

FUNDAMENTALS OF
CATHOLIC DOGMA

DR. LUDWIG OTT

FUNDAMENTALS OF
CATHOLIC DOGMA

EDITED IN ENGLISH

By

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PREFACE

THIS Basic Course of Dogmatic Theology appears in place of B. Bartmann's († 1938) Basic Course which has been out of print for years. Derived from practical experience of theological instruction, it is primarily intended to meet the needs of students. My aim was to present the essentials of Church teaching and the foundation of such teaching in clear and concise form. On didactic grounds the matter was very extensively correlated. As the framework of a basic course could not be exceeded, only the most important pronouncements of Official Church Teaching, only individual significant scriptural texts, and only one or two patristic texts could be quoted verbatim. The history of the development of dogma has been kept within the minimum limits indispensable for the understanding of Church doctrine. The scriptural and patristic texts were, on principle, quoted in their translation. Anyone desirous of seeing the original texts can easily find them in the Bible; most of the patristic texts quoted or indicated may be found in the *Enchiridion Patristicum* of M. J. Rouet de Journel (Freiburg i Br. 1947). On account of the brevity aimed at, the speculative establishment of doctrine had to give place to the positive. The many indications to the works of St. Thomas are intended to be a pointer to deeper study. The reader is directed to the appropriate Articles in the *Dictionnaire de Théologie catholique* and to the *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament* of G. Kittel.

The present Basic Course is constructed on the framework of the lectures of my teacher Michael Rackl († 1948 as Bishop of Eichstätt) and of Martin Grabmann († 1949), and I venture to hope that it breathes their spirit. It was Grabmann who urged me to publish this work. I acknowledge with thanks that I found many hints and ideas in various religious textbooks particularly in those of Bartmann, Diekamp, Pohle and Van Noort. I am indebted to the Most Reverend Dr. Alfred Kempf in Oberzell bei Würzburg for assistance in reading proofs and for the preparation of the Index of Persons.

May this book contribute to the extension of the knowledge of the Church's teaching, to the deepening of the understanding of this teaching, and to the awakening of the religious life!

Eichstätt
15th August, 1952.

LUDWIG OTT.

FOREWORD

To the First English Edition

THIS book by Dr. Ludwig Ott is a conspectus of all Dogmatic Theology and quite the most remarkable work of compression of its kind that I have encountered.

The book will appeal particularly to busy priests who are anxious to review quickly the teaching from Tradition, from the Bible, and from reason on any particular point of doctrine. It will be specially useful to students who desire to revise rapidly, in the vernacular, the tracts which they are presenting for examination. It makes available for educated laymen a scientific exposition of the whole field of Catholic teaching. Finally, Dr. Ott's work will be invaluable for use as a text-book by those priests whose duty it is to present to students, in a systematic way, the teaching of the Catholic Church.

The Mercier Press has performed a service of major importance in making this work available in English. A special word of praise is due to the translator, Dr. Patrick Lynch, whose careful and accurate work made my task relatively simple.

Personally I am happy to be associated with the first appearance in English of this work. I believe it will prove to be of such importance and lasting value as to justify fully the labour which has gone into its production.

University College
Cork

JAMES BASTIBLE

FOREWORD

To the Second English Edition

THE exhaustion of the first edition, in such short time, is most gratifying. It may, perhaps, be interpreted not only as an indication of the need which the book fills but also as a tribute to the book itself. In this connection it is of considerable interest to note that Dr. Ott's work has appealed not only to priests and religious but to a very wide circle of layfolk.

As the author mentions in his preface, the object is to provide a basic course. In the light of this the book is amazingly comprehensive. The references to disputed questions are, of course, very much in outline but students of theology find them valuable in that they recall to their minds problems which they have studied in detail elsewhere. The very many references to sources and the bibliography will appeal to those desiring to study particular points more fully than they are dealt with here.

This second English edition embodies the many changes made in the second and third German editions. Further, in this edition, all Latin quotations have been translated wherever this seemed necessary to enable a reader, whose Latin is rusty, to follow the text with ease.

Every effort has been made to eliminate inaccuracies, but, doubtless, some slips have been overlooked in this book with its quarter-million words. I shall be very grateful for any help by readers in correcting these in future editions.

University College
Cork

JAMES BASTIBLE

ABBREVIATIONS

- AAS = Acta Apostolicae Sedis
AS = Anathema Sit. This signifies that the preceding proposition is officially condemned by the Church and is heretical.
CIC = Codex Iuris Canonici
D = H. Denzinger—C. Rahner, *Enchiridion symbolorum, definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum*
DThC = Dictionnaire de Théologie catholique
PG = J. P. Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*
PL = J. P. Migne, *Patrologia Latina*
S. th. = S. Thomas, *Summa theologiae*
S.c.G. = S. Thomas, *Summa contra Gentiles*

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INTRODUCTION

§ 1. Concept and Object of Theology

1. Concept

The word theology, according to its etymology, means “teaching concerning God” (*λόγος περὶ θεοῦ*, de divinitate ratio sive sermo : St. Augustine, De civ. Dei VIII 1). Thus theology is the science of God.

2. Object

The material object of theology is firstly God, and secondly, created things under the aspect of their relation to God : *Omnia pertractantur in sacra doctrina sub ratione Dei, vel quia sunt ipse Deus, vel quia habent ordinem ad Deum ut ad principium et finem*. In sacred science all things are considered under the aspect of God, either because they are God Himself or because they refer to God as their beginning and end. S. th. I 1, 7.

As regards the Formal Object a distinction must be made between natural and supernatural theology. Natural theology was first expounded by Plato. It is called by St. Augustine, in agreement with Varro, *Theologia Naturalis*, and since the 19th century it is also called theodicy. It is the scientific exposition of the truths concerning God, in so far as these can be known by natural reason and thus may be regarded as the culmination of philosophy. Supernatural theology is the scientific exposition of the truths about God under the light of Divine Revelation. The formal object of natural theology is God, as He is known by natural reason from creation ; the formal object of supernatural theology is God, as He is known by faith from revelation (cf. St. Augustine, De Civ. Dei VI 5 : S. th. I 1, 1 ad 2).

Natural and supernatural theology differ : (a) in their principles of cognition, unaided human reason (*ratio naturalis*), reason illuminated by faith (*ratio fide illustrata*) ; (b) in their means of cognition, the study of created things (*ea quae facta sunt*), divine revelation (*revelatio divina*) ; (c) in their formal objects, God as Creator and Lord (*Deus unus, Creator et Dominus*), God one and three (*Deus Unus et Trinus*).

§ 2. Theology as a Science

1. The Scientific Character of Theology

a) According to the teaching of St. Thomas, theology is a true science, because it uses as principles the securely founded basic truths of Divine Revelation and draws from these new knowledge (theological conclusions) by a strict scientific method and unites the whole in a closed system.

But theology is a subordinate science (*scientia subalternata*) because its principles are not immediately evident to us in themselves, but are taken

over from a higher science, from the truths communicated to us by God in revelation (cf. S. th. I 1, 2 : Sacred doctrine is a science because it proceeds from principles established by the light of a higher science namely the knowledge possessed by God and by the Blessed ; Sacra doctrina est scientia, quia procedit ex principiis notis lumine superioris scientiae, quae scilicet est scientia Dei et beatorum).

The questions posed by the Schoolmen were exclusively those pertaining to speculative theology. The development of historical research at the beginning of the modern era led to an extension of the concept of "science" which permits its application to positive theology also. By "science" in the objective sense is understood today a system of methodically worked-out knowledge about a unitary object. Theology possesses a unitary object, uses a methodical process adapted to the object, and unites its results in a closed system. The dependence of theology upon Divine authority and that of the Church does not derogate from its scientific character, because theology belongs to the revealed truth given by God into the hands of the Church, and therefore these cannot be dissociated from the object of theology.

b) Theology transcends all other sciences by : the sublimity of its object ; by the supreme certainty of its knowledge which is based on the infallible knowledge of God ; and by its practical purpose which is eternal bliss, i.e., the ultimate destination of mankind (cf. S. th. I 1, 5).

c) According to St. Thomas theology is both a speculative and a practical science, since, in the light of Divine Truth, it contemplates on the one hand, God, the First Truth, and things in their relation to God and on the other hand it contemplates the moral actions of man in relation to his supernatural ultimate goal. Speculative theology is the more noble since theology is concerned above all with Divine Truth. Thus the final aim even of Moral Theology is to bring men to the perfection of the knowledge of God (S. th. I 1, 4).

The medieval Franciscan School appraises Theology primarily as a practical or affective science, because theological knowledge by its very nature is aimed at moving the affections or the will. The main object of moral theology is the moral perfection of man : ut boni fiamus (St. Bonaventura, Proemium in IV libros Sent. q. 3).

The ultimate reason for the various answers to the problem lies in the various estimations of the hierarchy of the powers of the human soul. St. Thomas and his School, with Aristotle, recognise the primacy of the intellect, the Franciscan School with St. Augustine, that of the will.

d) Theology is "Wisdom," since its object is God the ultimate origin of all things. It is the supreme wisdom since it contemplates God, the ultimate origin, in the light of the truths of revelation communicated to man from the wisdom of God Himself (cf. S. th. I 1, 6).

2. A Science of Faith

Theology is a science of faith. It is concerned with faith in the *objective sense* (fides quae creditur) that which is believed, and in the *subjective sense* (fides qua creditur) that by which we believe. Theology like faith accepts, as the sources of its knowledge, Holy Writ and Tradition (remote rule of faith)

and also the doctrinal assertions of the Church (proximate rule of faith). But as a science of faith it seeks by human reason to penetrate the content and the context of the supernatural system of truth and to understand this as far as possible. St. Augustine expresses this thought in the words: "Crede, ut intelligas" Believe that you may understand (Sermo 43, 7, 9); St. Anselm of Canterbury, with the words: "Fides quaerens intellectum" Faith seeking to reach the intellect (Proslogion, Proemium) and: "Credo, ut intelligam" I believe that I may understand (Proslogion I); Richard of St. Victor with the words: "Properemus de fide ad cognitionem. Satagamus, in quantum possumus, ut intelligamus, quod credimus" (De Trinitate, Prologus). Let us hasten from faith to knowledge. Let us endeavour so far as we can, to understand that which we believe.

3. Classification

Theology is a unitary science, as it has a single formal object: God and the created world, in so far as they are the objects of Divine Revelation. As Revelation is a communication of the Divine knowledge, so theology is, in the words of St. Thomas, a stamp or impression imposed by the Divine knowledge, which is unitary and absolutely simple, on the created human spirit (S. th. I 1, 3).

Theology is, however, divided into various branches and departments according to its various functions, which are all sub-divisions of the one theological science:

- a) *Dogmatic Theology*, which includes *Fundamental Theology*, i.e., the basis of Dogmatic Theology.
- b) *Biblical-historical Theology*: Biblical introduction, Hermeneutics, Exegesis; Church History, History of Dogmas, History of Liturgy, Church Legal History, Patrology.
- c) *Practical Theology*: Moral Theology, Church law, Pastoral Theology, including Catechetics and Homiletics.

§ 3. Concept and Method of Dogmatic Theology

1. Concept

On the ground of its proposition to the faithful by the Church the whole field of supernatural theology could be called dogmatic theology. In point of fact, however, only the theoretical truths of Revelation concerning God and His activity are dealt with in dogmatic theology (*doctrina credendorum*: the science of things to be believed), while the practical teachings of Revelation regulating the activity of men are the object of moral theology (*doctrina faciendorum*: the science of things to be done). Thus dogmatic theology can with Scheeben (*Dogmatik, Einleitung n. 2*) be defined as "the scientific exposition of the whole theoretical doctrine revealed by God about God Himself and His activity and which we accept on the authority of the Church."

2. Method

The method of dogmatic theology is both positive and speculative. Positive dogmatic theology is concerned with doctrines that have been proposed to our belief by the Teaching Authority of the Church (dogmatic factor) and that are contained in the sources of Revelation, Scripture and

Tradition (Biblical-Patristic factor). In so far as it defends the doctrine of the Church against false conceptions, it becomes controversial theology (apologetic or polemic factor).

Speculative dogmatic theology, which is identical with the so-called scholastic theology, strives as far as possible for an insight into the truths of faith by the application of human reason to the content of revelation.

The positive and speculative methods must not be separated from each other. The ideal lies in the harmonious coalescence of authority and reason. This is, indeed, expressly prescribed by Ecclesiastical Authority: Pope Pius XI, in the Apostolic Institution "Deus scientiarum Dominus" 1931, directs that Sacred Theology "is to be presented according to the positive as well as to the scholastic method." The speculative exposition is to proceed "according to the principles and teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas" (Article 29) (cf. St. Thomas, Quodl. IV 9, 18).

§ 4. Concept and Classification of Dogma

1. Concept

By dogma in the strict sense is understood a truth immediately (formally) revealed by God which has been proposed by the Teaching Authority of the Church to be believed as such. The Vatican Council explains: *Fide divina et catholica ea omnia credenda sunt, quae in verbo Dei scripto vel tradito continentur et ab Ecclesia sive solemnii iudicio sive ordinario et universali magisterio tanquam divinitus revelata credenda proponuntur. D 1792.* All those things are to be believed by divine and Catholic faith which are contained in the Word of God written or handed down and which are proposed for our belief by the Church either in a solemn definition or in its ordinary and universal authoritative teaching.

Two factors or elements may be distinguished in the concept of dogma:—

a) An immediate Divine Revelation of the particular Dogma (revelatio immediata divina or revelatio formalis), i.e., the Dogma must be immediately revealed by God either explicitly (explicite) or inclusively (implicite), and therefore be contained in the sources of Revelation (Holy Writ or Tradition).

b) The Promulgation of the Dogma by the Teaching Authority of the Church (propositio Ecclesiae). This implies, not merely the promulgation of the Truth, but also the obligation on the part of the Faithful of believing the Truth. This Promulgation by the Church may be made either in an extraordinary manner through a solemn decision of faith made by the Pope or a General Council (Iudicium solemne) or through the ordinary and general teaching power of the Church (Magisterium ordinarium et universale). The latter may be found easily in the catechisms issued by the Bishops.

In this view, which is the usual one, and which is principally expounded by the Thomists, the Truth proposed in the dogma must be immediately and formally contained in the sources of Revelation either explicitly or implicitly. According to another opinion, however, which is held by the Scotists, and also by several Dominican theologians (M. M. Tuyaerts, A. Gardeil, F. Marín-Sola), a Truth can be proposed as a dogma, if it be only mediately or virtually contained in the sources of Revelation, that is, in such a manner that it may be derived from a Truth or Revelation by the aid of a truth known by Natural Reason. The Scotist view permits greater room for play in the formal action of the Teaching

Authority and makes it easier to prove that the Dogma is contained in the sources of Revelation but its validity is challenged on the ground that the Truth of the Dogma is supported not solely by the authority of the Revealing God, but also by the natural knowledge of reason, while the Church demands for the dogma a Divine Faith (*fides divina*).

Dogma in its strict signification is the object of both Divine Faith (*Fides Divina*) and Catholic Faith (*Fides Catholica*); it is the object of the Divine Faith (*Fides Divina*) by reason of its Divine Revelation; it is the object of Catholic Faith (*Fides Catholica*) on account of its infallible doctrinal definition by the Church. If a baptised person deliberately denies or doubts a dogma properly so-called, he is guilty of the sin of heresy (CIC 1325, Par. 2), and automatically becomes subject to the punishment of excommunication (CIC 2314, Par. 1).

If, despite the fact that a Truth is not proposed for belief by the Church, one becomes convinced that it is immediately revealed by God, then, according to the opinion of many theologians (Suarez, De Lugo), one is bound to believe it with Divine Faith (*fide divina*). However, most theologians teach that such a Truth prior to its official proposition of the Church is to be accepted with theological assent (*assensus theologicus*) only, as the individual may be mistaken.

2. Protestant and Modernistic Conception

a) Protestantism rejects the Teaching Authority of the Church, and consequently also the authoritative proposition of the content of Revelation by the Church. It claims that the Biblical Revelation attests itself. In spite of this, and for the sake of unity of doctrine, a certain connection is recognised between dogma and the authority of the Church. "Dogma is the valid teaching of the Church" (W. Elert). The liberal movement of the newer Protestantism rejects not only the authoritative doctrinal proclamation of the Church, but also the objective Divine Revelation, by conceiving Revelation as a subjective religious experience, in which the soul enters into contact with God.

b) According to Alfred Loisy († 1940) the conceptions which the Church represents as revealed dogmas are not truths which have come from Heaven, and which have been preserved by religious tradition in the exact form in which they first appeared. The historian sees in them "the interpretation of religious facts acquired by the toil of theological mental labour" (*L'Évangile et l'Église*, Paris, 1902, 158). The foundation of the dogma is, according to the modernistic viewpoint, subjective religious experience, in which God reveals Himself to man (religious factor). The totality of religious experience is penetrated by theological science and expressed by it in definite formularies (intellectual factor). A formulary of this kind is then finally approved by the Church Authority, and thus declared a dogma (authoritative factor). Pope Pius X has condemned this doctrine in the Decretum "*Lamentabili*" (1907), and in the Encyclical "*Pascendi*" (1907). (D 2022, 2078 et seq.)

As against Modernism, the Catholic Church stresses that dogma according to its content is of truly Divine origin, that is, it is the expression of an *objective truth*, and its content is *immutable*.

3. Classification

Dogmas are classified :

a) *According to their content as* : General Dogmas (*dogmata generalia*) and Special Dogmas (*dogmata specialia*). To the former belong the fundamental truths of Christianity, to the latter the individual truths contained therein.

b) *According to their relation with Reason* as : Pure Dogmas (dogmata pura) and Mixed Dogmas (dogmata mixta). The former we know solely through Divine Revelation, e.g., The Trinity (mysteries), the latter by Natural Reason also, e.g., The Existence of God.

c) *According to the mode by which the Church proposes them*, as : Formal Dogmas (dogmata formalia) and Material Dogmas (dogmata materialia). The former are proposed for belief by the Teaching Authority of the Church as truths of Revelation ; the latter are not so proposed, for which reason they are not Dogmas in the strict sense.

d) *According to their relation with salvation* as : Necessary Dogmas (dogmata necessaria) and Non-necessary Dogmas (dogmata non-necessaria). The former must be explicitly believed by all in order to achieve eternal salvation ; for the latter implicit faith (fides implicita) suffices (cf. Hebr. II, 6).

§ 5. The Development of Dogma

1. Heretical Notion of Dogmatic Development

The Liberal Protestant concept of dogma (cf. A. von Harnack) as well as Modernism (cf. A. Loisy) assumes a substantial development of dogmas, so that the content of dogma changes radically in the course of time. Modernism poses the challenge : "Progress in the sciences demands that the conceptions of the Christian teaching of God, Creation, Revelation, Person of the Incarnate Word, Redemption, be remoulded" (cf. D 2064). Loisy declares : "As progress in science (philosophy) demands a new concept of the problem of God, so progress in historical research gives rise to a new concept of the problem of Christ and the Church." (Autour d'un petit livre, Paris 1903, XXIV.) In this view there are no fixed and constant dogmas ; their concept is always developing. The Vatican Council condemned Anton Günther's († 1863) application of the idea of development in this sense to dogmas as heretical : Si quis dixerit, fieri posse, ut dogmatibus ab Ecclesia propositis aliquando secundum progressum scientiae sensus tribuendus sit alius ab eo, quem intellexit et intelligit Ecclesia. If anybody says that by reason of the progress of science, a meaning must be given to dogmas of the Church other than that which the Church understood and understands them to have let him be anathema. A.S. D 1818. In the Encyclical "Humani Generis" (1950), Pope Pius XII rejected that dogmatic relativism, which would demand that dogmas should be expressed in the concepts of the philosophy ruling at any particular time, and enveloped in the stream of philosophical development : "This conception," he says, "makes dogma a reed, which is driven hither and thither by the wind" (D 3012).

The ground for the immutability of dogmas lies in the Divine origin of the Truths which they express. Divine Truth is as immutable as God Himself : "The truth of the Lord remaineth for ever" (Ps. 116, 2). "Heaven and earth shall pass away : but my word shall not pass" (Mk. 13, 31).

2. Development of Dogmas in the Catholic Sense

a) From the material side of dogma, that is, in the communication of the Truths of Revelation to humanity, a substantial growth took place in human

history until Revelation reached its apogee and conclusion in Christ (cf. Hebr. I, 1).

St. Gregory the Great says: "With the progress of the times the knowledge of the spiritual Fathers increased; for, in the Science of God, Moses was more instructed than Abraham, the Prophets more than Moses, the Apostles more than the Prophets" (in Ezechielem lib. 2, hom. 4, 12).

With Christ and the Apostles General Revelation concluded. (*sent. certa.*)

Pope Pius X rejected the liberal Protestant and Modernistic doctrine of the evolution of religion through "New Revelations." Thus he condemned the proposition that: "The Revelation, which is the object of Catholic Faith, was not terminated with the Apostles." D 2021.

The clear teaching of Holy Writ and Tradition is that after Christ, and the Apostles who proclaimed the message of Christ, no further Revelation will be made. Christ was the fulfilment of the Law of the Old Testament (Mt. 5, 17; 5, 21 et seq), and the absolute teacher of humanity (Mt. 23, 10: "One is your master, Christ"; cf. Mt. 28, 20). The Apostles saw in Christ: "the coming of the fullness of time" (Gal. 4, 4) and regarded as their task the preservation, integral and unfalsified, of the heritage of Faith entrusted to them by Christ (1 Tim. 6, 14; 6, 20; 2 Tim. 1, 14; 2, 2; 3, 14). The Fathers indignantly repudiated the claim of the heretics to possess secret doctrines or new Revelations of the Holy Ghost. St. Irenaeus (Adv. haer III 1; IV 35, 8), and Tertullian (De praesc. 21) stress, against the Gnostics, that the full truth of Revelation is contained in the doctrine of the Apostles which is preserved unfalsified through the uninterrupted succession of the bishops.

b) As to the *Formal* side of dogma, that is, in the knowledge and in the ecclesiastical proposal of Revealed Truth, and consequently also in the public faith of the Church, there is a progress (accidental development of dogmas) which occurs in the following fashion:

1) Truths which formerly were only implicitly believed are expressly proposed for belief. (Cf. S. th. I; II, 1, 7: quantum ad explicationem crevit numerus articulorum (fidei), quia quaedam explicite cognita sunt a posterioribus, quae a prioribus non cognoscebantur explicite. There was an increase in the number of articles believed explicitly since to those who lived in later times some were known explicitly, which were not known explicitly by those who lived before them.)

2) Material Dogmas are raised to the status of Formal Dogmas.

3) To facilitate general understanding, and to avoid misunderstandings and distortions, the ancient truths which were always believed, e.g., the Hypostatic Union (unio hypostatica), Transubstantiation, etc., are formulated in new, sharply defined concepts.

4) Questions formerly disputed are explained and decided, and heretical propositions are condemned. Cf. St. Augustine, De civ. Dei 2, 1; ab adversario mota quaestio discendi existit occasio (a question moved by an adversary gives an occasion for learning).

The exposition of the dogmas in the given sense is prepared by theological science and promulgated by the Teaching Authority of the Church under the

direction of the Holy Ghost (John 14, 26). These new expositions of dogmatic truth are motivated, on the one hand, by the natural striving of man for deeper understanding of Revealed Truth, and on the other hand by external influences, such as the attacks arising from heresy and unbelief, theological controversies, advances in philosophical knowledge and historical research, development of the liturgy, and the general assertion of Faith expressed therein.

Even the Fathers stress the necessity of deeper research into the truths of Revelation, of clearing up obscurities, and of developing the teachings of Revelation. Cf. the classical testimony of St. Vincent Lerin († before 450). "But perhaps someone says: Will there then be no progress in the religion of Christ? Certainly there should be, even a great and rich progress . . . only, it must in truth be a progress in Faith and not an alteration of Faith. For progress it is necessary that something should increase of itself, for alteration, however, that something should change from one thing to the other." (Commonitorium 23.) Cf. D 1800.

5) There may be also a progress in the confession of faith of the individual believer through the extension and deepening of his theological knowledge. The basis for the possibility of this progress lies in the depth of the truths of Faith on the one hand, and on the other in the varying capacity for perfection of the human reason.

Conditions making for a true progress in the knowledge of Faith by individual persons are, according to the declaration of the Vatican Council, zeal, reverence and moderation: *cum sedule, pie et sobrie quaerit.* D 1796.

§ 6. Catholic Truths

Corresponding to the purpose of the Teaching Authority of the Church of preserving unfalsified and of infallibly interpreting the Truths of Revelation (D 1800) the primary object (*obiectum primum*) of the Teaching Office of the Church is the body of immediately revealed truths and facts. The infallible doctrinal power of the Church extends, however, secondarily to all those truths and facts which are a consequence of the teaching of Revelation or a presupposition of it (*obiectum secundarium*). Those doctrines and truths defined by the Church not as immediately revealed but as intrinsically connected with the truths of Revelation so that their denial would undermine the revealed truths are called *Catholic Truths* (*veritates catholicae*) or Ecclesiastical Teachings (*doctrinae ecclesiasticae*) to distinguish them from the *Divine Truths* or Divine Doctrines of Revelation (*veritates vel doctrinae divinae*). These are proposed for belief in virtue of the infallibility of the Church in teaching doctrines of faith or morals (*fides ecclesiastica*).

To these Catholic truths belong:

1. *Theological Conclusions* (*conclusiones theologicae*) properly so-called. By these are understood religious truths, which are derived from two premisses, of which one is an immediately revealed truth, and the other a truth of natural reason. Since one premiss is a truth of Revelation, theological conclusions are spoken of as being mediately or virtually (*virtualiter*) revealed. If however both premisses are immediately revealed truths, then the conclusion also must be regarded as being immediately revealed and as the object of Immediate Divine Faith (*Fides Immediate Divina*).
2. *Dogmatic Facts* (*facta dogmatica*). By these are understood historical

facts, which are not revealed, but which are intrinsically connected with revealed truth, for example, the legality of a Pope or of a General Council, or the fact of the Roman episcopate of St. Peter. The fact that a defined text does or does not agree with the doctrine of the Catholic Faith is also, in a narrower sense, a "dogmatic fact." In deciding the meaning of a text the Church does not pronounce judgment on the subjective intention of the author, but on the objective sense of the text (D 1350: *sensum quem verba prae se ferunt*).

3. *Truths of Reason*, which have not been revealed, but which are intrinsically associated with a revealed truth, e.g., those philosophic truths which are presuppositions of the acts of Faith (knowledge of the supersensual, possibility of proofs of God, the spirituality of the soul, the freedom of will), or philosophic concepts, in terms of which dogma is promulgated (person, substance, transubstantiation, etc.). The Church has the right and the duty, for the protection of the heritage of Faith, of proscribing philosophic teachings which directly or indirectly endanger dogma. The Vatican Council declares: *Ius etiam et officium divinitus habet falsi nominis scientiam proscribendi* (D 1798).

§ 7. Theological Opinions

Theological opinions are free views on aspects of doctrines concerning Faith and morals, which are neither clearly attested in Revelation nor decided by the Teaching Authority of the Church. Their value depends upon the reasons adduced in their favour (association with the doctrine of Revelation, the attitude of the Church, etc.).

A point of doctrine ceases to be an object of free judgment when the Teaching Authority of the Church takes an attitude which is clearly in favour of one opinion. Pope Pius XII explains in the Encyclical "Humani generis" (1950): "When the Popes in their Acts intentionally pronounce a judgment on a long disputed point then it is clear to all that this, according to the intention and will of these Popes, can no longer be open to the free discussion of theologians" (D 3013).

§ 8. The Theological Grades of Certainty

1. The highest degree of certainty appertains to the immediately revealed truths. The belief due to them is based on the authority of God Revealing (*fides divina*), and if the Church, through its teaching, vouches for the fact that a truth is contained in Revelation, one's certainty is then also based on the authority of the Infallible Teaching Authority of the Church (*fides catholica*). If Truths are defined by a solemn judgment of faith (definition) of the Pope or of a General Council, they are "*de fide definita*."

2. Catholic truths or Church doctrines, on which the infallible Teaching Authority of the Church has finally decided, are to be accepted with a faith which is based on the sole authority of the Church (*fides ecclesiastica*). These truths are as infallibly certain as dogmas proper.

3. A Teaching proximate to Faith (*sententia fidei proxima*) is a doctrine, which is regarded by theologians generally as a truth of Revelation, but which has not yet been finally promulgated as such by the Church.

4. A Teaching pertaining to the Faith, i.e., theologically certain (*sententia ad fidem pertinens*, i.e., *theologie certa*) is a doctrine, on which the Teaching

Authority of the Church has not yet finally pronounced, but whose truth is guaranteed by its intrinsic connection with the doctrine of revelation (theological conclusions).

5. Common Teaching (*sententia communis*) is doctrine, which in itself belongs to the field of the free opinions, but which is accepted by theologians generally.

6. Theological opinions of lesser grades of certainty are called probable, more probable, well-founded (*sententia probabilis, probabilius, bene fundata*). Those which are regarded as being in agreement with the consciousness of Faith of the Church are called pious opinions (*sententia pia*). The least degree of certainty is possessed by the tolerated opinion (*opinio tolerata*), which is only weakly founded, but which is tolerated by the Church.

With regard to the doctrinal teaching of the Church it must be well noted that not all the assertions of the Teaching Authority of the Church on questions of Faith and morals are infallible and consequently irrevocable. Only those are infallible which emanate from General Councils representing the whole episcopate, and the Papal Decisions *Ex Cathedra* (cf. D 1839). The ordinary and usual form of the Papal teaching activity is not infallible. Further, the decisions of the Roman Congregations (Holy Office, Bible Commission) are not infallible. Nevertheless normally they are to be accepted with an inner assent which is based on the high supernatural authority of the Holy See (*assensus internus supernaturalis, assensus religiosus*). The so-called "*silentium obsequiosum*," that is "reverent silence," does not generally suffice. By way of exception, the obligation of inner agreement may cease if a competent expert, after a renewed scientific investigation of all grounds, arrives at the positive conviction that the decision rests on an error.

§ 9. Theological Censures

By a theological censure is meant the judgment which characterises a proposition touching Catholic Faith or Moral Teaching as contrary to Faith or at least as doubtful. If it be pronounced by the Teaching Authority of the Church it is an authoritative or judicial judgment (*censura authentica or iudicialis*). If it be pronounced by Theological Science it is a private doctrinal judgment (*censura doctrinalis*).

The usual censures are the following: A Heretical Proposition (*propositio haeretica*). This signifies that the proposition is opposed to a formal dogma; a Proposition Proximate to Heresy (*propositio heresi proxima*) which signifies that the proposition is opposed to a truth which is proximate to the Faith (*Sent. fidei proxima*); a Proposition Savouring of or Suspect of heresy (*propositio haeresim sapiens or de haeresi suspecta*); an Erroneous Proposition (*prop erronea*), i.e., opposed to a truth which is proposed by the Church as a truth intrinsically connected with a revealed truth (*error in fide ecclesiastica*) or opposed to the common teaching of theologians (*error theologicus*); a False Proposition (*prop. falsa*), i.e., contradicting a dogmatic fact; a Temerarious Proposition (*prop. temeraria*), i.e., deviating without reason from the general teaching; a Proposition Offensive to pious ears (*prop. piarum aurium offensiva*), i.e., offensive to religious feeling; a Proposition badly expressed (*prop. male sonans*), i.e., subject to misunderstanding by reason of its method of expression; a Captious Proposition (*prop. captiosa*), i.e., reprehensible because of its intentional ambiguity; a Proposition exciting scandal (*prop. scandalosa*).

As to the form of the censures a distinction is made between *Damnatio Specialis*, by which a censure is attached to an individual proposition, and the *Damnatio in Globo*, in which censures are imposed on a series of propositions.

BOOK ONE

The Unity and Trinity of God

PART I
The Unity of God : His Existence and Nature

SECTION I

The Existence of God

CHAPTER I

The Natural Knowability of the Existence of God

§ 1. The Possibility of the Natural Knowledge of God in the Light of Supernatural Revelation

1. Dogma

God, our Creator and Lord, can be known with certainty, by the natural light of reason from created things. (*De fide*.)

The Vatican Council defined: Si quis dixerit, Deum unum et verum, creatorem et Dominum nostrum per ea, quae facta sunt, naturali rationis humanae lumine certo cognosci non posse, A.S. "If anybody says that the one true God, Our Creator and Lord cannot be known with certainty in the light of human reason by those things which have been made, anathema sit" D 1806; cf. 1785, 1391.

The Vatican definition stresses the following points: 2) The object of our knowing is the one true God, our Creator and Lord, therefore an *extra-mundane*, personal God. b) The subjective principle of knowledge is natural reason in the condition of fallen nature. c) The means of knowledge are created things. d) The knowledge is from its nature and manner a knowledge of certitude. e) Such knowledge of God is possible, but it is not the only way of knowing Him.

2. Scriptural Proof

According to the testimony of Holy Writ, the existence of God can be known : a) from nature : Wis. 13, 1-9. V. 5 : "For by the greatness of the beauty, and of the creature, the creator of them may be seen." Rom. 1, 20 : "For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made. His eternal power and His divinity also : so that they are inexcusable." The knowledge of God witnessed to in these two passages is a natural, certain, immediate and easily achieved knowledge.

b) From conscience : Rom. 2, 14 et seq : "For when the Gentiles, who know not the (Mosaic) law do by nature these 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." The heathens (that is) know naturally, without supernatural revelation, the essential content of the Old Testament

law. In their hearts a law has been written whose binding power indicates a Supreme Lawgiver.

c) From history : Acts 14, 14-16 ; 17, 26-29. St. Paul, in his discourses at Lystra and at the Areopagus in Athens, shows that God reveals Himself in beneficent works also to the heathens, and that it is easy to find Him, as He is near to each of us : "For in Him we live, and move and are" (17, 28).

3. Proof from Tradition

The Fathers, in referring to the assertions of Holy Scripture, stress the possibility and the facility of the natural knowledge of God. Cf. Tertullian, Apol. 17 : "O testimony of the soul, which is by its nature Christian" (O testimonium animae naturaliter christianae). The Greek Fathers preferred the cosmological proofs of God which proceed from external experience ; the Latin Fathers preferred the psychological proofs which flow from inner experience. Cf. Theophilus of Antioch, ad Autolyicum 1 4-5 : "God has called everything into existence from nothing, so that His greatness might be known and understood through His works. Just as the soul in man is not seen, as it is invisible, but is known through the movement of the body, so God cannot be seen with human eyes ; but He is observed and known through providence and His works. Just as one, at the sight of a well-equipped ship which sweeps over the sea and steers towards a harbour, becomes aware that there is a helmsman on her, who directs her, so also one must be aware that God is the director of everything, even though He is not seen with bodily eyes, as He cannot be apprehended by them." Cf. St. Irenaeus, Adv. haer. 11, 9, 1 ; St. John Chrysostom, in ep. ad Rom. hom. 3, 2 (to 1, 19).

4. Innate Idea of God

Taking their stand on the authority of the Fathers, many Catholic theologians, for example, Ludwig Thomassinus, Heinrich Klec, Anton Staudenmaier, Johannes von Kuhn, taught that the idea of God is not acquired by deductive thinking from the world of experience, but is innate in man (*idea innata*). Certainly many of the Fathers, for example, St. Justin (Apol. 11, 6) and St. Clement of Alexandria (Strom. V. 14, 133, 7) characterised the knowledge of God as automatic "not learned" "automatically learned" "implanted" self-taught : or as "a gift of the soul" (*animae dos* : Tertullian, Adv. Marc 1, 10). St. John of Damascus says : "The knowledge of the existence of God is implanted (by Him) in all in their nature" (*De fide orth.* 1 1). But as the same Fathers teach that we must win the knowledge of God from the contemplation of Nature, therefore, according to their conception, what is innate is not the idea of God as such, but the ability easily and to a certain extent spontaneously to know the existence of God from His works. Cf. St. Thomas, In Boethium De Trinitate, q. 1. a 3 ad 6 : *eius cognitio nobis innata dicitur esse, in quantum per principia nobis innata de facili percipere possumus Deum esse.* The knowledge of Him is said to be innate in us in so far as we can easily know the existence of God by means of principles which are innate in us.

§ 2. The Possibility of a Proof of God's Existence

The Existence of God can be proved by means of causality. (*Sent. fidei proxima.*)

The traditionalists, L. E. Bautain († 1867) and A. Bonnetty († 1879), having been reproved by the Teaching Authority of the Church, signed the assertion that reason can with certainty, prove the existence of God : *Ratiocinatio potest*

cum certitudine probare existentiam Dei. D 1622, 1650. Pope Pius X extended the Vatican Definition of the natural knowability of God in the anti-Modernist oath (1910) by the more exact statement, that the existence of God can formally be proved through reason by means of the principle of causality: *Deum, rerum omnium principium et finem, naturali rationis lumine per ea quae facta sunt, hoc est, per visibilia creationis opera, tamquam causam per effectus certo cognosci, adeoque demonstrari etiam posse. God, the beginning and end of all things can be known with certainty, by the natural light of reason, as a cause is known by its effects, from those things that are made, that is by the visible works of creation and can equally be demonstrated (to be).* D 2145.

The possibility of the proof of God flows :

- a) From the dogma of the natural knowability of God ; for the proof of God's existence is distinguished from the elementary knowledge of God only in that the basis for the knowledge is proposed in a more scientific form.
- b) From the fact that since the time of the Fathers, theologians have adduced proofs of the existence of God. Cf. Aristides, *Apol.* I, 1-3 ; Theophilus of Antioch, *Ad Autolyicum* I 5 ; Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 17, 4 et seq : 18, 4 ; St. Augustine, *De vera religione* 30-32 : *Conf.* X 6 ; XI 4 ; St. John of Damascus, *De fide orth.* I 3.

Scholasticism, in its greatest exponents, has unshakably adhered to the demonstrability of the existence of God. The scholastic proofs of God found their classical formulation in St. Thomas Aquinas (*S. th.* I 2, 3 : *S.c.G.* I 13). It was only in the era of late scholasticism that influential representatives of nominalism (Wilhelm of Ockham, Nicholas of Autrecourt, Peter of Ailly), in consequence of their scepticism, began to doubt the certainty of the proofs of God's existence.

These proofs are based on the absolute validity of the principle of causality, which St. Thomas formulates thus : *Omne quod movetur, ab alio movetur* (moveri=transition from potency to act). While Kant, under the influence of David Hume, limited the validity of this to the world of experience, St. Thomas establishes its transcendental validity, which far surpasses the world of experience, by reference to the self-evident principle of contradiction. *S. th.* I 1, 2, 3.

§ 3. Errors Regarding the Natural Knowability of God

1. Traditionalism

Traditionalism, which developed as a reaction against the rationalism of the Enlightenment, proceeds from the view that God, in a comprehensive primitive Revelation, bestowed on man simultaneously with speech a sum of religious and moral basic truths, which have been reproduced in mankind through tradition. General reason (*raison générale*) or common sense (*sens commun*) guarantees the unfalsified transference of the original heritage of the Revelation. The individual receives it through oral teaching. Reason cannot achieve of itself the knowledge of the existence of God (scepticism). The knowledge of God is, like every religious and moral knowledge, a knowledge of faith : *Deum esse traditur sive creditur*. The chief exponents of traditionalism in its strict form are L. G. A. de Bonald, F. de Lamennais and L. E. Bautain. It was represented in a moderated form by A. Bonnetty and G. Ventura. This theory was condemned by Pope Gregory XVI (*D* 1622/27), Pope Pius IX (*D* 1649/52) and by the Vatican Council (*D* 1785 et seq. 1806).

The semi-traditionalists of the School of Löwe (G. C. Ubaghs, † 1875) admit, indeed, that natural reason from the contemplation of natural things

can with certainty recognise the existence of God, but only on the supposition that it has already, through instruction, imbibed the idea of God originating from the primitive Revelation.

Traditionalism is to be rejected on philosophical and theological grounds : a) Language does not generate concepts, it presupposes them. b) Acceptance of the Revelation presupposes, according to reason, knowledge of the Revealing God, and the certain conviction of the truth of His testimony.

2. Atheism

The systems of agnosticism, scepticism, and Kantian criticism deny the certain knowability and the demonstrability of the existence of God, but can be associated with the belief in a Divine Being. They are based on the principle : We do not know and we shall not know (*Ignoramus et ignorabimus*).

Negative atheism is inculpable ignorance regarding the existence of God. Positive atheism (materialism, pantheism) directly denies the existence of a supramundane, personal Divine Being. It was condemned by the Vatican Council. D 1801-1803.

As far as the possibility of atheism is concerned, it cannot be denied that there are atheistic doctrinal systems (materialism, pantheism) and practical atheists, that is, people who live as if there were no God. The possibility, that there are also subjectively convinced theoretical atheists, is founded in the spiritual and moral weakness of man, and on the fact that the proofs of God are not immediately, but only mediately evident. But as the knowledge of God can easily be gained from the contemplation of nature and the life of the soul, it will not be possible permanently to adhere to an honest and positive conviction of the non-existence of God. An inculpable and invincible ignorance regarding the existence of God is not possible for a long time in a normal, grown-up person, in view of the facility of the natural knowledge of God attested in Holy Writ and in Tradition. Cf. Rom. I, 20 ; *ita ut sint inexcusabiles*.

Kant's Critique

While Kant in his pre-critical period recognised the possibility of the proofs of God, and even developed the ideological proof of God (cf. the article published in 1763 : "The only possible ground of proof for a demonstration of the existence of God"), in his critical period he denied the validity of all proofs of God (cf. the "Critique of Pure Reason" which appeared in 1781). According to Kant, the only object of theoretical reason is the world of phenomena ; the supersensual is withdrawn from it. The validity of the principle of causality is limited to things perceptible to the senses. In order to refute the individual proofs of God's existence, Kant sought to show that they all go back to the ontological argument, by deriving from the concept of the Supreme Reality its factual existence. Nevertheless, Kant believed in the existence of God and designated this belief the postulate of practical reason.

Kant's philosophy exercised a decisive influence on the Protestant theology of the 19th century. From the standpoint of the Kantian doctrine of cognition it rejected the rational foundation of religion, and with it the intellectual proofs of the existence of God, and taught that religious truths must be perceived, not by reason, but through religious feeling, which affirms the existence of God and by which we live in God. They claimed that it is on this subjective religious experience that Faith is founded. The consequence is a sharp separation of the spheres of knowledge and of Faith (Jacobi Schleiermacher, Ritschl, A. Harnack).

4. Modernism

The cognitional theoretical basis of Modernism is agnosticism, according to which human rational cognition is limited to the world of experience. Religion,

according to this theory, develops from the principle of vital immanence (immanentism) that is, from the need for God which dwells in the human soul. The truths of religion are, according to the general progress of culture, caught up in a constant substantial development (evolutionism).

CHAPTER 2

The Supernatural Knowability of the Existence of God

§ 4. God's Existence as an Object of Faith

1. Dogma

God's existence is not merely an object of natural rational knowledge, but also an object of supernatural faith. (*De fide*.)

In the beginning of all the formulas of the Faith stands the fundamental article: *Credo in unum Deum*. I believe in one God. The Vatican Council teaches: *Sancta catholica apostolica Romana Ecclesia credit et confitetur unum esse Deum*; The Holy Catholic Apostolic Roman Church believes and confesses that there is a God. D 1782. The denial of God's existence is condemned as heresy by the same Council. D 1801.

According to Hebr. 11, 6 faith in the existence of God is an indispensable condition of salvation: "Without faith it is impossible to please God; for he who wishes to approach God must believe that He is: and that He is a rewarder to them that seek Him." But only supernatural Faith in Revelation is effective unto salvation (cf. D 798, 1173).

The supernatural Revelation of the existence of God confirms the natural knowledge of God, and enables the existence of God to be known easily by all with certainty and without any admixture of error (D 1786; *ab omnibus expedite, firma certitudine et nullo admixte errore*)—relative or moral necessity of the Revelation (cf. S. th. I 1, 1; S.c.G. I 4.)

2. Knowledge and Faith as Regards the Same Object

It is a disputed point whether one and the same person can at the same time have knowledge and faith in the existence of God. Many outstanding scholastic theologians (Alexander of Hales, St. Bonaventure, Albertus Magnus) and many later theologians (Suarez) assert that such is possible, because the formal object is different (natural insight—Divine Revelation), and because both acts or habits belong to different orders of being (nature—grace). St. Thomas, on the contrary, teaches: "It is impossible for the same truth to be known and believed by the same person": *impossible est, quod ab eodem idem sit scitum et creditum* (S. th. 2 11, 1, 5). As ground for this he submits that the clear insight into the truth associated with knowledge cannot co-exist with the obscurity of faith. It is, however, possible, that the same truth could be known by one person and believed by another. According to the teaching of St. Thomas, it is also possible for the same person at the one time to have a natural knowledge of the existence of God as the originator of the natural order, and a supernatural faith in the existence of God as the originator of the supernatural order, because the supernatural faith comprehends truths which are not contained in natural knowledge (difference of the material object). (Cf. S. th. 2 11 1, 5.)

SECTION 2

The Nature of God

CHAPTER I

The Knowledge of the Nature of God

§ 5. The Natural Knowledge of the Nature of God in This World

As the knowledge of the existence of a thing is not possible without some cognition of its constitution, so in the natural knowledge of the existence of God there is always a certain knowledge of His Nature. Every single proof of God reveals a definite perfection of the Divine Nature. The naturally achievable knowledge of God is deepened and extended by supernatural revelation.

1. Constitution of our Natural Knowledge of God in This World

a) Mediate knowledge

Our natural knowledge of God in this world is not an immediate, intuitive cognition, but a mediate, abstractive knowledge, because it is attained through the knowledge of creatures. (*Sent. certa.*)

In opposition to the teaching of the Church, Ontologism (Malebranche, † 1715, Gioberti, † 1852) teaches that, even in this life, we possess from nature an immediate, intuitive knowledge of God, and that in the light of the immediate knowledge of God we become cognisant of created things. The order of knowledge must correspond to the order of being. God, as the First Being, must therefore also be the primary object of knowledge: *Primum esse ontologicum debet esse etiam primum logicum* (Gioberti).

Ontologism is incompatible with the doctrine of the General Council of Vienna (1311/12), according to which the soul requires the supernatural light of glory for the immediate knowledge of God (D 475). In 1861 and 1887 the Holy Office rejected several ontological assertions. (D 1659 et seq., 1891 et seq.).

Holy Writ proves, on the one hand, that the natural knowledge of God is attained through created things (cf. Wis. 13, 1 : *operibus attendentes* : Rom. 1, 20 : *per ea quae facta sunt*), and on the other hand, that no human being is capable of seeing God immediately, but that the vision of God is reserved for the other life. Cf. 1 Tim. 6, 16 : "He inhabiteth light inaccessible ; whom no one hath seen, nor can see." 1 Cor. 13, 12 : "Now we see Him through a glass in a dark manner, but then face to face."

Ontologism also contradicts the testimony of consciousness, and in its consequences leads to pantheism and rationalism. The ontologists, quite wrongly,

appeal to the teaching of St. Augustine of the knowledge *in rationibus aeternis* ; for St. Augustine without doubt teaches a mediate cognition of God, which proceeds from the contemplation of the human soul or of the external world, and which ascends to God.

b) Analogical cognition

Our knowledge of God here below is not proper (cognitio propria) but analogical (cognitio analogica or analogica). (Sent. certa.)

While cognition properly so-called comprehends an object through its own mental form (*per speciem propriam*) or by immediate vision, analogical cognition comprehends an object through an alien form (*per speciem alienam*). In the cognition of God in this world we apply concepts gained from created things to God on the ground of a certain similarity and ordination of the created things to Him as their efficient and exemplary cause. There is a relation of analogy between the creature and the Creator which is founded on the fact that the creature is necessarily made to the likeness of the Creator. This analogy is the basis of all natural knowledge of God (cf. Wis. 13, 5). This so-called analogy of being (*analogia entis*) is sharply rejected by K. Barth as the "invention of anti-Christ." Despite this analogy or similarity, there is a much greater dissimilarity between the creature and the Creator, namely the dissimilarity between the finite and the infinite.

2. Method of the Natural Knowledge of God Here Below

Our cognition of God in this world, comes as Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite taught, by the three-fold way of affirmation, negation and eminence.

a) The way of Affirmation or Causality (*θέσις*) proceeds from the consideration that God is the efficient cause of all things, and that the efficient cause contains in itself every perfection which is in the effect. From this it follows that God, the Originator of all creatures, possesses every true perfection of the creatures. The pure perfections are formally ascribed to God. The mixed perfections, which contain something finite in their concept, are ascribed to God in a transferred sense (metaphorically or anthropomorphically) only.

b) The way of Negation (*ἀφαίρεσις*) denies to God every imperfection which is found in created things, also the circumscription attached to imperfections of created things, deriving from their finiteness. Such negation of an imperfection implies affirmation and eminence (for example, infinite=absence of limit, i.e., fullness of being).

Under the influence of the theology of the Neo-platonists, certain individual Fathers make use of such formulations as : "God is not substance, not light, not life, not sense, not spirit, not wisdom, not goodness" (Pseudo-Dionysius, *Myst. theol.* c. 3). They do not wish to deny to God these perfections, but to assert that these perfections do not belong to God in the same manner as they do to creatures, but in an infinitely higher manner.

c) The Way of Eminence enables us to deduce, from the finite perfections of creatures, the possession by God of infinite analogous perfections.

The three modes of cognition complement one another. For the attributing of a perfection to God demands the attribution of it to Him eminently, and the negation of every imperfection. Cf. *Ecclus.* 43, 29 (G 27) et seq. St. John of Damascus, *De fide orth.* I 12.

3. Imperfection of the Knowledge of God Here Below

God's Nature is incomprehensible to men. (*De fide.*)

Our knowledge of God in this world is a composition of many inadequate concepts, and on account of this composition, it is necessarily limited and imperfect. The 4th Lateran Council (1215) and the Vatican Council, call God "incomprehensible" (*incomprehensibilis*), the Lateran Council also calls Him "ineffable" (*ineffabilis*). D 428, 1782. Cf. Jer. 32, 19 (according to the Vulgate: *Magnus consilio et incomprehensibilis cogitatu*: "great in council and incomprehensible in thought"). Rom. 11, 33: "How incomprehensible are His judgments, and how unsearchable His ways!"

The Fathers, notably St. Basil, St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. John Chrysostom, defend the incomprehensibility of the Divine Essence by indicating the infinity and the sublimity of God in comparison with all creatures, against the Eunomians, who assumed an exhaustive (adequate or comprehensive) cognition of God, and indeed even in this world. St. Augustine says: "More true than our speech about God is our thinking of Him, and more true than our thinking is His Being" (*Verius enim cogitatur Deus quam dicitur et verius est quam cogitatur*; *De Trin.* VII 4, 7). Only God possesses a comprehensive knowledge of God; for the Infinite Being can be completely comprehended by an Infinite Intellect only. Cf. S. th. I 12, 7: "God whose Being is infinite, is infinitely knowable. No created understanding can, however, know God in an infinite manner."

4. Truth of the Knowledge of God in This World

Although our knowledge of God in this world is imperfect, still it is true, because God really possesses the perfections attributed to Him, and because we are conscious of the analogous character of our knowledge of God and of our assertions concerning Him.

§ 6. The Supernatural Knowledge of the Divine Essence in the Other World

1. Reality of the Immediate Vision of God

The blessed in Heaven possess an immediate intuitive knowledge of the Divine Essence. (*De fide.*)

Pope Benedict XII defined in the dogmatic constitution "*Benedictus Deus*" (1336): *vident (sc. animae sanctorum) divinam essentiam visione intuitiva et etiam faciali, nulla mediante creatura in ratione obiecti visi se habente, sed divine essentia immediate se nude, clare et aperte eis ostendente*. They (the souls of the just) see the divine essence by an intuitive vision and face to face, so that the divine essence is known immediately, showing itself nakedly clearly and openly, and not mediately through any creature. D 530. The Council of Florence (1438/45) determined the object of the knowledge of God in the other world as follows: *intuiri (sc. animas sanctorum) clare ipsum Deum trinum et unum, sicuti est. (to know God one and three as He is)* D 693.

The most apposite passage in Holy Writ is 1 Cor. 13, 12, in which the Apostle contrasts the mirror-like, enigmatical and piecemeal knowledge of

God in this world with the immediate and clear knowledge of God in the other world: "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. John describes the future state which is prepared for the children of God on earth, with the words: "We shall be like to Him: because we shall see Him as He is" (*videbimus eum, sicuti est*: 1 John 3, 2). Cf. Mt. 5, 8: 18, 10; 2 Cor. 5, 7.

The older Fathers, using the simple words of Holy Scripture, teach that the angels and saints are vouchsafed a real vision of God, and behold Him face to face. Cf. St. Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* IV 20; V 7, 2. Since the middle of the 4th century, some Fathers, like St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. John Chrysostom, appear to dispute the possibility of an immediate vision of God. Their assertions in point of fact can, however, be explained as being directed against Eunomius, who claimed an immediate cognition of God, even in this world. In contrast to this, the Fathers stress that the knowledge of God in this world is mediate, in the next world immediate, but not comprehensive. St. John Chrysostom compares the vision of God in the other world with the sight of the transfigured Christ on Tabor and says: "What shall be said when Royalty Itself appears, when the palace is opened, and it is permitted to view the King Himself, no longer enigmatically nor in a glass, but face to face, no longer in faith but in vision" (*Ad Theodorum lapsum* I 11).

To the corporeal eye, even in the transfigured state, God is invisible, since God is a pure spirit, and the corporeal eye is able to see corporeal objects only. St. Augustine, *Ep.* 92 and 147; *S. th.* I 12, 3.

2. Object of the Immediate Vision of God

a) The primary object of the immediate vision of God is the Infinite Divine Essence in its Triune fullness of personal life (*ipse Deus trinus et unus, sicuti est*). D 693.

b) The secondary object consists in the extra-Divine things, which are seen in God as the origin of all things. The scope of this knowledge is different in the individual blessed according to the grade of their immediate cognition of God; the latter, however, is determined by the measure of their supernatural merits (D 693). One may assume with St. Thomas that the glorified spirit in God in any case sees all that pertains to it. Cf. *S. th.* III 10, 2: *nulli intellectu beato deest, quin cognoscat in Verbo omnia, quae ad ipsum spectant* (nothing is lacking to the knowledge of a beatus of things which pertain to him; he knows all (these) in the Word).

3. Supernatural Character of the Immediate Vision of God

The Immediate Vision of God transcends the natural power of cognition of the human soul, and is therefore supernatural. (*De fide.*)

The Council of Vienne (1311/12) rejected the false teaching of the Beghards and Beguines: *quod anima non indiget lumine gloriae ipsam elevante ad Deum videndum et eo beate fruendum*. That the soul does not need the light of glory elevating it to see and enjoy God. D 475. According to the general

teaching of theologians, the immediate vision of God is a gift absolutely exceeding the natural potentiality of every created and creatable intellect and hence it is absolutely supernatural.

Holy Scripture asserts that the immediate knowledge of the Divine Essence is inaccessible to natural reason. 1 Tim. 6, 16. "God habiteth light inaccessible : whom no one hath seen, nor can see." The vision of the Divine Essence belongs by its very nature, only to God. John 1, 18 : "No man hath seen God ; the Only Begotten God (Vulg : Son), who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." Cf. Mt. 11, 27 ; John 6, 46 ; 1 Cor. 2, 11.

Speculatively the absolute supernatural character of the immediate vision of God may be demonstrated from the principle : *Cognitum est in cognoscente, secundum modum cognoscentis*. As the nature is so is the cognition. When the mode of being of the object of cognition is higher than the mode of being of the subject of cognition, then the latter is from its nature incapable of immediately knowing the object of cognition in its essence. God is Subsistent Being (*ipsum esse subsistens*) while every created intellect has a communicated being (*esse participatum*) only. Therefore it lies beyond the cognitive power of every created intellect immediately to know the Essence of God. Cf. S. th. I 12, 4. On account of its absolute supernatural character the immediate vision of God is a mystery *stricte dictum* (strictly so called).

One may, with St. Augustine and St. Thomas, assume that the human intellect can, even on earth, be elevated supernaturally and exceptionally (*et supernaturaliter et praeter communem ordinem*) to the immediate vision of God. As examples are quoted Moses (Ex. 33, 11 ; Num 12, 8) and St. Paul (2 Cor. 12, 2 et seq.). Cf. St. Augustine, Ep. 147, 13, 31-32 ; S. th. I 12, 11 ad 2.

4. Necessity of the Light of Glory for the Immediate Vision of God

The possibility of the elevation of the soul to the immediate vision of God is founded on the one hand, on the soul's likeness to God, i.e., on its immateriality (Gn. 1, 26 et seq.), and on the other hand, on the omnipotence of God. Cf. S. th. I 12, 4 ad 3.

The soul, for the Immediate Vision of God, requires the light of glory. (*De fide. D 475.*)

Lumen gloriae is as necessary for the mode of cognition of the state of glory as is *lumen rationis* for the mode of cognition of the state of nature, and *lumen fidei* for the mode of cognition of the state of faith. It consists in a lasting supernatural perfecting of the human power of cognition, through which it is inwardly strengthened for the vital act of the immediate vision of the Divine Essence. (Cf. S. th. I 12, 5 ad 2 : *perfectio quaedam intellectus confortans ipsum ad videndum Deum.*) In its ontological nature it must be considered as a supernatural operative habit bestowed upon reason. The habit of the light of glory dissolves the habit of faith. The expression which is first found in St. Bonaventura and St. Thomas, goes back to Ps. 35, 10 : *in lumine tuo videbimus lumen.*

5. Limits to the Immediate Vision of God

God's Essence is also incomprehensible to the blessed in Heaven. (*De fide.*)

The blessed in Heaven also possess no adequate or comprehensive cognition of the Divine Being. God is for every created spirit even in the state of supernatural elevation, incomprehensible (*incomprehensibilis*). Cf. D 418, 1782 : Jer. 32, 19 (according to the Vulgate : *incomprehensibilis cogitatu*). In the times of the Fathers, St. John Chrysostom especially, in his 12 Homilies *Dei incomprehensibili*, has defended the incomprehensibility of God against the Eunomians.

The intrinsic basis of the incomprehensibility of God lies in the boundless abyss between the Infinite Divine Spirit and the finite created spirit. The finite spirit can understand the infinite Essence of God in a finite manner only : *Videt infinitum, sed non infinite*. Cf. S. th. I 12, 7 ad 3.

§ 7. The Supernatural Knowledge of the Divine Being in This World through Faith

The order of grace in this world is a preliminary stage and a preparation for the glory in the world to come : *gratia et gloria ad idem genus referuntur, quia gratia nihil est aliud quam quaedam inchoatio gloriae in nobis*. S. th. 2 II, 24, 3 ad 2. Supernatural faith here below corresponds to the immediate vision of God in the other world ; *lumen fidei* corresponds to *lumen gloriae*. Faith is a kind of anticipation of the vision of God in the world to come.

1. Relation to the Natural Knowledge of God

Knowledge of faith is distinguished from natural knowledge of God by the principle of cognition (*ratio fide illustrata*), the means of cognition (*revelatio divina*), and the formal object (God, as He is known through Revelation : *Deus unus et trinus*). The principal object of supernatural faith lies in the mysteries of faith which are known by Divine Revelation (*mysteria in Deo abscondita, quae, nisi revelata divinitus, innotescere non possunt* : D 1795). The Divine Revelation guarantees the infallible certainty of the truths of Faith (*certitudo evidentialae*). The truths of Faith have therefore a higher degree of certitude than the natural truths of reason. But from the viewpoint of clarity or intelligibility (*certitudo evidentialae*) the natural truths of reason are higher than the truths of Faith, because in the former we possess an inner insight, in the latter, however, we do not. In this sense the frequently cited saying of Hugo of St. Victor († 1141) is valid, namely, that the certitude of Faith is of a lower grade than natural knowledge (*De sacramentis christ. fidei* I 10, 2 : *Fidem esse certitudinem quandam animi de rebus absentibus, supra opinionem et infra scientiam constitutam*). Cf. S. th. 2 II 4, 8.

2. Relation to the Immediate Vision of God

In relation to the vision of God in the other world the supernatural cognition of Faith, although it also is a participation in the Divine self-cognition, is still imperfect. The basic truths of Faith are beyond the power of comprehension of the human reason, and even after the Revelation, still remain obscure and mysterious. 2 Cor. 5, 7 : "We walk by faith and not by sight." Cf. D 1796. As supernatural Revelation takes its concepts from the created world, so also the cognition of Faith is analogical. 1 Cor. 13, 12 : "Now we see through a glass in a dark manner."

CHAPTER 2

The Nature of God in Itself

§ 8. The Biblical Names of God

As the Nature of God cannot be adequately conceived by the mind, it cannot be expressed in a perfectly corresponding name. Hence the Fathers designate God as "unnameable, inexpressible" (*ἄρρητος*, ineffabilis) and "nameless" (*ἀνόνημος*). The manifold names which Holy Writ applies to God express more the Operations than the Nature of God. According to the various operations, God can be called by various names, for which reason Pseudo-Dionysius calls Him the "Many-named" (*πολυώνυμος*) or the "All-named" (*πανώνυμος*). Cf. Pseudo-Dionysius, *De div. nominibus* I, 6; 12, 1; St. John of Damascus, *De fide. orth.* I 12.

Following Scheeben (*Dogmatik* I. n. 84 et seq.), the seven "Holy Names" of the Old Testament may be divided into three groups, the first of which determines the relation of God to the world and to mankind (El=The Strong, the Powerful: Elohim=He Who possesses the Fullness of Power: Adonai=Lord, Commander, Judge). The second group designates more the intrinsic perfections of God (Schaddai=The Mighty One, Eljon=The Highest; Kadosch=The Holy). The third group comprehends the proper name and the essential name (Jahweh).

The real name of the true God is Jahweh. It is linguistically derived from hawa, a related form of haje=to be; it means; he is. The Septuagint renders the form 'ehje=I am (or 'ascher 'ehje=the I am) by which God designates Himself in Ex. 3, 14 by *ὁ ὢν*=The Being One, while it regularly paraphrases the form Jahweh by the expression *κύριος*=Lord, which was a current Greek designation for God. God Himself revealed His name to Moses, when He, in answer to the question as to His name, replied "I AM WHO AM" ('ehje 'ascher 'ehje). "You shall say to the children of Israel: HE WHO IS, hath sent me to you. . . . The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me to you. This is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations." (Ex. 3, 14 et seq.) According to Ex. 6, 3 God Himself revealed Himself, in the first instance to Moses, by His proper name of Jahweh, while He appeared to the Patriarchs as El schaddai. The Biblical narrator used the name Jahweh, foreseeing the later Revelation, even in the story of Paradise, and puts it into the history of the Patriarchs, even into the mouth of the fathers and of God Himself. (Gn. 15, 2, 7.) In agreement with this, Gn. 4, 26, "This man began to call upon the name of the Lord," is not to be understood as an invocation of the name of God in virtue of the use of the word Jahweh, but as a general adoration of God. In the pre-Mosaic era the name Jahweh cannot with certainty be established either within or without Israel. The New Testament takes over the Old Testament designations of God as found in the Septuagint, and makes the appellation Father, which occurs only in a few places in the Old Testament, the centre of the Christian Revelation.

§ 9. The Physical and Metaphysical Nature of God

1. The Physical Essence of God

The physical essence of God is the totality of the Divine perfections which are

factually identical among themselves. Cf. the enumeration of the Divine attributes by the 4th Lateran Council and the Vatican Council. D 428, 1782.

2. The Metaphysical Nature of God

The metaphysical nature of God is the basic determining factor of the Divine Essence. According to our analogical conception, it is the fundamental note of the Deity which distinguishes It from all created things, and which is the source and origin of all the other Divine perfections. Various opinions have been advanced on this point :

a) The Nominalists wrongly place the metaphysical essence of God in the sum of all His perfections (*cumulus omnium perfectionum*) and thus equate the physical and the metaphysical essence.

b) The Scotists see the metaphysical essence of God in His radical infinity (*infinitas radicalis*), that is, in that quality by which God possesses all perfections in infinite measure. This view, however, leaves unsolved the question of the final basis of the infinity. Infinity is a mode of being only, not the metaphysical essence itself.

c) Many Thomists would find the metaphysical essence of God in His absolute intellectuality, which they define either as absolute spirituality (*intelligere radicale*), or as formal intellectuality (*intellegere actuale, intellectio subsistens*). Against both opinions the objection is made that they do not give the ultimate root of all perfections, but a characteristic derived therefrom. Absolute Spirit-Being implies absolute being, *intelligere subsistens* presupposes *esse subsistens*.

d) The opinion best founded in Scripture and Tradition is that the metaphysical essence of God consists in this that It is Subsistent Being (*ipsum esse subsistens*). As distinct from created things, which have received being (. . . *existentia*) from another being (*esse participatum*), God has His Being of Himself and through Himself by virtue of His own perfection of Essence. God is Being Itself, the Absolute Being, the Subsisting Being. In God essence and existence coincide. The concept of Absolute Being excludes all non-being, and all merely potential being. Consequently, God is pure act (*actus purus*) without any admixture of potentiality (*actus purus sine omni permixtione potentiae*).

This opinion, which follows the Thomistic definition, is held by many theologians, who conceive the metaphysical essence of God to be *Aseity*, which, however, is not to be understood in the negative sense of not having been made (*ἀγενησία*) or in being independent of a cause since this is only a mode of being, but in the positive sense of self-actualisation.

Foundation

a) In Ex. 3, 14 et seq., God revealed His proper name and His essential name : "I AM WHO I AM," that is, I AM HE Whose Essence is expressed in the words : "I am." God is therefore purely and simply Being (He who is; *ὁ ὢν*). His Essence is Being. Israel, however, did not yet grasp the full sense of the Revelation vouchsafed to it ; it understood the name Jahweh as He who is always, the Constant, the True, the Helper, as He had shown Himself to be in the history of Israel (cf. Is. 43, 11). Later Scriptural texts express the absolute being of God by designating Jahweh as the First and Last, as the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and End, as He Who Is, Who Was, and Who Shall

Come. Cf. Is. 41, 4 ; 44, 6 ; 48, 12 ; Acts, I, 4, 8, 17 ; 21, 6 ; 22, 13. Wis. 13, 1 calls God, as does Ex. 3, 14 He Who Is (*τὸν ὄντα*) and contrasts Him with the visible things which have received being from Him. The characteristic of absolute Being, expressed in the name Jahweh, distinguishes God from all non-living beings. Cf. Is. 42, 8 : "I am the Lord ; this is my name. I will not give my glory to another, nor my praise to graven things."

b) The Patristic writers and the Schoolmen accept the name of the Divine Essence given in Ex. 3, 14, and regard Absolute Being as that concept by which we state the Essence of God most fundamentally. St. Hilarius, full of wonderment at the Divine self-designation, says : "Nothing can be conceived which is more appropriate to God than Being" (De Trin. I, 5). St. Gregory Nazianthus remarks on Ex. 3, 14 : "God was always, is, and will always be : or rather, He is always ; for 'was' and 'will be' are divisions of our time and of nature which is in constant flow. But He is the Constant Being ; and thus He called Himself, when He answered Moses on the mountain. He holds sealed off in Himself the whole fullness of being, which has neither a beginning nor an end, like an endless and boundless ocean of being, transcending every notion of time and (created) nature" (Orat. 45, 3). St. Augustine, referring to Ex. 3, 14, says that God has called Himself the Very Being (*ipsum esse*). He alone is the immutable Being, which is the True Being (Enarr. in Ps. 134, 4). St. John Damascene remarks that the name "He Who Is" (*ὁ ὢν*) is the most appropriate of all the Divine names. (De fide orth. I 9).

St. Bernard says : "One may call God good or great or blessed or wise or whatever one will, all is contained in the phrase 'Est' (=He is)" (De consid. V 6). St. Thomas teaches : "Cuius (sc. Dei) essentia est ipsum suum esse" (De ente et essentia c. 6). As only in God is essence one with existence, he sees in the name "He Who Is" (*qui est*) the appropriate proper name of God. S. th. I 13, 11.

c) The concept of *ipsum esse subsistens* (in the positive sense) fulfils all conditions necessary for the determination of the metaphysical essence of God.

d) *Ipsum Esse Subsistens* does not designate a mere mode of being, but that perfection which, according to our analogical thinking, is fundamental to God and which is the summing-up of His Essence. Cf. The proofs of God which proceed from *esse participatum* (participated Being) to *Subsistent Being*.

β) *Ipsum Esse Subsistens* distinguishes God fundamentally from all created things, which only possess being, but which are not being itself. The being of created things is a limited being, and in comparison with the Being of God it is more non-being than being. "They cannot be compared with Him, because they are from Him : but compared with Him they are not, because the True Being is an immutable being, and that is He alone" (Enarr. in Ps. 134, 4). *Ipsum Esse Subsistens* also distinguishes God from abstract or general being ; for the latter is of such a nature that it has not any objective reality without the addition of further characteristics, while the Absolute Divine Being is such that nothing can be added to it. Abstract being is the poorest concept in point of content, while absolute being is the richest. Cf. St. Thomas, De ente et essentia c. 6.

Ipsum Esse Subsistens is the root from which all the other Divine perfections may logically be derived. As God is the Absolute Being he must contain in Himself all the perfections of being. Cf. S. th. I 4, 2 ad 3. *Nulla de perfectionibus essendi potest deesse ei, quod est ipsum esse subsistens.*

Appendix

Hermann Schell († 1906) sought to give the concept of the Divine Aseity a richer content by extending the idea of causation to God, and formulated the dictum : *Deus est causa Sui* (God is His Own Cause). He claimed that Aseity is to be conceived as self-causation, self-realisation, self-inauguration of the Divine Essence. God, according to him, is not the fullness of being, as the Schoolmen asserted, but the fullness of activity and of life.

Schell's concept of God, which goes back to Platonic and neo-Platonic ideas, contradicts the principle of causality, according to which all that is moved must be moved by another thing, as well as the principle of contradiction on which the principle of causality is based ; for an essence which causes itself must have been effective before it exists, that is, be and not be. God is not *causa sui*, but *ratio sui*, that is, He has the reason of His existence in Himself. In a wider, improper sense, following the precedent of St. Jerome (In ep. ad Ephes. II 3, 14 : *ipse sui origo est suaeque causa substantiae*), individual Schoolmen apply the concept " *causa sui* " to God. St. Augustine rejected the idea of the Divine self-origination and with it self-causation. Cf. De Trin. I 1, 1. Sc. G. I 18 : *nihil est causa sui ipsius ; esset enim prius seipso, quod est impossibile*. (nothing is the cause of itself since that implies that it had existed prior to itself, which is impossible).

SECTION 3

The Attributes or the Qualities of God

§ 10. The Attributes of God in General

1. Concept

The attributes or properties of God are perfections which, according to our analogical mode of thinking, proceed from the metaphysical substance of God and belong to it. Hence, we only know being of the absolutely simple Divine Substance "in part" (1 Cor. 13, 9), i.e., in a multiplicity of inadequate concepts, by which we know individual perfections of God truly but inadequately.

2. Difference between the Attributes and the Essence of God

a) The Divine Attributes are really identical among themselves and with the Divine Essence. (*De fide.*)

The reason lies in the absolute simplicity of God. The acceptance of a real distinction (*distinctio realis*) would lead to acceptance of a composition in God, and with that to a dissolution of the Godhead. In the year 1148, a Synod at Rheims, in the presence of Pope Eugene III, condemned, on the instance of St. Bernard of Clairvaux, the doctrine of Gilbert of Poitiers, who, according to the accusation of his opponents, posited a real distinction between God and Godhead (*Deus-Divinitas*), between the Divine Persons and Their properties (*Pater-paternitas*), and, according to the accounts of his opponents, also, between the Divine Essence and the Divine Attributes. This accusation can hardly be demonstrated from Gilbert's writings. Against this doctrine, the Synod asserted the factual identity of God with the Godhead, that is with the Divine Nature and the Persons, as well as of God and His Attributes: *Credimus et confitemur simplicem naturam divinitatis esse Deum nec aliquo sensu catholico posse negari, quin divinitas sit Deus et Deus divinitas . . . credimus, nonnisi ea sapientia, quae est ipse Deus, sapientem esse, nonnisi ea magnitudine, quae est ipse Deus, magnum esse est.* (We believe and confess that the divine nature in itself is (identical with) God nor, in any way consonant with Catholic doctrine, can we deny that the divinity is God and God is the divinity. . . . We believe that God is wise by that wisdom which is God Himself, that God is great by that greatness which is God Himself). D 389. The Union Council of Florence explained in the *Decretum pro Jacobitis* (1441): "(in God) all is one, where an opposition of relation does not exist." D 703.

In the Greek Church, the 14th century mystic-quietistic Sect of the Hesychasts or Palanites (so-called after the monk Gregory Palamas († 1359) taught a real distinction between the Divine Essence (*ουσία*) and the Divine Efficacy or the Divine attributes (*ἐνέργεια*). While the former was claimed to be

unknowable, the latter was claimed to be vouchsafed to humanity in a condition of contemplative prayer (*ἡσυχία*) through an uncreated Divine light ("Taborlight"). With this they distinguished a higher and a lower, an invisible and a visible side of the Godhead.

Holy Scripture indicates the identity of the Essence and the attributes of God, when it says: "God is charity" (John 4, 8). St. Augustine teaches: "What God has, that He is" (Quod habet, hoc est: De civ. Dei XI 10, 1). Gilbert's opponents summed up the ecclesiastical doctrine advanced against his error in the words attributed to St. Augustine: Quidquid in Deo est Deus est.

Again, the distinction is not a mere mental distinction, as the Eunoimians in the 4th and 5th centuries, and the Nominalists in later medieval times taught. According to the Eunoimians, all names and attributes of God are synonyms, which express nothing other than agenesie (ingeneratedness) in which we apparently adequately comprehend the Essence of God. According to the Nominalists the distinguishing of several qualities has no basis in the Divine Essence itself, but only in the various operations of God (*distinctio cum connotatione effectuum*—a distinction connoting effects).

Against the acceptance of a mere logical distinction there is the fact that Holy Scripture refers to many attributes of God. To explain these away as mere synonyms is incompatible with the dignity of Holy Writ. Again the perfections appearing in the works of God presuppose that God as their Originator Himself possesses them. God is not good because He does good, but He does good because He Himself is good.

c) According to the Scotists, the difference between God and His attributes is formal (*distinctio formalis*). A formal difference lies between a real and a purely mental difference. But the acceptance of the notion of various formalities of being which are (actualiter) present in God, previous to and independent of our thinking, is contrary to the absolute simplicity of the Divine Substance.

d) According to the general teaching, the difference is to be conceived as a virtual difference (*distinctio virtualis* or *rationis ratiocinatae sive cum fundamento in re*—a virtual distinction, a distinction of ratiotiative reason with a foundation in reality). The distinguishing of many attributes in God has a factual basis in the infinite fullness of the Divine Being. Even if God's Nature is in itself absolutely simple, yet we can only know it in a multiplicity of concepts. Cf. S. th. I 13, 4: *nomina Deo attributa licet significant unam rem, tamen quia significant eam sub rationibus multis et diversis, non sunt synonyma* (although the names attributed to God signify the same reality, yet because they signify it under many and diverse aspects, they are not synonymous). The assumed virtual difference is to be more exactly determined as *distinctio virtualis minor*, since one Divine perfection implicitly includes the other.

3. Classification

The Divine attributes are classified into:

a) Negative and positive (infinite—power); b) incommunicable and communicable (ingeneratedness—goodness); c) absolute and relative (holiness—mercifulness); d) attributes of being, and of being-active, also quiescent and active attributes (simplicity—omniscience).

CHAPTER I

The Attributes of the Divine Being

§ 11. The Absolute Perfection of God

That is perfect, in which nothing is lacking which according to its nature it should possess. Cf. S. th. I 4, 1 : *Perfectum dicitur, cui nihil deest secundum modum suae perfectionis.* That is absolutely perfect, which unites in itself all possible excellences and excludes all deficiencies. That is relatively perfect which has a finite nature and possesses all the advantages corresponding to this nature.

God is absolutely perfect. (*De fide.*)

The Vatican Council teaches that God is infinite in every perfection (*omni perfectione infinitus*). D 1782. Cf. Mt. 5, 48 : "Be ye therefore perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect!" Holy Writ indirectly expresses the absolute perfection of God by stressing His self-sufficiency and His independence of all other substance (cf. Rom. II, 34 et seq. : Is. 40, 13 et seq. ; Acts 17, 24 et seq.) and teaches that God contains in Himself all perfections. Eccus. 43, 29 : "He is all" (*τὸ πᾶν ἐστὶν αὐτός*). Cf. Rom. II, 36. Ps. 93, 9. The Fathers base the absolute perfection of God on the infinite fullness of being of God. They represent God's perfection as an essential, universal perfection which transcends all perfection. St. Irenaeus says : "God is perfect in everything, like unto Himself, all light, all reason, all essence, and the source of all goodness" (*Adv. Haer. IV 11, 2*). St. John of Damascus teaches : "The Divine Essence is perfect, is in no way deficient in goodness, in wisdom and in power. It is without beginning, without end, eternal, boundless—in short, absolutely perfect" (*De fide orth. I 5*). Cf. Ps.-Dionysius, *De div. nominibus* 13, 1.

St. Thomas bases the absolute perfection of God speculatively on the fact that God, as the First Cause of all created things, virtually contains in Himself all the perfections of the created, and that He, as the *ipsum esse subsistens* includes in Himself Eminently every being and thus, every perfection. Cf. S. th. I 4, 2. In regard to the attribution to God of perfections which are in creatures, the saying is valid : the pure perfections are in God *formaliter* and *eminenter* (formally and eminently), the mixed, *virtualiter et eminenter* (virtually and eminently).

§ 12. God's Infinity

That is infinite which has no end, no bound. Cf. S. th. I 7, 1 : *Infinitum dicitur aliquid ex eo, quod non est finitum.* The infinite is distinguished according to potentiality (*infinitum potentiale*) and according to actuality (*infinitum actuale*). The potentially infinite can be multiplied infinitely, but in reality it is finite and limited. On account of the indefiniteness of the limits, it is also called *indefinitum*. Further, one distinguishes between the relative and the absolute infinite. The former is infinite in a definite connection (for example duration), the latter is infinite in every respect.