

ON LOVE

PART II

THE CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN THE METAPHYSICAL AND

THE SUPERNATURAL ORDER

HOW GOD IS CALLED LOVE

CHAPTER THREE

UTILITY, INTENTION AND ORDER OF THE

"IN DE DIVINIS NOMINIBUS"

In the preceding chapter we spoke of a supernatural order to which man may be elevated by grace, and of a separated good and happiness which exceeds his natural due but to which faith reveals his ordering.¹ We indicated too that God's superior will, from love of His own goodness, had established the conditions for a friendship of charity with His human creature - conditions including the similarity and equality which we studied as the principles of love, and that the object of charity was God's goodness as it is in itself. The principles of the supernatural order exceed our reason's grasp, for the truths of the divine essence exceed the virtue of all created intellects;² while on earth, then, man must accept such principles in obscurity, on the sole evidence of divine revelation, yet the certitude of these same principles is absolute, for it rests upon the truth and wisdom of God Himself.³ Only the infused

¹See pp. 77-82 above.

²De Ver., q. 8, a. 2. Cf., IDN., c. 1, D. n. 3; T. 1, nn. 8, 9.

³Ia., a. 1, a. 5; IDN., c. 1, T. I, nn. 9, 11, 21.

virtue of faith can strengthen man's mind to reach these principles; yet from them theology, or science of divine truths, can deduce, according to the rational rules of logic, conclusions that share in the certitude of the supernatural principles. Thus has arisen the science of sacred theology, an intellectual habitus, formally natural because of the acquired virtue permitting it to reach its conclusions, but per se secundo supernatural, for its light is divine, participating in the elevation of its principles which will be evident to us only in the science of the blessed to which acquired theology is subalternated.¹ Theology considers divine things and likewise creatures in their relation to God, but when it treats such objects of the natural sciences, it judges and elevates what it accepts to its own certitude.² Now if theology has established that our doctrine on love, as presented in our preceding chapters, corresponds to its doctrine, we shall have the congruence of faith and reason to certify to the validity of our principles. In search of that certitude we have studied Saint Thomas' commentary on the De Divinis Nominibus of Dionysius, a theological treatise which employs similitude as means of manifestation, the

¹Ia, q.1, aa.1-7. Cf., IIa IIae, q.9, a.1; Ia, q.84, a.5, c; De Ver., q.18, a.5, c; J. of Saint-Thomas, Curs. Theol. (Solesmes ed.), T.II, dips.13, a.3, n.19, p.166.

²Contra Gentes, II, cc. 2-4 .

good as principle, its corresponding act, love, as sign, to set forth the correspondence between the natural order known by metaphysics and the supernatural order revealed by scripture. There is a complete treatise on love therein, which we have translated and appended, for the reader's convenience, at the end of our study, and it embodies Aquinas' doctrine on the object of our study. We were encouraged in our choice by Dionysius' claim that he would manifest for imperfect Christians and little minds,¹ even in a way proportioned to us, these truths that are above the virtue of our reason.²

Although Dionysius intended to lead his disciples to the Dieu éprouvé of the mystics rather than the Dieu prouvé of the scientific mediaeval theologian³ - hence the prominent role of love in all his theological writing - he used, like Augustine, such Platonic tradition as could be harmonized with faith, viz., the good as absolutely first principle, the doctrine of participation, to manifest

¹Idn., c.3, T.I, nn.251,260.

²Ibid., c.1, T.II, nn.64-65, with T.I, n.15. We would point out that, since this is not an historical study, we are not concerned with the motives influencing the Pseudo-Dionysius to impersonate an earlier Dionysius, a contemporary of Saint Paul's disciple, Timothy. Our interest lies solely in the doctrine of the treatise as it is explained and developed by Saint Thomas.

³Idn., introduction, pp.xxvii ff.

his profound supernatural doctrine to the extent possible.¹ He likewise used the mode of metaphysics in reasoning to a cause from its effects by way of excess or remotion, to distinguish positive from negative theology.² Saint Thomas uses Aristotelian philosophy in his commentary, but the ancillary and manifestative role of human wisdom is retained.³ For, since metaphysics is proportioned to our reason, though the last known and most abstract of natural sciences, it is a notius quoad nos, and serves as a dispositive principle for our firm adhesion to the presently obscure truths of faith, which are notius in se; however, it is dispositive only after we have grasped the consonance between the knowledge believed on God's authority, and the evidence of human speculation. So, while Saint Thomas cannot use the notius quoad nos as a principle of supernatural science, he can use it as a principle of the recognition of the congruity between created effects and divine principles, to show that faith exceeds but does not contradict reason.⁴

¹Ia, q.84, a.5, c: "Et ideo Augustinus, qui doctrinis Platonicorum imbutus fuerat, si qua invenit fidei accommoda in eorum dictis, assumpsit; quae vero invenit fidei nostrae adversa in melius commutavit." Compare IDN., Proemium, II.

²In XII Metaph., lect.VII-XII. Cf., De Pot., q.7, a.5, ad 2 with IDN., c.7, T.IV, nn.729ff.

³See Contra Gentes, II, cc.2-4, with Ia, q.1, a.5.

⁴Contra Gentes, I, c.4, with IDN., c.3, all, along with the commentary. Saint Thomas begins both the Contra Gentes and the Summa with a summary of metaphysics' manifestation by natural processes of what he will teach by divine principles.

and that divine theology contains natural theology (metaphysics) as materially pre-supposed, and confirms it. Indeed, the God of whom theology speaks would use revelation to communicate Himself supernaturally to the human creature, to whom He has already communicated a participation in His goodness and illumination by the gifts of life, appetite for its good, and knowing faculties.¹

Theology's use of wisdom as handmaid to assist human limitations ennobles rather than demeans the function of metaphysics, for, while it leaves the latter autonomous in its own domain, it permits it to share in the light of theology's higher principles, thus giving man a certain similitude of divine wisdom as regards creatures.² Nowhere is that similitude of divine wisdom so apparent, as in the contribution which Dionysius and his commentator have made to the knowledge, which a Christian has, of the means whereby he may reach his ultimate end, especially the mode of love which may move God to accord Him the union of the docta ignorantia of the gifts,³ even on earth, and later the beatifying vision of Himself in heaven. By proceeding from created perfections, similitudes of the divine good, which tend to

¹IDN., introd., pp.xxviiff. Cf., De Trin., q.2, aa.2-4.

²Contra Gentes, II, c.4, ad finem; IDN., c.7, T.I, n.706.

³IDN., c.1, T.III, n.83. Cf., IIa IIae. q.9, a.2, ad 1; a.4, c.

that good in seeking their own perfective good by love, these two authors have manifested, to the extent possible to our capacity to comprehend, the lovable-ness of Him who caused these perfections, and so have proportioned our wills to desire to return a love commensurate with the good revealed, that is, to respond to our full measure to the attraction of His infused charity.¹ As the Contra Gentes puts it:

Si igitur creaturarum bonitas, pulchritudo et suavitas sic animos hominum allicit, ipsius Dei fontana bonitas, rivulis bonitatum in singulis creaturis repertis diligenter comparata, animas hominum inflammatas totaliter ad se trahet.²

It is because it manifests by similitude, by similitudes of the good that is pre-eminently found in God, that the book of the Divine Names, while still theology, is "iuxta proportionem nostram."³

Let us explain. In our first chapter we indicated that we knew by assimilating the known object,⁴ that similitude between object and appetite was the proximate condition of love,⁵ that the universal good was the adequate object of

¹See IDN., c.1, T.I, where Saint Thomas explains Dionysius' conditions for approaching the knowledge of God contained in the work which he is beginning, especially n.39: "Tertio conditio est quod affectum amoris, divinis manifestatis exhibeant; et hoc est quod subdit: et commensurato amore convenientium illuminationum..."

²Contra Gentes, II, c.2, tertio.

³IDN., c.1, T.II, nn.64-69; D.nn.15ff. The phrases "secundum modum nostrum" and "iuxta proportionem nostram" occur frequently.

⁴See pp.9-12 supra.

⁵See, pp.12-38 supra.

human wills to which they tended by way of individual perfective objects.¹ Now it is in the names of the good attributes of God, applied to Him from the manifest goodnesses which He caused in creatures, and which are goods likewise for man, that the De Divinis Nominibus treats. All that is good, that is perfective, and therefore appetible in creatures, is an effect or likeness of the absolute good. All that participates in that goodness reflects the unparticipated. These evident perfections must be sought supereminently in their source - God.² God can produce creatures that are more or less perfect, but, in every case, they are ordered to their good, and indirectly to Him by a love whose principle is their likeness to Him.³ It is from love of His own goodness that God diffuses or communicates goodness to creatures, whose greatest good consists in their return to the original universal Good.⁴

¹See p.16 supra.

²IDN., c.1, D.all, with T.I,II, but especially N.51: "Et ut universos Dei effectus simul comprehendat, subdit quod est bona traditio occulti. Manifestum est enim quod quaecumque in creaturis sunt, in Deo praexistunt eminentius. Sed creaturae quidem manifestae sunt nobis, Deus autem occultus. Sic igitur, secundum quod rerum perfectiones a Deo per quamdam participationem derivantur in creaturas, fit traditio in manifestum eius quod erat occultum; et hoc fit secundum quod est conveniens, scilicet, secundum proportionem determinatam uniuscuiusque."

³Ibid., especially T.III, nn.93ff., with D.nn.24ff.

⁴Ibid., c.3, especially D.nn.78,79, with T.I, n.228. "Sic igitur, quidquid Deus facit creaturis, sive esse sive vivere et quodcumque aliud totum ex bonitate divina procedit et totum ad bonitatem pertinet creaturae."

Indeed, if the Creator wishes to do so, He may order creatures, not merely to Himself as principle and term of their good, but He may even order them to Himself as He is in Himself.¹ The scriptures reveal that He who is principle and cause of all good, all life, has so ordered man: that He sent His Son to restore man to that ordering when Adam had put the human race outside of it by sin.² Our natural reason reveals all these created goods to us, and we are moved to love what perfects us. Only the knowledge of Faith can reveal why that God, Who is the principle whence these goods came, made them somewhat like Himself that they might move us to return in love to Him, the infinitely perfect and perfective. In the book of The Divine Names, Saint Thomas and Dionysius have explained the scriptural names manifesting the good attributes of that God to whom we are ordered, attributes veiled for us in the intelligible signs of created effects.³ All things tend to their good by love: the concerted movement of the whole universe, of which man is a part, knits that universe to unity by its tendancy to the good that is God, and the resulting order is His closest created image.⁴

¹Ibid., c.1, T.II, especially nn.44-64.

²Ibid., T.II, nn.60-63, 66.

³Ibid., T.II, D.nn.15ff., with T.nn.64ff., but especially n.64: "Dicit autem: per sancta velamina, quia in praesenti vita, non possumus per ea quae nobis tradita sunt, ipsam Dei essentiam, prout in se est, videre, sed instruimur de Deo in Scripturis, per similitudinem effectus Ipsius, quas per quaedam velamina, secundum illud; Videmus nunc per speculum in aenigmate (I Corinth., xiii, 2)".

⁴Ibid., T.III, nn.93-99.

All these similitudes of God in creatures are intelligible for us, and once God has infused the theological virtue of charity, can be principles of a deliberate act or increase of that charity. It is to kindle love for Him, Whose divine providence founded the universe and keeps it moving to love, that the book of the Divine Names was written, and that, at its heart, there was placed a treatise on love, the root of all operations natural or supernatural. It is proportioned to our mode of knowing, our mode of loving, and our mode of operating; the authors hoped that by teaching us to contemplate God in His knowable effects, they might make us apt for divine union. As Saint Thomas Himself expresses it:

...Tertio, ut voluntas nostra per caritatem et devotionem sit ordinata in Deum et hoc est quod subdit: et apti ad divinam unionem.¹

To facilitate that contemplation, they introduce God under analogic names.

A contemporary author suggests that Dionysius has not the same concept of analogy as Saint Thomas, but they have points in common.² For both, the word analogy is

¹IDN... c.3. T.I, nn.233.

²Maurice de Gandillac, Oeuvres Complètes du Pseudo-Denys (Ed. Montaigne; Paris: Aubier, 1945), pp.40-45. References to the French text of Dionysius will be taken from this work, and will be indicated by Pseudo-Denys, name of work, chapter and page.

applied primarily to knowledge, and suggests a measure "according to the capacity and or merits of each."¹ Capacity signifies the natural order, merits the supernatural order, so two sources of knowledge are indicated here. Saint Thomas is explicit:

....Mens nostra duo habet ad intelligibilia cognoscenda: Primo habet naturalem virtutem, idest intelligentiam, per quam inspicere potest intelligibilia sibi proportionata; secundo vero, habet quandam unionem ad res divinas per gratiam, quae excedit naturam mentis nostrae, per quam unionem coniunguntur homines per fidem aut quamcumque cognitionem, ad ea quae sunt super naturalem mentis virtutem. Oportet ergo ut intelligamus divina secundum hanc unionem gratiae, quasi non trahendo divina ad ea quae sunt secundum nos, sed magis totos nos statuantes extra nos in Deum, ita ut per praedictam unionem totaliter deificemur. 2

God has established a descending hierarchy of beings with corresponding faculties of learning.³ Naturally the rational animal has only his reason to know the "intelligible things proportioned to him." He can know God, of himself, only as cause of what sense and reason reveal to him. But, with grace, there arises a natural desire and love to contemplate the

¹De Gandillac, op. cit., p.40; Pseudo-Denys, Lettre VIII, 1089A-1092A, pp.339-341.

²IDN., c.7, T.I, n.705. Cf., D.n.302.

³Pseudo-Denys, La Hiérarchie Céleste, pp.184ff, with Lettre VIII, 1988C-1093B, pp.338-343. The hierarchy is to be understood in a Thomistic light, not in the dialectical interpretation of Nicholas of Cusa in his Docta Ignorantia. See De Gandillac, op. cit., pp.34-35, with Maurice De Gandillac, Ceuvres Choiesies de Nicolas de Cues, (Ed. Montaigne; Paris: Aubier, 1941), pp.23, 29-31, 34-37.

"supernatural things which he can grasp, for by them his mind is especially perfected."¹ Even with grace, the majority of Christians upon the earth can know God only as supernatural cause of all known perfections, natural and supernatural, and can proceed by similitude from created perfections to ascribe such effects supereminently to His essence, which no man can know until strengthened by the lumen gloriae of heaven. The Christian, by grace, desires to see God as He is in Himself,² but His vision will depend upon the degree of lumen proportioned to his merits; even upon earth he will receive new light and grace only in proportion to his co-operation with the light already received, a co-operation which includes the effort to transmit his light of faith to others. Wherefore, in the order of grace as well as of nature, "each must limit his aspirations to the functions

¹IDN., c.3, T.I, n.259: "Et ad hoc dupliciter persuasus est: primo quidem, ex naturali desiderio mentium quae semper cum quodam amore cupiunt contemplationem rerum supernaturalium quam capere possunt, quia per hoc maxime perficiuntur; secundo, quia optima dispositio divinarum legum prohibet multum scrutari ea quae sunt supra nos, tum quia sunt supra dignitatem nostram, tum quia impossibile est nobis adipisci... Sed ea quae a nobis desiderantur et data sunt nobis, ut ea capere possimus, praecipit lex divina nos attente discere et aliis benigne tradere... Cf., D.n.93.

²With note 1 see: Ia IIae, q.62, a.1, ad 3; Cajetan, In Iam, q.12, a.1: J. of Saint-Thomas, Curs. Theol., T.II, a.12, all, with a.3, nn.7,10,13; Saint Thomas, Compendium Theologiae (Mandonnet ed.), cc.103-106.

which have been assigned to him, in proportion to his merits."¹ He must not expect to understand the Trinity here below; he may expect only that degree of lumen merited by him; he must not presume that God will accord him the purely gratuitous light of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, wherein God lets His saints know Him, even on earth, by experiential knowledge.² It would seem that analogy means the measure of knowledge proportioned to man's state of nature and of grace, when the term is used by Dionysius. But for Saint Thomas, although the above implication is pre-supposed, the primary connotation of the word is the logical device whereby one may learn, or manifest the unknown from the known by way of analogic names.

The term analogy is defined by proportion, but proportion itself has a primary and an extended meaning.³ The word was first applied to the relation of one quantity to another, as when we say that four is twice two; a cognate, namely proportionality, was then formed to signify a similitude

¹Pseudo-Denys, Lettre VIII, n.1, 1092A, p.341.Cf., n.3, pp.342-344, with De Gandillac's introduction, pp.36-45; IDN., c.1, T.I, all but especially n.39.

²IDN., c.2, T.IV, nn.191-192.

³Ia, q.13, a.5, especially ad 4; De Ver., q.2, a.11, c. We are here following the doctrine of Saint Thomas, as found in Ia, q.13, aa.5,6,10, and Contra Gentes, I, c.34, rather than that of Cajetan, De Analogia Nominum (Ed. Zammit; Romae: Institutum Angelicum, 1934), except where the latter agrees with Saint Thomas.

of two proportions, as when we say that six is to three as eight is to four. Finally, the signification was extended to take in every similitude or proportion of relations between things.¹ Because the mind recognizes the similitude of significations, the philosophers can manifest by analogic names - i.e. names which are one according to a proportion understood in this extended sense - intrinsic entities, goodnesses and qualities inevident in the name's first imposition, and theologians can lead the human reason from the finite to the infinite, from creature to creator, avoiding therein the double danger of pantheistic univocity and fideistic equivocity.

For Saint Thomas, then, analogy is first of all a logical problem of signification, principally concerned with the imposition of a common name, following an order of prius and posterius, wherein the idea signified in the first imposition becomes a principle whereby we may know the idea signified in the secondary impositions, because of a similitude between meanings.² A same name may be said of a plurality of

¹Ia, q.12, a.1, ad 4: "Dicendum quod proportio dicitur dupliciter. Uno modo, certa habitudo unius quantitatis ad alteram; secundum quod duplum triplum et aequale sunt species proportionis. Alio modo, quaelibet habitudo unius ad alterum proportio dicitur. Et sic potest esse proportio creaturae ad Deum, inquantum se habet ad ipsum ut effectus ad causam, et ut potentia ad actum. Et secundum hoc, intellectus creatus proportionatus esse potest ad cognoscendum Deum." Cf., De Ver., q.2, a.3, ad 4; a.11, c; In V Metaph., lect. VIII, nn.879-880.

²Ia, q.13, aa.5,6,10; Contra Gentes, I, c.34.

things in three ways, univocally, equivocally and analogically, but analogic names may be considered as modified equivocals, not purely equivocal but one according to a proportion or similitude.¹ A name is univocal when its corresponding definition is always identical. For example, the word animal always indicates a sentient living thing, even though the natures that are animal vary in perfection as much as man or brute, and though the metaphysician, concerned only with the distinct natures that are animal, understands the term as if it were equivocal.² A name is equivocal when only the name is common, while the corresponding definition is completely different in each case, as in the names dog-fish, dog-star, dog.³ But in the analogic names there is one primary ratio, and the name imposed according to that one proper signification is placed in the definition of the same name taken in its secondary significations because the intellect conceives a proportion between them, as when being is said primarily of substance, secondarily of accident, or when healthy is said first of animal and then of medicine.⁴

¹Ia, q.13, a.5, c: "Et iste modus communitatis medius est inter puram aequivocationem et simplicem univocationem. Neque enim in his quae analogice dicuntur, est una ratio, sicut est in univocis; nec totaliter diversa, sicut in aequivocis..." Cf., Ia, q.13, a.10.

²I Sent., d.19, q.5, a.2; Ia, q.13, a.6. Cf., Cajetan, De Anal. Nom., c.1, nn.4-7.

³Ia, q.13, a.10, c. In IV Metaph., lect.I, nn.534-537.

⁴Ia, q.13, a.10.

There is true analogy only when the name is properly communicable to all the analogues, as when we apply the word principle to the animal's heart and to the house's foundations, or when we apply good to God and good to the creature. But when the original imposition of the name is retained, and this name is used for things which, while quite different, yet have some similitude with the things properly named, as when we speak of a smiling meadow, or of Christ the lion, we have metaphor, not analogy.¹ The Scriptures have many such metaphors to express something of the divine.

There is an order of prius and posterius both for the imposition of the analogic name and for its significations, though that order is not necessarily the same for both. The imposition follows the order of our knowing, for the names are imposed by us according to their mode of being in our knowledge, rather than their mode of being in reality.²

Saint Thomas expresses it thus:

In this matter of analogous predication we find sometimes the same order in point of name and in point of thing named, sometimes not the same. The order of naming follows the order of knowing, because the name is a sign of an intelligible concept. When then that which is prior in point of fact happens to be also prior in point of knowledge, there is one and the same priority alike in point of the concept answering to the name and of the nature of the thing named. Thus substance is prior to

¹Ia, q.13, a.9; De Ver., q.2, a.11, c; "Sed tamen...".
Cf., Cajetan, De Anal. Nom., c.3, n.25.

²Ia, q.13, a.9, ad 2.

accident by nature, inasmuch as substance is the cause of accident; and prior also in knowledge, inasmuch as substance is put in the definition of accident; and therefore 'being' is predicated of substance before it is predicated of accident, alike in point of the nature of the thing and in point of the concept attaching to the name. But when what is prior in nature is posterior in knowledge, in such cases of analogy there is not the same order alike in point of the thing named and in point of the concept attaching to the name. Thus the power of healing, that is in healing remedies, is prior by nature to the health that is in the animal, as the cause is prior to the effect: but because this power is known from its effect, it is also named from its effect: hence, though 'healthful' or 'health-producing' is prior in order of fact, yet the application of the predicate 'healthy' to animal is prior in point of the concept attaching to the name. Thus then, because we arrive at the knowledge of God from the knowledge of other realities, the thing signified by the names that we apply in common to God and to those other realities - the thing signified, I say, is by priority in God, in the mode proper to God: but the concept attaching to the name is posterior in its application to Him: hence He is said to be named from the effect which He causes.¹

Four facts stand out in the above. First, that analogue is prior in fact wherein the definition signified by the name is most perfectly found. Second, that analogue is prior for us which we know first, and to which we first attach the name, although it may realize the name's ratio most imperfectly. Third, we can apply analogous names in common to God and to His created effects; such names may be properly and even essentially predicated of Him, "for the words, 'God is good', or 'wise', signify not only that He is

¹Contra Gentes, I, c.34.

the cause of wisdom or goodness, but that these exist in Him in a more excellent way."¹ Therefore the name's signification here applies primarily to God. Fourth, because we know by assimilation, when we grasp even the proportionate likeness of the first analogue found imperfectly in the inferior analogue - when it is an inferior analogue that is first known to us - we can know the perfect from the imperfect. We can even proceed from the known created effect to know, imperfectly, because He transcends the creature's mode of being, the Creator Himself. This will be important in the book of the Divine Names.²

In proper analogy that analogue which is prior in fact must be put in the definition of the other analogues, although Cajetan would limit that rule to attribution.³

As Saint Thomas puts it:

In names predicated of many in an analogical sense, all are predicated through a relation to some one thing, and this one thing must be placed in the definition of them all. And since the essence expressed by the name is the definition, as the Philosopher says,⁴ such a name must be applied primarily to that which is put in the defi-

¹Ia, q. 13, a. 6, c. Cf., Albertus Magnus, *Opera Omnia* (ed. Vives), t. XIV, *Commentarii in Opera B. Dionysii Areopagitae, De Mystica Theologia*, c. 1, n. 3, p. 825b. Subsequent references to Saint Albert will be to this text, wherefore we will cite only the name of the author, the precise work, and the location.

²See, *IDN.*, c. 1, T. II, n. 64: "...Instruimur de Deo in Scripturis, per similitudinem effectus Ipsius, quasi per quaedam velamina, secundum illud, I Corinth. 13, (2): Videmus nunc per speculum in aenigmate." Cf., *ibid.*, c. 1, T. I, n. 29.

³Cajetan, *De Anal. Nom.*, c. 2, n. 14, with n. 10.

⁴Aristotle, *Metaph.* III, c. 7, 1012a23.

...nition of the other things, and secondarily to these others according as they approach more or less to the first.¹

So, to determine the analogic meaning, one must turn from the first-known analogue to the inferior analogues where the ratio is commonly realized. That analogue which is put in the definition of the others is the prior in point of fact. We can recognize it from the similitude of it found in the other analogues. But the name's signification must be properly communicable to all the analogues, for if realized properly in only one, it is transferred improperly or metaphorically to the other members.² In the above example, when God is termed a lion, we predicate of Him a name whose definition includes matter. Any name whose definition signifies what is imperfect, is alien to Him. While there is a similitude, in that He acts with strength, we can only transfer the name to Him as a cause, and must deny the imperfection in the definition, as well as the created mode of existence when it is applied to Him. But when we attribute to Him an analogic name, since the ratio signified applies to Him per prius, we need only deny the creaturely mode of existence in Him, by ascribing it to Him supereminently. And these names can be applied to God both as cause, and essentially, for they also signify His substance, though

¹Ia, q.13, a.6, c.

²Ia, q.13, a.9, c: "Proprie quidem communicabile est quod secundum totam significationem nominis est communicabile multis. Per similitudinem autem communicabile est quod est communicabile secundum aliquid eorum quae includuntur in nominis significatione." Cf., p.98 supra.

imperfectly. So, by a means proportioned to our reason, we are led to a better grasp of the names revealed by Scripture as applying to God, even in Himself.¹ This is a mode of instruction which proportions divine things to us to the extent possible.² And since, by the instrumentality of the word, the master can be said to cause science in the mind of his disciple by his superior intellectual virtue, the analogic word is superlatively adapted for teaching.³ So Dionysius, following the example of Christ and of his master, Hierotheus, uses it to instruct the minds of his flock, for "Sacred Scripture distributes divine things to us by symbols, that, in a way proportioned to us, by those things that are known to us, we may be led to the divine."⁴

How, then, can we name, that is, know God? First there is the mode natural to the rational animal - metaphysics' way of discourse. From his experience of nature man is aware of motion, of the need of a cause for that

¹IDN., c.1, T.I, nn.29-39; T.II, nn.69ff.; T.III, nn.100-104; c.4, T.I, all. Cf., Ia, q.12, a.12, c; q.13, aa.1-8.

²See IDN., introduction, p.xxx: "Hae omnes considerationes, theologiam naturalem spectantes, lucem adaugent, nisi faller, in theologia dionysiana supernaturali."

³De Ver., q.11, a.1, ad 11: "Unde ipsa verba doctoris audita, vel visa in scripta, hoc modo se habent ad causandum scientiam in intellectu sicut res quae sunt extra animam, quia ex utrisque intellectus intentiones intelligibiles accipit; quamvis verba doctoris propinquius se habeant ad causandum scientiam quam sensibilia extra animam existentia inquantum sunt signa intelligibilium intentionum." Cf., IDN., c.3, D.n.88; T.I, nn.251-260.

⁴Albertus Magnus, De Mystica Theologia, c. proemialis, ob.8, p.814b.

motion, and therefore of the idea of cause.¹ In this way we know God as cause of all that the senses and our intellect reveal to us. We assign to Him supereminently the perfections evident in sensible and intelligible creatures, and we can deny of Him all that implies imperfection. The name God signifies something existing above all things and removed from all things.² By remotion or negation of what implies imperfection, we can reach, in a way, the quid non est of God. But Saint Thomas points out the poverty of our best results from reason, in this way of causality, eminence and negation;

Hence we know His relationship with creatures, that is, that He is the cause of all things; also that creatures differ from Him, inasmuch as He is not in any way part of what is caused by Him; and that His effects are removed from Him, not by reason of any defect on His part, but because He superexceeds them all.³

All men of normal faculties can reach mediately, after a simple a-posteriori demonstration, a confused awareness that God is, but only a few - namely the wise - could

¹For naming from discourse see Ia, q.2, aa.2,3; q.12, a.12, with Cajetan's commentary; Contra Gentes, I, cc.9ff; In XII Metaph., all; De Pot., q.7, a.5, ad 2; IDN., c.7, T.IV, etc. These give the arguments from cause, excess and remotion. The beginning of the Summa and the Contra Gentes give the argument of the five ways, which argue to God as first mover, first efficient cause, the necessary being, the maximum good and maximum being which is exemplar and measure of the more and less, and the intelligence ordering the universe. See Cajetan, In Iam Ilae, q.2, a.2, ad 2 for their value as proofs.

²Ia, q.13, a.8.

³Ia, q.12, a.12, c. ad finem.

have a distinct or scientific knowledge of even this aspect of God.¹ Error is almost inevitable, and, because he is ignorant of the existence of a life of grace, of the divine life of God, or of man's possibility of the life of glory, even the philosopher can reach no just index of the virtue of God as cause.² So Christ came on earth to call all men to a share in the divine life by charity, for which grace, revealed knowledge and infused hope were likewise necessary.³ Only God can know His own essence, which is beyond the virtue of any created intellect, so only He can manifest it. In His essence He is known only to Himself, hidden to us.⁴ But He freely willed that His goodness should not be hidden, so He revealed that goodness gratuitously, according to a kind of distributive justice, and deposited the knowledge for us in the scripture.⁵ Yet while no creature can know Him as He is "ad perfectum modum cognitionis Ipsius", we attain Him in some way by faith.⁶ Saint Thomas expresses it:

Sed in doctrina fidei proponuntur quaedam homini ignota
et indicibilia quibus habentes fidem inhaerent, non cognos-

¹Contra Gentes, I, c.9; III, cc.38,39, with J. of Saint-Thomas, Curs. Theol., T.I, disp. 3, a.1, nn.12-14, pp.416-417.

²IDN., c.6, T.II, nn.688,689.

³Contra Gentes, II, c.4, with III, c.39; De Ver., q.10 a.12; Ia, q.1, a.1, ad 2; IDN., c.7, T.IV.

⁴IDN., c.1, T.I, all but especially nn.13,14.

⁵Ibid., n.22.

⁶Ibid., n.27.

cende aut perfecte verbo explicando, licet certius eis
inhaerent et altior sit huiusmodi inhaesio quam aliqua
cognitio naturalis.¹

Both the incomprehensible and the proportioned knowledge are
to be found in Scripture, and that is the basis of all sacred
theology's naming of God.

As the proemium of Saint Thomas indicates, Dionysius
had planned to systematize this whole theological deposit
into a Summa of four volumes, forming four successive degrees
of an exegesis which would cover all the scriptural names
of God.² In his De Divinis Hypotyposibus he had treated the
names attributed to God as one and three, along with the pro-
cession of Persons within the Trinity.³ This portion of
theology deals with God as He is in Himself, and will always
be "mystica" or incomprehensible to man on earth, inasmuch
as its principles are known only by faith. Such sublime
doctrine can be manifested only to a slight extent, for there
are no adequate similitudes of the divine essence in creatures
whereby somehow we may know its mystery. Only those who have
reached the unitive way of the gifts can manifest it to even
that slight extent, and Hierotheus, the learned teacher of
Dionysius, had already done so in his De Theologicis Stoi-
chiosibus.⁴ Dionysius himself had indicated such similitudes

¹IDN., C.I. T. I, n.7.

²IDN., Proemium, I. Cf., Pseudo-Denys, introd., pp.
34ff; Albertus Magnus, De Theol. Mystica, c.3, pp.843ff.

³IDN., c.1, D.n.1; T.I, n.3; Cf., D.all; T.I-IV.

⁴IDN., c.2, D.n.60; T.IV, nn.189-192.

as were to be found, for instance, that all paternity in heaven and earth was named after the divine generation, but the matter of this treatise must remain inevident until man is beatified.¹ He therefore turns to those names which he can manifest by created similitudes.

Two classes of names can be ascribed to God from the likenesses of Him found in creatures.² In the first God is named from a participation of His goodness actually found in creatures: these are the analogic names of His "intelligible processions", wherein the same name is properly applied both to the created perfection and to God who caused it. All that is, all that is good, all life, wisdom and virtue.etc. is derived from that first being Who is good by His essence. His providence communicated this semblance of His own perfection, first, because of His love for His own divine goodness, and secondly, that we might recognize with love the cause from its effect.³ The manifestative virtue of this analogic method, so proportioned to man's cognitive capacity, we have already pointed out, and it is of these names, properly common to God and creature, that Dionysius proposes to treat in his book of the Divine Names.⁴

¹IDN., c.2, D.nn.54-57; T.IV, especially nn.172-184.

²IDN., Proemium, Ib.

³IDN., c.1, T.II, nn.45ff, with D.nn.12ff; T.III, especially n.104, where Saint Thomas refers to intelligible perfections.

⁴IDN., c.1, T.I, nn.21-29; T.III, especially nn.104ff.

The second mode of proceeding by similitude is found when a name properly signifying a sensible object, alien to God in that its signification contains the idea of the creature's imperfection, is translated to God by metaphor.¹ Such names, so numerous in scripture, Dionysius will treat in his De Symbolica Theologia, wherein he will show how God can be praised as lion, stone etc; how, in a certain sense, He can be said to have divine forms, figures, parts etc; how He may be angry, sad or sleep; how He has sworn and may even curse His creature,² There is a certain likeness here, but Saint Albert shows how far this mode of naming falls short of the analogic name in the following passage:

Sed disendum, quod ad hoc quod effectus praedicetur de causa, oportet quod causa et effectus sint communicantia aliquo modo; unde dico, quod quamvis Deus non communicet cum creaturis in genere, vel specie, vel analogia per quam aliquid unum sit in ipso et creaturis: communicat tamen quadam analogia imitationis, secundum quod alia imitantur ipsum, quantum possunt; quaedam tamen imitantur ipsum Deum ut ideata, sicut ea quae non sunt per prius in ipso; sicut asinus et lapis in formis suis, et ista non praedicantur de Deo essentialiter, sed causaliter tantum; quaedam vero imitantur ipsum ut imago ver similitudo illius, quae per prius sunt in ipso, sicut sapientia, et bonitas, etc., et ista dicuntur de ipso essentialiter et causaliter; et non est simile de fabro qui non est ratio cultelli quam habet, sed Deus est omnes rationes rerum quas habet, quia est quidquid habet, et ideo recipit quodammodo omnium praedicationem...³

¹IDN., Proemium Io. with supra, pp.98,102.

²IDN., c.1, T.III, n.104; D.n.27; c.4, T.IV, especially n.322 with D.nn.125-131; c.13, T.IV, n.1007; D.n.457. Cf., Albertus Magnus, De Myst. Theol., c.1, n.3, p.825b.

³Albertus Magnus, loc.cit.

The metaphoric name, then, implies only the similitude of a Divine idea realized, and is alien to God. But having given to God the alien name, we must, by negative addition, deny of Him one or more of the characteristics naturally associated with the signification of the name, as well as the creaturely mode of existence which must be denied in the analogic name. This method of naming God from sensible similitudes by metaphor is neither as secure nor as appropriate as the mode of the book of the Divine Names.¹

The above three works belong to affirmative theology wherein affirmations are made of God, either of the Trinity or of one of the divine Persons as in the De Divinis Hypotyposibus, or of a property of His nature, or of God as cause such as in the De Divinis Nominibus, or "transumptive" from creatures, as in the De Symbolica Theologia, which also makes assertions about Him as cause.² In each case, what we can assert of Him reduces to some aspect of good,³ and we begin with what is closest to God, what is noblest, wherein our knowledge and our vocabulary is scanty, because we cannot

¹Both the De Divinis Hypotyposibus and the De Symbolica Theologia, if ever written, were lost before the time of Saint Thomas' commentary.

²Albertus Magnus, De Myst. Theol., c.3, n.1, pp.845b-846.

³IDN., c.1, D.nn.22-24; T.III, all but especially n.84. Cf., c.2, D.nn.49-53; T.III, especially n.159 and c.13, T.XII, n.995.

grasp even what faith reveals to us of His essence; then we descend to what is farthest removed from Him - the sensible effects of the divine cause - multiplying our inadequate names as we leave the one universal cause to approach the increasing multitude of His effects.¹ But we cannot understand the Trinity; all the similitudes of the divine in creatures allow us to know God as cause, but "hoc ipsum quod est Deus (remanet) occultum et ignotum".² So we proceed to deny these symbols that hid Him from us, that is, we deny of Him all that we can know by sense or intellect, beginning by negations of what is farthest from Him, but closest to us, and proceeding upward, in an order that reverses the processus of positive theology. Here we come to the negative theology of Dionysius' De Mystica Theologia, wherein our knowledge and vocabulary become progressively smaller as we ascend to God. Yet, while our negations are said of God's essence, and our affirmations could be made only secundum quid, namely, of Him as cause, we do not yet know what He is, but we now know what He is not.³ This is the closest the human intellect can come to knowing God on earth. Saint Thomas expresses it thus:

¹IDN., c.1, T.III, nn.96ff; D.n.25. Cf., c.13, T.III, nn.992ff; D.n.452 with Albertus Magnus, De Myst. Theol., c.2, n.2, pp.839-842.

²IDN., Proemium, Id.

³Albertus Magnus, De Myst. Theol., c.1, n.3, p.825b, ad 4; q. proemialis, n.8, pp.814b-815. Cf., IDN., c.1, T.III, nn.84, 96ff.; c.13, T.III, nn.995-996.

Et quia theologi consideraverunt quod omne nomen a nobis impositum deficit a Deo, ideo ipsi, inter omnes modos quibus in Deum possumus ascendere per intellectum, praedeterminaverunt eum qui est per negationes, per quas quodam ordine in Deum ascendimus...

Ad ultimum autem anima nostra Deo coniungitur, ascendendo per negationes, in ultimis totorum, idest in supremis finibus universaliorum et excellentiorum creaturarum. Et quidem coniunctio animae ad Deum fit inquantum nobis possibile est nunc Deo coniungi; non enim coniungitur in praesenti intellectus noster Deo ut Eius essentiam videat; sed ut cognoscat de Deo quid non est. Unde haec coniunctio nostri ad Deum, quae nobis est in hac vita possibilis perficitur quando devenimus ad hoc quod cognoscamus Eum esse supra excellentissimas creaturas.¹

Yet while by this method of theology we have surpassed the method of the Divine Names in that we have reached something similar to the divine nature, which manifests something of that nature, we must first affirm before we can deny. That is, we must be formed, rendered "doctus" by knowledge proportioned to us before we attempt to study it.² Only saints in the unitive way of perfection, such as a Paul or an Hierotheus, have the light to manifest mystical theology, according to Dionysius,³ for by the infused, affective

¹IDN., c.13, T.III, nn.995,996. Cf., D.n.452; c.1, T.III, nn.81ff, with D.nn.21-24.

²IDN., c.1, T.III, n.106. Cf., Pseudo-Denys, La Théologie Mystique, c.1, n.2, p.178.

³IDN., c.2, T.IV, n.90, with D.n.60, for the three modes of doctus as applied to the teachers. Indoctus signifies first the non-Christian, then the beginner in Christian knowledge and practice. See IDN., c.1, T.III, n.106, with D.n.30; T.I, nn.34-39. Cf., Albertus Magnus, De Myst. Theol., c.1, n.3, p.823a: "Dicit autem primo, quod hic cavere debet ne aliquis indoctus in divina doctrina audiat mystica: dicit enim illos indoctos, qui cum sunt informati et secundum affectum et secundum intellectum existentibus a quibus scientiam accipimus nihil credunt esse super entia."

knowledge of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, God has deigned to fill "with splendours more beautiful than beauty itself those intellects that know how to close their eyes."¹ So, for the average Christian, and for the teacher to whom God has not given the exceptional knowledge of the gifts, the mode of the Divine Names is the best method of theological learning and teaching, for it is the most proportioned to the imperfect in perfection, among whom he includes himself.² In any case, one moves God to accord the gift of affective knowledge by prayer, and by offering Him affectum amoris divinis manifestatis, a love commensurate with the light already received.³ Dionysius will teach all novices in spirituality what that love means, in his treatise on how God can be called love in the Divine Names. If they correspond they will reach the end of all theology, the divine vision. For, as Saint Albert puts it:

Finis autem hujus doctrinae non est tantum scire, neque ut solum per opera boni simus, sicut in Ethicis, sed ut ulterius ad aeternam salutem perveniamus, in qua quod hic de Deo occultum nobis relinquitur per negationes,

¹Pseudo-Denys, La Théologie Mystique, c.1, n.1, p.177.

²IDN., c.3, T.I, nn.250-251.

³IDN., c.1, T.I, n.39: "Tertio conditio est quod affectum amoris divinis manifestatis exhibeant; et hoc est quod subdit: et commensurato amore convenientium illuminationum, ita scilicet quod affectus eorum circa ea insistant quae secundum eorum mensuram eis sunt data, per quae elevantur in divina alis spiritualibus scilicet contemplationibus intellectualibus, cum reverentia sancta et caste et sancte." Cf., D.n.10, and c.3, D.nn.86ff; T.I, nn.229ff.

sine aliquo velamine et aperte nobis objiciatur,¹

Yet Saint Thomas bids us beware of difficulties in the text of Dionysius.² He had deliberately veiled the sacred truths in archaic Platonic language to protect them. At times his style is cryptic, at other times repetitious to verbosity when he would emphasize the importance or profundity of this teaching. Again he adapts from Platonism manifestative techniques. Plato, confusing the logical with the real order, had posited the separated existence of abstract universals, the good, the true, etc., in which all that was good and true in individual things participated. He thereby identified the universal in praedicando with the universal in causando, and thus his abstract principle of the good is above God as cause, for its causality extends even to prime matter.³ Dionysius rejected the false, but utilized the true and corrected the imperfect in the Platonic tradition. By using as principle of manifestation the good, attributing it to God who is transcendently good by His essence, and whose goodness is preeminently cause of all created perfections,

¹Albertus Magnus, De Theol. Myst., Proemium, p.812. He cites the above as the end of Mystical Theology but in that mystical theology is the fourth part of Dionysius' Summa, it likewise applies to theology as a whole.

²IDN., Proemium, II.

³IDN., Proemium, IIa: "Nec solum huiusmodi abstractione Platonici considerabant circa ultimas species rerum naturalium sed etiam circa maxime communia, quae sunt bonum, unum et ens."

he obtained the descending order of excellence proper to affirmative theology.¹ As found in Dionysius, the doctrine of participation is in perfect accord with faith.² In imitating Plato's order, he does not endorse his doctrine.

... We might add to Saint Thomas' warning the suggestion that Dionysius' protestations of unworthiness for his task are not to be interpreted too literally.³ Whatever his limitations in grace or in teaching ability as measured by his ideal teacher Hierotheus - and the humble as well as the truly wise are severe in self-judgment - he wrote a book of mystical theology as well as the book of the Divine Names - the book containing that part of theology which is both proper to God and proportioned to us. The writer who is capable of presenting theology in a way that is manifest to beginners is both a great teacher and a profound theologian.⁴

¹IDN., cc.1,3, with commentary, especially c.3, T.I, nn.225-227.

²For participation, see IDN., c.2, T.III, nn.158ff. with D.nn.49-50; for our knowledge of God from created participations of his goodness, see T.IV, nn.176-185 with D.nn.58ff.

³IDN., c.3, D.nn.88ff; T.I, nn.245-260.

⁴See the Proemium of Dionysius in IDN., c.3, with the commentary thereon, for the authors' appraisal of this work. See also the apology of Dionysius in his conclusion, c.13, especially T.IV, nn.1000ff., and D.nn.453-457. Modern critics point to a false claim on the part of Dionysius and an error in Saint Thomas' commentary in c.3, D.n.91 and T.I, nn.255-257. Dionysius states that, with others, he went "ad visionem corporis vitae principis et quod Deum suscepit;" among those others

The De Divinis Nominibus itself is dedicated to Dionysius' friend Timothy, and is divided into three sections. The first, an introduction, gives two chapters of necessary preliminary information, with a third justifying the author's use of the good as principle.¹ The second, chapter four (there are twenty three lectures of commentary), manifests the good as principle of all perfections in creatures, that is, as principle and cause of the intelligible processions of God outside of the divine essence. Here he treats first of the good itself, then of the act specified by the good, namely, love - our next chapter will review his doctrine - and ends with the contrary of the good, evil.² The remainder of the book forms the third part, which describes the specific

were "frater Domini Iacobus et Petrus;" yet we know that he did not live in the first century, so it would seem that the critics are right. But as the Marietti text suggests (pp.81-82), the reference may well be to the first solemn celebration of the newly inaugurated feast of the Nativity. John (the eastern hierarchy) and Peter (the western hierarchy) met, along with their respective clergy, to offer the holy sacrifice at Rome. There Dionysius, along with the other priests attending, saw the consecrated Body of the Lord. Saint Thomas was not conducting an historical investigation. He gave two current textual interpretations which would accord with both the text itself and the scriptures. Since the commentator's role is to explain, not verify his text, this interpretation invalidates neither commentary nor original text.

¹With chapter one there are three lectures of commentary, six for chapter two, one for chapter three.

²Saint Thomas divides his commentary as follows: the good, lect.I-VII; love, lect.VIII-XII; evil, lect.XIII-XXIII.

progressions from the supereminently good cause, God.¹
 Since we have already given much of his preliminary information in developing the utility of his work, we will touch on it here only in passing.

Dionysius will base this second book upon the principles of faith, which proceed from the Holy Spirit and are found in Scripture,² even though his purpose is to make us understand where possible. Without faith, he acknowledges, we could not know these truths; thanks to faith we can nevertheless adhere to them, and be united to them inasmuch as "the intellect in act is in some way what is known in act,"³ for here the will applies the intellect to adhere firmly to inevident truths because they are a good. He points out the great advantage of such knowledge to Timothy, and Saint Thomas adds his comment:

¹cc.13-23.

²IDN., c.1, T.I, n.11: "Sic igitur principia ex quibus procedit haec doctrina sunt ea quae per revelationem Spiritus Sancti sunt accepta et in sacris Scripturis habentur; hoc est ergo quod concludit, quod nullo modo aliquis debet audere dicere ore, nec etiam cogitare aliquid de occulta Deitate supersubstantiali, quae est super omnem substantiam, et per hoc est occulta nobis quibus creatae substantiae sunt proportionatae ad cognoscendum et per consequens ad loquendum, praeter ea quae nobis divinitus ex sanctis eloquiis sunt expressa, idest, exprimuntur per sancta eloquia."

³IDN., c.1, T.I, n.38: "Et quia qui contemplantur Ipsum quodammodo unum cum Ipso efficiuntur (secundum quod intellectus in actu est quodammodo intellectum esse actu) et per consequens Ei assimilantur utpote ab Ipso informati, subdit: et communionem et assimilationem."

Oportet autem videre mentem nostram habere quidam virtutem ad intelligendum per quam intelligibilia inspicit, unionem autem excedentem mentis naturam, per quam coniunguntur ad ea quae super ipsam.

Secundum hanc igitur oportet divina intelligere, non secundum nos, sed nos ipsos totos extra nos ipsos status et totos deificatos.¹

...Cum Deus sit melior nobis, melius est nobis quod simus Dei per unionem gratiae quam quod simus nostri ipsorum, idest nostris naturalibus innitentes. Sic enim, nobis factis cum Deo, idest cum Deo uniti fuerimus, divina nobis dona aderunt quae percipere non possumus, si Dei unionem neglegentes, nobis ipsis inhaeremus.²

By this communion or assimilation of grace, with its accompanying virtue of faith, we are united to God as author of grace, of divine life and light, thereby enjoying a good much higher than the contemplation, in natural theology, of God, author of nature. God sets three conditions for an increase in faith's knowledge: first, we may seek no more than the degree measured by His will; secondly, we must adhere firmly and indeclinably to the ray of faith shining from the divine sun of truth, though both are too brilliant for our reason; thirdly, we must return a love commensurate with the illumination accorded.³ Now in the knowledge of natural theology love might or might not follow: in the supernatural order, unless we return love in accordance with

¹IDN., c.7, D.n.302.

²Ibid., T.I, n.706.

³IDN., c.1, T.I, n.39.

the allotted proportion of faith, the light of faith tends to dim, for it is a gratuitous gift, not an achievement of our natural faculties.¹

That faith is gratuitous follows from the divine transcendence. God alone comprehends His own essence: He alone can manifest it.² But it is proper to His infinite excellence that His essence should remain unnamable in itself. Indeed it could not be revealed to us unless He first elevated the virtue of our intellect.³ Yet God did not want His goodness, of its very nature diffusive of itself, to remain concealed, so He manifested it according to a form of distributive justice, giving knowledge of Himself to each being secundum suam conditionem, thus ensuring the good order of the universe by the consequent ordered return of all things to Him in love. Saint Thomas expressed it thus:

¹IDN., c.1, T.I, n.37.

²IDN., c.1, T.I, n.13: "Soli autem Deo convenit perfecte cognoscere seipsum secundum id quod est. Nullus igitur potest vere loqui de Deo vel cogitare nisi in quantum a Deo revelatur. Quae quidem divina revelatio in Scripturis sacris continetur." Cf., ibid., n.22; also, c.1, T.III all, but especially nn.77,84,96.

³IDN., c.1, T.I, n.27: "Sic igitur, Deus incomprehensibilis quidem est omni intellectui creato, quia est super omnem mentem et rationem, utpote plus habens de claritate veritatis in sua essentia, quod ad eius cognoscibilitatem pertinet, quam aliquod creatum de virtute ad cognoscendum. Unde nulla creatura potest pertingere ad perfectum modum cognitionis Ipsius, quem nominavit supersubstantialem scientiam, et hoc esset eum comprehendere." Cf., nn.12ff.

Et hoc dico, thearchica, idest divina, bonitate segregata a mensuratis, idest a finitis, immensuratione, idest infinitate divinae essentiae, non quidem ut nullo modo cognoscatur sed ut non comprehendatur. ...Nam a beatis quidem mente attingitur divina essentia non autem comprehendatur. Et hoc quidem facit Deum in iustitia salutari. In hoc enim ratio distributivae iustitiae consistit quod detur unicuique secundum suam conditionem. Et sicut per ordinem distributivae iustitiae constitutae a principe civitatis, salvatur totus ordo politicus, ita per hunc ordinem iustitiae salvatur a Deo totus ordo universi: ...et hoc quidem facit ut decet Deum; eum enim decet sua bonitate salvare quos condidit.¹

God deposited faith's knowledge for us in the scriptures, because we could reach no adequate knowledge of Him from His deficient images in things.² For, though the divine Agent, in creating, reproduced His likeness, so inferior is the created image to its exemplar that the sum total of the universe fails to represent Him to us as He is. Natural theology shows us the limitations of reason's best attainment here. But the Scriptures give us the multiple names of the four theologies, the names of one and three, wisdom, beauty, benignity etc. Now all these signify God as principle of the good, of a whole procession of perfections, whereby, because of His goodness "omnia implentur bonitate."³ All these many names can be related to the one name of the good,

¹ IDN., c.1, T.I, n.22. All of c.1 with T.I-III should be read.

² Ibid., n.29: "Esse autem rerum creaturarum deductum est ab Esse divino secundum quandam deficientem assimilationem."

³ Psalms, ciii, 28. Cf., IDN., c.1, T.II, nn. 53ff.

cause of all spiritual as well as natural goodness.¹ He is principle and cause of the supernatural life of grace and of its end, beatitude in His vision;² of determined effects whereby he not only produces and conserves all substance and life, but improves them, illuminating and perfecting the minds of angels, the intellect and will of men;³ of all perfection in that He is the ultimate end of each creature as well as of the whole universe, whose order is His best image outside of the Trinity,⁴ but also in that He gives to all proximate ends their virtue.⁵ So He is principle and cause in a supereminent manner.

In this book, Dionysius will give us the names of the divine processions into creatures, that are both according to the good and common to the whole Trinity.⁶ Saint Thomas summarizes his intention:

He intends in this book to treat of the divine names that manifest processions of creatures from God inasmuch as He is cause of things. But it is the good that

¹IDN., c.1, T.II, nn.46, 55-63, along with c.13 and the whole commentary thereon.

²IDN., c.1, D.nn.11ff; T.II, nn.44-45.

³Ibid., T. nn.46-49

⁴IDN., c.1, T.III, nn.90-99.

⁵Ibid., T.I, nn.50-53.

⁶IDN., c.3, D.n.78; T.I, nn.225-226.

primarily and universally has the ratio of cause as is plain from a two-fold demonstration. The first is that the good has the reason of the end, but the end primarily has the ratio of cause; for the form is cause inasmuch as it causes matter to be in act but matter is brought into first act when it begins to be because of an agent. The second is as follows: An agent produces his like not inasmuch as he is being in any way at all, but inasmuch as he is perfect. For the perfect, as stated in IV Meteorologicorum (c.3. 380a, 13-15), is that which can produce its like. The perfect then has the reason of the good.¹

His choice of name or principle of manifestation is perfect, Saint Thomas continues, "in that it is completely comprehensive and manifestative of all the divine processions,"² as well as a proper naming both for God and for us. First, as regards God, it is proper and comprehensive in that He is the unparticipated good of which the perfections in creatures are but imperfect participations;³ He is good absolutely by His essence, creatures only when they have been perfected by attaining a good end.⁴ Again His goodness is cause of all His progressions, both within the Trinity,⁵ and "outward from" His essence, that is into creatures; those processions give the creature its whole goodness and all that God produces in creatures reduces to a good.⁶ So the

¹IDN., c.3. T.I, n.227 commenting on D.nn.78ff.

²Ibid., T.228.

³IDN., c.1. T.I, n.88; c.3, T.I, nn.229ff.

⁴IDN., c.4, T.I, n.269.

⁵IDN., c.2, D.n.49; T.II, nn.136ff.

⁶IDN., c.2. T.VI, all, with c.3, T.I, n.228.

name good manifests both Himself and His providential gifts.

The good is the first to have the nature of cause: its virtue extends beyond all other causes to comprehend even prime matter;¹ it has the nature of end and is therefore the cause of all other causes, for it attracts all other causes, including the agent cause, to operate;² it is perfective, not only as the cause of the perfecting qualities in the proper and proximate ends of each and every creature,³ as principle of that order which is the intrinsic perfection of the universe,⁴ but, most of all, as the ultimate and extrinsic end of universal creation, for, in the separated common good that is God, is found the perfection of every being other than Himself, and, in a special way, of the intellectual creature, whose ultimate perfection consists in the vision of the One Who is the essential good.⁵

We have two signs of that perfect causality: first,

¹IDN., c.3, T.I, nn.226-227.

²IDN., c.1, T.II, nn.46ff; D.n.12; c.13, T.III, n.994.

³IDN., c.2, T.II, nn.46-51; c.13, T.I, nn.961-968.

⁴IDN., c.1, T.III, n.99, with many others.

⁵IDN., c.11, T.I, nn.885ff. Cf., c.1, T.II, n.67: "Et per hanc participationem luminis erimus et participantes unitiorem quae est super mentem, quia scilicet mens nostra, ut intelligibili, ipsi Deo qui est super mentem, uniatur."

all these effects of the good return to their cause by love; secondly, the agent that is perfect reproduces its likeness.¹ The reproductions of God's goodness are evident to us in a whole hierarchical procession of created goods, while faith presents for our uncomprehending adherence the Trinitarian processions that perfectly manifest the goodness whence they proceed - had we the capacity to perceive them - viz., the processions of the three Divine Persons wherein the Word is conceived to perfectly represent God's thought, the Spirit to express His love.²

The procession according to the good is perfect for us too, for we can recognize these intelligible likenesses of the divine cause, and can recognize them as participations of the divine good principle that faith reveals. We have already referred to the function of similitude in knowledge and in love.³ From reason we have learned to know a cause from its effects, either from the proportioned resemblance in the assimilated effect, or the similitude of the effect pre-existing as exemplar in its cause, or the increasing similitude to the cause as it approaches its end

¹IDN., c.3, T.I, nn.226-227; c.1, T.III, nn.93,94; c.10, T.I, n.858.

²IDN., c.2, D.nn.49ff; T.III, all, but especially n.158; c.2, T.IV, nn.181-184.

³See supra, pp.8ff., and 12ff.

by a perfective process.¹ Since we know and love by assimilation, and since these intelligible similitudes can be named by an analogic name properly and primarily attributable to God - a name which then becomes a principle of a deeper knowledge of Him to Whom we attribute it - these name similitudes can serve as principles of man's love of choice for Him Who caused them. If the name good is especially suitable to God, so also is the name love, for love is the act answering to the good in that it is perfective. The names which Dionysius will treat in this book comprehend what is proportioned and appealing to both the intellect and will of the human creature, the names of God as good, and the name that signals the presence of the good - love. With an appeal to that good principle to give him light to manifest its goodness, Dionysius turns to the body of his work, beginning with an exposition of the good as object of the appetite, and the act it specifies - love.²

The specific progressions of the supereminently good cause Dionysius develops according to three classifications of perfections that are participations in the goodness of their source: first, the perfections inhering absolutely

¹IDN., c.1, T.III, nn.85-105; D.nn.28ff.

²IDN., c.4, with commentary, lect.I-XXIII.

in things in that they can be said to be, and in that they are perfected: second, in that they can be compared, one with another: third, in that they are ordered to their end. In an order of descending generality he explains how creatures can be said to exist, (have esse), to live, to be wise, just or virtuous, and how these names can be attributed to God.¹

The names implying comparison are divided into two groups. There are, first, those signifying that, by an intrinsic something as measure of comparison, creatures are termed great, small, same, other, like, unlike, stationary, in movement or equal;² there is a second group which signify that, according to a measure extrinsic to them, things are contained and measured by God.³

God can be named similar with regard to Himself because He remains ever like His essence, and because He causes all similitudes between creatures, similitudes that are such due to the vestigial likeness in them of their cause. But He is called dissimilar inasmuch as all created effects fall short of their exemplar, for there is never reciprocity between cause and effects, especially when the cause is divine.

¹For being, see IDN., c.5, with T.I-III; for life, c.6, with T.I-II; wisdom, c.7, with T.I-III; virtue and justice, c.8, with T.I-V.

²IDN., c.9, with commentary.

³IDN., c.10, with commentary.

This likeness, which is the vestige of the Creator, accomplishes all union in things, and is the principle of all things tending to Him. Dionysius, referring especially to the soul's likeness to the divine by grace, repeats the purpose of the Creator in implanting that similitude:

Theologi autem existentem super omnia Deum, secundum quod Ipse est, nulli dicunt esse similem; Ipsam autem similitudinem divinam dare his qui ad Ipsum existentem super omnem diffinitionem et rationem convertuntur secundum virtutem imitatione; et est divinae similitudinis virtus quae advenientia omnia ad causam convertit.¹

Things can be said to be measured by God in that He is the universal principle of all being and duration. As principle of all being He is called omnipotent, in that His providence produces, preserves or contains by its government, and attracts to Himself as perfective end the whole universe. This providential government is efficacious, for His goodness engenders in all things a love for His beauty, inspiring them to tend obediently and of themselves to Him, their "princeps" who is also their perfection and their end. Saint Thomas contrasts God's providential rule with the inefficacious government by fear, in the following passage:

Contingit autem aliquem aliquibus principari dupliciter: Uno modo, per modum timoris et iste modus principandi non est efficax ad subditos tenendum: qui enim contra propriam

¹IDW., c.9, D.n.374, Cf., T.III, all.

voluntatem subduntur, qui timore serviunt, data opportunitate, servitutis iugum excutiunt. Alio modo, per modum amoris et his modus principandi est efficax ad tenendum subiectos qui voluntarie subduntur; et hunc modum principandi Deo attributi, cum dicit: et sicut omnibus desiderabilis, omnia enim Ipsum desiderant, ut pluries dictum est.¹

As principle of all duration God is called the "Ancient of Days," for His eternity, the measure of His being and operations, virtually contains and causes the aevum, which is the measure of the whole sempiternal being of the angels, and time, "the number of motion according to before and after,"² that duration which measures the parts of motion, the very becoming and movement of mobile being.³ He not only virtually contains and causes the aevum, time, and days which measure time, but He is ancient in that "Ipse est ante omnes dies et ante aevum et ante tempora."⁴ Here Saint Thomas distinguishes the terms eternity, aevum and time, for the text of Dionysius is ambiguous, inasmuch as the Greek word aion corresponds to the latin words aevum and eternity both.⁵

¹IDN., c.10, T.I, n.856. Cf., D.nn.384-387 with T.I, nn.857-858.

²IDN., c.10, T.III, n.871.

³IDN., c.10, D.nn.388-398 with T.II, III.

⁴IDN., c.10, T.II, n.860.

⁵Pseudo-Denys, Les Noms Divins, p.163, note (1). Saint Thomas devotes all of c.10, lect.III to the distinction of the terms.

The result of this providential ordination and co-ordination of absolute and related perfections in creation is peace, or quietude, i.e., the tranquility of good order, and this is the intrinsic end of the universe. Dionysius will follow up with an exposition of the absolute perfections considered abstractly, to distinguish his doctrine of participation from the Platonic separated species. Saint Thomas comments on his procedure thus:

Superius, Dionysius exposuit divina nomina quibus signantur perfectiones procedentes a Deo in creaturas. Unaquaeque enim res appetit suam perfectionem, quam a Deo participat et amat eam et cum adeptam fuerit, quiescit appetitus eius, in qua quiete consistit quies et ratio pacis. Et ideo in hoc capitulo Dionysius de pace divina determinat et etiam de ipsis perfectionibus procedentibus a Deo in creaturas, secundum quod in abstracto considerantur: esse enim in abstracto consideratum dicitur per se esse et similiter de aliis.¹

In explaining the scriptural names which signify God as the essence and principle of peace, Dionysius points out that we can neither "express in words nor think in our hearts" the divine peace and silence in the essence of God, and in the human nature of Christ. We can only call Him

¹IDN., c.II, T.I, n.876. In each lecture treating of the perfections inhering absolutely in things, Saint Thomas points out that they can be treated "in abstracto", thus distinguishing the logical from the real order, lest we conclude that Dionysius was repeating Plato's confusion of the two. For a summary of these, considered in the abstract, see IDN., c.II, D.nn.421-426; T.IV.

the Holy Just One, to suggest our impotency.¹ But oneness or unity help define peace,² and we can know God as cause of peace, that is, of unity, especially when that unity is understood of rational creatures wherein the notion or nature of peace is especially found,³ and when peace is understood as the ultimate cause wherein all creation has its rest.⁴ Men are said to have peace when their wills harmonize for some one end, that is, when they communicate in a good. God is cause of all the goods in which they can communicate, so He is cause of all unity or union, of all communion, cohesion or concord, of all order in general, whether among angels, men, inferior beings, or the whole universe.⁵ It is the divine peace which causes even the stable union of form and matter in all that has being. There follows a refutation of objections to this name of peace as attributed to the divine nature or as established by

¹IDN., c.11, D.nn.399-413; T.I, II. The quotation is found in T.II, n.894, and we give the complete context: "Discit ergo primo quod neque licitum est neque possibile, non solum alicui hominum, sed neque alicui existentium creaturarum, dicere ore aut cogitare corde, ipsam divinam pacem secundum quod in se est et ipsum divinum silentium, quod quidam sanctus nomine Iustus vocabat ineffabilitatem Dei, quia scilicet neque nos Deum affari possumus neque Ipse sic effatur nobis, quod nos Ipsum, secundum quod est, perfecte cognoscere possimus."

²IDN., c.11, T.II, n.896: "Unitio...ad rationem pacis pertinet."

³Ibid., T.I, n.885.

⁴Ibid., n.886.

⁵IDN., c.11, D.nn.399-413; T.I and II.

Christ.¹ The ordination to the universal end of peace demands a providential government ordering the universe thereto.² The names signifying God's providential government he develops next, and follows up with a description of the little we can know of the Perfect and the One Who is the end.³

In connection with the divine government scripture teaches us superlative phrases to suggest Him whose names are infinite, names such as Saint of Saints,⁴ King of Kings,⁵ Lord of Lords,⁶ God of Gods, etc.⁷ While Dionysius explains them as signifying a quality of the ruler - for example, the ability to rule inferiors, or the possession of absolute goodness, beauty, imperturbable stability and so forth - Saint Thomas understands them as indicating four attributes of the ruler's government:

...Prime quidem divinae cognitionis providentia, ad quam pertinet nomen Deitatis; secundo, potestas exsequendi sapientiae divinae ordinationem ad quam pertinet nomen

¹IDN., c.11, D.nn.414-420; T.I, II.

²IDN., c.12, T.I.

³IDN., c.13. T.I-IV.

⁴Dan., ix, 24.

⁵I Tim., vi, 15.

⁶Apoc., xix, 16.

⁷Ps. xlix, 1. Cf., IDN., c.12, with T.I.

Dominationis; tertio, ipsa executio gubernationis, ad quam pertinet nomen Regis; quarto, gubernationis effectus, qui est munditia ab omni inordinatione et ad hoc pertinet nomen Sanctitatis...¹

This providence sets all things tending to the perfect and the triune Cause, which is both universal cause and universal end, making all things one in Him, Who is the supereminently perfect whole, infinitely exceeding the perfection of the Whole universe.² There are four characteristics of the eminence of God's perfection: first, He communicates His goodness unceasingly to all things, and continues to operate for His and their good; second, His perfection is immutable; third, He is perfect simpliciter, for He virtually contains, in Himself as cause, all beings along with their perfections; fourth, He reproduces His like in an unparalled way, as Saint Thomas indicates:

Perfectum autem est unumquodque cum potest facere sibi simile... et ideo de Deo dicit quod Deus dicitur perfectus, inquantum secundum diversas largitiones, ex parte ipsius Dei largientis, sed secundum unam; quae quidem largitio non deficit, sed est impausabilis et eadem manens. Nec iterum est diminuta, sed cum det omnibus affluenter, ut dicitur Iacob.¹ (5). Eius largitio est superplena, ut quae nunquam minorari potest per suam copiam effusionis, secundum quam largitionem, perficit omnia perfecta, inquantum adimplet ea, similitudine propria perfectionis.³

¹IDN., c.12, T.I, n.939. Cf., nn.940ff. with D.nn. 427-434. Aquinas summarizes his political philosophy, which he models on the divine order, in nn.946-947.

²IDN., c.13, T.I, especially n.962, with D.nn.435-438.

³IDN., c.13, T.I, n.968.

We cannot comprehend the richness of Him Who perfects all things in according them His likeness, but, out of a desire to know something of His divine nature, we have given Him the name of good, the most worthy name in our vocabulary, to express His unutterable essence.¹ In a little canticle to the Trinity Dionysius exclaims:

Propter quod et Unitas laudat et Trinitas, quae est super omnia Deitas, non est neque unitas neque trinitas quae a nobis aut alio quodam existentium sit cognita; sed ut super-unum Ipsius et deigenum vere laudemus, Trinitatis et Unitatis Dei nominationem supernominabilem nominamus et existentibus superessentialem. Nulla autem monas aut trinitas neque numerus neque unitas aut fecunditas neque aliud aliquid existentium aut alicui cognitum, educit existens super omnia et rationem et mentem occultum superdeitatis super omnia supersubstantialiter superexistentis; neque nomen ipsius est neque sermo, sed in inviis segregatum.

Et neque afferimus ipsum nomen bonitatis sicut concordantes ipsi. sed desiderio intelligendi aliquid et dicendi de ineffabili natura illa, nominum dignissimum sanctificamus ipsi primum. Et concordabimus quidem et in hoc theologis, a rerum autem veritate deficiemus.²

Since there are no words to express the Trinity, Dionysius ends here his treatise on the intelligible names ascribed to God from His created perfections. Only the mode of negative theology can take him to a greater knowledge, for, by manifesting what His nature is not, we grasp something of

¹IDN., c.13, D.nn.439-452; T.II, III, especially nn.994-995.

²IDN., c.13, D.n.452.

what He is. Saint Thomas confirms the way of negations as the source of our highest knowledge of God in the passage:

It was because theologians considered that every name imposed by us fell short of God that, among all the modes whereby we can rise to God by intellection, they had a predilection for that mode which proceeds by way of negations, for by it, somehow, we rise to God.¹

Dionysius will utilize negation in his following volume of symbolic theology, and later in his mystical theology.²

But while negative theology is the only mode left open to man, while he is on earth, to rise to God by a higher means of knowledge, there is left the way of love wherein his will turns to the "bonorum omnium Largitori."³ This most direct of all ascents to God we will investigate in our next chapter, wherein we will attempt to give the doctrine of Saint Thomas on how God may be called love.

¹IDN., c.13, T.III, n.995. Cf., D.n.452: "Propter quod et ipsi per negationes ascensum praehonoraverunt, sicut exuscitantem animam ab his quae sunt ipsi connaturalia et per omnes divinos intellectus pergentem, a quibus segregatum est quod est super omne nomen et omnem rationem et omnem cognitionem."

²IDN., c.13, T.IV, n.999; D.n.457.

³IDN., c.13, T.IV, n.1008.