THE UNITY OF GOD

Article One: Whether One Adds Anything to Being?

On the Contrary: Dionysius says that one is not an addition to being because everything existing has in some sense a oneness without limiting its being.

TA answers that: One is meant only in the sense that it is undivided of itself. Nothing is added to being by it. It just explains itself without division.

Article Three: Whether God is One?

On the contrary: Deut. 6:4 indicates that the Lord our God is one Lord.

TA’s I answer that: A three-part answer is given from God’s simplicity, from the infinity of His perfection and from the unity of the world. The nature of man is to be one. So too it is God’s nature to be one. If there were more than one God the other God could not be identical to the other God. Both Gods could not contain all the parts of the other God for duplicity of perfection is not only unnecessary, but wholly redundant. Perfection does not need a repeat to be anything more or less than it is. Otherwise, the original was not truly perfect. The last answer of that part appeals to the unity of the world. Only oneness need be undivided. If all the parts of the one exist in one being the division of oneness is without any function. What does or who does it serve to divide oneness into incomplete parts? All the parts make up the whole or the entirety of the being. Analysis is almost useless without synthesis. If incompleteness is attained through analysis by division, what perfection could be achieved by disunity?

Questions on Chapter 11

1. What is the reason for oneness? Oneness is to provide a means to be known and appreciated.

2, If all things were divided how then could one be able to distinguish one from another? This would omit the recognition of the uniqueness of the individual. No sum of the parts equals the unity of the whole. For no one, a part from God can distinguish what is gained or lost in the synthesis of the division into the whole. Something would be diminished or lost in the process and the retrieving of the loss is not able to be completely discerned..

3. What are the three areas that TA proposes as an answer to the unity of God? One is from God’s simplicity. Two is from the infinity of His perfection, and three is .from the unity of the world.

HOW IS GOD KNOWN BY US?

Article One: Whether Any Created Intellect Can See the Essence of God?

Objection 2: Since everything infinite being is unknown and God is infinite as shown by (A.7.A 1), therefore God is not knowable.

I answer that: TA appeals to the fruition of the beatific vision. If God is knowable and He is, then He will make His beatific vision known to saints. It would be unthinkable for those whom God has given faith to believe, to keep them from ultimately knowing who gave them this faith. Can anything that exists continue to exist without reaching what it was designed to reach? What is the purpose for reason if not to grasp the essence of the one who gave the capacity to reason? Wouldn’t that be cruel and not the quality and perfection of the nature of God who is good? The “Sermon on the Mount” (Matt. 7:7-11) shows us that a loving Father gives good gifts to those whom He loves. How is that love experienced if the giver refuses the one who received the gift from knowing the One who gave it?

Reply Obj. 2: The infinity of God is not limited by form and is supremely known. The infinity of matter not made perfect by form is unknown in itself.

Article Three: Whether the Essence of God Can Be Seen with the Bodily Eye?

Objection 2: If the eye can see corporeal things it also has the capacity to see God when glorified according to Augustine.

Reply Obj. 2. Augustine conditionally regards the corporeal eye’s power to clearly see God through cognitive power. PK says in note 79 on page 115 that this cuts across the usual dualism between abstract, rational argument and concrete sense experience. Our awareness of the *life* of another person already escapes that dualism, for life is not in itself visible, nor is it abstract and inferred by reason. The same applies to other people’s *minds*. St. Thomas is saying here that we will probably see God in the concrete, bodily things in Heaven as we now see life in persons, or mind in speech, or happiness in a smile: by our “inner eye” or (some other cognitive power).

Article Four: Whether Any Created Intellect by Its Natural Powers Can See the Divine Essence?

I Answer that: The ultimate question is How can the one who created, be known unless the creator wants to be known or not? For if the known is able to know the creator only when the power to know the creator is given to the known, then and only then can the known know the creator.

Reply to obj. 3: Only by grace can something corporeal be used to see something incorporeal. There must be an act of change occurring outside of the corporeal to enable and incorporeal vision. In other words, it just doesn’t happen by itself. Seeing the incorporeal cannot be made up by the incorporeal.

The Fifth Article: Whether the Created Intellect Needs Any Created Light in Order to See the Essence of God?

Objection 2: A medium needed to see does not permit the sight of the true essence for the medium does change the sight from its actuality. God seen through any created light does not permit seeing the essence of God.

On the Contrary: But the Scripture says in Psalms 35:10 “In Thy light we shall see light.”

I answer that: Only the one above the nature of the seer is able to elevate the seeing above its nature.

Reply to Obj. 2: The medium used to provide the vision of God is truly something different than a medium. It is more closely described as an enhancer or a strengthening without the use of any medium.

Article Six: Whether of Those Who See the Essence of God, One Sees More Perfectly Than Another?

On the contrary: According to John 27:3, “This is eternal life, that they may know Thee the only true God...” If all saw God equally they would all be equal. Therefore, this cannot be as the Apostle states in 1 Cor. 14:41 “Star differs from star in glory”

I answer that: According to TA each will see God in the degree one loves God. “Hence the intellect which has more of the light of glory will see God the more perfectly; and he will have a fuller participation of the light of glory who has more charity.” The idea is that the one with the greater love will have the greater desire. The one with greater desire will have the greater capacity to experience the more charity and will see God more perfectly and therefore will be more beatified. (PM)

The Seventh Article: Whether Those Who See the Essence of God Comprehend Him?

Reply Obj. 1: The Song of Solomon 3:4 reminds us that “I held him and I will not let him go.” God can be comprehended by those who are the blessed. For comprehension is twofold: In the first sense we are truly unable to comprehend God because we are finite and God is infinite, yet in the second sense we are able to comprehend God when we attain to God. This attaining can be likened to the abiding of three things in the blessed: That is according to the Apostle: Faith, Hope and Love, and the greatest of these is Love.

The Eighth Article: Whether Those Who See the Essence of God See All in God?

Objection 4: Since the rational creature desires to know all things, thus if the seeing of God is not attained the creature will not be fully happy. This is not thinkable and therefore, one who knows God, knows all things.

On the Contrary: Since angels see the essence of God yet do not know all things, therefore then no created intellect can comprehend God completely as shown in (A.7) above.

Reply to Obj. 4: Happiness according to Augustine is found in knowing God as opposed to knowing all things. In Augustine’s Confession V we quote: “Unhappy the man who knoweth all these (that is, all creatures) and knoweth not Thee! But happy whoso knoweth Thee although he know not these. And whoso knoweth both Thee and them is not the happier for them, but for Thee alone.” PK in his note 86 at the bottom of pg. 119 clearly proposes the question if you could have it all would you go for it under the condition you would never see God’s face? That is the same question that Jesus asks, “For who would want to gain the whole world and yet lose his own soul?” (PM)

Article Eleven: Whether Anyone in This Life Can See the Essence of God?

Objection 3: Augustine seems to think so in confess. Viii: We discern things by the divine truth. The corporeal judges things by the incorporeal and this is the duty of the incorporeal for they are above the mind. This is the source of seeing the essence of God in our corporeal state. That is the revealed Word of God. Therefore even in this life, we see God Himself.

On the Contrary: According to Ex. 33:20 man shall not see me and live. No one can see God in this life but only see images having somewhat of a likeness of His nature but not His true essence.

I answer that: “God cannot be seen in His essence by a mere human being, except he be separated from this mortal life. The reason is, because, as was said above (A. 4), The mode of knowledge follows the mode of the nature of the knower.” It is impossible for man in this life to see the essence of God.

Reply Obj. 3: “All things are said to be seen in God and all things are judged in Him, because by the participation of His light we know and judge all things; for the light of natural reason itself is a participation of the divine light; as likewise we are said to see and judge of sensible things in the sun, that is, by the sun’s light. “ In order to see a sensible object it is not required that we see and know the sun’s substance, (the sun is likened as God is this analogy) therefore we do not need to see the essence of God in order to see any intelligible object. (PM)

Article Twelve: Whether God Can Be Known in This Life by Natural Reason?

PK does a good thing by referencing a note 91 at the bottom of page 121. He states: “St. Thomas is severely agnostic about how adequately we can know God, for all our knowledge depends on a very thin base of sense experience and intellectual abstraction and deduction from it; yet from this narrow foundation, he constructs a remarkably high building, with many stories. The “*I answer that”* mentions at least five: (1) His existence, (2) His relation to creatures as their cause, (3) attributes which the First Cause must have (St. Thomas deduces quite a few in I, 3-10), (4) how He differs from creatures, what He *is not*; and (5) that these differences, though expressed in negative words (since the meanings of these words come from creatures, which God is *not*) are nevertheless due to God’s positive perfections.”

On the contrary: In Romans 1:19, the Apostle Paul states :”That which is known of God, namely, what can be known of God by natural reason, is *manifest in them.”*

I answer that: Even though our understanding of God begins with our sensible experience our knowledge of God can only go as far as can be led by sensible things. But our sensible mind cannot comprehend the essence of God because the sensible effects of God do not equal the power of God.

Therefore, we can know God, but not His essence until He chooses to reveal this to us and this time has not come for it can only be revealed to us outside of time and into eternity. For God cannot truly be contained by time and space.

Questions on Chapter Twelve

1. Is it possible to see the essence of God while in the present state? All things are possible with God. However, a part from God we can do nothing. The answer is that God only truly knows. We cannot and should not try to limit God. But, unaffected mankind cannot see the essence of God.

2. Does the bodily eye see the essence of God? St.Thomas is saying that we will probably see God in the concrete, bodily things in heaven as we now see life in persons, or mind in speech, or happiness in a smile: by our “inner eye” or (some other cognitive power).

3. Can any created intellect by its natural powers see the divine essence? This is true only if the divine essence wants to be seen.

4. Is any created light able to assist the creature in seeing the essence of God. Light as a medium of assistance in seeing is more appropriately thought of as an enhancer or strengthening agent as opposed to a medium through which something is seen.

5. In what way does a created being differ from other created beings in ability to see God? Only in the sense that the one with greater desire will have the greater capacity to experience the more charity and will see God more perfectly and therefore, will be more beatified.

6. Does seeing God’s essence require that one comprehend God? Comprehension of God can only occur through abiding with God in his nature. God is love. Therefore only those who abide in faith, hope and love can have any hope of comprehending God.

7. Do the ones who see the essence of God see all? Not necessarily as in the case of the angels for they see the essence of God, but do not know all things. Knowing all things does not compare to seeing God’s face. PK asks the question; If you could have it all would you go for it under the condition you would never see God’s face?

8. Can anyone in this life truly see the essence of God? The mode of knowledge follows the mode of the nature of the knower. Therefore, it is impossible for man in this life to see the essence of God.

9. Can God be known in this life by natural reason? Our sensible mind cannot comprehend the essence of God because the sensible effects of God do not equal the power of God. Therefore, we can know God, but not His essence. His essence can only be revealed to us outside time and into eternity. For God cannot truly be contained by time and space.

10. Why try to know something now when we can only know it in the hereafter? If you really love God you’ll know Him. And Enoch walked with God and God took him. We want to truly be taken by God!