

In librum Dionysii De divinis nominibus exposito

Friday, February 08, 2008

Chapter 1, Lecture 1, K

However, just as the names which we impose are able to be said of God following the fact that there is some similitude of creatures to God; likewise following the fact that creatures fall short from a full image of God, the names we impose are able to be removed from God, and their opposite to be predicated (of Him). Whence he adds that God thus is called “reason” which is also able to be called “irrationality” (*irrationabilitas*), and thus he is called an intellect that is able to be called “non-intellectuality” (*non-intelligibilitas*); and thus he is called a word that is able to be called “non-namedness” (*innominabilitas*); not indeed because of this that these things do not extend to Him, but because “like (?) (*secundum*) none of the existing things is (his) existence”, that is he does not exist according to (*secundum*) the manner of any existing thing; “and” He Himself, “indeed” is “the cause” of existing “for all”, pouring forth into all whatsoever (?) their similitude; and thus he is able to be named from the names of creatures; “He Himself however is non-existing” not as if lacking an essence, but “as it were” existing “above all substances”; and he is “non-namedness” (*innominabilitas*) “thus he utters Himself from Himself, Personally and Knowingly” that is according to the property of his own “to be” and according to His own perfect Knowledge of Himself, by which mode, no one is able to utter Him. After these things have been said, he reaches the first conclusion when he adds: “from this therefore, just as it has been said, one ought not dare to speak nor to know anything about the supersubstantial and hidden deity, save those things which have been Divinely expressed to us from the Holy Speech” which has been explained above.

posted by Matthew N. Petersen at 2:22 PM 0 comments

Chapter 1, Lecture 1, J

Nevertheless, the created intellect is able to contemplate his essence according to some mode which shall be attained, but not through any abject of species or any creatural similitude, because none of them is able to lead [?] into the divine essence much less than the body is able to lead into incorporeal essence. Thus therefore, according to the reasoning of Dionysius it is fitting to say that God is both incomprehensible to all intellects and incontemplatable to us in his essence, in that our intellect has been bound to created things, namely to things which are of similar nature to us; and thus it is in the state of life. And because he had called God unity, lest anyone believe it is that unity inhering in things formally, just as in things themselves by participation, in order that this be excluded he adds “unity” namely subsisting in itself, “unifying all unity” that is pouring out unity into all things which participate in unity according to any mode. Then because God had been called supersubstantial unity and good beyond the mind, someone is able to believe that God is in no way able to be called a substance or mind or anything of this kind, therefore, to exclude this error, he adds that God is indeed “a substance” but “supersubstantial.” Concerning this odd language we ought to reflect that names, when they have been imposed by us, they signify according to how things stand in our cognition. Therefore that itself which God is is beyond our cognition, as has been made clear, our cognition however is commensurable to created things, the names we have imposed thus do not signify according to a congruence to the divine excellence, but according to a coming together to the essence of created things. The “to be” of created things however, has drawn out from the divine “to be” according to a certain sort of incomplete assimilation. Thus therefore, because of this, whatever similitude there is of created things to God, the names which we use are able to be said to be names of God—not as they would be of creatures, but through a certain projection—and Dionysius signifies this when he says that God is “a supersubstantial substance” (*supersubstantialis substantia*), and he puts it similarly that God is “a non intelligible intellect” (*intellectus non-intelligibilis*), that is not the sort of intellect which is intelligible [I’m not sure what the technical translation of this word is, it means able to be held in our intellect MNP] “and” he is “an unspeakable word” (*verbum non-dicibile*), that is not the sort of word which is able to be spoken by us.

posted by Matthew N. Petersen at 4:25 PM 0 comments

Wednesday, July 11, 2007

Chapter 1, Lecture 1, I

In this he touched upon four things, namely: substances, which are the object of cognition; mind, that is simple intellect; deliberation, that is investigative reason and which pertains to cognitive virtues; and the word which pertains to the manifestation of cognition. He gives however these four because he does not only intend to show that God is not able to be comprehended through any cognitive virtue, or to be manifested perfectly in speech, but neither is he [comprehended or manifested] through any created object or through any creaturely similitude. Thus also in the examples which he gives, he does not say that intelligible things are incomprehensible to the senses, but to sensible things because intelligible things are not able to be comprehended through sensible. And likewise for the other examples. And it should be noted that he does not only say that intelligible things are incomprehensible through sensible things, but also uncontemplable because through things which are of an inferior order, not only are superior things not able to be comprehended, but neither are they contemplated. This is because we contemplate through something when through one thing we are able to see the essence of that we may know from what it is. The essence of something is comprehended however when it is held in cognition [*cogniscit*] perfectly, as it is knowable [*cogniscibilis*]. For who knows the demonstrated conclusion to a medial degree, even if he somehow contemplates it, nevertheless, he does not comprehend it because he does not reach up to the perfect mode of his cognition. Thus, therefore, God is indeed incomprehensible to all created intellects because he is beyond all mind and reason, inasmuch as having more from the brightness of truth in his essence (and this pertains to knowability), than any creature from his power of knowing. Thus no creature is able to attain to the perfect mode of his own knowledge, which is called “supersubstantial knowledge” which would be to comprehend him.

posted by Matthew N. Petersen at 5:57 PM 0 comments

Monday, July 09, 2007

Chapter 1, Lecture 1, H

And because of this he adds “just as incomprehensible.” For indeed the Divine Essence is touched by the mind of the blessed, but is not comprehended. And indeed God does this “through justice.” For the ratio of distributive justice consists in this, that each one receives according to his condition. And as through the arrangement of distributive justice established by the magistrate, the whole political order is made whole, so through this order of justice the whole order of the universe is made whole by God, for if this is subtracted, all remains in confusion. And indeed he says this “it befits God”; for it befits him on account of his goodness to save those he has made. He gives a second reason where he says “*sicut enim incomprehensibilia* etc.” (“for thus incomprehensible things etc.”), namely: a superior rank of being is not able to be comprehended by the inferior, just as intelligible things are not able to be comprehended perfectly through the senses, nor simple things through composite, nor incorporeal through corporeal; but God is beyond every order of created things; therefore he is not able to be comprehended through anything created. And he says this when he says: “for thus the intelligible are incomprehensible and incontemplatable by” (that is through) “the senses; and the simple and unshaped” (through things) “which are in composition and figure (*figura*)” that is which are composite and shaped (*figurata*) (for there is no figure unless of composite things); and thus “deficiency” of things “incorporeal,” that is things lacking form of a body, which deficiency or privation indeed is *intangible* and *infigurable*, that is the deficiency is incorporeity itself; such things lack form and are *intangible* and *infigurable* (to understand we place an abstraction for the concrete), “such things are incomprehensible and incontemplatable in their forms according to the figure of bodies” that is by bodies themselves thus, I say, that is, “according to the same reason of truth, oneness is placed above” that is God who is oneness that is existing as one through his own essence “which is supersubstantial, and is placed above substances and which is beyond the mind” placed above “minds” that is beyond intellectual spirits; and “good Himself” namely God, “which is beyond comprehension” that is beyond all reason, “is incomprehensible to all comprehensions” that is no creaturely reason can investigate it “and which is beyond the word” that is beyond all locution of a creature, “is ineffable” that is unspeakable “in any created word.”

Monday, February 19, 2007

Chapter 1, Lecture 1, G

“And” thus, now we do not extend ourselves more to understanding divine things, than the light of sacred Scripture extends itself, “snub-nosed” through this “constriction”, as if confined to a certain limit “about divine things” by a kind of “temperance and sanctity”: by sanctity when we maintain the splendid truth of sacred Scripture from all error; by temperance when we thrust ourselves to things no greater than we have been given. Then, when he says “*etenim*” “for indeed” etc. he shows clearly what the reason for this conclusion are: and first, that God is known to Himself alone, too us however he is hidden; second, he shows clearly the way by which the divine cognition is communicated to us; where: “*non tamen incommunicabile est*” “it is not however incommunicable” etc. Regarding the first, he shows twice; the first of these, from reasons, second from authorities; where “*etenim sicut ipsa de seipsa*” “for indeed just as himself from he himself...” He puts however, at the first, two reasons; of which the first thus: divine things are revealed by God according to the proportion of the things to whom they are revealed; but to know the infinite is beyond the proportion of the finite intellect; therefore the thing itself which God is beyond the proportion of the finite intellect; therefore the thing itself which God is not known by anyone through divine revelation. And this is what he says: certain “divine things are revealed” by God “and contemplated” by us, “according to the proportion of the minds of each.” [It would seem *mentuim* “of minds” should be singular, but it is plural here, and in Dionysius...] And I have amended what he earlier said [because it was too difficult] to: “If it is fitting in any respect to believe the all wise and most true theology”, that is sacred Scripture [divine things are revealed according to the minds of each]. For it says in Matthew 25 “he gave ...to every man according to his several ability.” (AV) And it should be noted that he lays down two reasons from which it is shown that sacred Scripture ought to be believed in the highest degree. [It doesn’t match!!!!] For it happens to something that it is not to be believed from two reasons: either because it is, or at least is reputed to be, ignorant, or because it is, or at least is reputed to be, malicious. Thence, as sacred Scripture is all-wise, and most true because it has been revealed by and related by God who is truth and knows all, sacred Scripture ought to be believed in the highest degree. And this I

say “thearchic” that is divine “goodness” having been separated “from the measured things” that is, from finite things, by “immensurability” that is by the infinitude of the divine essence, but not with the result that we are not acquainted with it in any way, but that it is not comprehended.

posted by Matthew N. Petersen at 4:13 PM 0 comments

Friday, January 26, 2007

Chapter 1, Lecture 1, F

“And” thus, now we do not extend ourselves more to understanding divine things, than the light of sacred Scripture extends itself, “snub-nosed” through this “constriction”, as if confined to a certain limit “about divine things” by a kind of “temperance and sanctity”: by sanctity when we maintain the splendid truth of sacred Scripture from all error; by temperance when we thrust ourselves to things no greater than we have been given. Then, when he says “*etenim*” “for indeed” etc. he shows clearly what the reasons for this conclusion are: and first, that God is known to Himself alone, too us however he is hidden; second, he shows clearly the way by which the divine cognition is communicated to us; where: “*non tamen incommunicabile est*” “it is not however incommunicable” etc. Regarding the first, he shows twice; the first of these, from reasons, second from authorities; where “*etenim sicut ipsa de seipsa*” “for indeed just as himself from he himself...”

posted by Matthew N. Petersen at 2:59 PM 0 comments

Friday, December 22, 2006

Chapter 1, Lecture 1, E.

Then, when he says “*nam supersubstantialem scientiam etc.*” “now the supersubstantial knowledge...” he introduces the reason for manifesting the proposition; first he states the reason; second, he demonstrates a certain thing which he puts under the proposition, at “*etenim etc.*” “for indeed...” The virtue of his reason is as follows: regarding something which is known by one alone, no one is able to cognize or speak it, unless inasmuch as it is manifested by that one. However, it is proper to God alone to perfectly cognize himself according to what he is.

Therefore none is able to truly speak about God or to cognize him unless inasmuch as he is revealed by God. Indeed such a divine revelation is contained in sacred Scripture. And this is what he says “*convenit ipsi attribuere supersubstantialem scientiam ignorantiae supersubstantialitatis quae est super rationem et intellectum ipsam substantiam*” “It is fitting to ascribe to himself” that is to God alone “knowledge of the ignorant supersubstance” that is of the unknown divine supersubstance “which”—for indeed supersubstantiality is not unknown because of some defect, but because of its excess, because namely “it is beyond the reason and the intellect” which is created and over the created “substance itself” which is an object and commensurate to the created intellect, likewise the uncreated essence is proportional to uncreated knowledge. Therefore just as the divine essence is supersubstantial, likewise knowledge of it is called supersubstantial. For it is always proper that an object of the cognitive power be proportional to the power of knowing. Nevertheless that he not be flattened out in ignorance of the nature of God, he adds: “how great a radius of the thearchian eloquence extends itself to extend us who are reflecting on” through spiritual contemplation “the higher thing” that is on that which is above us, namely God, “to higher splendors” that is to intelligible truths of divine things. For the truth of Sacred Scriptures is a certain light like a radius derived from first truth which light does not extend itself to the point that like angels and the blessed seeing his essence, we should through Himself be able to see the essence of God or to cognize all which God in Himself knows, but fully, to a certain termination or measure, truths of divine things are manifested by the light of sacred Scripture.

posted by Matthew N. Petersen at 7:48 PM 0 comments

About Me

Matthew N. Petersen

Idaho, United States

[View my complete profile](#)

Links

- [My Blog](#)
 - [Works of Aquinas](#)
 - [Summa Theologica](#)
 - [On Divine Names \(Latin\)](#)
-

Previous Posts

- [Chapter 1, Lecture 1, K](#)
 - [Chapter 1, Lecture 1, J](#)
 - [Chapter 1, Lecture 1, I](#)
 - [Chapter 1, Lecture 1, H](#)
 - [Chapter 1, Lecture 1, G](#)
 - [Chapter 1, Lecture 1, F](#)
 - [Chapter 1, Lecture 1, E.](#)
 - [Chapter 1, Lecture 1, D](#)
 - [Chapter 1, Lecture 1, C](#)
 - [Chapter 1, Lecture 1 B](#)
-

Archives

- [October 2006](#)
- [November 2006](#)
- [December 2006](#)
- [January 2007](#)

- [February 2007](#)
- [July 2007](#)
- [February 2008](#)

