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Chapter XXI

On the Intellect of God

Teachings

The properties of the first order are thus exposed: now follow the essential properties of the second order, which are said of God posteriorly, that is, as the principle of acting. These denote spiritual life or integral life. Spiritual life indicates intellect, will, and power.

The intellect of God is that by which God understands all intelligible things through His essence.

References: Genesis 50:2, John 28:23, Psalm 94:7, Acts 1:24, Revelation 8:18.

Revealed

The essential properties of God, of the first and second order, diffusely denote the nature of the first and second order.

In nature, Scripture finds only two substantial things, in which all perfection of things is contained: essence and life. The former pertains to all existing creatures; the latter only to some, and the most perfect ones.

References: Psalm 104:3, 29; Psalm 148; Acts 17:9, 28.

Beyond these two, the human mind cannot comprehend anything substantial. For since it is limited and a part of the world, it cannot exceed the scope of the universe. These two principles are elegantly called the two moments of nature in the schools. They are rightly considered in God. Although in God they do not differ in reality, they are distinguished by our mode of understanding, primarily for the sake of teaching and learning.

Both must be considered in God with the mode of eminence, that is, excellently, above all the essence and nature of creatures.

References: Psalm 107:27, 1 Timothy 6:16.

Thus far, we have considered the essence of God to pronounce all the highest things about it. Therefore, our method now leads us to the life of God, about which we will similarly predicate all the highest things.

Chapter XXII

Life of God

The life of God is an act flowing from His essence, by which He is understood to be active in Himself. The life of God is His own essence, but considered in such a way that it is active. Hence, Scripture repeatedly emphasizes: "The Lord lives," to present to us that God is not only essence but also endowed with life, and therefore not idle.

This life of God is active in three ways: intellect, will, and the power of acting. Of these, intellect and will pertain to both internal and external objects, while power only pertains to external objects. This relates to what Thomas Aquinas says, that three things pertain to the operation of God, known from divine essence (being active): knowledge, will, and power. These three things were primarily pursued by Peter Lombard in his Sentences.

Properties of God of the Second Order

The essential properties of God of the second order are in God essentially, according to the principle, but accidentally in creatures according to certain acts. These properties are said to be communicable, not formally but causally. For according to their essence, they exist intimately and immovably in God; according to their act and use, or rather their shadow, they are communicated to creatures, in whom they are mere qualities.

Intellect of God

The intellect of God penetrates all things. How does God understand all things? By His own essence.

References: Acts 1:24, 1 Samuel 8:18, Psalm 139:4, Psalm 147:5.

God knows all possible things, which are of three kinds: first, those which He Himself can do by His omnipotence; second, those which creatures, whether they exist or not, can do by His preservation, motion, help, concurrence, or permission; third, those which God Himself can do conveniently with respect to the acts of creatures.

References: 1 Samuel 23:12, Matthew 11:21, Jeremiah 18:6, Isaiah 44:3.

God knows all things that are, whether past, present, or future, and comprehends their circumstances, connections, and mutual relationships.

References: Psalm 139:4, Psalm 147:5, Matthew 11:21.

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God knows Himself first and directly; other things indirectly. The human intellect, being limited and part of the world, cannot fully comprehend itself or the universe. Just as a

colored glass, tainted by external color, does not fully see itself. But in God, who is the most perfect object, there is no such defect.

God understands all things by simple intuition, without syllogism or method. He is the simplest being, understanding all things in Himself as in an omnipotent cause.

References: Psalm 147:5, 1 Corinthians 7:9.

On the Will of God

The will of God is that by which He freely and immutably rules all things for His glory and the ultimate good. Although it is essentially one, it is distinguished according to its various objects and effects.

Types of Will

1. **Essential or Personal Will:**
 - Essential will: God wills the good as an end and all things to the good.
 - Personal will: The Father wills to send the Son, and the Son to be sent.
2. **Will in Its Object:**
 - Natural will: Tends to the primary object, Himself, out of necessity.
 - Free will: Tends to objects outside of God.
3. **Will for the End and Means:**
 - For the end, God tends naturally.
 - For the means, God tends by free choice.
4. **Efficient or Permissive Will:**
 - Efficient will: God wills to do good.
 - Permissive will: God allows something to be done by creatures.
5. **Absolute or Conditional Will:**
 - Absolute will: God wills to do or prevent something unconditionally.
 - Conditional will: God wills something to happen if certain conditions are met.
6. **Revealed or Hidden Will:**
 - Revealed will: Made known through His word.
 - Hidden will: Known only to God.
7. **Will Respecting God Alone or Creatures:**
 - Will respecting God alone: God wills something for Himself, not for any external cause.
 - Will respecting creatures: God wills something for a reason from the creature.
8. **Antecedent or Consequent Will:**
 - Antecedent will: The rational act of will precedes the volition or action of the creature.

- Consequent will: The act of will follows the volition or action of the creature.

9. Simple or Relative Will:

- Simple will: God wills things that are good in themselves.
- Relative will: God wills things that are good considering all circumstances.

10. Will in Causes or in Itself:

- God wills causes and the effects that follow from them.

11. Will Per Se or Per Accidens:

- Per se: God wills things that are good simply.
- Per accidens: God wills things considering some attached circumstances. Accidentally, He wills those things which, in some respect, are evil. However, such things have good joined to them, which He wills more than the relative goods opposed to those evils. Thus, He wills punishments because He prefers to maintain the order of justice through punishment rather than granting impunity to the sinful creature.

12. The Will of God Acquires Various Names

The will of God is sometimes called Goodness, Love, Grace, or Mercy; other times, it is referred to as Justice, Hatred, and Wrath in the scriptures. Hence, these are said to be the various names of God's will.

RULES

I. The Name of the Will of God Signifies Three Things Properly:

First, the faculty of willing; second, the act of willing; third, the object willed. See John 6:39 and Psalm 115:3.

II. The Will of God Most Properly Aims at Known Good.

It aims at good because this is the proper and adequate object of the will. However, God does not will the evil of guilt, that is, He does not approve of it because the malice of sin is contrary to the supreme good, which is God Himself. See Psalm 5:5. Evil by its nature is not something to be willed or loved, but rather to be shunned and hated, just as the object of the intellect is not falsehood but truth. And God, by His own nature, cannot understand falsehood. Hence, with respect to evil, God is attributed a non-will indirectly. Since evil is an object of the will by accident, non-will indirectly belongs to God. Meanwhile, God wills evil by accident, insofar as some good is elicited from it, as we will say shortly.

III. God Wills the Supreme Good Directly and Other Goods Indirectly.

Goodness is twofold: supreme and from the supreme or under the supreme. The supreme good is the first, most important, and direct object of the divine will: namely, His infinite essence, which from eternity existed alone before any other good, and

therefore was the only good. Hence, it is aptly called the adequate object of the divine will. In this good, the intellect and will of God are directed by a single act, finding such fullness of being, truth, and goodness that they judged it right to establish its communication. In this way, He willed that good by such communication to the extent that another good is excited from the supreme, which can be called an indirect object of the will of God, because He wills it for the sake of the supreme good or rather wills it to exist for the sake of the supreme good. Just as God directly understands Himself as the supreme and first and most notable truth and goodness, so He indirectly wills inferior goods only insofar as they relate to the supreme good.

IV. The Act by Which the Will of God Tends Towards Objects is Independent, Most Simple, Infinite, Eternal, Unchangeable, Holy, and Most Free.

Since the divine will is independent, it depends on nothing else. Therefore, it follows that all wills originate from that first will and are created by it. It is most simple, because the act of God's will is not composed of parts. It is infinite, as it extends to all possible objects of will. It is eternal, because nothing new can appear to God as good. It is unchangeable, because what was once good or willed by God always remains so. It is holy, because God tends to His object only because it is good, not for any other reason. It is most free because He wills according to His own pleasure. Hence, God is called the supreme and absolute lord. However, this freedom does not negate the necessity of God's immutability (this necessity is congruent with His essence, as it arises from His internal principles) but removes the necessity of coercion, which is contrary and inconvenient to His essence, and is imposed by an external principle. Thus, freedom is opposed to coercion, just as contingency or mutability is opposed to necessity.

V. The Will of God, Being Most Simple, Tends Towards Its Objects in a Certain Order.

Just as the simple and eternal act by which the divine intellect knows all its objects does not exclude order, so also it is permissible to assign a certain order according to which the simple and eternal and single act of God's will tends towards its objects. This order is completed in five degrees. First, God wills His own essence, or Himself, as the Optimal and Maximum being. Then, He wills all those things which, out of infinite possible beings, He judged from the ultimate judgment of His wisdom to be made. First, He wills to make them; then, He acts towards those made things by His will according to their likeness to His nature. The third object of the divine will is those things which He judges to be fair to be done by creatures endowed with intellect and free will; the will concerning these is given in precepts and prohibitions, as we will discuss shortly. Fourth, the object is divine permission, by which God allows a rational creature to do what He prohibited and to omit what He commanded, which consists in the suspension of an effective impediment, not of a due and sufficient one. Fifth, the object of the divine will is those things which God judges to be done according to His infinite wisdom concerning the acts of rational creatures.

VI. The Volition of God is, as it Were, Its Own Cause.

Although there is no external cause of the volition of God, yet since God wills order to be in things, which is principally situated in this, that some are the causes of others, to this extent, the volition of God, as it tends towards these objects, is as it were the cause of itself as it tends towards others. Thus, the reason why God wills the condemnation of some is because He wills the order of His justice to be observed in the punishment of the guilty. Hence, there can be no cause of any divine volition other than the consideration of that act or omission without which God would not have that particular volition.

VII. The Will of God is the Cause of All Other Things, but in Such a Way That It Does Not Abolish Their Natures.

God, through His will, mediated by His power, is the cause of all other things: but in such a way that when He acts through secondary causes, either with them or in them, He does not abolish their divinely imparted mode of action; rather, He allows these secondary causes to produce their effects according to their proper mode, necessarily when necessary, contingently when contingent, and freely when free. This contingency and freedom of secondary causes do not prevent the certainty of what God operates in a determinate way, and therefore, the certainty of the future event does not include the necessity of coercion.

VIII. The Will of God is Essential and Equally Common to the Holy Trinity.

That such a will exists in God is testified by the scriptures, the nature and intellect of God, and the consensus of humankind. Scripture: Psalm 115:3; Romans 9:19. The nature and intellect of God: because the best and most perfect essence necessarily lives, and indeed lives the most perfect life, which is intellectual and spiritual, accompanied by will. The consensus of humankind: because those who believe in God concede that He is a most free agent. However, freedom presupposes will.

IX. Personal or Hypostatic Will is Considered Singularly According to a Certain Person.

This will does not differ essentially but modally; it signifies nothing other than a relation ad intra. We cited testimonies for this in the preceding chapters.

X. God Wills Some Things Out of the Necessity of Nature, Some Freely.

God, by natural necessity, wills Himself and His own glory, without any external cause, neither according to the pleasure of His will nor for any end. For how could the supreme good desire itself for another good? God freely wills all other things, especially those concerning creatures. He wills these things according to His own good pleasure because He can either will them or not. However, this act of willing can be necessary not absolutely, but in a certain respect and from a hypothesis; namely, in that it can be

bound by another prior act of willing. This necessity originates partly from the free will and action of God and partly from the immutability of His nature. God is not unjust, says the Apostle, to forget the laborious charity of the pious, because He freely promised them a reward: and the immutability of His nature does not allow Him to rescind His promises. Thus God decreed to give us the Holy Spirit, faith, and the fruits of faith: this, I say, He willed freely from eternity: but He necessarily wills the same in time due to His immutability. God wills whatever He wills, and this necessarily, because the will of God is immutable.

XI. God Wills Both the End and the Means.

God naturally tends to the end. For the end is God Himself. Nor can God establish another end for Himself. For He would depend on the end if He had an end outside Himself. The end is truly called, with respect to us, the glorification of God. Concerning all means, God acts by free choice.

XII. The Efficient Will of God Regards Only Good Things; His Permissive Will Regards Good, Evil, and Indifferent Things.

God wills only good things and wills them without distinction, that is, simply and absolutely because they are good. Evil is never willed by God except incidentally. For it is not proper for the will of God to desire evil. Yet God permits evil for the sake of a greater good. Thus, God punishes sins with sins. He does not, however, will evil in itself but permits it for the sake of good.

XIII. God's Will is Sometimes Called Absolute, Sometimes Conditional.

God's absolute will is His supreme and first will by which He decrees all things unchangeably and immutably. This will is revealed partly and hidden partly. The conditional will, on the other hand, is called ineffective, because it is often resisted. However, this resistance does not affect God's primary will.

XIV. The Will of God Concerning Us and From Us is Ambiguous.

This distinction coincides with the distinction between the revealed will of God, whether Evangelical or legal. The will of God concerning us respects both law and Gospel: and the same judgment applies to the will of God from us. For from the Gospel, we learn what God has decreed concerning us for our eternal salvation, and what He requires from us, namely, that we repent and believe in Christ. John 6:38-40; Matthew 3:9; Mark 1:15. In His Law, God teaches what He wants to be done by us and what He decrees concerning us, whether we fulfill His will or not.

XV. God Hides His Hidden Will From Men As Long As It Pleases Him.

He is a most free agent. Therefore, what is hidden today may become manifest tomorrow; or what is hidden concerning one person may be revealed concerning another. However, the hidden and secret will of God is that which is known to no creature. It is commonly called the will of God's majesty: which we cannot and should not scrutinize but must admire and venerate.

XVI. What God Wills to Do or Permit, He Wills Either for His Own Sake or for a Prior Cause on the Part of the Creature.

God wills some things from Himself, not for any cause placed outside Himself: whether it be without the consideration of any act proceeding from the creature, or on account of the mere occasion of the creature's act. John 3:16; Exodus 32:32-33; 1 Samuel 17:23. Some things, however, He wills for a prior cause placed on the part of the creature. Isaiah 28:21. This distinction refers to some work proper to God, and some extraneous and alien work of His. The Church signifies this by saying: "O God, whose property is always to have mercy and to spare." We usually say that it is proper for God to do good, and alien to punish. Hence, in His will, He is said to precede and follow concerning rational creatures. If the act of the rational creature precedes the act of God's will, it is called antecedent will; if it follows, it is called consequent will. Some think that antecedent will should be more properly called desire. However, this distinction is given by Damascene in Book 2 of Orthodox Faith, Chapter 29, and in the dialogue against the Manichees. By antecedent will, God is said to will some things because of the merit of the creature. By consequent will, He is said to reward or punish.

Chapter XXIII.

On the Power of God

The power of God is that by which He, out of the freedom of His will, can operate externally, willing and acting freely; this is called omnipotence. Genesis 17:1, 28:3, Isaiah 40:28, 45:5, Jeremiah 32:17-19, Psalm 115:3, Luke 1:37, Revelation 4:8, 1:8, 17:6, 19:6, Genesis 18:14, Jeremiah 32:27, Deuteronomy 32:39, 1 Samuel 14:6, Psalm 74:17, 42:3, Romans 9:19.

It is either absolute or actual. Absolute power of God is that by which God can perfectly do anything possible. It is also called extraordinary. Actual power is when God does in reality what He wills. It is also called operative, effective, ordinary, and orderly: this latter designation indicates that God, through it, accomplishes what He has ordained.

RULES

I. The Power of God Here Regards an Object Outside of God.

The power of God in this context does not signify what God always does in Himself by the necessity of His nature, but the faculty by which He can operate externally, and

when it pleases Him, He does. Thus, it excludes that personal power of generating and spirating, as well as natural power acting ad intra.

II. The Adequate Measure of Divine Power is the Free Will of God.

For whatever God can freely will, He can also do; and whatever He can do, He can also freely will. And whatever He cannot will, He cannot do; and whatever He cannot do, He cannot will. Therefore, the object of divine power is circumscribed directly by the object of the divine will, in this way: the free will presupposes the intellect, and both faculties have essence as their foundation. Thus, the will and intellect of God have the essence of God as their foundation. Therefore, God can freely will only those things that are not contrary to His essence or nature and are comprehensible to His intellect as entities and truths. Thus, the intellect, will, and power of God are restricted to those things which are holy and absolutely possible. All other things, which are impossible, God neither can nor wills. Impossible things are those that imply a contradiction. Such things include God making another god, lying, changing, sinning, dying, making something to be and not to be simultaneously, or making it to have been and not to have been. These things cannot be done by God and are not within His power, not due to a lack of power but because they are contrary to His essence, intellect, and will.

III. The Power of God is Infinite in Essence, Objects, Effects, and Duration; Therefore, It is Rightly Called Omnipotence.

The power of God is infinite in essence because His essence is infinite. It is infinite in objects because God's essence can encompass all possible things. It is infinite in effects because it extends to all things that can be made. It is infinite in duration because God never begins to have power nor ceases to have it; whatever He can do, He always could do and always can do if He wills. Thus, the omnipotence of God remains the same throughout eternity.

IV. From the Omnipotence of God, Nothing Future Can Be Concluded Unless According to the Will of God.

The omnipotence of God does not mean that anything future is determined without the will of God. For what God wills to be done, He can do, but He does not will everything that He can do. The will of God is not separate from His omnipotence.

Chapter XXIV.

On the Knowledge of God

PREFACE

We have considered the properties denoting spiritual life; now we will consider those that denote this life as being complete. They are of two kinds: those of virtue and those

of beatitude. The idea of virtue in the intellect of God is noted by knowledge; in the will by efficacy and goodness.

I. The Knowledge of God is Perfect.

God is omniscient, knowing all things: past, present, and future. This is testified by Job 11:7-9, Isaiah 40:27, 1 Timothy 1:17, Psalm 139:1-12, 1 John 3:20.

II. It is Theoretical or Practical.

Theoretical knowledge is that by which things are understood under the aspect of their existence and truth. Practical knowledge is that by which things are understood under the aspect of goodness and as objects of the will and power.

III. It is Knowledge of Vision and Simple Intelligence.

Knowledge of vision is that by which God knows Himself and all other entities that are, will be, or have been; it is also called definite and determinate knowledge. Knowledge of simple intelligence is that by which God knows all possibilities; it is also called indefinite and indeterminate knowledge.

IV. It is Natural or Necessary, Free or Middle.

Natural knowledge is that by which God knows Himself and all possibilities. Free knowledge is that by which He knows all other entities. Middle knowledge is that by which He knows what will happen if certain conditions are met.

RULES

I. Knowledge is Attributed to God Not According to the Mode of Habit, but According to the Mode of Act.

Knowledge is not attributed to God as an imperfect habit but as a pure and perfect act, because God is pure act and perfection.

II. God Practically Knows Only Good Things.

Practical knowledge concerns only good things because God knows all things in their relation to His will. However, He knows evil things only in a theoretical sense, not as objects of His will.

III. Knowledge of Vision and Free Knowledge is Called Foreknowledge, and It is Not the Cause of Things.

Foreknowledge does not cause things but follows from the divine will. God's knowledge of future things is infallible because it is based on His will and the nature of things.

IV. God's Middle Knowledge is Necessary for Understanding Conditional Events.

Middle knowledge concerns events that depend on free creatures and is necessary for understanding the contingency and freedom of such events.

In conclusion, God's knowledge is perfect, comprehensive, and infinite, extending to all possibilities and realities, governed by His will and essence, and it comprehends all things in their proper mode and order.