoned; for if they were able to know so much as to make a judgment of the world, how did they not more easily find out the Lord thereof?” A careful analysis of this passage reveals the following line of thought: The existence of God is an object of the same cognitive faculty that explores the visible world,—*i.e.*, human reason. Hence the medium of our knowledge of God can be none other than that same material world, the magnitude and beauty of which leads us to infer that there must be a Creator who brought it forth. Such a knowledge of God is more easily acquired than a deeper knowledge of the creatural world; in fact, absence of it would argue unpardonable carelessness. As viewed by the Old Testament writer, therefore, nature without any extraneous aid on the part of Revelation or any special

⁷ Cfr. Romans 2:21 sqq.

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

⁹ “*In quibus non subest scientia Dei.*”

¹⁰ By hendiadys for “beauty of the creature.”

¹¹ ἀναλόγως

¹² θεωρεῖται.

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

¹⁴ τάχιον

illumination by supernatural grace, furnishes sufficient data to enable the mind of man to attain to a knowledge of the existence of God.

β) We have a parallel passage in the New Testament,—Romans 1:18 sqq., which reaches its climax in verse 20: “*Invisibilia enim ipsius [scil. Dei] a creatura mundi per ea, quae facta sunt, intellecta, conspiciuntur*¹⁵ *sempiterna quoque ejus virtus, et divinitas: ita ut sint inexcusabiles*¹⁶— the invisible things of him [God] from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made; his eternal power also, and divinity: so that they are inexcusable.” In other words:—God, Who is *per se* invisible, after some fashion becomes visible to human reason (νοούμενα καθορᾶται). But how? Not by positive revelation, nor yet by the interior grace of faith; but solely by means of a natural revelation imbedded in the created world (τοῖς ποιήμασιν). To know God from nature appears to be such an easy and matter-of-fact process (even to man in his fallen state), that the heathen are called “inexcusable” in their ignorance and are in punishment therefor “given up to the desires of their heart unto uncleanness.”¹⁷

c) By way of supplementing this argument from Holy Scripture we will briefly advert to the important distinction which the Bible makes, or at least intimates as existing, between popular and scientific knowledge of God. The former comes spontaneously and without effort, while the latter demands earnest research and conscientious study, and, where there is guilty ignorance, involves the risk of a man’s falling into the errors of polytheism, pantheism, etc. We find this same distinction made by St. Paul in his sermons at Lystra and Athens, and we meet it again in the writings of the Fathers, coupled with the consideration that, to realize the existence of a Supreme Being men have but to advert to the fact that nations, like individuals, are plainly guided and directed by God’s Providence. In his sermon at Lystra, after noting that God had allowed the Gentiles “to walk in their own ways,” that is to say, to become the prey of false religions, the Apostle declares that He nevertheless¹⁸ “left not Himself without testimony, doing good from heaven, giving rains and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.”¹⁹ Before the Areopagus at Athens, the great Apostle of the Gentiles, pointing to the altar dedicated “To the Unknown God,” said: “God, who made the world, . . . and hath made of one [Adam] all mankind, to dwell upon the whole face of the earth, determining appointed times and the limits of their habitation, that they should seek God, if happily they may feel after him or find him,²⁰ although he be not far from every one of us: for in him we live, and move, and are.”²¹ In the following verse (Acts 17:29) he calls attention to the unworthy notion that the Divinity is “like unto gold, or silver, or stone, the graving of art, and device of man.” Both sermons assume that there is a twofold knowledge of God: the one direct, the other reflex. The direct knowledge of God arises spontaneously in the mind of every thinking man who contemplates the visible universe and ponders the favors continually lavished by Providence. In the reflexive or metaphysical stage of his knowledge of God, on the other hand, man is exposed to the temptation wrongly to transfer the concept of God to objects not divine, and thus to fall into gross

¹⁵ τοῖς ποιήμασι νοούμενα καθορᾶται

¹⁶ αναπολόγητοι

¹⁷ Romans 1:18, 24 sqq.

¹⁸ καίτοι γε=*nihilominus*

¹⁹ Acts 14:16 DRB/Clementine Vulgate, Acts 14:17 Most modern translations following NA 26/27

²⁰ “*Si forte attrectent eum aut inveniant*”

²¹ Acts 17:24-28

polytheism or idolatry.²² We have, therefore, Scriptural warrant for holding that the idea of God is entirely spontaneous in its origin, but may easily be perverted in the course of its scientific development.²³

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

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

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

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

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

²² Cfr. Wisdom 13:6 sqq.

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

²⁴ ἐνέχυρα τῆς θεοσεβείας

²⁵ *Legat. pro Christ.*, n. 4 sq.

²⁶ *Strom.*, V, 14.

²⁷ *In Hexaëm.*, hom. I, n. 6.

²⁸ διδασκαλεῖον καὶ θεογνωσίας παιδευτήριον

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

³⁰ δόξα ἔμφυτος, ἔννοια ἔμφυτος, πρόληψις φυσικὴ

³¹ χρῆμα οὐ διδακτόν, αὐτομαθές.

³² πᾶσι σύμφυτος λόγος

³³ *De Testim. An.*, c. 2 et 5.

acknowledges God as the maker of this world.”³⁴ Seeking a deeper explanation, several Fathers (*e. g.*, Justin Martyr and St. Basil) have raised the rational soul to the rank of an essential image of the Eternal Logos, calling it a *λόγος σπερματικός*, which irresistibly seeks out and finds God in the universe.

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

The Greek Fathers, who had to combat paganism and the heresy of the Eunomians, generally relied on two arguments as sufficient to enable any man to form a philosophical concept of God; *viz.*, the cosmological and the teleological. Augustine's profounder mind turned to the purely metaphysical order of the true, the good, and the beautiful, to deduce therefrom the existence of Substantial Truth, Goodness, and Beauty.³⁵ This trend of mind did not, however, prevent him from acknowledging the validity of the teleological and cosmological argument. “*Interroga mundum, ornatum coeli, fulgorem dispositionemque siderum, . . . interroga omnia et vide, si non sensu suo tamquam tibi respondent: Deus nos fecit. Haec et philosophi nobiles quaesierunt et ex arte artificem cognoverunt. . . . Quod curiositate invenerunt, superbia perdiderunt.*”³⁶

³⁴ *Ibid Tract. In Ioa.*, 106, n. 4.

³⁵ Cfr. *Confess.*, VIII, 17; *DeLib. Arbit.*, II, 12

³⁶ *Serm.* 141. Cfr. Schiffini, *Disput. Metaphysicae Specialis*, II, 61 sqq. Aug. Taurin. 1888. Copious references from the Greek Fathers will be found in Petavius, *De Deo*, I, 1 sq.— Cfr. also on the whole subject: Van Endert, *Der Gottesbeweis in der patristischen Zeit*, Freiburg 1861; K. Unterstein, *Die natürliche Gotteserkenntnis nach der Lehre der kappadosischen Kirchenväter*, Straubing 1903-4.

ARTICLE 2 THE IDEA OF GOD NOT INBORN

1. THE THEORY THAT OUR IDEA OF GOD IS INBORN.—Several of the Fathers insisted so strongly on the original and spontaneous character of our knowledge of God, that a number of theologians¹ were led to claim Patristic authority for the theory of innate ideas evolved by the famous Descartes. According to the teaching of these theologians, the Patristic concept of God is not based upon a conclusion of human reason (*idea Dei acquisita*), but is inborn (*idea Dei innata*). Our “consciousness of God,” says *e. g.* Kuhn, is but part and parcel of our “self-consciousness,” that is to say, it is “a knowledge of God founded upon His revelation to the human mind.”² It is a plausible enough theory. For as, *e. g.*, Justin Martyr terms the idea of God “ἐμφυτον τῇ φύσει τῶν ἀνθρώπων δόξαν”,—an opinion implanted in the nature of men,³ so also Tertullian teaches: “*Animae enim a primordio conscientia Dei dos est, eadem nec alia et in Aegyptiis et in Syris et in Ponticis*—From the beginning the knowledge of God is the dowry of the soul, one and the same amongst the Egyptians, and the Syrians, and the tribes of Pontus.”⁴

2. REFUTATION OF THIS THEORY.—The theory that the concept of God is inborn in the human mind, cannot stand the test of either philosophy or theology. Without entering into its philosophical weaknesses, we will only remark that aside from the danger of idealism which it incurs, the very possibility of atheism renders this theory improbable. While not perhaps deserving of formal theological censure, it cannot escape the note of “hazardous,” inasmuch as it is apt to endanger the dogmatic truth that the existence of God is strictly demonstrable on rational grounds.⁵ At any rate it can be shown beyond a peradventure that the Patristic teaching of the primordial character of human belief in God, is by no means identical with the theory of Descartes, and cannot be construed as an argument in favor of the proposition that the idea of God is inborn.

a) In the first place, the assumption that it can be so construed does not square with the noetic system of those very Fathers who speak of our knowledge of God as “innate.” Clement of Alexandria, Athanasius, Gregory Nazianzen, Augustine and John of Damascus, uniformly teach that all our concepts, including those we have of God and divine things, in their last analysis are drawn from experience by means of a consideration of the material universe; hence they cannot possibly mean to say that our idea of God is inborn.⁶

b) A careful comparison of all the Patristic passages bearing on this subject shows that the Fathers nowhere assert that our idea of God is innate, though they frequently insist on the spontaneity with which, by virtue of an unconscious syllogism, this idea springs from any, even the most superficial, consideration of nature. What is inborn in our mind is not the idea of God as such, but rather the faculty readily to discover God in His creatures.⁷

¹ Thomassin, Tournely, Klee, Drey, Kuhn.

² “*Ein Wissen von Gott auf Grund seiner Offenbarung im Geiste.*”

³ *Apol.*, II, n, 6.

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

⁵ Cfr. Chr. Pesch, S. J., *Prae lect. Dogm.*, t. II, 3rd ed., Friburgi 1906.

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

⁷ Gregory of Nazianzus, *e. g.*, says: “*Ratio a Deo data et omnibus congenita et prima in nobis lex omnibusque conserta ad Deum nos deducit ex visibilibus*” (*Orat.* 28, n. 6), which is in perfect accord with the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas: “*Dei cognitio nobis dicitur innata esse, in quantum per principia nobis innata de facili percipere*

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

a) The knowableness of God, as taught by Holy Scripture and the Church, ultimately resolves itself into His demonstrability. To question the validity of the ordinary proofs for the existence of God, and to say, as *e. g.* W. Rosenkranz says:⁸ “The so-called metaphysical proofs, which theology has hitherto employed, have one and all failed when put to a critical test,”—is to advocate scepticism and to miss the meaning intended by the Church. If no conclusive argument for the existence of God had yet been found, it would be safe to say that none such exists, and that the case is hopeless. Gregory XVI obliged Professor Bautin, of Strasbourg, to assent to the thesis: “*Ratiocinatio Dei existentiam cum certitudine probare potest*” (Sept. 8, 1840.) Fifteen years later the S. Congregation of the Index ordered Bonnetty to subscribe this proposition: “*Ratiocinatio Dei existentiam, animae spiritualitatem, hominis libertatem cum certitudine probare potest*”⁹ (Dec. 12, 1855.)

b) If we inquire into the nature of the middle term that is indispensable to a valid syllogistic argument for the existence of God, we find that Sacred Scripture and the Fathers agree that we must ascend to God *a posteriori*, i. e., from the material world that surrounds us. This fact alone would explain the distrust which theologians have ever shown towards the *a priori* or ontological argument of St. Anselm.¹⁰ Of the other proofs for the existence of God, it may be noted that two, namely, first, that which from the consideration of possible or contingent beings passes on to the conclusion that at least one necessary being exists; and, secondly, that commonly called teleological, which draws this conclusion from order and beauty in the physical universe, are imposed on us both by Holy Writ and the teaching of the Fathers. Nor, as the example of St. Paul shows,¹¹ can the moral and historical proofs (conscience, providence) be brushed aside as lacking cogency. Whence it appears that these arguments cannot easily be improved, except perhaps with regard to method, and by formulating them with greater precision. Since it is not the object of Revelation to furnish an exhaustive course of proofs for the existence of God, such other arguments as that of St. Augustine based upon the metaphysical essences, and the one drawn from man's desire for happiness, must also be accepted as valid, provided, of course, they do not move in a vicious circle.

c) The *a posteriori* demonstrability of God is confirmed by the great theological luminaries of the Middle Ages. Thus St. Thomas Aquinas, the Prince of Scholastic theologians, teaches: “*Simpliciter dicendum est, quod Deus non est primum quod a nobis cognoscitur; sed magis per creaturas in Dei cognitionem venimus, secundum illud Apostoli ad Romanos (I, 20): Invisibilia Dei per ea, quae facta sunt, intellecta conspiciuntur. Primum autem quod intelligitur a nobis secundum statum praesentis vitae, est quidditas rei materialis.*”¹² That St. Anselm's view, apart from his ontological argument, was in substantial agreement with that of St. Thomas, has been established by Van Weddingen.¹³

possumus Deum esse” (.In Boëth. *De Trin.*, proem., qu. 1, art. 3» ad 6). Cfr. Kleutgen, *Philosophie der Vorzeit*, Abhandl. 1 and 9; Franzelin, *De Deo Uno*, thes. 7; Heinrich, *Dogmat.Theologie*, Vol. III, § 140.

⁸ *Die Prinzipien der Theologie*, p. 30, München 1875.

⁹ Cfr. St. Thomas, *Contra, Gent.*, I, 12.

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

¹¹ Rom. 2:14 sqq.; Acts 14:16; 27:24 sqq.

¹² *S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 84, art. 7

¹³ *Essai critique sur la philosophie de S. Anselme*, chap. 4, Bruxelles 1875. See also Heinrich, *Dogm. Theologie*, Vol. III, § 137; A. König, *Schöpfung und Gotteserkenntnis*, Freiburg 1885; and E. Rolfes, *Die Gottesbeweise bei Thomas von Aquin und Aristoteles*, Köln 1898.

Readings : — Cfr. the compendiums of Hurter, Jungmann, Bautz, Einig, Heinrich-Huppert, Wilhelm-Scannell, and Hunter. — Also, in particular, *Card. Franzelin, *De Deo uno*, ed. 3a, Romae 1883.* — Kleutgen, *De Ipso Deo*, Ratisbonae 1881.— Heinrich, *Dogmatische Theologie*, Vol. III, Mayence 1883.— *Scheeben, *Katholische Dogmatik*, Vol. I, Freiburg 1873.— *De San, *De Deo uno*, 2 vols., Lovanii 1894-97.— *Stentrup, *De Deo uno*, Oeniponte 1878.— *L. Janssens, O.S.B., *De Deo uno*, 2 tomi, Friburgi 1900.— A. M. Lepicier, *De Deo uno*, 2 vols., Parisiis 1900.— Ronayne, S. J., *God Knowable and Known*, 2nd ed., New York 1902.—D. Coghlan, *De Deo Uno et Trino*, Dublinii 1909.— P. H. Buonpensiere, O.P., *Comment. in 1 P. (qu. 1- 23) S. Th. Thomae Aquinatis*, Romae 1902.— Chr. Pesch, S. J., *Prael. Dogmot.*, Vol. II, ed. 3a, Friburgi 1906.—R. F. Clarke, S. J., *The Existence of God*, London 1892.— Of the Scholastics, especially St. Thomas, *Summa Theol.* 1a, qu. 1 sqq. and *Summa contra Gentiles*, 1. I, cap. 10 sqq. (Rickaby, *Of God and His Creatures*, London 1905, pp. 9 sqq.) ; also the treatises of Suarez, Petavius, and Thomassin, *De Deo uno*, and Lessius, *De Perfectionibus Moribusque Divinis*, ed. nova, Parisiis 1881.—The teaching of Franzelin and Palmieri is summarized in English by W. Humphrey, S. J., in “*His Divine Majesty,*” or *the Living God*, London 1897.— Other references in the text.¹⁴

¹⁴ The asterisk before an author's name indicates that his treatment of the question is especially clear and thorough. As St. Thomas is invariably the best guide, the omission of the asterisk before his name never means that we consider his work in any way inferior to that of others. There are vast stretches of dogmatic theology which he scarcely ever touched.

SECTION 2

OUR KNOWLEDGE OF GOD AS DERIVED FROM THE SUPERNATURAL ORDER

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

ARTICLE 1

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

1. STATE OF THE QUESTION.—Both nature and the supernatural order,—the latter even more convincingly than the former,—tell us that there is a God. The arguments which can be drawn from the supernatural order—the fulfilment of prophecies, miracles (in the Old and the New Testament), Christ and His mission, are historical, and therefore appeal most forcibly to the student of history, though scarcely any thinking mind can escape their force.

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

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

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

b) Secondly, there is the person of Jesus Christ. Cfr. Heb. I, 1, 2: “*Multifariam multisque modis o'lim Deus loquens patribus in prophetis, novissime diebus istis locutus est nobis in Filio, quem constituit haeredem universorum, per quem fecit et saecula* — God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke, in times past to the fathers by the prophets, last of all, in these days hath spoken to us by his Son,

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

whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the world.” The Old Testament was plainly a mere preparation for the New. In the person of the Messiah, God appeared bodily on earth. His wondrous conception, His miracles and prophecies, His superhuman teaching, His instituting the Church, His resurrection and ascension, triumphantly prove Christ to be what He claimed to be: the true Son of God. Hence God exists. Historians and philosophers are constrained to acknowledge in the words of the Evangelist (John 1:14): “And we saw His glory, the glory as it were of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” Like the two hands of a clock, universal history, before and after Christ, gives testimony of Jesus: antiquity pointing forward as a “*paedagogus ad Christum*,” while the Christian era points backward to indicate fulfilment. The Incarnation represents the climax and culmination of God’s self-revelation to humankind. Thus Christ is in very truth the axis of the universe and of universal history, the living proof of Theism.²

c) A third argument is derived from the wonderful religious and moral regeneration of the Mediterranean races wrought by the influence of Christianity in the first three centuries of its existence. Oppressed by the “shadow of death,” the Gentiles before Christ walked in the ways of evil and darkness, or, as St. Paul puts it, God “in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways.”³ The fourth century of the Christian era found these same nations radically changed — they had become “a new generation” walking in “the way of the cross,” “burning what they had previously adored.” The bloody persecutions of the Caesars had proved so ineffective in stamping out the new religion, that Tertullian was able to exclaim: “*Sanguis martyrum semen Christianorum*.” Leaving aside all other considerations, from the purely historical point of view alone such a radical transformation of the family, and of economic and political life, the conversion of the masses, and their preservation, even at the risk of life, in a state of moral purity such as the world had never known before, demands an adequate explanation. Where are we to seek for this explanation? Surely not in the circumstances, either extraneous or internal, of the regenerated masses themselves. For both in doctrine and morals Christianity was the antithesis of paganism, and therefore could not possibly have developed from it. All attempts to derive the Christian religion from remnants of Oriental beliefs or the philosophic theories of the Greeks (Stoicism, Neo-Platonism, Philo) have utterly failed. Far from aiding in the regeneration of the corrupt masses under the Roman Empire, philosophy made common cause against Christianity with a fanatical Jewry and a paganism already struggling in the grip of death. Nor did the new religion owe its final triumph to force. The rulers of the mighty Empire, far from favoring Christianity and advancing its spread with the powerful means at their command, turned these engines against it as a deadly foe, and sought to drown the new faith in the lifeblood of its adherents.⁴ It was not until the day of Constantine that a change set in. There is no satisfactory explanation for all this except that a superhuman Being guides the destinies of men and lets the gentle sun of His providence shine upon the weak and the strong alike. Filled with a conviction of this great truth, the unknown author of the Epistle to Diognetus⁵ writes: “*Ista non videntur hominis opera, haec virtus est Dei, haec adventus eius sunt demonstrationes*.”⁶

² Cfr. Didon, *Jesus Christ*, London 1897; Bougaud, *The Divinity of Christ*, New York 1906.

³ Acts 14:15.

⁴ Cfr. P. Allard, *Ten Lectures on the Martyrs*, London 1907.

⁵ *Epist. ad Diogn.*, n. 7.

⁶ Cfr. B. Jungmann, *De Vera Religione*, pp. 197 sqq., Brugis 1871; F. Bole, *Flavius Josephus über Christus und die Christen in den jüdischen Altertümern*, Brixen 1896

ARTICLE 2
THE SUPERNATURAL FACTS AS A PREAMBLE TO
OUR BELIEF IN THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

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

There is another consideration that must be emphasized. While the Revelation made through Jesus Christ, in spite of its demonstrability on rational grounds, does not necessarily compel supernatural faith, but may leave the unbeliever entirely unconvinced, it produces in the mind of him who receives it willingly the act of faith. Inasmuch as, with regard to their contents, the *praeambula fidei* form an essential part of divine Revelation, they enter as a necessary ingredient into this *actus fidei*. From a mere outwork of (subjective) faith they become a part of its essence; what was previously an historic and apologetic certainty, is transformed into the certainty of faith. Nature gives way to the supernatural in the heart of man. Objectively, purely rational demonstration cedes its place to the infallible authority of God's word, while subjectively, a supernatural light instead of the natural light of reason becomes the source of faith.² Like the “preamble” itself, the existence of God becomes a formal dogma, to be embraced and held with the supernatural certitude proper to faith.

2. THE EXISTENCE OF GOD AS AN ARTICLE OF FAITH.—The knowableness of God being an article of faith, His existence must be a dogma *a fortiori*. Although, as Heinrich says,³ supernatural faith is an impossibility unless in the very act of faith itself we believe with supernatural certainty in the existence and veracity of God, inasmuch as a revelation postulates the existence of a revealer; nevertheless, the fact that there is one who reveals constitutes a separate and independent article of the “*depositum fidei*” “*Si quis unum verum Deum, visibilium et invisibilium creatorem et Dominum negaverit, anathema sit*—If any one shall deny one true God, Creator ~ and Lord of all things visible and invisible, let him be anathema.”⁴

a) In his Epistle to the Hebrews, St. Paul declares belief in the existence of God to be an indispensable condition of salvation. Heb. 11:6: “But without faith it is impossible to please God. For He that cometh to God, must believe that He is, and is a rewarder to them that seek Him.” Here belief in the existence of God is coordinated, separately and independently, with belief in the truth that He rewards those that seek Him. Both these truths are based not only on philosophical arguments, but likewise on that supernatural faith which is the foundation of man's justification. “*De hac dispositione [ad justificationem] scriptum est: Credere oportet accedentem ad Deum, quia est et inquiringibus se remunerator sit*—Concerning this disposition it is written: 'He that cometh to God, must believe that He is, and is a rewarder to them that seek Him.’”⁵ The examples of faith which St. Paul gives in Heb. 11:1 sqq., where he concludes with a reference to Christ as “the author and finisher of faith,”⁶ admit of no other interpretation.

¹ Cfr. Schanz, *Apologie des Christentums*, 3rd ed., Vol. II, Freiburg 1905. The English translation of the first edition of this work, while several times reprinted, has not kept pace with the thoroughly overhauled second and third editions of the German original. Recently a fourth edition has begun to appear under the editorship of Prof. Koch of Tübingen

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

³ *Dogm. Theol.*, II, 21.

⁴ *Conc. Vat., Sess. III de Deo, can. 1.*

⁵ *Conc. Trid., Sess. VI, cop. 6.*

⁶ Heb. 11:1 sqq.; XII, a.

b) The Fathers re-echo this teaching of St. Paul, so much so that Suarez⁷ was able to state it as the conviction of the Schoolmen that “*Fide catholica tenendum est, Deum esse.*” We have the most succinct proof for this proposition in the first article of the Apostles' Creed: “*Credo in Deum—πιστεύω εἰς Θεόν.*” The paraphrase which the Vatican Council gives of this article⁸ shows clearly that “God” here means not the first person of the Most Holy Trinity (*i. e.*, the Father), but God in His absolute essence and inasmuch as He is apt to be the object of a sure knowledge attainable by unaided reason. There can be no mistake about this; else how account for the fact that the canons attached to this proposition expressly condemn, not some anti-Trinitarian heresy, but atheism, materialism, and pantheism. If Atheism is a heresy, the existence of God must necessarily be a dogma,—the fundamental dogma upon which all others rest. This explains why, as early as 1679, Pope Innocent XI condemned the proposition: “*Fides late dicta ex testimonio creaturarum similive motivo ad justificationem sufficit*—Faith in the wide sense, that is faith as based upon the testimony of creatures or some similar motive, suffices for justification.”⁹

3. KNOWLEDGE VS. FAITH.— It may be objected that if the natural cognoscibility of God and the necessity of supernatural faith are both supernaturally revealed, these dogmas would seem to exclude each other, inasmuch as no man can know God for certain by his unaided reason, and at the same time firmly believe in Him on authority. At the root of this objection lies the assumption that we cannot know a thing and believe it at the same time, because, what we believe on the authority of another we do not know, and what we know we do not and cannot believe. It is true St. Thomas¹⁰ seems to have held that an evident knowledge of God is incompatible with belief in Him; but Estius confessed himself unable to reconcile this opinion with the teaching of St. Paul in Heb. 11:6; while St. Bonaventura,¹¹ De Lugo,¹² Suarez,¹³ and others, openly defended the contrary. Some theologians, like Cardinals De Lugo and d'Aguirre, interpreted St. Thomas in favor of their own dissenting view.

Whatever may have been the Angelic Doctor's theory as to the subjective compatibility of knowledge with faith, it seems certain that we are not free to doubt the necessity, much less the possibility, of a coexistence of both modes of cognition in the same subject, especially since St. Paul and the Tridentine Council condition the justification of each and every man, whether he be learned or ignorant, upon a belief in the existence of God. The Vatican Council expressly defines both the knowableness of God from the consideration of the physical universe, and the necessity of supernatural faith in God, as dogmatic truths. Hence we must conclude that both modes of cognition can coexist in the same subject without conflicting. Such teaching involves no contradiction, for it does not oblige us to hold that we can know and believe the same truth under the same aspect or from the same point of view. Manifestly the material object of both acts (*scientia — fides*) is the same: “God exists.” But between the formal object of the one and the formal object of the other, there is this essential difference, that rational knowledge depends on the degree of evidence in the argument, while faith flows from the authority of God Himself testifying to His own existence.¹⁴ There is this further difference, that to know God by purely natural means does not require supernatural grace, while faith, on the other hand, is conditioned by the supernatural assistance of the Holy Ghost (*gratia actus fidei*), without which no man can have that belief in God which is necessary for salvation.¹⁵

⁷ *In i. p. S. theol, I, 1.*

⁸ *Cone, Vatican Constit. de fide, 15, c. 1.*

⁹ *Denzinger-Bannwart, Enchiridion, n. 1173.*

¹⁰ *S. Theol. 2a 2ae, qu. 1, art. 5; De Veritate, qu. 14, art. 9.*

¹¹ *In 3 dist., 24, art. 2, qu. 3.*

¹² *De Fide, disp. 2, sect. 2.*

¹³ *De Fide, disp. 3, sect. 9.*

¹⁴ *Cfr. W. Humphrey, S. J., The Sacred Scriptures, ch. XIII, London 1894.*

¹⁵ For a fuller treatment of this point we must refer the student to the treatise on Grace, which is to form Volume V of this English edition of Pohle's dogmatic course.

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

SECTION 3
TRADITIONALISM AND ATHEISM
ARTICLE 1
TRADITIONALISM A FALSE SYSTEM

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

b) In its crudest form¹ Traditionalism asserts that a man can no more think without language than he can see without light,— that without language reason would be dead and man a mere brute. Hence the Creator had to endow man with the gift of speech before He could impress upon his mind the ideas of God, immortality, liberty, virtue, etc; and it was only by means of language that Adam and Eve were able to transmit to their offspring the system of natural religion and ethics based upon these ideas. Hence faith is the foundation not only of supernatural knowledge and life, but likewise of purely human science and reason. De Lamennais,² the inventor of the “*sens commun*” as the supreme criterion of truth, insisted even more emphatically than De Bonald on the necessity of Primitive Revelation, from which alone, he says, all man's religious and moral knowledge is derived. Traditionalism reappears in a somewhat moderated form in the writings of Bonnetty (1798-1879) and P. Ventura (1792-1861).³ Bonnetty admits that human reason is able to deal with the truths at least of the material order independently of language and instruction, but that for the fundamental doctrines of metaphysics and ethics we are dependent on Revelation. Ventura goes so far as to admit that unaided reason can form the basic notions of being, substance, causality, virtue, and so forth, but his Traditionalistic bent moves him to insist that these basic notions must needs remain unfruitful, so far as our natural knowledge of God is concerned, were it not for the aid of language and instruction, that is to say, ultimately, Primitive Revelation. Traditionalism was still further attenuated by the Louvain school of Semi-Traditionalists, whose chief representative, Ubaghs,⁴ expressly admits the revealed teaching that human reason can acquire a knowledge of God from the consideration of the physical universe, though he hastens to offset his own concession by explaining that the full use of reason (in a child) depends essentially on education and instruction in divine things, and that the concept of God which it is the business of education to convey, is derived from the Primitive Revelation given to our first parents in Paradise. This theory is calculated to raise anew the question as to the extent of the cognitive power of human reason, and traces the notion of God back to Tradition as its sole source. Were it not for its admission that reason can *subsequently*, by its own powers, perceive the existence (and essence) of God from nature, Traditionalism would openly contradict itself.

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

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

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

³ *La Tradition*, Paris 1856

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

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

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

Of the different Traditionalist schools only one, that of Louvain, has made an attempt to interpret Sacred Scripture and Tradition in accordance with its teaching. Its representatives endeavored to persuade themselves that the Bible and the Fathers refer to man as he grows up among his fellowmen, and converses with them by human methods, and consequently, when they employ the phrase “natural knowledge of God,” do not mean that concept of God which each individual human being forms anew under the influence of parents and instructors, but that concept which, derived from human instruction and tradition, has its roots in Primitive Revelation and can at most be confirmed and deepened by individual consideration of nature. If this explanation were true, we should have to interpret Wisdom 13:1 sqq., and Rom. 1:20, thus: A man is inexcusable if he does not know God, for the reason that all men derive a knowledge of God from Primitive Revelation and are, besides, able to perceive Him in nature. Is this the sense of Holy Scripture? We are at liberty to assume an elision only when there is reason to think that a writer has omitted something which, being self-evident, did not require express mention. Is the indispensableness of tradition, oral instruction, and Primitive Revelation self-evident in the passages under consideration? Certainly not; hence the sacred writers can not have meant to pass this point over *per ellipsin*. This becomes still plainer when we reflect that the Traditionalist interpretation is a modern innovation, excogitated for the purposes of a philosophical system that was entirely unknown in the past. Nor can the teaching of the Fathers be quoted in favor of Traditionalism. True, the Fathers admit the existence, in Paradise, of a Primitive Revelation upon which the human race is perpetually drawing; but they never regarded this Primitive Revelation as an absolutely necessary instrument of education: they merely advert to it as an accidental fact with which it is necessary to reckon. They insist that the original purity of Primitive Revelation was tarnished among the heathen nations, and that the genuine knowledge of God had to be constantly rejuvenated in the perennial purity of the springs of nature.⁷

Readings : — *Kleutgen, *De Ipso Deo*, p. 1, qu. 1, art 3.— Chastel, S. J., *De la Valeur de la Raison Humaine*, Paris 1875.— Denzinger, *Vier Bücher von der religiösen Erkenntnis*, Vol. I, pp. 149

⁵ *De Magistro*, c. 11.

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

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

sqq., Würzburg 1856.— For a philosophical appreciation of Traditionalism, see Schiffini, S. J., *Disput. Metaphys. Specialis*, Vol. I, n. 338 sqq. ; B. Boedder, S. J., *Natural Theology*, pp. 149 sqq., New York 1891; Jos. Hontheim, S. J., *Theodicaea*, PP. 33 sqq., Friburgi 1893.

ARTICLE 2 THE POSSIBILITY OF ATHEISM

1. DEFINITION OF ATHEISM.—Negative Atheism (Agnosticism, Criticism, Scepticism) holds that the existence of God is “unknowable,” because there are no arguments to prove it. By positive Atheism we understand the flat denial of the existence of a supreme being apart and distinct from the cosmos. Its chief forms are the different varieties of Materialism (Sensualism, Positivism, Mechanical Monism) and Pantheism, which constantly assumes new shapes, and has therefore been justly likened to Proteus of ancient classic mythology. Polytheism and Semi-Pantheism (*e. g.*, the “Panentheism” of Krause) cannot, however, be branded as Atheism. For though both systems logically culminate in the denial of God, their champions in some fashion or other hold to the existence of a supra-mundane and absolute being¹ upon which all other beings depend.

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

a) We must, in the first place, carefully distinguish between atheistic systems of doctrine and individual professors of Atheism. The history of philosophy shows beyond a doubt that there exist philosophic systems which either expressly deny,² or in their ultimate principles virtually exclude,³ the existence of God. It must be noted, however, that by a happy inconsistency the atheistic tendency of these systems often remains more or less latent, inasmuch as their adherents, in spite of atheistic (or pantheistic) premises, seek to uphold a belief in God.⁴

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

b) As we have intimated above, even learned men may, from quasi-conviction, temporarily harbor a species of unbelief; though, of course, this always involves grave guilt. “*Dixit insipiens in corde suo: Non est Deus*—The fool hath said in his heart: There is no God.”⁵ Not scientific acumen nor a desire for truth, but folly is the source and fountainhead of Atheism. In most cases such folly is

¹ The Homeric Zeus, Vedic henotheism, etc.

² Materialism, Pantheism.

³ Scepticism, Criticism.

⁴ Ontologism is an example in point.

⁵ Ps. 13:1. (Ps. 14:1 in most modern translations)

traceable to a corrupt heart, as St. Paul plainly intimates in his Epistle to the Romans, and as St. Augustine⁶ repeats in his commentary on the Psalms: “*Primo vide Mos corruptos, ut possint dicere in corde suo: Non est Deus. . . . Dixerunt enim apud se non recte cogitantes. Coepit corruptio a mala fide, inde itur in turpes mores; inde in acerrimas indignitates: gradus sunt isti*” The psychological process of apostasy from the faith may be described as follows : First a man loses his faith; then comes a period of practical unbelief, nourished sometimes by sensuality, sometimes by pride, until finally he is deluded into theoretical Atheism. Not infrequently moral corruption precedes infidelity as a cause. Cfr. Eph. 4:18: “*Tenebris obscuratum habentes intellectum, alienati a vita Dei per ignorantiam, quae est in illis propter caecitatem cordis ipsorum*—Having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts.”⁷

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

The number of real atheists is impossible to ascertain. It depends on conditions of time, of milieu, of degree and method of education, and on various other agencies. Our age boasts the sorry distinction of being immersed in a flood of Atheism which it may take a social revolution to abate.⁸

Readings: — Segneri, S. J., *L'Incredulo senza scusa*, Venezia 1690.— W. G. Ward, *Essays on the Philosophy of Theism*, 2 vols., London 1884.— Kaderavek, *Der Atheismus*, Wien 1884. — L. v. Hammerstein, *Edgar, or From Atheism to the Full Truth*, St. Louis 1903.— W. M. Lacy, *An Examination of the Philosophy of the Unknowable*, Philadelphia 1883.— A. W. Momerie, *Agnosticism*, London 1889.— Id., *Belief in God*, London 1891.— G. J. Lucas, *Agnosticism and Religion*, Baltimore 1895.— G. M. Schuler, *Der Pantheismus*, Würzburg 1881.— Id., *Der Materialismus*, Berlin 1890.— E. L. Fischer, *Die modernen Ersatzversuche für das aufgegebenene Christentum*, Ratisbon 1903.— H. Schell, *Der Gottesglaube und die naturwissenschaftliche Welterkenntnis*, Bamberg 1904.— F. Aveling in the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. II, s. v. “Atheism.”— F. Hettinger, *Natural Religion*, New York 1890.— W. S. Lilly, *The Great Enigma*, 2nd ed., New York 1893.— L. A. Lambert, *Notes on Ingersoll*, Buffalo 1883.⁹— T. Finlay, S. J., “Atheism as a Mental Phenomenon” in the *Month* (1878), pp. 186 sqq.

⁶ In Ps. LII, n. 3.

⁷ On the psychology of unbelief, see X. Moisant, *Psychologie de l'Incroyant*, Paris 1908. Cfr. also Hettinger-Bowden, *Natural Religion*, pp. 1 sqq.

⁸ Cfr. C. Gutberiet, *Theodicee*, 2nd ed., § 2, Münster 1890; B. Boedder, S. J., *Natural Theology*, pp. 76 sqq., New York 1891; J. T. Driscoll, *Christian Philosophy : God*, 2nd ed., pp. 15 sq., New York 1904.

⁹ Father Lambert's *Notes on Ingersoll* has been published in numerous editions and shall be mentioned here, though it is, of course, perfectly true that popular speakers and writers of the type of Robert G. Ingersoll, while they "may create a certain amount of unlearned disturbance, ... are not treated seriously by thinking men, and it is extremely doubtful whether they deserve a place in any historical or philosophical exposition of Atheism." (Aveling in the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, II, 42.)

CHAPTER II

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

The arguments for the existence of God not only prove His existence, but at the same time reveal each some one or other aspect of the Divine Essence.¹ Whatever knowledge of the Divine Essence we may thus acquire from a consideration of finite things, is sure to be stamped with the birth mark of the creature. It may be ennobled and transfigured by Revelation and faith, but they cannot change its substance. Not until we are admitted to the beatific vision in Heaven, does the abstractive and analogous knowledge of God acquired here on earth give way to that intuitive and perfect knowledge which enables us to see the Blessed Trinity as It is. Such are the limitations of the created intellect that it cannot even enjoy the beatific vision except by means of a specially infused light, called "*lumen gloriae*."

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

SECTION 1

OUR KNOWLEDGE OF GOD AS IT IS HERE ON EARTH

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

ARTICLE 1

THE IMPERFECTION OF OUR KNOWLEDGE OF GOD IN THIS LIFE

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

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

in the same way that a metaphorical differs from a proper concept (*conceptus improprius* — *proprius*). A univocal or proper concept is one which applies to every individual comprehended under it in the same sense, as for example the concept "man" applies to Peter, Paul, John, etc. An analogous concept, on the other hand, is predicated of a number of objects partly in the same and partly in a different sense, as *e. g.*, "healthy" of the human body, the color of one's face, the climate, etc.³

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

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

³ For further details consult any good textbook of logic.

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

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

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

The principal text in proof of our thesis is drawn from the New Testament, *viz.*, 1 Cor. 13:12: “*Videmus nunc per speculum in aenigmate, tunc autem facie ad faciem; nunc cognosco ex parte, tunc autem [i. e. in coelo] cognoscam, sicut et cognitus sum*—We see now through a glass in a dark manner; but then face to face. Now I know in part; but then I shall know even as I am known.” St. Paul here makes a sharp distinction between two modes of knowing God, the one earthly, the other heavenly, which are opposed to each other (*nunc—tunc*, ἄρτι—τότε). Limiting ourselves to the former (the latter will engage us later), human knowledge of God here below is characterized by three essential marks. It is represented first as a “seeing through a glass,”¹⁰ a mode of perception directly opposed to intuitive vision “face to face.” As in Romans 1:20, so here St. Paul describes our earthly knowledge of God as an abstractive, mediate, inadequate knowledge, which remains a vision *per speculum* even if a man “should have all faith.”¹¹ The second mark is “enigmatic,”¹² which means that the human mind on earth can conceive God only by analogy drawn from His creatures; for a proper and univocal concept of God could not be designated as enigmatical or compared to seeing “in a dark manner.” This characteristic is completed by the third mark, *viz.*, partiality (*ex parte*, ἐκ μέρους), which clearly designates our knowledge of God as being a knowledge “in part.” All three of these notes prove the imperfection of our earthly knowledge of God as conclusively as they establish God's incomprehensibility by the human mind so long as man lingers in “this vale of tears.”¹³

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

⁵ Cfr. 3 Corinthians 5:7: “διὰ πίστεως γὰρ περιπατοῦμεν διὰ εἶδους—For we walk by faith and not by sight.”

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

⁷ *Conc. Vat.*, Sess. III, cap. 1.

⁸ Job 11: 7 sqq.

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

¹⁰ *Per speculupi, δι' ἐσόπτρον*.

¹¹ 1 Corinthians 13:1

¹² *In aenigmate, ἐν αἰνίγματι*

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

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

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

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

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

¹⁴ ἐπέκεινα πάσης οὐσίας

¹⁵ *Contra Tryph.*, 4.

¹⁶ τὰ περὶ θεόν == attributes of God.

¹⁷ *Contr. Eunom.*, 12.

¹⁸ *Catech.*, IV, n. 2.

¹⁹ *De Fide Orthod.*, I, 4.

²⁰ *De Trinit.*, VII, 4.7.—For further references, cfr. Petavius, *De Deo*, I, 5 sqq.

order to be a true concept, must first shed all imperfections, cannot possibly claim to be adequate, intuitive, or univocal.²¹

The theory of knowledge elaborated by the Fathers, assumes that all our concepts are derived from sense perception, and concludes that a concept of God drawn from such a source must needs be imperfect. Thus, *e. g.*, Gregory of Nyssa argues: "God's epithets are based upon the things He works in us. ... But His essence is anterior to its operations, and we derive our knowledge of these operations from the things we perceive by our senses."²² The great Basil²³ and John of Damascus²⁴ express themselves in like manner. Several of the Fathers go into the subject more deeply, anticipating as it were the Scholastic axiom: "*Cognitum est in cognoscente non ad modum cogniti, sed ad modum cognoscentis,*" and emphasizing the truth that "the measure (*τὸ μέτρον*) of our knowledge of God is immanent in man, who is a synthesis of spirit and matter;" that is to say, the more perfect the power of cognition, the nobler is the resultant act or knowledge. Man, ranking midway between angels and brutes, apprehends the material things below him according to a higher, *i. e.*, the notional, mode of being; but his apprehension of the things that are above him (the angels, God) is cast in a more imperfect mould.²⁵ Consequently, our idea of God is necessarily imperfect.

γ) There are on record certain utterances of the Fathers which appear to contradict or at least to weaken the doctrine we have just propounded. But in reality they confirm it. The oft-repeated phrase, We know that God exists, but we do not know His essence,²⁶ does not mean that we can have no knowledge of God whatever, but merely that our knowledge of His essence is imperfect. Nor can the Patristic dictum that we merely know what God is *not*, but do not know what He *is*, be cited in support of the Neo-Platonic teaching of a purely negative cognoscibility,²⁷ or of Mr. Herbert Spencer's Philosophy (bless the mark!) of the Unknowable. St. Augustine, *e. g.*, insists: "*Si non potestis comprehendere, quid sit Deus, vel hoc comprehendite, quid non sit Deus; multum profeceritis, si non aliud quam est de Deo senseritis* — If ye are not able to comprehend what God is, comprehend at least what God is not: you will have made much progress, if you think of God as being not something other than He is."²⁸ We have his own authority²⁹ for explaining, that he merely intends to define the sublimity of the divine Essence as surpassing all categories of human thought; that is to say, he merely emphasizes the purely analogical and abstractive character of our knowledge of God. Therefore Gregory Nazianzen admonishes us: "It is not enough to state what [God] is *not*; but he who would discover the nature of Him Who is (*τοῦ ὄντος*), must also define what He *is*. For he who defines only what God is *not*, is like unto a man who would answer the question: How much is twice five? by saying: It is not one, nor two, etc., omitting to tell his questioner that it is ten."³⁰

c) The dogma here under consideration is supported also by the authority of the great Scholastic theologians, notably St. Thomas Aquinas.³¹

Following in the footsteps of the Fathers, the Schoolmen worked out a theory of knowledge which conforms not only to the psychology of the thinking mind, but likewise to the principles of

²¹ For the necessary references, see St Basil, *Contra Eunom.*, lib. I, n. 13 sqq.; Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orat. theolog.*, 2; Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunom.*, lib. XII. Cfr. K. Unterstein, *Die natürliche Gottserkenntnis nach der Lehre der kappadosischen Kirchenväter*, Straubing 1903-04.

²² *Contr. Eunom.*, 1. XII.

²³ *Ep.*, 234.

²⁴ *De Fide Orth.*, I, 4.

²⁵ Cfr. Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunom.*, lib. I.

²⁶ Cfr. Hilary, *In Ps.*, 129: — "*Humanae infirmitatis religiosa confessio est, de Deo solum hoc nosse, quod est.*"

²⁷ *Θεὸς βυθὸς ἄγνωστος.*

²⁸ *Tract. in Ioa.*, XXIII, n. 9.

²⁹ *De Trinit.*, V, 1.

³⁰ *Orat. Theol.*, 2.—See also Article 2, *infra*.

³¹ *S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 12, art. 13

revealed religion. As the foundation of their system they adopted the philosophy of Aristotle, for the reason that this system — at least in its fundamental lines — fitted in best with both the nature of the human intellect, and supernatural Revelation. Inasmuch as Sacred Scripture and the Fathers favor the basic principles of the Aristotelian theory of knowledge, this theory can claim our unconditional assent, and we must admit that in its essential features, aside from incidental details, it cannot be false. In making this assertion, we do not, of course, wish to advocate a slavish restoration of the ancient psychology, nor to condemn every effort at originality in stating and developing its principles. Our sole object is to impress upon the reader that not every system of psychology can be fitted into the framework of revealed theology. Thus, *e.g.*, the critical Idealism of Kant, based as it is upon radically false premises, cannot be harmonized with Revelation. It is a mistake to believe that, by clinging to Scholastic Aristotelianism, the Church puts a brake upon theologians who endeavor to clear up special questions. On the contrary, was not, for instance, the psychology of Albertus Magnus, a heteroclite amalgam of omnigenous philosophical elements, which it required the master mind of an Aquinas to sift and transfuse into a coherent system, by eliminating all extraneous ingredients?³²

³² Cfr. J. Bach, *Des Albertus Magnus Verhältnis zu der Erkenntnislehre der Griechen, Lateiner, Araber und Juden*, Wien 1881.— For a digest of "the traditional theory of knowledge," see Heinrich, *Dogm. Theol.*, III, § 141. Cfr. also M. Schneid, *Aristoteles in der Scholastik*, Mainz 1875; A. Otten, *Allgemeine Erkenntnislehre des hl. Thomas*, Paderborn 1882; De Wulf-Coffey, *History of Medieval Philosophy*, pp. 304 sq., London 1909; *Id.*, *Scholasticism Old and New*, pp. 134 sqq., Dublin 1907.

ARTICLE 2

THE THREEFOLD MODE OF KNOWING GOD HERE ON EARTH

1. PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.—Our previous article will receive confirmation from the detailed exposition, which we now undertake, of the manner in which man acquires such knowledge of God as is vouchsafed him here below. He attains to it in a threefold manner: *viâ affirmationis seu causalitatis* (θέσις), *viâ negationis* (ἀφαίρεσις), and *viâ superlationis seu eminentiae* (ὑπεροχή). Every one of these methods is exceedingly imperfect. As we do not perceive God in his own form (*in specie propria*), but in that of some other being (*in specie aliena*), that is to say, by means of analogous concepts derived from His creatures, it is plain that our knowledge of Him must involve many imperfections, notably a certain inaccuracy in the notion of God, which calls for incessant correction if the judgments we formulate of God and divine things are not to be entirely wrong. When we affirm some divine perfection, such as, *e.g.*, wisdom, we are immediately constrained to eliminate from this perfection, by an act of negation, every species of imperfection common to creatures (*e.g.*, human wisdom), and furthermore to raise the perfection thus purged by a series of negations to its superlative degree and into the domain of the infinite (*e.g.*, superhuman, absolute wisdom). This threefold process of affirmation, negation, and intensification, is therefore merely a natural and necessary result of the abstractive and analogous character of our conception of God.¹

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

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

a) The positive predicates at which we arrive by means of the *via affirmationis*, express either a simple or a mixed divine perfection.² The difference between the two classes is, that the concept of a simple perfection (*e. g.*, sanctity), does not include any sort of imperfection, while a mixed perfection always connotes some defect (*e. g.*, syllogistic reasoning). Now it is obvious that no mixed perfection can be affirmed of God that has not previously been subjected to a process of logical purification. We may not even apply our notions of simple perfections unconditionally to God, except with the express restriction that such and such a quality exists in God not after the manner of the creature (negation), but in an infinitely higher mode, in what is called the eminent sense.

b) With regard to the *via negationis* we must observe that this method is able to impart more than a purely negative knowledge of God; for inasmuch as it eliminates defects or limitations, it is essentially a negation of a negation, and thus attains to the dignity of an affirmation.³ Thus the infinity

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

² *Perfectio simplex, perfectio mista*.

³ Cfr. S. Maxim., *In Dionys. De Divin. Nomin.*, c. 4: "*Sunt efficacies positiones.*"

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

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

The Scotist Frassen⁴ appropriately compares these three modes of cognition with the *modus procedendi* peculiar to the three arts of painting, sculpture, and poetry. The painter produces a portrait as it were “affirmatively,” by brushing his colors upon the canvas; the sculptor may be said to proceed “negatively” in carving a statue; while the poet treats his subject “superlatively,” by applying to it all sorts of tropes, metaphors, and hyperboles.⁵

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

a) We have a plain Scriptural argument in Ecclus. XLIII, 29-32, a text which picturesquely describes the works of God, winding up as follows: “*Consummatio autem sermonum [i. e., briefly stated]: Ipse [seil. Deus] est in omnibus [τὸ πᾶν ἔστιν αὐτός, i. e., He contains all created perfections = via affirmationis s. causalitatis]. Gloriantes ad quid valemus? Ipse enim omnipotens super omnia opera sua [the Septuagint has: αὐτὸς γὰρ ὁ μέγας παρὰ πάντα τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ, i. e., He is nothing of the things He has made = via negationis]. . . . Glorificantes Dominum, quantumcunque potueritis, supervalebit enim adhuc [ὑπερέξει γὰρ καὶ ἔτι, i. e., He is high above every thing = via eminentiae].” St. Thomas Aquinas finds the three modes or stages indicated also in Rom. I, 20 : “ ‘*Invisibilia Dei cognoscuntur per viam negationis; ‘sempiterna virtus’ per viam causalitatis; ‘divinitas’ per viam excellentiae.*”⁶*

b) The most famous and the best known formula that has come down to us from Patristic times, is that of the Pseudo-Dionysius : *Θεὸς . . . πάντων θέσις καὶ πάντων ἀφαίρεσις ἢ ὑπὲρ πᾶσαν θέσιν καὶ ἀφαίρεσιν αἰτία.*⁷ The same early writer, whoever he may have been, sailing in the wake of the Neo-Platonists, cultivated with a certain predilection the *via superlationis*: “*Nihil eorum, quae*

⁴ *Scotus Academicus*, “De Deo,” disp. I, art. 2, qu. 1.

⁵ “The three ways may be likened to the methods of the fine arts. Just as a painter produces his picture by putting paint on his canvas, so I use the positive way of forming my shadows — I take qualities from creatures and I transfer them to God. Just as a sculptor produces his statue by chipping off pieces from a block of marble, so I use the negative way of forming my shadows — I think of qualities in creatures and I remove the limitations. And just as a poet makes his word-picture more by metaphorical suggestion than by exact description, so I use the more eminent way in forming my shadows — I take the qualities of creatures and knowing that they are all realized in infinite degree in God, I conclude that any mutual exclusiveness which they have in creatures must be transcended in the simplicity of God.” (Gerrard, *The Wayfarer's Vision*, pp. 5 sq.)

⁶ *In Ep. ad Rom.*, c. I, lect. 5.

⁷ *Myst. Theol.*, c. 2.

sunt ... explicat arcanum illud omnem rationem et intellectum superans superdeitatis superessentialiter supra omnia superexistentis (τῆς ὑπὲρ πάντα ὑπερονσίας ὑπερούσης ὑπερθεότητος).⁸ He is equally familiar with the *via negationis*, though in employing this mode he does not adopt the one-sided view of the Neo-Platonists. "God"—he says—"is not substance, not life, not light, not sense, not spirit, not wisdom, not goodness, not divinity, but something that is far higher and nobler than all these,"⁹ Summing up the teaching of the Greek Fathers, St. John of Damascus says: "It is more becoming to speak of God negatively, denying all things about Him. Not as if He were nothing Himself, but inasmuch as He is *above* everything which exists, nay, above being itself."¹⁰ For many other confirmatory passages, see Thomassin, *De Deo*, IV, 7-12.

As every negative conception of God essentially involves affirmations and intensifications, the negative mode of apprehending God is not quite so striking as one might conclude from the manner in which it was urged by the Fathers. Far from employing it for the purpose of proving the (Gnostic) "incognoscibility" of God or the (Neo-Platonic) "purely negative cognoscibility" of God, the Fathers rather strive by means of it to throw light both on the super-substantiality (*ὑπερουσία*) of God, and on our (relative) ignorance of things divine. For as Pseudo-Athanasius correctly remarks, *Θεὸς γὰρ καταλαμβάνομενος οὐκ ἐστὶ θεός*. This explains why ever since the days of the Pseudo-Areopagite, the mystics have defended the principle that "The highest knowledge we can have of God is that we do not know Him."¹¹ Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa devoted an entire book to the development of this thought. "*In rebus divinis scire est scire, nos ignorare*," he writes.¹² In speaking, as they often do, of a "mystic night," in which God's obscurity reveals itself to us most clearly, the medieval mystics merely vary the dictum of the Apostle of the Gentiles: [*Deus*] "*lucem ... inhabitat inaccessibilem, quem nullus hominum vidit, sed nec videre potest*—[God] inhabiteth light inaccessible, whom no man hath seen, nor can see."¹³

ARTICLE 3 THEOLOGICAL CONCLUSIONS

1. GOD'S INEFFABILITY.—a) Language is merely the expression of thought, and therefore, if God is incomprehensible, it follows that He must also be ineffable or unutterable. "*Deus . . . ineffabilis*," says the Fourth Lateran Council.¹⁴ And St. Augustine beautifully observes: "*Quid quaeris, ut ascendat in linguam, quod in cor hominis non ascendit?*"¹⁵ As God alone comprehends Himself, so He alone can utter Himself adequately. It is in this sense, that the Fathers designate God as the "ineffable" or "nameless" one (ἄνόνημος).

b) Nevertheless man is able to conceive God, though inadequately, by a series of concepts representing His different attributes; and consequently can utter Him in a variety of names. Hence the Patristic term πολυώνυμος, "He of many names," and the still larger term employed by some of the Fathers, πανώνυμος, *i.e.*, "all-names," "He to Whom all names apply." In his sublime "Hymn to God," Gregory Nazianzen beautifully sums up these conceptions: "Σὺ πάντων τέλος ἐσσι καὶ εἷς, καὶ πάντα, καὶ οὐδέν οὐχ ἔν ἐών, οὐ πάντα. Πανώνυμε, τί σε παλέσσω, τὸν μόνον ἀκλήϊστον."¹⁶ St. Augustine expresses himself in a similar manner: "*Omnia possunt de Deo dici et nihil digne dicitur de Deo. Nihil*

⁸ *De Div. Nom.*, 13.

⁹ *Myst. Theol.*, c. 3.

¹⁰ *De Fide Orth.*, I, 4.

¹¹ Cfr. Pseudo-Dionysius, *Myst. Theol.*, cap. I, § 3: "τῷ μηδὲν γινώσκειν ὑπὲρ νοῦν γινώσκειν."

¹² *De Docta Ignorantia*, I, 26.

¹³ 1 Timothy 6:16

¹⁴ *Caput "Firmiter."*

¹⁵ *In Ps 85 Clem Vulgate/86 Modern translations*, n. 12.

¹⁶ Thou art at once One, All, and None, and yet Thou art not all or one. All-name! by what name can I call Thee, nameless One, alone of all.

latius hac inopia. Quaeris congruum nomen? Non invenis. Quaeris quoquo modo dicere? Omnia invenis—All things can be said of God, and nothing is worthily said of God. Nothing is wider than this poverty of expression. Thou seekest a fitting name for Him; thou canst not find it. Thou seekest to speak of Him in any way soever; thou findest that He is all."¹⁷

c) A comparison of the logical elements of the various names applied to God, shows that all taken together yet fall far short of expressing the fulness of his infinite and supernotional Being; hence the Patristic term ὑπερώνυμος. We need not call attention to the fact that this threefold mode of appellation (πολυώνυμος, πανώνυμος, ὑπερώνυμος) corresponds exactly to the threefold mode of our apprehension of God, as explained above.¹⁸

2. THE COMPOSITE CHARACTER OF OUR CONCEPTION OF GOD IN RELATION TO HIS SIMPLICITY.—The three modes by which we apprehend God produce in the human mind a great variety of concepts expressing attribution; hence the inevitably composite character of our conception of God. We have a typical example of such composition in the "Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith" adopted by the Vatican Council : "*Ecclesia credit et confitetur, unum esse Deum verum et vivum, Creatorem ac Dominum coeli et terrae, omnipotentem, aeternum, immensum, incomprehensibilem, intellectu ac voluntate omnique perfectione infinitum, etc.*—The Holy Catholic Apostolic Roman Church believes and confesses that there is one true and living God, Creator and Lord of heaven and earth, almighty, eternal, immense, incomprehensible, infinite in intelligence, in will, and in all perfection."¹⁹ There naturally arises the question: How can a composite conception of God be harmonized with the absolute simplicity of the Divine Essence?

Already the Eunomians raised the objection that the doctrine of the abstractive and analogous character of our knowledge of God must necessarily lead to an (impossible) piecing together of the Divine Essence, though it is quite evident that the supremely simple Being can be conceived only by the agency of an equally simple concept, and that consequently the various names applied to God are mere synonyms. The Fathers, in particular Basil and Gregory of Nyssa, solved this cunning objection by pointing out that though our knowledge of God is very imperfect, the Divine Essence comprises all perfections and consequently cannot be compressed into a finite concept. While our abstractive analogical mode of cognition compels the intellect to conceive God by a series of partial concepts, the infinite fulness of the Divine Being renders it impossible for us to exhaust that Being by means of conceptions formed in our finite mind.²⁰

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

a) In undertaking to refute this specious objection, we must stress the fact that the truth and correctness of the concept which man forms of God by the agencies of reason and revelation, is a dogma coinciding with that of the cognoscibility of God.²¹ Among the divine predicates that human reason gathers from the consideration of nature, St. Paul²² expressly mentions two: ἡ ἀίδιος αὐτοῦ

¹⁷ *Tract. In Ioa.*, 13, n. 5. Cfr. St. Thomas, *S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 13, art. 1.

¹⁸ Cfr. Gerrard, *The Wayfarer's Vision*, p. 7.

¹⁹ *Conc. Vatic., Const. De Fide*, c. 1. Denzinger-Bannwart, *Enchiridion*, n. 1782.

²⁰ For a more detailed explanation of this difficulty, see Part II. Cfr. also St. Thomas, *De Pot.*, qu. 7, art. 7.

²¹ *Supra*, Ch. 1.

²² Romans 1:20.

δύναμις, *i.e.*, the eternal power manifested in the creation of the universe, and *θειότης*, *i. e.*, a Divine Essence differing from all created things. As a third predicate the Book of Wisdom²³ adds the attribute of divine "beauty." Elsewhere the Bible refers to God as "He who is," *i. e.*, Who has the plenitude of being; the Eternal, the Allwise, the Immense, etc,— all predicates which, if they were incorrect or untrue, would belie the Word of God.

b) The Eunomian contention, that unless we assume the possibility of man's forming an adequate idea of God, we are placed before the alternative of forming either a false conception of Him or no conception at all,— is met by the Fathers with the retort that it rests upon a confusion of the separate and distinct notes of "imperfect" and "incorrect" on the one hand, and their contradictories, "perfect" and "correct," on the other. The Fathers insist that there is such a thing as a true though imperfect concept of God; that our knowledge of God, in spite of its inevitable defects, is true and remains true for the very simple reason, among others, that we are fully aware, and do so judge, that the perfections we ascribe to God exist in Him in a quite different way than they exist in His creatures and in the concepts of the human mind; that, whatever wrong elements may enter into our conception of God, are eliminated by an express judgment; while on the other hand the Eunomians themselves are open to the charge of counterfeiting the notion of God when they pretend to be able to conceive God and to comprehend Him as He is, though in matter of fact they derive their conceptions of Him from analogy.²⁴

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

²³ Wisdom 13:5

²⁴ Cfr. Franzelin, *De Deo Uno*, thes. 13.

SECTION 2

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

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

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

ARTICLE 1

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

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

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

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

2. DOGMATIC THESES.—The subject-matter propounded in the above preliminary remarks may be reduced to three problems, which we shall endeavor to solve in as many theses; *viz.*: (1) the absolute impossibility of a bodily vision of God; (2) the natural impossibility of an intuitive vision of God; and (3) the supernatural reality, and consequent possibility, of the intuitive (beatific) vision of God in Heaven.

¹ *Vide infra*, Article 3.

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

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

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

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

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

In spite of the passage quoted from Job, the impossibility of the bodily eye being so highly spiritualized as to be able immediately to see God, while not an article of faith, is today generally received as a well established theological conclusion. St. Augustine himself trenchantly refuted the construction which his adversaries put upon Job 19: 26, and other similar texts. With regard to the effatum of Job, he says: "*Non dixit Job: per carnem meam, quod quidem si dixisset, posset Deus Christus intelligi, qui per carnem in carne videbitur. Nunc vero potest et sic accipi: in carne mea videbo Deum, ac si dixisset: In carne mea ero, cum videbo Deum* — Job does not say 'by the flesh.' And, indeed, if he had said this, it would still be possible that by 'God' Christ was meant; for Christ shall be seen by the flesh. But even understanding it of God, it is only equivalent to saying, 'I shall be in the flesh when I see God.'"⁷ The spiritualization of the risen body, of which St. Paul speaks in 1 Cor. 15:44 (*σῶμα πνευματικόν*), by no means consists in the transmission to the material body of

² Cfr. John 4:20 sqq.

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

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

⁵ *Ep. 22 ad Italicam.*

⁶ *Ep. 147 ad Paulinam.*

⁷ *De Civit. Dei*, XXII, 29.

spiritual powers and qualities — for this would be tantamount to an impossible evolution of matter into spirit—, but in a clarification or transfiguration of the flesh enabling it to foster and support the activity of the soul, instead of pulling it down to the level of the senses. "*Erit spiritui subdita caro spiritualis*," St. Augustine says, "*sed tamen caro, non spiritus; sicut carni subditus fuit spiritus ipse carnalis, sed tamen spiritus, non caro* — The flesh shall then be spiritual, and subject to the spirit, but still flesh, not spirit."⁸ At bottom the whole question appertains to philosophy rather than theology. Philosophy, needless to remark, cannot admit the possibility of an intuitive vision of God's spiritual substance by a material organ, for such a concession would imply that flesh could be changed into spirit without ceasing to be material flesh. The argument is strengthened by another theological conclusion, *viz.*: It is metaphysically certain that the bodily eye can see none but corporeal substances; on the other hand, it is *de fide* that the glorified bodies of the Elect after the resurrection will be and remain bodies of real flesh; hence it is theologically certain that the bodily eye, even in its transfigured state, can perceive only what is corporeal — consequently, that it cannot see God, Who is a pure spirit.

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

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

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

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

α) The natural inaccessibility of the Divine Essence is expressly taught in 1 Tim. 6:15-16: "*Beatus et solus potens rex regum et Dominus dominantium, qui solus habet immortalitatem et lucem inhabitat inaccessibilem, quem nullus hominum vidit, sed nec videre potest*— The Blessed and only Mighty, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, who only hath immortality, and inhabiteth light inaccessible, whom no man hath seen, nor can see." It appears from this enumeration of such attributes as "blessedness," "omnipotence," and "immortality," (attributes every one of which is quite invisible to the bodily eye), that the Apostle had in view not so much the bodily as the intellectual invisibility of God. Such expressions as "whom no man hath seen nor can see," and "inhabiteth light inaccessible," must therefore be taken as referring mainly to the understanding. Now if this light is inhabited by God alone, it follows that all who are outside of it —and all rational creatures both existing and possible *are* outside of it, because it is "inaccessible" to all except God—neither "see" nor "can see" the Godhead. Nor is this conclusion in the least affected by the circumstance that invisibility is here predicated of God only in relation to man ("*nullus hominum*"); for the decreatory

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

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

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

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

principle—viz., inaccessibility—is so positive and universal that it comprises not only the angels but all spirits in general (even those which have no existence). That, on the other hand, St. Paul did not consider it impossible for finite rational beings to be admitted into the divine "light" *by the favor of grace*, is quite plain from his teaching in regard to the reality of the supernatural vision of God in Heaven.¹²

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

β) There are a number of Scriptural texts in which the intuition of the Divine Essence is described as the exclusive privilege of the Godhead, or of the three Persons in the Most Holy Trinity, implying that God's intuition of Himself can be communicated to creatures, even those endowed with reason, only by way of supernatural grace. Cfr. Matt. 11:27: "*Nemo novit Filium nisi Pater, neque Patrem quis novit* (ἐπιγινώσκει) *nisi Filius, et cut voluerit Filius revelare* (ἀποκαλύψαι)—No one knoweth the Son, but the Father: neither doth anyone know the Father, but the Son, and he to whom it shall please the Son to reveal him." Similarly in John VI, 46: "*Non quia Patrem vidit quisquam* (ἐώρακέ τις) *nisi is, qui est a Deo [scil. Filius]: hic vidit Patrem*—Not that any man hath seen the Father; but he who is of God, he hath seen the Father." The same thought is still more sharply brought out in John 1:18: "*Deum nemo vidit unquam* (οὐδεὶς ἐώρακε πώποτε) ; *unigenitus Filius, qui est in sinu Patris, ipse enarravit* (ἐξηγήσατο)—No man hath seen God at any time: the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." Besides the Father and the Son, there is only the Holy Ghost Who intues¹⁴ the inner essence of the Divinity. Cfr. 1 Cor. 2:11 : "*Quae Dei sunt, nemo cognovit* (ἔγνωκεν) *nisi Spiritus Dei*—The things that are of God no man knoweth, but the Spirit of God." Whence it follows that no created intellect can, by virtue of its own power, penetrate into the Divine Essence. If the revelation to believing men of the mystery of the Blessed Trinity is a supernatural favor, the intuitive "face-to-face" vision of the same must *a fortiori* be a grace, and a much greater one. From all of which we may validly conclude that, according to the teaching of the Bible, the Divine Essence is absolutely invisible to any created being except through the operation of supernatural grace.

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

α) Those of the Fathers in particular, who did not content themselves with merely stating the dogma and showing it to be founded in Holy Writ, tried to bottom the natural invisibility of God on the metaphysical axiom that "the Uncreated cannot become visible to a created being."¹⁵ They regarded solely the natural mode of cognition, as is evidenced by the fact that they did not hesitate to ascribe to the Elect in Heaven a supernatural intuition of God. Gregory of Nazianzus insists that an

¹² Cfr. 1 Cor. XIII, 8-12.

¹³ Cfr. the commentators on Rom. I, 20.

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

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

intuitive vision of the Divine Essence is possible only "in virtue of a special indwelling of God in the intellect and of the latter's being penetrated through and through with a divine light,"¹⁶ — a divine act which St. Chrysostom designates more succinctly as συγκατάβασις, *i. e.*, a condescension on the part of the Almighty.

β) The teaching of St. Irenaeus is deserving of special mention because of its unmistakable clearness. He assumes that we can attain to a knowledge of God naturally, by contemplating the created universe, and then proceeds to distinguish three stages in the supernatural knowledge which man can have of God: (1) the "symbolical" vision implied in the Old Testament theophanies ; (2) the "adoptive" vision exemplified in the Incarnation of the Logos; and (3) the "paternal" vision of the Elect in Heaven, which alone deserves the name of intuition. The principal passage is *Adv. Haeres.* IV, 20, 5, where St. Irenaeus says: "*Homo etenim a se [per naturalia sua] non videt Deum, ille autem volens videtur [ab] hominibus, quibus vult et quando vult et quemadmodum vult; potens est enim in omnibus Deus. Visus quidem tunc [i. e., in V. T.] per spiritum prophetiae, visus autem et per Filium adoptive, videbitur autem et in regno coelorum paternaliter* — For man does not see God by his own powers; but when He pleases He is seen by men, by whom He wills, and when He wills, and as He wills. For God is powerful in all things, having been seen at that time [in the Old Testament] indeed, prophetically through the Spirit, and seen, too, adoptively through the Son, and He shall also be seen paternally in the kingdom of Heaven."¹⁷ He sharply differentiates between the natural invisibility and the supernatural visibility of God, when he says: "*Qui vident Deum, intra Deum sunt, percipientes eius claritatem. ... Et propter hoc incapabilis (ὁ ἀχώρητος) et invisibilis (ἀόρατος) visibilem se et comprehensibilem et capabilem hominibus praestat (ὁρώμενον ἑαυτὸν καὶ καταλαμβάνόμενον καὶ χωρούμενον)* — And for this reason, He [although] beyond comprehension, and invisible, rendered Himself visible and comprehensible to men."¹⁸

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

This thesis embodies an article of faith.

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

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

¹⁷ Iren., *Adv. Haer.*, IV, 20.

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

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

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

and that it is described as the consummation of the theological virtues of faith and hope.²¹ All possible doubt as to whether or not the vision of the Blessed Trinity is included in the beatific vision, has been removed by the Florence decree of 1439, which says: "*Definimus ... [illorum animas] ... in coelum mox recipi et intueri clare ipsum Deum trinum et unum, sicuti est.*"²²

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

a) In 1 Cor. 13:8 sqq., we read: "*Sive prophetiae evacuabuntur sive linguae cessabunt sive scientia destruetur; ex parte enim cognoscimus et ex parte prophetamus. Cum autem venerit quod perfectum est, evacuabitur quod ex parte est. ... Videmus nunc per speculum in aenigmate, tunc autem facie ad faciem; nunc cognosco ex parte, tunc autem cognoscam, sicut et cognitus sum*—Whether prophecies shall be made void, or tongues shall cease, or knowledge shall be destroyed; for we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come,²⁵ that which is in part shall be done away.²⁶ We see now through a glass in a dark manner, but then face to face.²⁷ Now I know in part;²⁸ but then I shall know even as I am known."²⁹ As we have already observed on a previous page, the Apostle here contrasts the piecemeal, enigmatic, and *per speculum* vision of God that is vouchsafed us here below, with the radically different one which we shall enjoy hereafter, and which possesses the two distinctive marks of immediateness³⁰ and perfect clearness.³¹ Man's knowledge of God in Heaven is a vision "face to face," or "person to person,"³² which is opposed to the vision "through a glass"³³ that we have on earth. Again, the "*perfectum*" (τὸ τέλειον) is contrasted with the *cognitio ex parte* (τὸ ἐκ μέρους), and the perfect clearness of the beatific vision is illustrated in this wise: "As God sees me, even so shall I see Him;" that is to say, immediately, intuitively, clearly, without veil or medium, no longer by means of analogy derived from the created universe.³⁴

β) The teaching of St. John accords perfectly with that of St. Paul. Cfr. 1 John 3:2 : "*Carissimi, nunc filii Dei sumus et nondum apparuit, quid erimus. Scimus, quoniam, cum apparuerit (ἐὰν φανερωθῆ), similes ei erimus, quoniam videbimus eum sicuti est*—Dearly beloved, we are now the sons of God; and it hath not yet appeared what we shall be. We know, that, when he shall appear, we shall be like to him, because we shall see him [i. e., Christ in His Divinity] as he is." As in 1 Cor. 13, so here our knowledge of God on earth is contrasted with our knowledge of Him in Heaven. Here below, until it will "appear what we shall be," we are "children of God" in an imperfect way only; but in Heaven "we shall be like to God,"³⁵ because we shall see Him as He is."³⁶—In the light of these

²¹ "Ac quod visio et fruition actus fidei et spei in eis evacuant, prout fides et spes propriae theologae sunt virtutes." Const. "Benedictus Deus," l. c.

²² "καὶ καθαρῶς θεωρεῖν αὐτὸν τὸν ἕνα καὶ τρισυπόστατον Θεόν, καθὼς ἐστίν." Cfr. Denzinger-Bannwart, n. 693.

²³ For further information on this point we must refer the reader to Eschatology. (*Another book in this series*)

²⁴ Cfr. Apoc. VII, 16; XXI, 4, etc.

²⁵ τὸ τέλειον, i. e., the beatific vision.

²⁶ καταργηθήσεται τὸ ἐκ μέρους, i. e., abstractive knowledge shall cease.

²⁷ πρόσωπον πρὸς πρόσωπον = visio facialis.

²⁸ ἐκ μέρους.

²⁹ τότε δὲ ἐπιγνώσομαι καθὼς καὶ ἐπεγνώσθη

³⁰ *Sine speculo, non in aenigmate.*

³¹ *Non ex parte.*

³² Cfr. Exodus 33:11. מַּיִם לְפָנָי וְיָיִם לְפָנָי

³³ *Cognitio per speculum* = abstractive et analogica.

³⁴ Cfr. Al. Schäfer, *Erklärung der beiden Briefe an die Korinther*, pp. 268 sqq., Münster 1903. On man's dark and enigmatical vision of God here on earth, its purpose, and the bearing of St. Paul's teaching on the present-day error of "Pragmatism," cfr. T. J. Gerrard, *The Wayfarer's Vision*, London 1909.

³⁵ ὅμοιοι αὐτῷ.

explanations we are able to understand the deeper meaning of the Saviour's dictum: "*Beati mundo corde, quoniam ipsi Deum videbunt*—Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God."³⁷ The angels, too, enjoy the beatific vision of God the Father, and consequently of the whole Divine Trinity. "*Angeli eorum [sc. infantium] in coelis semper vident faciem Patris mei,*³⁸ *qui in coelis est*—Their [the children's] angels in heaven always see the face of my Father who is in heaven."³⁹

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

α) The pre-Eunomian Fathers simply teach, in full accord with the Bible, that the angels and saints in Heaven are vouchsafed a real "face to face" vision of God. We have already adverted to the admirably lucid teaching of St. Irenaeus. Corroborative passages can be cited from the writings of Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Cyprian, and others.⁴⁰

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

It is important to exonerate especially St. John Chrysostom from the charge of material heresy made against him by Vasquez.⁴¹ Treating of the Transfiguration of Christ on Mount Tabor, Chrysostom says:⁴² "If the bliss produced by a dark vision of the future was sufficient to induce St. Peter to cast away everything, what will man say when once the reality bursts upon him; when the doors of the royal chamber are thrown open, and he is permitted to look upon the King Himself — no longer enigmatically as in a mirror, but face to face; no longer in the faith,⁴³ but in reality."⁴⁴ Again he says:⁴⁵ "The just, however, dwell there with their King, . . . not as in a vestibule,⁴⁶ not in the faith, but face to face."⁴⁷ It is only when he combats Eunomianism, or at least when he has this heresy in view, that St. Chrysostom uses expressions which might strike the careless reader as a denial of the beatific vision in Heaven, or a limitation of it to the Blessed Trinity. Vasquez points especially to *Hom. de Incompreh.*, 3, n. 3: "*Nulli creatae virtuti Deum esse comprehensibilem,*⁴⁸ *et a nulla plene*⁴⁹ *videri posse.*" To understand this and similar passages correctly, we must consider in the first place,⁵⁰ that in St. Chrysostom's time the distinction between such terms as knowing (γνώσις), seeing (θεωρία), and comprehending (κατάληψις) was not yet clearly defined, and that the Saint was not minded to deny the simple *visio intuitiva*, but merely combated the *comprehensio adaequata* asserted by Eunomius.

³⁶ ὀψόμεθα αὐτὸν καθὼς ἐστίν.

³⁷ Matthew 5:8

³⁸ βλέπουσι τὸ πρόσωπον τοῦ πατρὸς μου.

³⁹ Matthew 18:10.

⁴⁰ Cfr. Petavius, *De Deo*, VII, 7.

⁴¹ *Comment. in S. The.*, 1 p., disp. 37, cap. 3.

⁴² *Ad Theod. Laps.*, n. 11.

⁴³ διὰ πίστεως.

⁴⁴ διὰ εἶδους.

⁴⁵ *Hom. in Phil.*, 3, n. 3.

⁴⁶ διὰ εισόδου is probably a more correct reading than διὰ εἶδους.

⁴⁷ ἀλλὰ πρόσωπον πρὸς πρόσωπον.

⁴⁸ κατάληπτον.

⁴⁹ μετὰ ἀκριβείας.

⁵⁰ Cfr. Kleutgen, *De Ipso Deo*, p. 238.

Hence such guarded phrases as these: "γνώσις ἀκριβῆς, ἀκριβῆς κατάληψις τῆς οὐσίας, ἀκριβῶς γινώσκειν," etc. An adequate comprehension of God, such as that taught by Eunomius, is plainly not granted to either angels or men, but, as St. Chrysostom himself elsewhere explains, is proper only to the three Divine Persons.⁵¹ By putting a different construction on St. Chrysostom's teaching, we should not only muddle the sense and violate the context of his writings, but make him contradict himself.⁵²

γ) Vasquez's accusations against certain other Fathers must be appraised in the light of this typical example. If St. Basil asserts that "the angels do not see the Godhead as It sees Itself," he expresses no doubt as to the beatific vision, but merely wishes to emphasize the dogma of God's absolute incomprehensibility, which makes Him inscrutable even to the Elect in Heaven. "The face to face vision and the perfect cognition of the incomprehensible majesty of God,"⁵³ he says, "is promised to all who are worthy of it as a reward in the hereafter."⁵⁴ Such was also the teaching of St. Cyril of Jerusalem, who, after declaring that "the angels do not see God as He is,"⁵⁵ immediately adds: "They see Him according to the measure of their ability, ... the Thrones and Powers [see Him] more perfectly than the [mere] angels, yet short of His excellency;⁵⁶ only the one Holy Ghost, besides the Son, can see Him in a becoming manner."⁵⁷

8) We can spare ourselves the trouble of defending the other Fathers who have been attacked by Vasquez, because it is quite plain to any one who reads their writings carefully and without bias, that they teach just the contrary of what Vasquez imputes to them. If the one or other of them does here, and there appear to deviate from the orthodox view (as, *e. g.*, Gregory of Nyssa), they must be interpreted in the same way as St. Chrysostom. There is no solid reason for charging a single one of these Fathers with heterodoxy. St. Augustine already showed⁵⁸ how certain utterances of St. Ambrose and St. Jerome can be construed in a perfectly orthodox sense.⁵⁹ The only false note in the harmonious concert is an expression of Theodoretus in regard to the Angels, who, he says, "do not see the Divine Essence, but only a certain lustre,"⁶⁰ which is adapted to their nature." It is likely that this passage is the source of the heresy of the fourteenth century Palamites,⁶¹ who alleged that the divine attributes can be contemplated separately from the divine Substance in the form of a "garb of light" enveloping the Godhead.⁶²

⁵¹ *Homily on the Gospel of John*, 15, n. 2: "For by knowledge He here means an exact idea and comprehension, such as the Father hath of the Son."—"γνώσιν γάρ ἐνταῦθα (Ἰησοῦς) τὴν ἀκριβῆ λέγει θεωρίαν τε καὶ κατάληψιν, καὶ τοσαύτην ὅσην ὁ Πατήρ ἔχει περὶ τοῦ Παιδός"

⁵² Cfr. Wirceburgenses, *De Deo Uno*, nn. 99 sqq.

⁵³ τὸ μὲν γὰρ πρόσωπον πρὸς πρόσωπον, καὶ ἡ τελεία ἐπίγνωσις

⁵⁴ Basil, *Serm. de Imp. et Potest.*

⁵⁵ οὐ καθὼς ἐστὶν ὁ Θεὸς

⁵⁶ ἔλαττον δὲ τῆς ἀξίας.

⁵⁷ ὡς χρῆ. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catech.*, 6, n. 6.

⁵⁸ *Ep.* 148, *alit.* 111; Migne, *P. L.*, XXXIII, 622.

⁵⁹ For St. Augustine's own teaching the reader is referred to *De Civ. Dei*, XI, 29, XXII, 29, and *De Trinit.*, XIV, 16.

⁶⁰ δόξαν τινα.

⁶¹ On the heresy of the Palamites (from Gregory Palamas), cfr. *Hergnröther's Handbuch der Allgemeinen Kirchengeschichte*, 4th ed. by J. P. Kirsch, vol. II, pp. 804 sqq.; Blunt, *Dictionary of Sects, etc.*, pp. 191 sq.

⁶² Possibly Gregory the Great alluded to Theodoretus when he wrote (*Moral.* XVIII, nn. 90 sq.): "*Fuere nonnulli, qui Deum dicerent etiam in illa regione beatitudinis in claritate quidem sua conspici, sed in natura minime videri. Quos nimirum minor inquisitionis subtilitas fefellit; neque enim illi simplici essentiae aliud esset claritas et aliud natura, sed ipsa ei natura sua claritas, ipsa claritas natura est.*" On the whole subject, see Franzelin, *De Deo Uno*, thes. 19, Romae 1883.

ARTICLE 2

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

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

Here we have to deal with the light of glory. What is the light of glory? Like the light of reason and the light of grace, the light of glory must be immanent in the human intellect, and hence cannot be objectively identical with the majesty or splendor of God (*lumen quod videtur*). Nor can it be the *actus videndi* of the Elect, inasmuch as this act, though immanent in the human intellect, is impossible without the light of glory, just as cognition depends of necessity on the light of reason, and faith on the light of grace. The theologians accordingly define the light of glory as a supernatural force or power imparted to the intellect of the Blessed in Heaven, like a new eye (or principle of vision), enabling them to see God as He is.⁶³

2. THE DOGMA.—The Council of Vienne (A.D. 1311) defined the necessity (and hence implicitly the existence) of the *lumen gloriae*, when, through the mouth of Clement V, it condemned the heresy of the Beguines and Beghards,⁶⁴ that "*Anima non indiget lumine gloriae ipsam elevante ad Deum videndum et eo beate fruendum.*"⁶⁵

a) The necessity of the light of glory flows as a corollary from what we have said above. If the order of grace and salvation instituted for all rational creatures is a strictly supernatural state, absolutely unattainable by purely natural means; if, in particular, the natural power of the created intellect is not sufficient to enable it to attain to an intuitive vision of God's essence because He "dwells in light inaccessible;"—then manifestly the cognitive faculty of rational creatures must, in virtue of the *potentia obedientialis* latent therein, be elevated to the supernatural sphere and endowed with the supernatural power necessary for it to see God. Whoever denies this conclusion must perforce accept the heretical antecedent that the created intellect is able by its own natural powers to arrive at an intuitive vision of God.⁶⁶

b) The necessity of the light of glory can be proved even more cogently from its relation to the *habitus* of theological faith. For while the supernatural *habitus* of love (*habitus caritatis*) will continue in the beyond,⁶⁷ faith, on the other hand, will cease, being changed into vision.⁶⁸ Now, if the supernatural life of faith here on earth is supported by a special *habitus*, *viz.*, theological faith, it is plain that the light of glory, too, which takes the place of faith in Heaven, requires a *habitus* for its foundation; the more so because the beatific vision is far superior to the knowledge of faith, representing, as it does, the summit which grace makes it possible for any created intellect to attain. Cfr. Apoc. XXII, 4 sqq. (*Rev 22:4*): "*Et videbunt faciem eius;*"⁶⁹ ... *et nox ultra non erit; et non egebunt*

⁶³ Cfr. W. Humphrey, "*His Divine Majesty*," pp. 48 sqq.

⁶⁴ On the Beguines and the Beghards, see E. Gilliat-Smith in the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. II, pp. 389 sq.

⁶⁵ *Clement.*, 1. V, tit. 3, cap. 3.

⁶⁶ Cfr. *Supra*, Article 1, No. 2.

⁶⁷ Cfr. 1 Cor. 13:8: ἡ ἀγάπη οὐδέποτε ἐκπίπτει

⁶⁸ Cfr. 1 Cor. 13:10: ὅταν δὲ ἔλθῃ τὸ τέλειον, τὸ ἐκ μέρους καταργηθήσεται.

⁶⁹ ὄψονται τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ

*lumine lucernae, neque lumine solis, quoniam Dominus Deus illuminabit illos,*⁷⁰ *et regnabunt in saecula saeculorum*—And they shall see his face; ... and night shall be no more: and they shall not need the light of the lamp, nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God shall enlighten them, and they shall reign for ever and ever."

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

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

α) We must reject as incorrect in the first place the opinion of that school which holds that a mere extrinsic elevation (*elevatio extrinseca*) is sufficient⁷¹ for the supernatural equipment of the human intellect, or that it is at least possible.⁷² The essence of this *elevatio extrinseca* is held by its champions to consist not in any intrinsic strengthening of the cognitive faculty, but in the exercise by God Himself of an immediate influence on the natural intellect, enabling it to attain to supernatural vision. Some theologians, as, *e. g.*, Cardinals Cajetan and Franzelin, regard this opinion as theologically unsound, and as involving a philosophic contradiction, on the ground that no vital potency can produce a supernatural act without undergoing an intrinsic alteration.⁷³ Whatever view one may take of the possibility or impossibility of the *elevatio extrinseca*, this much appears to be certain: the theory does not accord with the *spirit* of the Clementine decision, because the term "*lumen gloriae elevans animam ad Deum videndum*" implies just as much of an intrinsic (qualitative) change in the principle of cognition as does the phrase, "*lumen fidei elevans animam ad credendum*."

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

γ) Thomassin and several other theologians⁷⁴ held that the beatific vision of God consists in a direct participation by the Elect in the Divine Vision itself, *i. e.*, in an actual transfer of the divine act of intuition to the intellect of the Just. Thomassin says:⁷⁵ "*Videtur Deus a beatis non alia specie intelligibili quam Verbo ipso mentem informante*. Nay, he does not shrink from identifying the light of glory with the Holy Ghost, falsely drawing from Ps. 35:10: "*In lumine tuo videbimus lumen*" the conclusion: "*Ideoque lumen gloriae, quo videtur Deus, est Spiritus sanctus*." Such a confusion of the beatific vision with the uncreated Logos, and of the light of glory with the Person of the Holy Ghost, deserves to be called adventurous. While it is quite certain that God cannot transfer His own vital act of self-contemplation to any extraneous being, it is equally certain that the Blessed in Heaven behold Him in virtue of a vital act of vision proper to, and immanent in, their own intellects. Can I see with the eyes of another? True, the Holy Ghost elevates and strengthens the intellect *per appropriationem*;

⁷⁰ ὁ θεὸς φωτίζει ἐπ' αὐτούς

⁷¹ Durandus, *Comment. in Quatuor Libros Sent.*, IV, dist. 49, qu. 20.

⁷² Cfr. Suarez, *De Deo*, II, 13; Toletus, *Comment. in S. Theol.*, 1, qu. 12, art. 5, concl. 3.

⁷³ Cfr., however, G. B. Tepe, S. J., *Instit. Theol.*, II, pp. 137 sqq., Paris 1895.

⁷⁴ Mentioned by Lessius, *De Summo Bono*, II, 2.

⁷⁵ *De Deo*, VI, 16.

but He is not the subjective principle of energy from which the supernatural act of vision vitally emanates. Pursued to its logical conclusion this theory leads directly to Pantheism.

b) From what we have said in refutation of these false theories the reader can easily formulate the true view. According to the *sententia communis*, the light of glory consists in that "supernatural power which inheres in the intellect of the Blessed as a permanent *habitus*, enabling them to see the Divine Countenance." This definition possesses the twofold advantage of being in full accord with the Clementine decree, and of satisfying the scientific dogmatician.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ On some of the deeper problems concerning the *species impressa* and *expressa*, cfr. G. B. Tepe, *Instit. Theol.*, pp. 145 sqq. Chr. Pesch, S. J., treats the same subject more briefly in his *Praelect. Dogmat.*, vol. II, 3rd ed., pp. 41 sqq. Friburgi 1906.

ARTICLE 3
THE BEATIFIC VISION IN ITS RELATION TO THE DIVINE
INCOMPREHENSIBILITY

1. STATE OF THE QUESTION.—The incomprehensibility of the Divine Essence must not be conceived as merely relative. God is incomprehensible to us not only in the natural condition of our intellect here below, but likewise in the supernatural state of glory in Heaven. Holy Scripture⁷⁷ and Tradition both define incomprehensibility as an absolute attribute, by which the Divine Essence is, and ever remains, impenetrable to every created and creatable intellect, even in the state of transfiguration and elevation produced by the light of glory. The Fourth Lateran Council enumerates "*incomprehensibilis*" among God's absolute and incommunicable attributes.⁷⁸ Now there arises a difficult problem. It has been defined by Benedict XII (1336) and by the Florentine Council (1439), that the beatific vision of the Blessed in Heaven is directed to the infinite substance of God, nay, to the Blessed Trinity itself, which the Elect intue *immediate, nude, clare et aperte*. If this is true, how can the Divine Essence remain incomprehensible to those who enjoy the beatific vision? In other words: How can the dogma of the absolute incomprehensibility of God be reconciled with the dogmatic teaching of the Church that the Just in Heaven are happy in the intuitive vision of the Divine Essence?

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

a) By excepting from the beatific vision several divine attributes, and positing the essence of God's incomprehensibility precisely in the concealment of certain unseen divine perfections, Thomassin and Toletus manifestly minimize the dogma of the *visio intuitiva*. Toletus insists that "*Decem attributa distincte percipere, maioris est virtutis quam octo; ergo infinita percipere infinitae est virtutis. Divinae perfectiones sunt infinitae: ergo impossibile est, omnes ab intellectu creato percipi.*"⁷⁹ But to distinguish between seen and unseen attributes is contrary to the absolute simplicity of the Divine Essence. That some of God's attributes remain hidden to the Elect, in contradistinction to others which they do see, is a theory which can be entertained only on the assumption that the Divine Essence is split up into an infinite multiplicity of objectively distinct perfections, of which one might become visible while the others remained hidden. But the essence of the Godhead is physically and metaphysically indivisible. Hence, whoever enjoys an intuitive vision of this most simple Being, must envisage either all its perfections or none. To the objection of Toletus that in that case "*sequeretur quod omnia Dei iudicia, omnes voluntates occultae essent beatis manifesta, quia omnia talia sunt formaliter in Deo,*" we retort that God's occult decrees and counsels involve an extrinsic relation, *i. e.*, a relation to something which is not God. As little as the intuition of the Divine Essence *eo ipso* entails a knowledge of all real and possible creatures — for these do not form a part of the Divine Essence as such — just so little does a vision of the Divine Essence in its entirety necessarily imply knowledge of God's free decrees, which have their terminus outside of the Godhead, and, therefore, remain hidden even to the Elect in Heaven, unless God sees fit to disclose them by a special revelation.

⁷⁷ Cfr. Job XI, 7; Ps. CXLIV, 3.

⁷⁸ Cfr. Denzinger-Bannwart, *Enchirid.*, n. 428.

⁷⁹ *Comment. in S. Theol.*, 1, qu. 12, art. 7.

b) The second theory under consideration detracts from the dogma of God's incomprehensibility. Its champions (notably Ockham and Gabriel Biel) assert that no concept formed of any object is complete, unless to the *comprehensio intrinseca* (*i. e.*, an exhaustive notion of its objective cognoscibility), there is joined a *comprehensio extrinseca*, which implies that the subjective mode of cognition is the most perfect possible. This view does not necessarily deny the incomprehensibility of God, because after all it is only God's contemplation of Himself which is entitatively and noëtically infinite, inasmuch as only the infinite Being Himself is capable of performing an infinitely perfect vital act. But the underlying shallow conception of God's incomprehensibility involves certain insoluble antinomies. It implies, on the one hand, that the Blessed in Heaven might enjoy a true and full comprehension of the Divine Essence without infringing on the "ἀκαταληψία," inasmuch as, subjectively and from the noëtic standpoint, there would still remain an unbridgeable chasm between God's divine apprehension of Himself and the vision which He vouchsafes to His creatures in Heaven. It implies, on the other hand, that the attribute of incomprehensibility cannot be limited to the Divine Essence, but must be extended to all things without exception, even the smallest and most easily knowable. Not only God, but every truth (*e. g.*, the Pythagorean theorem), nay, every material object (*e. g.*, a blade of grass) would then be incomprehensible even to the highest angelic intellect, for the simple reason that an infinitely perfect mode of knowledge is possible only to an infinite being.⁸⁰

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

"*Ens et verum convertuntur.*" Therefore God's knowableness, like His Essence, must be infinite. Infinite cognoscibility, however, can be exhausted only by an infinite power of cognition, and this no creature possesses. Hence it is in the infinite, absolute Being only that cognoscibility and cognition, being and thought, can be really identical." Everything that is comprehended by any knowing mind, is known by it as perfectly as it is knowable.... But the Divine Substance is infinite in comparison with every created intellect, since every created intellect is bounded within the limits of a certain species. It is impossible, therefore, that the vision of any created intellect can see the Divine Substance as perfectly as it is visible."⁸¹ In the light of this explanation we can understand why the Elect in Heaven, though they envisage the entire Substance of God (including all His attributes and the Divine Persons), nevertheless do not and cannot comprehend this Substance either intensively, to the limits of its content, nor yet extensively, in its totality. They intue the whole Godhead (*totum*), but they do not intue it fully (*totaliter*); they envisage the Infinite Being Himself (*infinitum*), but they do not envisage Him in an infinite manner (*infinite*). As a keen eye, says Richard of Middletown,⁸² perceives the same color more distinctly than a weak eye, so the saints' supernatural power of vision is proportioned to the measure of their merits, that is to say, to the different degrees of the light of glory vouchsafed to each, although they all behold the same object.⁸³

Readings: — Lessius, S. J., *De Summo Bono et Aeterna Beatitudine Hominis*, Antwerpiae 1616.— Kleutgen, *De Ipso Deo*, pp. 222 sq., Ratisbonae 1881.— Bautz, *Der Himmel, spekulativ dargestellt*, Mainz 1881.— *Franzelin, *De Deo Uno*, thes. 14-19. — Th. Conefry, *The Beatific Vision*, Longford 1907.— W. Humphrey, S. J., "*His Divine Majesty*" pp. 46 sqq., London 1897.— Idem, *The One Mediator*, pp. 296 sqq., London 1890.— Schnütgen, *Die Visio Beatifica*, Würzburg 1867.— *G. B. Tepe, S. J., *Institut. Theol.*, Vol. II, pp. 103 sqq., Parisiis 1895.— Scheeben, *Die Mysterien des*

⁸⁰ On the unsatisfactory theory of Vasquez (*De Deo*, disp. 53, cap. 2), see Franzelin, *De Deo Uno*, thes. 18, Romae 1883.

⁸¹ S. Thom., *Cont. Gent.*, III, 55. (Rickaby, *Of God and His Creatures*, p. 227. London 1905.)

⁸² *Comment. in quatuor Libros Sent.*, III, dist. 14, qu. 14.

⁸³ Cfr. St. Thom., *Comp. Theol.*, cap. 216.

Christentums, 2nd ed., pp. 583 sqq., Freiburg 1898.— St. Thomas, *S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 12, and the commentators.

SECTION 3 EUNOMIANISM AND ONTOLOGISM

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

ARTICLE 1 THE HERESY OF THE EUNOMIANS

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

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

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

c) Besides "ἀγεννησία" (uncreatedness), he said, there is no other divine attribute. All the other so-called attributes are mere synonyms comprised in the one notion of "ἀγεννησία." A composite concept of God would necessarily imply composition in the Divine Essence, and therefore could not possibly be true. There is but one simple conception of God that corresponds to the simplicity of the Divine Essence, and that is "ἀγεννησία"⁴

2. REFUTATION OF EUNOMIANISM.—Though the Church never formally condemned Eunomius, his teaching as to the absolute intelligibility of the Divine Essence has always been held to be quite as heretical as his decidedly Arian view of the Logos. In refuting him the Fathers of his time insisted chiefly on the dogma of the divine incomprehensibility, though they did not neglect to combat this heretic, who was well versed in the writings of Aristotle, with the sharp weapons of philosophy also. It was, as we have already shown on a previous page, especially Basil,⁵ Gregory of Nazianzus,⁶

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

² *Hom. 2 De Incompr.*

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

⁴ On the history and use of the term ἀγέννητος, see Newman, *Select Treatise of St. Ahtanasius*, Vol. II, pp. 347-9, 9th ed., London 1903.

⁵ *Contra Eunom.* On St. Basil's attitude towards Eunomianism, cfr. Bardenhewer-Shahan, *Patrology*, pp. 282 sq.

Gregory of Nyssa,⁷ and Chrysostom⁸ who refuted this heresy. After what we have said on the subject in an earlier chapter, we need not enter into a detailed argument here.

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

⁶ *Or. Theol.*, 1-4.

⁷ *Contra Eunom.*

⁸ *Hom. contra Anomoeoes*, especially 1-5, περὶ τοῦ ἀκαταλήπτου.

ARTICLE 2

WHY ONTOLOGISM IS UNTENABLE

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

2. HISTORY OF ONTOLOGISM.— The germ of Ontologism may be traced back to the time of St. Thomas Aquinas, who himself at first favored the theory, in his Commentary on the *Liber Sententiarum* of Peter Lombard, but combated it vigorously in his later writings.² In the fifteenth century Ontologism had an exponent in Marsilio Ficino, an ardent neo-Platonist, who went so far as to demand that Plato should be read in the churches, and who kept a light burning before the great philosopher's bust in his room at Florence.³

a) Nicolas Malebranche first developed the theory into a philosophical system and may therefore be justly called the Father of Ontologism. He tells us in his famous *Recherche de la Vérité* (published in 1675): God is as it were the Sun in the center of a world of thinking spirits. He is ever present to our minds, into which He pours the light of His eternal ideas. It is only by peering into this intellectual Sun, *i. e.*, by an immediate intuition of God, that we perceive all things and truths. "*Nous voyons toutes choses en Dieu*"⁴ Malebranche's theory was adopted and defended by Cardinal Gerdil in his *Défense du Sentiment du P. Malebranche sur la Nature et l'Origine des Idées*; but it is said the learned Cardinal renounced Ontologism in his later years. In the nineteenth century, Vincenzo Gioberti⁵ endeavored to strengthen Ontologism by drawing his famous distinction between direct and reflex perception. Direct perception, according to him, consists in the immediate intuition of God, though not of God *per se*, but in His creative influence on the world. Hence the celebrated principle: "*Vente créa le esistenze* — Being creates existences." In virtue of reflexive perception we realize, though indistinctly and in a limited way, what we see clearly and definitely, though unconsciously, in the *intuitus Dei*. The essence of Gioberti's system lies in the assumption that direct intuition of God, though only as "creating existences" — *Ens creans existentias, i. e.*, in so far as He exercises an influence upon the cosmos,— is the starting-point of all human knowledge.

¹ + 1852. For a sketch of his life and a brief account of his philosophy, see U. Benigni's article, "Gioberti," in vol. VI of the *Catholic Encyclopedia*.

² On this point, cfr. M. Schumacher, *The Knowableness of God*, Ch. II, § 1, no. 3: "Innatism of Aquinas," pp. 109 sqq., Notre Dame, Ind. 1905. See also Msgr. Ferré, *St. Thomas of Aquin and Ideology*, English transl. by a Father of Charity, 3rd ed., London 1881.

³ Cfr. M. Schumacher, C.S.C., in the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. VI, s. v. "Ficino." Among Ficino's several works, the *Theologia Platonica de Animarum Immortalitate* deserves mention. Cfr. also De Wulf-Coffey, *History of Medieval Philosophy*, pp. 468 sq., London 1909.

⁴ For a succinct account of Malebranche's system, see T. Turner, *History of Philosophy*, pp. 464 sq., Boston 1903.

⁵ *Introduzione allo Studio della Filosofia*. On Gioberti, cfr. Benigni in Vol. VI of the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, pp. 562 sq.

b) The Ontological system of Antonio Rosmini (died 1855) created quite a stir, especially in his native Italy. The controversy reached its climax in the condemnation, on December 14, 1887, of forty propositions taken from Rosmini's writings.⁶ The condemnation was pronounced by the Holy Roman and Universal Inquisition by command of Pope Leo XIII. Rosmini, who began his philosophical career as a defender of the theory of "inborn ideas,"⁷ later entered the camp of the Ontologists, and finally ascribed to the *idea entis* certain qualities which belong only to the Absolute, *i. e.*, God.⁸ By hopelessly confusing the notion of indefinite, general, abstract being (τὸ ὄν) with that of the infinite, concrete, divine Being (ὁ ὄν), he gave the Ontological system a decidedly Pantheistic turn.⁹

Among the theistic champions of Ontologism Professor Ubaghs of Louvain (died 1854), whom we have already met with as a defender of Traditionalism, was perhaps the most prominent. "Ubaghs thinks that we are born with the idea of the infinite God, and that this idea is in the beginning unformed, but becomes formed by reflection, to which we are led by our education in human society."¹⁰ Ontological errors were also propagated by Père Gratry,¹¹ Abbé Branchereau,¹² Bishop Hugonin of Bayeux,¹³ Abbé Fabre,¹⁴ by an unknown author under the pseudonym "Sans-Fiel,"¹⁵ and by a number of other writers in France, Belgium, and Italy. There is also, or was until recently, a small school of Ontologists in the United States.¹⁶ German writers, with the sole exception of P. Rothenflue, S. J.,¹⁷ never grew enthusiastic over Ontologism; but such among them as were tainted with it (notably Krause and Baader) drifted straightway into Pantheism, which is after all only a logical — if covert — sequel of Ontologism.

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

⁶ For a list of the condemned doctrines, consult *Rosminianarum Propositionum Trutina Theologica*, Romae, Typis Vaticanis, 1892. A *Life of Rosmini* was written in English by Fr. Lockhart (London 1901). Cfr. Turner, *History of Philosophy*, pp. 631 sq.

⁷ *Nuovo Saggio sull' Origine delle Idee* (1830).

⁸ *Il Rinnovamento della Filosofia* (1836); *Teosofia* (1859).

⁹ Cfr. *Propos. Rosmini damn.*, 1-5.

¹⁰ Boedder, *Natural Theology*, p. 14.

¹¹ *De la Connaissance de Dieu*, 2 vols. Paris 1853. On Gratry and his teachings, see G. M. Sauvage's article *s. v.* in the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. VI.

¹² *Instit. Philos.*

¹³ *Etudes Philosophiques; Ontologisme.*

¹⁴ *Défense de l'Ontologisme.*

¹⁵ *Discussion Amicale sur l'Ontologisme.*

¹⁶ Its most distinguished representative was Orestes A. Brownson. (Cfr. W. Turner, *History of Philosophy*, pp. 636 sq., Boston 1903). Driscoll (*Christian Philosophy: God*, p. 56) says that "Today Ontologism counts no defenders among Catholic writers," but is "most strenuously advocated by many non-Catholic writers" (*e. g.*, Harris, Knight, Luthardt, C. M. Tyler, T. H. Green, E. Caird). "This recent form of Ontologism is due to the influence of Hegel."

¹⁷ *Instit. Philos.*

infinite which could be abstracted. Consequently, the concept of the infinite is derived from an immediate intuition of the Infinite Being itself.

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

.With a contemptuous sneer at "German philosophy," some of the leaders of Ontologism attempted to raise their system into the exalted place of "the only accepted Catholic philosophy." In endeavoring to explain the origin of our ideas, they argued, we must choose between Cartesian Psychologism and Ontologism. In other words: We must draw our ideas either from the mind that conceives them, or from the object of perception (ὄν == being). If we derive them from the mind, we shall depreciate their objective content, deify reason as the sole source of truth, throw open the door to Pantheism, and drift into the shoals of Kant, Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel. Ontologism is the only alternative.¹⁸

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

a) A close examination of the nature of our universal concepts (*ideae universales*) shows convincingly that God cannot be the principal nor (in point of time) the first object of human knowledge here on earth. We first apprehend the visible world, and thence ascend to a knowledge of God as its Creator. Our knowledge of God is the arch or keystone of science. Furthermore, our conception of the infinite is vitiated by an incurable negation,— which could not be were we endowed with an immediate intuition of that Being which is in reality the Infinite. If Ontologism were right, how should we explain the notorious fact that man can know of the existence of God by no other than the syllogistic method? How comes it that we are forced to define the Essence of God by means of concepts that express quality, and to employ the methods of negation and eminence? How is it that theodicy is built up on cosmology and psychology (the sciences of the world and of the soul) ? Why do all our apprehensions and judgments contain an admixture of phantasms?¹⁹ Why, if we have an immediate intuition of God, are we not conscious of it? All these questions Ontologism finds itself unable to answer.

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

b) The falsity of Ontologism further appears from the circumstance that it entails wrong conclusions. Logic tells us that where there is a false consequent, there must be a false antecedent. The worst feature of the Ontologist system is its immanent Pantheistic bias. We do not, of course,

¹⁸ For a refutation of all these fallacies, see the text-books on philosophy; cfr. also No. 3, *infra*.

¹⁹ Cfr. Aristotle, *De Memor. Rem.* 1: "Νοεῖν οὐκ ἔστιν ἄνευ φαντάσματος."

mean to charge all Ontologists, most of whom were well-meaning, learned, and honorable men, with consciously advocating Pantheism, though several of them, like Gioberti and Rosmini, seem to have quite frankly drawn the last conclusions from their premises. What we mean to say is, that the system as such, in its logical deductions, inevitably runs into the marshes of Pantheism. This is most plainly apparent in those forms of Ontologism which identify abstract being (*esse universale*) with Divine Being (*esse infinitum*), and confuse knowledge of the one with an intuition of the other. For if abstract being is really identical with Divine Being, then everything that can be subsumed under the universal notion of being is God; in other words : *Everything is God*. But even the more moderate defenders of the Ontologist system, who put the purely negative necessity, eternity, and unchangeableness of our universal ideas on the same plane with the corresponding positive attributes of God, are guilty of a deification of finite essences and tumble hopelessly into the pit of Pantheism.

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

a) The first in the series of these judgments is a decree of the Holy Office, dated September 18, 1861, in which seven Ontologist propositions are indirectly censured by the remark: "*Tuto tradi non possunt*" Chief among them are: "*Immediata Dei cognitio, habitualis saltem, intellectui humano essentialis est, ita ut sine ea nihil cognoscere possit, siquidem est ipsum lumen intellectuale*" (prop. 1). "*Esse illud, quod in omnibus [est] et sine quo nihil cognoscimus, est esse divinum*" (prop. 2). "*Universalia a parte rei considerata a Deo realiter non distinguuntur*" (prop. 3). The Ontologists tried to make it appear that this decree was aimed directly against Pantheism; but when Branchereau in 1862 submitted his theistic Ontologism to the judgment of the Roman authorities, he was advised that the fifteen theses into which he had cast it fell under the decree of the Holy Office.²⁰ The Vatican Council did not enter into a discussion of this aberration, but one of its dogmatic definitions²¹ plainly strikes at Ontologism, in so far as Ontologism leads logically to a Pantheistic identification of God with the universe.²²

Even more telling and important is the condemnation, in A.D. 1887, by the Congregation of the Holy Office, of forty propositions of Antonio Rosmini, "in proprio sensu auctoris"—a decision which Pope Leo XIII expressly ordered to be observed throughout the universal Church. Several of these forty propositions embody a frank statement of the principles of Ontologism. Thus, *e. g.*: "*Esse indeterminatum, quod procul dubio notum est omnibus intelligentiis, est divinum illud, quod homini in natura manifestatur*" (prop. 4). "*Esse, quod homo intuetur, necesse est ut sit aliquid entis necessarii et aeterni, causae creantis ... atque hoc est Deus*" (prop. 5).²³

b) In appraising the theological value of these official decisions the first question that suggests itself is: If Ontologism contradicts two dogmas, that of the mediate character of our knowledge of God here below,²⁴ and that of the *lumen gloriae*,²⁵ why was it not condemned as a heresy?

α) There is a vast difference between the Ontologists and those earlier writers who denied the dogmas just mentioned. The latter were outright heretics, while the Ontologists, on the contrary, disavow the heretical consequences of their doctrine and profess loyal adherence to the faith. They deny in particular that the intuition of God which they teach implies the "*visio beatifica*," admitting that the latter can only take place in Heaven and by virtue of the "*lumen gloriae*." In explaining this

²⁰ See Kleutgen, *Verurtheilung des Ontologismus*, Münster 1868.

²¹ "*Praedicandus est [Deus] re et essential a mundo distinctus.*"—Denzinger-Bannwart, n. 1782.

²² Cfr. Granderath, *Constit. Dogmat. SS. Conc. Vaticani ex ipsis eius Actis Explicatae*, p. 75, Friburgi 1892.

²³ The full text of the decree is given by Schiffini, *Disput. Metaph. Spec.*, Vol. I, pp. 432 sqq.

²⁴ V. *supra*, Chapter II, § 1.

²⁵ V. *supra*, Chapter II, § 2, Art. 2.

distinction they have recourse to various subterfuges, which, while elucidating nothing, at least prove that those who seek shelter under them are not and do not desire to be regarded as heretics.

β) But the laws of logic are inexorable, and Ontologism cannot escape the heretical conclusions that flow from its principles. It is for this reason that the Church dealt the whole system a mortal blow. An immediate intuition of God,— no matter whether we consider Him as the Absolute Spirit or as the Creator, — necessarily implies an intuitive knowledge of the Most Holy Trinity, and also beatific bliss. He who excludes the visible world as an indispensable medium of cognition, must needs admit that man, if he sees God, Who is simplicity itself, must see Him as He is. Now if, as Ontologism alleges, an intuitive knowledge of the Divine Essence is "natural," nay "essential" to the human intellect, it is impossible to escape the conclusion that an intuitive knowledge of the Most Holy Trinity, and consequently also beatific vision, are likewise natural and essential to the mind of man.²⁶

γ) For a positive dogmatic justification of the Roman decrees against Ontologism it suffices to revert to the two dogmas which we have already proved above. For, the fact that our knowledge of God is necessarily inferential and imperfect, of itself excludes the possibility of an immediate intuitive vision of the Divine Essence. This teaching being so clearly contained in the sources of Divine Revelation, it is plain that the Ontologists cannot base their claims on the Bible. They adduce Ps. IV, 7: "*Signatum est super nos lumen vultus tui, Domine*—The light of thy countenance, O Lord, is signed upon us," in favor of their contention, that we see God directly here below; but the context makes it plain that the Psalmist merely meant to praise the benevolence of God Who watches over him.²⁷ And if St. John (Jn 1:9) speaks of "the true light, which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world," he clearly means supernatural enlightenment by faith and grace through the Divine Logos. Nor has Ontologism been successful in its attempts to found its teaching upon the Fathers. Its opponents were able to show that not a single one of the Fathers ever taught that man enjoys an intuitive vision of God here on earth; no, not even St. Augustine, on whom the Ontologists chiefly rely.

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

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

²⁶ Cfr. Kleutgen, *De Ipso Deo*, pp. 76 sqq.

²⁷ Cfr. Ps. 30:7 Douay-Rheims (31:6 Modern Translations); Numbers 6:25.

13: "*Ipsa visio est facie ad faciem, quae summum praemium promittitur iustis* — That sight is face to face that is promised as the highest reward to the just."

b) It is in conformity with this fundamental teaching of St. Augustine that we must interpret those passages of his writings in which he speaks of God as the "*intelligibilis lux*" of things, and even describes him as the "*lumen mentium*" *Solil*, cap. 1, n. 3: "*Deus intelligibilis lux, in quo et a quo et per quem intelligibiliter lucent omnia* — God is the intelligible light, in which and from which and through which all things are intelligible." *De Civit Dei*, VIII, 7: "[*Deus est*] *lumen mentium ad discenda omnia*—[God is] the light of our understanding, by which all things are learned by us." In the first of these passages his purpose is to raise created things to the rank of copies of the divine original, "incorporated thoughts of God," as it were; while in the second passage he evidently means that the light of reason in man is a reflection as well as an effect of the Divine Light. Cfr. *De Trin.*, XIV, n. 15: "*Mens humana non sua luce, sed summae illius lucis participatione sapiens erit. ... Sic enim dicitur ista hominis sapientia, ut etiam Dei sit ... verum non ita Dei, qua sapiens est Deus, ... quemadmodum dicitur etiam iustitia Dei non solum illa, qua ipse iustus est, sed quam dat homini, cum iustificat impium*—The human mind then will be wise, not by its own light, but by participation of that supreme Light. ... For this wisdom of man is so called, that it is also of God ... yet not so of God, as is that wherewith God is wise ... as we call it the righteousness of God, not only when we speak of that by which He Himself is righteous, but also of that which He gives to man when He justifies the ungodly." This teaching has nothing in common with the Ontologism condemned by the Church; else the Schoolmen would surely not have incorporated it into their treatises on God.²⁸

c) The genius of Augustine ascended to heights into which only the profoundest mystic can follow. It is his mystic utterances that the Ontologists adduce in favor of their theory, especially his teaching that we envisage the truths of the metaphysical order "*in rationibus aeternis*," nay, "*in ipsa, quae supra mentes nostras est, incommutabili veritate*."²⁹ Vercellone and others, from the fact that St. Augustine was favorably inclined towards Platonism, inferred that he postulated an intuitive vision of the archetypal ideas in God Himself. This would stamp him an Ontologist. But the assumption is altogether unfounded. Despite his predilection for Plato,— he himself towards the end of his life retracted the exaggerated encomiums he had heaped upon the ancient Greek philosopher,— St. Augustine never shared the errors of Platonism. St. Thomas assures us³⁰ that "*Augustinus, qui doctrinis Platoniorum imbutus fuerat, si qua invenit fidei accommodata in eorum dictis, assumpsit; quae vero invenit fidei nostrae adversa, in melius commutavit*." Besides, the Ontologist claim cannot be harmonized with Augustine's well-known theory of knowledge. For he not only insists that the conception of God which men have here below, is a cognition "*per speculum*" and "*in aenigmate*," derived from the consideration of the material universe; but he also teaches that we can not argue *a priori* from ideal truth to real truth, or to the Divine Archetype.³¹ Interpreting the above quoted passages by their context, therefore, and in the light of the author's ordinary teaching, their meaning must be that the Author of all things, in creating them, stamped them with the seal of ontological truth, at the same time imprinting upon the human intellect the eternal and necessary laws that govern thought, *i. e.*, logical truth. That man has an immediate intellectual intuition of all truths in God, is a teaching quite foreign to the mind of St. Augustine, as interpreted by St. Thomas Aquinas and the Schoolmen generally; and the Ontologist construction, which was unknown before the seventeenth century, has no claim to truth or probability.³²

²⁸ Cfr. S. Thom., *S. Theol.*, 12 qu. 84, art. 5; *De Verit.*, qu. 10, art. 11, ad 12.

²⁹ *Confess.*, XII, 25.

³⁰ *S. Theol.*, *l. c.*

³¹ Cfr. *supra*, Chapter 1, Art. 1.

³² Cfr. Schütz, *Divum Augustinum non esse Ontologum*, Monasterii 1867.

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

Readings: — *A. Lepidi, *Examen Philosophico-Theologicum de Ontologismo*, Lovanii 1874.— Schiffini, S. J., *Disput. Metaphysicae Spec.*, Vol. I, pp. 476 sqq., Taurini 1888.— *Kleutgen, S. J., *Verurteilung des Ontologismus durch den hl. Stuhl (Beilagen zur Theol. und Philos. der Vorzeit)*, Münster 1868.— ♦Zigliara, *Deila Luce Intellettuale e dell' Ontologismo*, Romae 1874.— Karl Werner, *Antonio Rosmini und seine Schule*, Wien 1884.— IDEM, *Der Ontologismus als Philosophie des nationalen Gedankens*, Wien 1885.— IDEM, *Die kritische Zersetzung und speculative Umbildung des Ontologismus*, Wien 1885.— Boedder, S. J., *Natural Theology*, 2nd ed., pp. 12 sqq., London 1899.— M. Schumacher, *The Knowableness of God*, pp. 136 sqq., Notre Dame, Ind. 1905.— J. T. Driscoll, *Christian Philosophy: God*, pp. 56 sqq., 2nd ed., New York 1904.— W. Turner, *History of Philosophy*, pp. 228, 367, 632 sqq., Boston 1903.—Rosmini's *Short Sketch of Modern Philosophies and of His Own System*, trans. by Lockhart, London 1882.— For the ecclesiastical decisions in the matter, see the *Resolutiones Congr. S. Officii et Indicis de Traditionalismo, Ontologismo, etc.*

PART II

THE DIVINE ESSENCE

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

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

CHAPTER I
THE BIBLICAL NAMES OF GOD
SECTION I

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

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

Scheeben²⁸⁷ has ingeniously divided the so-called "seven holy names" of God in the Old Testament into three classes, of which the first (containing three names) elucidates the relation of God *ad extra, i. e.*, to man; while the third (comprising also three names) sets off the "three aspects of His intrinsic perfection." In the center of both groups stands *Yahweh*, which is essentially a proper name, because it expresses the Divine Essence, and which is related to the other six names as a cause to its effects.

2. THE THREE CLASSES OF DIVINE NAMES.—As we have already explained, the proper name of God, describing His Essence, is יהוה (*Yahweh*). The three aspects of His intrinsic perfection are denoted by שַׁדַּי (*Schadai*), the Strong, Mighty; עֲלִיּוֹן (*Elion*), the High, Sublime, the Most High; and קָדוֹשׁ (*Kadosch*), the Holy. God's relation *ad extra* is characterized by אֵל (*El*), the Strong, אֱלֹהִים (*Elohim* (*see note*) - *He who is worthy of veneration*²⁸⁸), and אֲדֹנָי (*Adonai*), Commander, Lord.

a) God Himself revealed to Moses the *Tetragrammaton ineffabile* (YHWH יהוה) as the proper name signifying His Divine Essence.²⁸⁹ Owing to a misunderstanding of Lev. 24:16: "*Qui pronuntiaverit [=blasphemaverit] nomen Domini, morte moriatur* — He that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, dying let him die," the Jews did not dare to pronounce the "Four Letters" (*τετραγράμματον*), and in consequence it long remained uncertain whether the Tetragrammaton was to be pronounced "Jehovah" (a word still in use), or "Yihve," or "Yehave," or "Yahweh." In the Jewish synagogues יהוה was always pronounced *Adonai*, according to the Rabbinical precept: "*Dixit Deus: non legor, sed scribor. Scribor et legor Adonai.*"²⁹⁰ This uncertainty as to the proper pronunciation of יהוה explains the interesting fact that the Tetragrammaton found its way even into Greek Bible codices, where it was changed by ignorant copyists into ΠΙΠΙ (=πιπι). To indicate that mm was always to be pronounced אֲדֹנָי (*Adonai*), it was written with the vowel signs of the latter word, thus: יהוה (*chateph-patach* being altered into *shwa mobile*). This gave rise — probably no earlier than the sixteenth century — to the wrong pronunciation "Jehova." Today it seems pretty certain that the word must be written יהוה and pronounced *Yahweh*.²⁹¹

More important than the question of its grammatical form, is the meaning of the Tetragrammaton. Its root is undoubtedly הָוה, an older form of היה, *i. e.*, *to be*. Hence יהוה means: *He Who Is*. God Himself attached this meaning to the word when he replied to Moses who had asked Him for His name: "I am who am."²⁹² It is therefore *God's proper name*, denoting His very essence, and can never, even catachrestically, be applied to other beings besides Himself, *e. g.*, to false gods.²⁹³

Exegetes have often discussed the question, whether the Tetragrammaton was known to the antediluvian Patriarchs and to Abraham, or whether it was first revealed to Moses. In attempting to solve this problem, we must distinguish carefully between the word as a vocal sound, and its meaning.

²⁸⁷ *Dogmatik*, Vol. 1, § 66 (Wilhelm-Scannell's *Manual*, pp. 170 sqq.)

²⁸⁸ Editorial Note for the electronic edition of this work. This word, אֱלֹהִים, is *Elohim*.

²⁸⁹ Exodus 3:13 sqq.; VI, 3.

²⁹⁰ Cfr. Raym. Martini, *Pugio Fidei*, p. 649, Lips. 1687

²⁹¹ Cfr. Broglie, "Elohim et Jahweh", *Annales de Phil. Chretienne*, pp. 537 sqq., 1891.

²⁹² Exodus 3:14 Vulgate., "Sum qui sum"; Septuagint, ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὢν; Hebrew, אֲנִי הוּא אֲנִי

²⁹³ Cfr. Isaiah 42:8 "I the Lord, this is my name: I will not give my glory to another.—Ego Jahve, hoc est nomen meum; gloriam meam alteri non dabo." (Cfr. also Deut. 6:4; 2 Kings 7:22 (2 Kings here is 2 Samuel))

The pre-Mosaic origin of the word is probable: (1) from the archaic verbal root הָיָה , *to be*, from which was formed הָיָה (the root - is not הָיָה , *to be*, which was in use in Moses' time); (2) from the use of the Divine Name among the Patriarchs;²⁹⁴ (3) from the pre-Mosaic verbal compounds with יְהוָה (abbreviated הָ), like Abja, Achja, Jochabed, Morja, etc. The assumption of a prolepsis does not appear to be justified in view of the fact that the name occurs 150 times in Genesis and that Moses introduces himself to the Israelites as one sent by Yahweh.²⁹⁵ It is quite certain that the Tetragrammaton in its deeper meaning and full sense (as a *nomen proprium*) was first revealed to Moses. Cfr. Exodus 6:3: "Ego יהוה *et apparui Abraham et Isaac et Iacob ut אֵל שַׁדַּי*, *sed (quoad nomen meum יְהוָה non notus fui illis.*" This fact is well established and cannot be affected by Delitzsch's theory²⁹⁶ that the name of God was familiar to the ancient Babylonians.

b) Among the names of the third class, which, as we have said, express the intrinsic (transcendental) perfection of God, שַׁדַּי (*Schadai*), usually enforced by the article אֵל שַׁדַּי or יְהוָה שַׁדַּי , is the most frequent and also the most ancient.²⁹⁷ Derived from the etymon שָׁרַר , *i. e., to be violent, employ force*, it designates the intrinsic might or power of God, thus: the Allpowerful; Sept., *παντοκράτωρ*; Vulg., *omnipotens (i. e., fortis)*.— The majesty and sublimity of God find expression in the name עֶלְיָ (from עָלָה = *ascendit*): the Most High; Sept., $\acute{\omicron}\ \upsilon\psi\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\varsigma$; Vulg., *altissimus*.— The word קָדוֹשׁ , found chiefly in the Prophets, and among these especially in Isaiah, means the Holy One, and denotes the sanctity and purity of the Divine Essence. These three words, although originally adjectives, have been developed into substantive appellations of the Deity and enjoy the prerogative of being applied exclusively to the one true God.

c) The same cannot be said of the first two names of the remaining group, which describe God in His relation to man. The first and most ancient of these, current among all Semitic nations, אֵל (from אָזַל , *to be strong*), *i. e., the Strong, the Mighty* (Sept., $\acute{\omicron}\ \iota\sigma\chi\rho\acute{\omicron}\varsigma$, *παντοκράτωρ*), is sometimes *per abusum* applied also to pagan gods.²⁹⁸ When applied to the one true God, it is emphasized thus: אֵלֵהֶם ($\acute{\omicron}\ \Theta\acute{\epsilon}\omicron\varsigma$), or אֱלֹהֵי (*Deus vivus*), or אֵל הַשָּׁמַיִם (*Deus coelorum*), or אֵל אֲלֹהֵיִם (*Deus deorum*).²⁹⁹ The plural form אֱלֹהִים (the singular, אֱלֹה , is chiefly poetical), occurs no less than 2,500 times, and is probably related to אֵל . Its primary root is supposed to be אָזַל , *to be strong*, its derived root אָלַף , *to swear, to venerate, to fear*. The fundamental meaning of the word, therefore, is *power*, inasmuch as it strikes fear, or challenges adoration.³⁰⁰ *Elohim* is a majestic plural, or a veiled indication of the Most Holy Trinity, and by no means represents a rudiment of polytheism. For not only is the word almost invariably construed with the verbal singular, but we must remember that God Himself, took special care to preserve Monotheism pure among the Jews. *Elohim* is quite frequently applied to the false gods of the Gentiles, and likewise to angels and kings, that is to say, to rational beings that reflect the power and adorableness of God.³⁰¹ In all such cases, however, אֱלֹהִים is always a true plural.³⁰² To describe the true God, it is often combined with appositions such as אֱלֹהִים צְבָאוֹת (*Elohim Sabaoth = dominus exercituum*) or *Elohim Abraham, Isaac, Jacob*, etc. Unlike יְהוָה , *Elohim* is consequently not a proper name of God, but rather a *nomen appositivum*, which sometimes even takes the place of a predicate, *e. g.*, "Yahweh is the Elohim." A further difference lies in this that *Elohim* is used preferably to designate the God of nature, while *Yahweh* more often describes God in His relation to the supernatural order of salvation.— The most significant and most important name of this group is the third, אֲדֹנָי (*Adonai*), from דָּן , *to judge*; hence: *Judge, Lord (Dominus, ὁ κύριος)*. In spite of its plural form (= "my lords;" *cfr. monsieur, monsignore*) *Adonai* is always singular in meaning and is applied only to the one true God. It is closely related to יְהוָה , not only because it loans its vowels to that word, but also for the reason that it is to be considered as a quasi-proper name of God.³⁰³

²⁹⁴ Cfr. Gen 4:1, 26; 5:29; *et passim*.

²⁹⁵ Cfr., however, Himpel, *Kirchenlexikon*, 2nd ed., VI, 1281 sq.

²⁹⁶ *Bibel und Babel*, Leipzig 1902.

²⁹⁷ Cfr. Exodus 6:3.

²⁹⁸ Daniel 11:37 sqq.

²⁹⁹ Cfr. Zschokke, *Theologie der Propheten*, pp. 12 sqq. Freiburg 1877.

³⁰⁰ Cfr. the Arabian *Allah*, Syrian *Aloho*, Babylonian *Jl, Jlu*.

³⁰¹ Cfr. Ps. 81:6 (Ps 82:6 modern translations following the Hebrew): "I have said: You are gods.—*Ego dixi, dii estis.*"

³⁰² Cfr. St. Thomas, *S. Theol.*, 12, qu. 13, art 9.

³⁰³ Cfr. Gesenius, *Thesaur.*, I, 328 sq.

SECTION 2 .
THE NAMES APPLIED TO GOD IN THE NEW TESTAMENT
AND IN PROFANE LITERATURE—
THE SYMBOLIC APPELLATIONS

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

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

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

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

The origin of the Germanic *Gott* (English *God*) is far more uncertain, in fact, it has not been cleared up. Some have derived the word from the Sanskrit *jut* = *dyut* (*shining*); others from *ghu*, *to hail*; others from the Greek ἀγαθός (*good*), while again others have traced it to the Persian *khoda* (old Persian *godata* = "ens a se").⁶ The Slavic tongues have the name *bogu*, Polish *bog*, derived from the Sanskrit root *bhag* = *to apportion, order, venerate*.⁷

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

Adapting itself to man's way of thinking and speaking, the Bible applies to God many appellations known as anthropomorphic or anthropopathic, which describe Him as if he were a man,

¹Deuteronomy 32:6; Isaiah 63:16; Malachi 2:10.

²*Cratyl.*, c. 16, p. 397 D.

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

⁴Cfr. Max Müller, *Essays*, IV, 444. The Sanskrit word *Dyaus* (Persian *deus*), formed from this root, appears not only in the Latin language as *Deus* (cfr. *dies, sub divo*) and in Greek as Θεός and Ζεὺς, but it also occurs in the Lithuanian as *devas* and in the ancient Nordic Edda as *Týr* (genit. *Tý-s*, accus. *Tý*), whom the ancient Teutons venerated as their supreme god. In Old High German this god was called *Zio*, in Anglo-Saxon, *Tiw*; hence our English *Tuesday*, the same as "Ziestag" in the Alemannic dialect. The highest deity of the Romans, *Jupiter* (*Dispiter*) is identical with the ancient Greek Ζεὺς-πατήρ. Cfr. J. T. Driscoll, *Christian Philosophy: God*, pp. 42 sqq., 2nd ed., New York 1904.

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

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

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

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

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

⁸ Cfr. Hebrews 12:29.

⁹ Mal. 4:2. (Douay-Rheims)

¹⁰ John 1:9; 1 John 1:5.

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

CHAPTER II
THE ESSENCE OF GOD IN ITS RELATION TO HIS ATTRIBUTES
SECTION 1
FALSE THEORIES

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

ARTICLE 1

THE HERESY OF GILBERT DE LA PORREE AND THE PALAMITES

1. HERETICAL REALISM AND THE CHURCH.— That well-known champion of extreme Realism, Gilbert de la Porree,¹² taught that there is and needs must be a real distinction between God and Divinity, and between essence and person in God. Opinions differ as to whether Gilbert applied his Realism also to the Essence and the attributes of God. Some writers exonerate him from this charge, while St. Bernard¹³ declares him guilty. It is certain, at any rate, that the Synod of Rheims, A. D. 1148, in the presence of Pope Eugene III, condemned as heretical the error of the extreme Realists when it decreed: "*Credimus et confitemur, simplicem naturam divinitatis esse Deum nec aliquo sensu catholico posse negari quin divinitas sit Deus et Deus divinitas. Si vero dicitur, Deum sapientia sapientem ... aeternitate aeternum ... esse, credimus nonnisi ea sapientia, quae est ipse Deus, sapientem esse ... i. e., seipso sapientem, magnum, aeternum, unum Deum.*"¹⁴ Gilbert readily submitted to this decision, and also his friend, Otto von Freising.

Two centuries later there arose among the schismatic Greeks the heresy of the Palamites —so called from its author, Gregory Palamos. This heresy two Constantinopolitan synods (A. D. 1341 and 1347) did not blush to proclaim as a schismatic dogma. The quintessence of the Palamite error may be stated as follows: Between the essence (οὐσία) and the activity (ἐνέργεια) of God there is a real distinction, inasmuch as the latter radiates from the former as something inferior, though still, in a sense, divine (θεότης) God's different attributes are merely radiations of the Divine Essence, and they solidify as it were by taking on the shape of an uncreated but visible light, which the Blessed in Heaven perceive by means of bodily vision. It is the same light that the disciples beheld on Mount Tabor. Here on earth this heavenly bliss is possible *per anticipationem* only, as the fruit of severe mortification, in the (ἡσυχία) that is, the repose of contemplative prayer. Hence the name Hesychasts; hence also the contemptuous nickname *ὀμφαλόψυχοι* or Umbilicans, given to these heretics by Barlaam, the learned Abbot of St. Saviours at Constantinople.¹⁵

2. HERETICAL REALISM REFUTED.—Except between the Divine Hypostases, no real distinction can be admitted to exist in the Godhead, because if there were in it any sort of real distinction, the Divine Essence would consist of distinct parts, which is repugnant. St. Bernard of Clairvaux¹⁶ justly traces this erroneous view to Polytheism: "*Multa dicuntur esse in Deo et quidem sane catholiceque, sed multa unum; alioquin si diversa putemus, non quaternitatem habemus, sed centeneitatem: habebimus multiplicem Deum.*"

The dogma that God's Essence is absolutely identical with His attributes, is taught, at least by implication, in all those passages of Holy Writ in which the divine attributes are conceived substantively rather than adjectively. Cfr. 1 John 4:8: "*Deus Caritas est*—God is charity." John 14:6: "*Ego sum via et veritas et vita*—I am the way, and the truth, and the life."¹⁷ The Fathers never took these passages for rhetorical figures of speech, but interpreted them literally. Augustine condensed the entire dogmatic teaching of the Church on this subject into one pregnant axiom, *viz.*: "*Deus quod habet, hoc est*—God is what He has."¹⁸ When the Fathers distinguish between Θεός and τὰ περὶ Θεόν,

¹² Bishop of Poitiers from about 1142 to his death in 1154. His principal work is the *Liber Sex Principiorum*. For a concise statement of his philosophical views, see De Wulf-Coffey, *History of Medieval Philosophy*, pp. 194 sqq.

¹³ *Serm. 80 in Cant.*

¹⁴ Hardouin, *Coll. Conc.*, t. VI, p. 2, col. 1299.

¹⁵ Cfr. Alsog, *Manual of Universal Church History*, II, 812 sq., Cincinnati 1899; von Stein, *Studien über die Hesychasten*, Wien 1874; Hergenröther, *Kirchengeschichte*, 4th ed., Vol. II, pp. 804 sqq., Freiburg 1904. The doctrine of the sight of the divine light has been retained in the theology of the schismatic Greeks and gained new power with the revival in that body in the nineteenth century. A work on the "spiritual prayer" which leads to the vision of light, was published at Athens as lately as 1854, under the title of "Spiritual Synopsis," by Sophronius, an archimandrite of Mt. Athos. Cfr. Ph. Meyer in the *New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, Vol. V, pp. 256 sqq., New York 1909.

¹⁶ *De Consid.*, V, 7.

¹⁷ ἡ ἀλήθεια καὶ ἡ ζωή

¹⁸ *De Civit. Dei*, XI, 10.

they simply mean to emphasize that there is room for a *virtual* distinction between the Divine Essence and attributes.¹⁹

ARTICLE 2

THE HERESY OF EUNOMIUS AND THE NOMINALISTS

1. NOMINALISM AND THE CHURCH.—The Eunomian heresy,—that man can form an adequate conception of God here below by means of the ἀγεννησία,²⁰ paved the way for another error, *viz.*: that all the names and attributes of God are synonymous; in other words, that the distinction between God's essence and His attributes is purely logical (*distinctio pure mentalis s. rationis ratiocinantis*). The medieval Nominalists (Ockham, Gregory of Rimini, Gabriel Biel) revamped this same error, with this difference that they held that the only ground we have on which to base distinctions between the attributes of God (which are *per se* synonymous), is the difference in the modes by which God manifests His power *ad extra* (*distinctio cum connotatione effectuum*). Both the Eunomians and the later Nominalists insisted that the absolute unity and simplicity of the Divine Essence allowed of no distinctions, not even a virtual one.²¹

That the various names and attributes of God correspond to as many objective aspects of the Divine Substance, and are consequently not synonymous, is "*vix non de fide*."²² It was because he had exaggerated the concept of unity that Master Eckhart had to submit to the condemnation, by Pope John XXII, of the following propositions extracted from his writings: "*Deus unus est omnibus modis et secundum omnem rationem, ita ut in ipso non sit invenire aliquam multitudinem in intellectu vel extra intellectum*" (prop. 23). "*Omnis distinctio est a Deo aliena, neque in natura neque in personis; probatur: quia natura ipsa est una et hoc unum, et quaelibet persona est una et id ipsum unum, quod natura*" (prop. 24).²³

2. REFUTATION OF NOMINALISM.—a) Gregory of Nyssa²⁴ already called attention to the many attributes ascribed to God in various parts of the Bible. If the Eunomian hypothesis were correct, he insisted, these attributes would be meaningless and the Sacred Writers guilty of insufferable pleonasm. Basil ridicules the patent absurdities implied in the Eunomian theory as "*manifeste insania, ridiculum*." The intrinsic unity and simplicity of God does not justify us in timidly denying all virtual distinctions in the Godhead. Far from infringing on the simplicity of God, the distinctions drawn by the human intellect "rather have their roots in, and grow out of, the unity of the Divine Essence."²⁵ "*Hoc ipsum ad perfectam Dei unitatem pertinet*," says St. Thomas, "*quod ea quae sunt multipliciter et divisim in aliis, in ipso sunt simpliciter et unite*."²⁶ The simplicity of God not only consists, like the simplicity of a mathematical point, in the absence of all composition, but also in an infinite wealth of unnumbered perfections. But since our finite intellect is unable to exhaust this wealth of perfection in one concept, we are compelled to form successively a number of varying attributive notions, which correspond to as many different *momenta* (not elements) in the Divine Being. It is only by this method that our limited understanding can take account of the plenitude of Divine Perfection.

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

¹⁹ Cfr. S. Anselm., *Monol.*, cap. 16.

²⁰ *Supra*, p. 114.

²¹ Cfr. Gotti, *De Deo, tract. 2*, qu. 4, § 5.

²² Kleutgen.

²³ Cfr. Denzinger-Bannwart, n. 523 sq. The Bull of John XXII ("*Dolentes referimus*") is dated March 27, 1329. On Eckhart's life and writings, cfr. A. L. McMahon in the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. V, art. "Eckhart;" also De Wulf-Coffey, *History of Medieval Philosophy*, pp. 453 sqq.

²⁴ *Or. 12 contr. Eunom.*

²⁵ Scheeben.

²⁶ *S. Theol.*, 1a, qu. 13, art. 4, ad 3.

