

SUPPLEMENT TO THE THIRD PART, QUESTION 92

Of the Vision of the Divine Essence in Reference to the Blessed*

(In Three Articles)

In the next place we must consider matters concerning the blessed after the general judgment. We shall consider: (1) Their vision of the Divine essence, wherein their bliss consists chiefly; (2) Their bliss and their mansions; (3) Their relations with the damned; (4) Their gifts, which are contained in their bliss; (5) The crowns which perfect and adorn their happiness.

Under the first head there are three points of inquiry:

- (1) Whether the saints will see God in His essence?
- (2) Whether they will see Him with the eyes of the body?
- (3) Whether in seeing God they will see all that God sees?

Whether the human intellect can attain to the vision of God in His essence?

Suppl. q. 92 a. 1

Objection 1. It would seem that the human intellect cannot attain to the vision of God in His essence. For it is written (Jn. 1:18): “No man hath seen God at any time”; and Chrysostom in his commentary says (Hom. xiv in Joan.) that “not even the heavenly essences, namely the Cherubim and Seraphim, have ever been able to see Him as He is.” Now, only equality with the angels is promised to men (Mat. 22:30): “They... shall be as the angels of God in heaven.” Therefore neither will the saints in heaven see God in His essence.

Objection 2. Further, Dionysius argues thus (Div. Nom. i): “Knowledge is only of existing things.” Now whatever exists is finite, since it is confined to a certain genus: and therefore God, since He is infinite, is above all existing things. Therefore there is no knowledge of Him, and He is above all knowledge.

Objection 3. Further, Dionysius (De Myst. Theol. i) shows that the most perfect way in which our intellect can be united to God is when it is united to Him as to something unknown. Now that which is seen in its essence is not unknown. Therefore it is impossible for our intellect to see God in His essence.

Objection 4. Further, Dionysius says (Ep. ad Caium Monach.) that “the darkness”—for thus he calls the abundance of light—“which screens God is impervious to all illuminations, and hidden from all knowledge: and if anyone in seeing God understood what he saw, he saw not God Himself, but one of those things that are His.” Therefore no created intellect will be able to see God in His essence.

Objection 5. Further, according to Dionysius (Ep. ad Hieroth.) “God is invisible on account of His surpassing glory.” Now His glory surpasses the human intellect in heaven even as on the way. Therefore since He is invisible on the way, so will He be in heaven.

Objection 6. Further, since the intelligible object is

the perfection of the intellect, there must needs be proportion between intelligible and intellect, as between the visible object and the sight. But there is no possible proportion between our intellect and the Divine essence, since an infinite distance separates them. Therefore our intellect will be unable to attain to the vision of the Divine essence.

Objection 7. Further, God is more distant from our intellect than the created intelligible is from our senses. But the senses can nowise attain to the sight of a spiritual creature. Therefore neither will our intellect be able to attain to the vision of the Divine essence.

Objection 8. Further, whenever the intellect understands something actually it needs to be informed with the likeness of the object understood, which likeness is the principle of the intellectual operation terminating in that object, even as heat is the principle of heating. Accordingly if our intellect understands God, this must be by means of some likeness informing the intellect itself. Now this cannot be the very essence of God, since form and thing informed must needs have one being, while the Divine essence differs from our intellect in essence and being. Therefore the form whereby our intellect is informed in understanding God must needs be a likeness impressed by God on our intellect. But this likeness, being something created, cannot lead to the knowledge of God except as an effect leads to the knowledge of its cause. Therefore it is impossible for our intellect to see God except through His effect. But to see God through His effect is not to see Him in His essence. Therefore our intellect will be unable to see God in His essence.

Objection 9. Further, the Divine essence is more distant from our intellect than any angel or intelligence. Now according to Avicenna (Metaph. iii), “the existence of an intelligence in our intellect does not imply that its essence is in our intellect,” because in that case our knowledge of

* Cf. Ia, Q. 12

the intelligence would be a substance and not an accident, “but that its likeness is impressed on our intellect.” Therefore neither is God in our intellect, to be understood by us, except in so far as an impression of Him is in our intellect. But this impression cannot lead to the knowledge of the Divine essence, for since it is infinitely distant from the Divine essence, it degenerates to another image much more than if the image of a white thing were to degenerate to the image of a black thing. Therefore, just as a person in whose sight the image of a white thing degenerates to the image of a black thing, on account of an indisposition in the organ, is not said to see a white thing, so neither will our intellect be able to see God in His essence, since it understands God only by means of this impression.

Objection 10. Further, “In things devoid of matter that which understands is the same as that which is understood” (De Anima iii). Now God is supremely devoid of matter. Since then our intellect, which is created, cannot attain to be an uncreated essence, it is impossible for our intellect to see God in His essence.

Objection 11. Further, whatever is seen in its essence is known as to what it is. But our intellect cannot know of God what He is, but only what He is not as Dionysius (Coel. Hier. ii) and Damascene (De Fide Orth. i) declare. Therefore our intellect will be unable to see God in His essence.

Objection 12. Further, every infinite thing, as such, is unknown. But God is in every way infinite. Therefore He is altogether unknown. Therefore it will be impossible for Him to be seen in His essence by a created intellect.

Objection 13. Further, Augustine says (De Videndo Deo: Ep. cxlvii): “God is by nature invisible.” Now that which is in God by nature cannot be otherwise. Therefore it is impossible for Him to be seen in His essence.

Objection 14. Further, whatever is in one way and is seen in another way is not seen as it is. Now God is in one way and will be seen in another way by the saints in heaven: for He according to His own mode, but will be seen by the saints according to their mode. Therefore He will not be seen by the saints as He is, and thus will not be seen in His essence.

Objection 15. Further, that which is seen through a medium is not seen in its essence. Now God will be seen in heaven through a medium which is the light of glory, according to Ps. 35:10, “In Thy light we shall see light.” Therefore He will not be seen in His essence.

Objection 16. Further, in heaven God will be seen face to face, according to 1 Cor. 13:12. Now when we see a man face to face, we see him through his likeness. Therefore in heaven God will be seen through His likeness, and consequently not in His essence.

On the contrary, It is written (1 Cor. 13:12): “We see now through a glass in a dark manner, but then face to face.” Now that which is seen face to face is seen in its

essence. Therefore God will be seen in His essence by the saints in heaven.

Further, it is written (1 Jn. 3:2): “When He shall appear we shall be like to Him, because we shall see Him as He is.” Therefore we shall see Him in His essence.

Further, a gloss on 1 Cor. 15:24, “When He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God and the Father,” says: “Where,” i.e. in heaven, “the essence of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost shall be seen: this is given to the clean of heart alone and is the highest bliss.” Therefore the blessed will see God in His essence.

Further, it is written (Jn. 14:21): “He that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father; and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him.” Now that which is manifested is seen in its essence. Therefore God will be seen in His essence by the saints in heaven.

Further, Gregory commenting (Moral. xviii) on the words of Ex. 33:20, “Man shall not see Me and live,” disapproves of the opinion of those who said that “in this abode of bliss God can be seen in His glory but not in His nature; for His glory differs not from His nature.” But His nature is His essence. Therefore He will be seen in His essence.

Further, the desire of the saints cannot be altogether frustrated. Now the common desire of the saints is to see God in His essence, according to Ex. 33:13, “Show me Thy glory”; Ps. 79:20, “Show Thy face and we shall be saved”; and Jn. 14:8, “Show us the Father and it is enough for us.” Therefore the saints will see God in His essence.

I answer that, Even as we hold by faith that the last end of man’s life is to see God, so the philosophers maintained that man’s ultimate happiness is to understand immaterial substances according to their being. Hence in reference to this question we find that philosophers and theologians encounter the same difficulty and the same difference of opinion. For some philosophers held that our passive intellect can never come to understand separate substances. thus Alfarabius expresses himself at the end of his Ethics, although he says the contrary in his book On the Intelligence, as the Commentator attests (De Anima iii). In like manner certain theologians held that the human intellect can never attain to the vision of God in His essence. on either side they were moved by the distance which separates our intellect from the Divine essence and from separate substances. For since the intellect in act is somewhat one with the intelligible object in act, it would seem difficult to understand how the created intellect is made to be an uncreated essence. Wherefore Chrysostom says (Hom. xiv in Joan.): “How can the creature see the uncreated?” Those who hold the passive intellect to be the subject of generation and corruption, as being a power dependent on the body, encounter a still greater difficulty not only as regards the vision of God but also as regards the vision of any separate substances. But this opinion

is altogether untenable. First, because it is in contradiction to the authority of canonical scripture, as Augustine declares (*De Videndo Deo*: Ep. cxlvii). Secondly, because, since understanding is an operation most proper to man, it follows that his happiness must be held to consist in that operation when perfected in him. Now since the perfection of an intelligent being as such is the intelligible object, if in the most perfect operation of his intellect man does not attain to the vision of the Divine essence, but to something else, we shall be forced to conclude that something other than God is the object of man's happiness: and since the ultimate perfection of a thing consists in its being united to its principle, it follows that something other than God is the effective principle of man, which is absurd, according to us, and also according to the philosophers who maintain that our souls emanate from the separate substances, so that finally we may be able to understand these substances. Consequently, according to us, it must be asserted that our intellect will at length attain to the vision of the Divine essence, and according to the philosophers, that it will attain to the vision of separate substances.

It remains, then, to examine how this may come about. For some, like Alfarabius and Avempace, held that from the very fact that our intellect understands any intelligible objects whatever, it attains to the vision of a separate substance. To prove this they employ two arguments. The first is that just as the specific nature is not diversified in various individuals, except as united to various individuating principles, so the idea understood is not diversified in me and you, except in so far as it is united to various imaginary forms: and consequently when the intellect separates the idea understood from the imaginary forms, there remains a quiddity understood, which is one and the same in the various persons understanding it, and such is the quiddity of a separate substance. Hence, when our intellect attains to the supreme abstraction of any intelligible quiddity, it thereby understands the quiddity of the separate substance that is similar to it. The second argument is that our intellect has a natural aptitude to abstract the quiddity from all intelligible objects having a quiddity. If, then, the quiddity which it abstracts from some particular individual be a quiddity without a quiddity, the intellect by understanding it understands the quiddity of the separate substance which has a like disposition, since separate substances are subsisting quiddities without quiddities; for the quiddity of a simple thing is the simple thing itself, as Avicenna says (*Met.* iii). On the other hand if the quiddity abstracted from this particular sensible be a quiddity that has a quiddity, it follows that the intellect has a natural aptitude to abstract this quiddity, and consequently since we cannot go on indefinitely, we shall come to some quiddity without a quiddity, and this is what we understand by a separate quiddity*.

* Cf. Ia, q. 88, a. 2

But this reasoning is seemingly inconclusive. First, because the quiddity of the material substance, which the intellect abstracts, is not of the same nature as the quiddity of the separate substances, and consequently from the fact that our intellect abstracts the quiddities of material substances and knows them, it does not follow that it knows the quiddity of a separate substance, especially of the Divine essence, which more than any other is of a different nature from any created quiddity. Secondly, because granted that it be of the same nature, nevertheless the knowledge of a composite thing would not lead to the knowledge of a separate substance, except in the point of the most remote genus, namely substance: and such a knowledge is imperfect unless it reach to the properties of a thing. For to know a man only as an animal is to know him only in a restricted sense and potentially: and much less is it to know only the nature of substance in him. Hence to know God thus, or other separate substances, is not to see the essence of God or the quiddity of a separate substance, but to know Him in His effect and in a mirror as it were. For this reason Avicenna in his *Metaphysics* propounds another way of understanding separate substances, to wit that separate substances are understood by us by means of intentions of their quiddities, such intentions being images of their substances, not indeed abstracted therefrom, since they are immaterial, but impressed thereby on our souls. But this way also seems inadequate to the Divine vision which we seek. For it is agreed that "whatever is received into any thing is therein after the mode of the recipient": and consequently the likeness of the Divine essence impressed on our intellect will be according to the mode of our intellect: and the mode of our intellect falls short of a perfect reception of the Divine likeness. Now the lack of perfect likeness may occur in as many ways, as unlikeness may occur. For in one way there is a deficient likeness, when the form is participated according to the same specific nature, but not in the same measure of perfection: such is the defective likeness in a subject that has little whiteness in comparison with one that has much. In another way the likeness is yet more defective, when it does not attain to the same specific nature but only to the same generic nature: such is the likeness of an orange-colored or yellowish object in comparison with a white one. In another way, still more defective is the likeness when it does not attain to the same generic nature, but only to a certain analogy or proportion: such is the likeness of whiteness to man, in that each is a being: and in this way every likeness received into a creature is defective in comparison with the Divine essence. Now in order that the sight know whiteness, it is necessary for it to receive the likeness of whiteness according to its specific nature, although not according to the same manner of being because the form has a manner of being

in the sense other from that which it has in the thing outside the soul: for if the form of yellowness were received into the eye, the eye would not be said to see whiteness. In like manner in order that the intellect understand a quiddity, it is necessary for it to receive its likeness according to the same specific nature, although there may possibly not be the same manner of being on either side: for the form which is in the intellect or sense is not the principle of knowledge according to its manner of being on both sides, but according to its common ratio with the external object. Hence it is clear that by no likeness received in the created intellect can God be understood, so that His essence be seen immediately. And for this reason those who held the Divine essence to be seen in this way alone, said that the essence itself will not be seen, but a certain brightness, as it were a radiance thereof. Consequently neither does this way suffice for the Divine vision that we seek.

Therefore we must take the other way, which also certain philosophers held, namely Alexander and Averroes (*De Anima* iii.). For since in every knowledge some form is required whereby the object is known or seen, this form by which the intellect is perfected so as to see separate substances is neither a quiddity abstracted by the intellect from composite things, as the first opinion maintained, nor an impression left on our intellect by the separate substance, as the second opinion affirmed; but the separate substance itself united to our intellect as its form, so as to be both that which is understood, and that whereby it is understood. And whatever may be the case with other separate substances, we must nevertheless allow this to be our way of seeing God in His essence, because by whatever other form our intellect were informed, it could not be led thereby to the Divine essence. This, however, must not be understood as though the Divine essence were in reality the form of our intellect, or as though from its conjunction with our intellect there resulted one being simply, as in natural things from the natural form and matter: but the meaning is that the proportion of the Divine essence to our intellect is as the proportion of form to matter. For whenever two things, one of which is the perfection of the other, are received into the same recipient, the proportion of one to the other, namely of the more perfect to the less perfect, is as the proportion of form to matter: thus light and color are received into a transparent object, light being to color as form to matter. When therefore intellectual light is received into the soul, together with the indwelling Divine essence, though they are not received in the same way, the Divine essence will be to the intellect as form to matter: and that this suffices for the intellect to be able to see the Divine essence by the Divine essence itself may be shown as follows.

As from the natural form (whereby a thing has being)

* Literally,—and becoming the ‘whereby-it-is’ of the composite itself

and matter, there results one thing simply, so from the form whereby the intellect understands, and the intellect itself, there results one thing intelligibly. Now in natural things a self-subsistent thing cannot be the form of any matter, if that thing has matter as one of its parts, since it is impossible for matter to be the form of a thing. But if this self-subsistent thing be a mere form, nothing hinders it from being the form of some matter and becoming that whereby the composite itself is* as instanced in the soul. Now in the intellect we must take the intellect itself in potentiality as matter, and the intelligible species as form; so that the intellect actually understanding will be the composite as it were resulting from both. Hence if there be a self-subsistent thing, that has nothing in itself besides that which is intelligible, such a thing can by itself be the form whereby the intellect understands. Now a thing is intelligible in respect of its actuality and not of its potentiality (*Met.* ix): in proof of which an intelligible form needs to be abstracted from matter and from all the properties of matter. Therefore, since the Divine essence is pure act, it will be possible for it to be the form whereby the intellect understands: and this will be the beatific vision. Hence the Master says (*Sent.* ii, D, 1) that the union of the body with the soul is an illustration of the blissful union of the spirit with God.

Reply to Objection 1. The words quoted can be explained in three ways, according to Augustine (*De Videndo Deo*: Ep. cxlvii). In one way as excluding corporeal vision, whereby no one ever saw or will see God in His essence; secondly, as excluding intellectual vision of God in His essence from those who dwell in this mortal flesh; thirdly, as excluding the vision of comprehension from a created intellect. It is thus that Chrysostom understands the saying wherefore he adds: “By seeing, the evangelist means a most clear perception, and such a comprehension as the Father has of the Son.” This also is the meaning of the evangelist, since he adds: “The Only-begotten Son Who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him”: his intention being to prove the Son to be God from His comprehending God.

Reply to Objection 2. Just as God, by His infinite essence, surpasses all existing things which have a determinate being, so His knowledge, whereby He knows, is above all knowledge. Wherefore as our knowledge is to our created essence, so is the Divine knowledge to His infinite essence. Now two things contribute to knowledge, to wit, the knower and the thing known. Again, the vision whereby we shall see God in His essence is the same whereby God sees Himself, as regards that whereby He is seen, because as He sees Himself in His essence so shall we also see Him. But as regards the knower there is the difference that is between the Divine intellect and ours. Now in the order of knowledge the object known follows

the form by which we know, since by the form of a stone we see a stone: whereas the efficacy of knowledge follows the power of the knower: thus he who has stronger sight sees more clearly. Consequently in that vision we shall see the same thing that God sees, namely His essence, but not so effectively.

Reply to Objection 3. Dionysius is speaking there of the knowledge whereby wayfarers know God by a created form, whereby our intellect is informed so as to see God. But as Augustine says (*De Videndo Deo*: Ep. cxlvii), “God evades every form of our intellect,” because whatever form our intellect conceive, that form is out of proportion to the Divine essence. Hence He cannot be fathomed by our intellect: but our most perfect knowledge of Him as wayfarers is to know that He is above all that our intellect can conceive, and thus we are united to Him as to something unknown. In heaven, however, we shall see Him by a form which is His essence, and we shall be united to Him as to something known.

Reply to Objection 4. God is light (*Jn.* 1:9). Now illumination is the impression of light on an illuminated object. And since the Divine essence is of a different mode from any likeness thereof impressed on the intellect, he (*Dionysius*) says that the “Divine darkness is impervious to all illumination,” because, to wit, the Divine essence, which he calls “darkness” on account of its surpassing brightness, remains undemonstrated by the impression on our intellect, and consequently is “hidden from all knowledge.” Therefore if anyone in seeing God conceives something in his mind, this is not God but one of God’s effects.

Reply to Objection 5. Although the glory of God surpasses any form by which our intellect is informed now, it does not surpass the Divine essence, which will be the form of our intellect in heaven: and therefore although it is invisible now, it will be visible then.

Reply to Objection 6. Although there can be no proportion between finite and infinite, since the excess of the infinite over the finite is indeterminate, there can be proportionateness or a likeness to proportion between them: for as a finite thing is equal to some finite thing, so is an infinite thing equal to an infinite thing. Now in order that a thing be known totally, it is sometimes necessary that there be proportion between knower and known, because the power of the knower needs to be adequate to the knowableness of the thing known, and equality is a kind of proportion. Sometimes, however, the knowableness of the thing surpasses the power of the knower, as when we know God, or conversely when He knows creatures: and then there is no need for proportion between knower and known, but only for proportionateness; so that, to wit, as the knower is to the knowable object, so is the knowable object to the fact of its being known: and this proportionateness suffices for the infinite to be known by the finite, or conversely.

We may also reply that proportion according to the strict sense in which it is employed signifies a ratio of quantity to quantity based on a certain fixed excess or equality; but is further transferred to denote any ratio of any one thing to another; and in this sense we say that matter should be proportionate to its form. In this sense nothing hinders our intellect, although finite, being described as proportionate to the vision of the Divine essence; but not to the comprehension thereof, on account of its immensity.

Reply to Objection 7. Likeness and distance are twofold. One is according to agreement in nature; and thus God is more distant from the created intellect than the created intelligible is from the sense. The other is according to proportionateness; and thus it is the other way about, for sense is not proportionate to the knowledge of the immaterial, as the intellect is proportionate to the knowledge of any immaterial object whatsoever. It is this likeness and not the former that is requisite for knowledge, for it is clear that the intellect understanding a stone is not like it in its natural being; thus also the sight apprehends red honey and red gall, though it does not apprehend sweet honey, for the redness of gall is more becoming to honey as visible, than the sweetness of honey to honey.

Reply to Objection 8. In the vision wherein God will be seen in His essence, the Divine essence itself will be the form, as it were, of the intellect, by which it will understand: nor is it necessary for them to become one in being, but only to become one as regards the act of understanding.

Reply to Objection 9. We do not uphold the saying of Avicenna as regards the point at issue, for in this other philosophers also disagree with him. Unless perhaps we might say that Avicenna refers to the knowledge of separate substances, in so far as they are known by the habits of speculative sciences and the likeness of other things. Hence he makes this statement in order to prove that in us knowledge is not a substance but an accident. Nevertheless, although the Divine essence is more distant, as to the property of its nature, from our intellect, than is the substance of an angel, it surpasses it in the point of intelligibility, since it is pure act without any admixture of potentiality, which is not the case with other separate substances. Nor will that knowledge whereby we shall see God in His essence be in the genus of accident as regards that whereby He will be seen, but only as regards the act of the one who understands Him, for this act will not be the very substance either of the person understanding or of the thing understood.

Reply to Objection 10. A substance that is separate from matter understands both itself and other things; and in both cases the authority quoted can be verified. For since the very essence of a separate substance is of itself intelligible and actual, through being separate from mat-

ter, it is clear that when a separate substance understands itself, that which understands and that which is understood are absolutely identical, for it does not understand itself by an intention abstracted from itself, as we understand material objects. And this is apparently the meaning of the Philosopher (De Anima iii.) as indicated by the Commentator (De Anima iii.). But when it understands other things, the object actually understood becomes one with the intellect in act, in so far as the form of the object understood becomes the form of the intellect, for as much as the intellect is in act; not that it becomes identified with the essence of the intellect, as Avicenna proves (De Natural. vi.), because the essence of the intellect remains one under two forms whereby it understands two things in succession, in the same way as primary matter remains one under various forms. Hence also the Commentator (De Anima iii.) compares the passive intellect, in this respect, to primary matter. Thus it by no means follows that our intellect in seeing God becomes the very essence of God, but that the latter is compared to it as its perfection or form.

Reply to Objection 11. These and all like authorities must be understood to refer to the knowledge whereby we know God on the way, for the reason given above.

Reply to Objection 12. The infinite is unknown if we take it in the privative sense, as such, because it indicates removal of completion whence knowledge of a thing is derived. Wherefore the infinite amounts to the same as matter subject to privation, as stated in Phys. iii. But if we take the infinite in the negative sense, it indicates the absence of limiting matter, since even a form is somewhat limited by its matter. Hence the infinite in this sense is of itself most knowable; and it is in this way that God is infinite.

Reply to Objection 13. Augustine is speaking of bodily vision, by which God will never be seen. This is evident from what precedes: "For no man hath seen God at any time, nor can any man see Him as these things which we call visible are seen: in this way He is by nature invisible even as He is incorruptible." As, however, He is by nature supremely being, so He is in Himself supremely intelligible. But that He be for a time not understood by us is owing to our defect: wherefore that He be seen by us after being unseen is owing to a change not in Him but in us.

Reply to Objection 14. In heaven God will be seen by the saints as He is, if this be referred to the mode of the object seen, for the saints will see that God has the mode which He has. But if we refer the mode to the knower, He will not be seen as He is, because the created intellect

will not have so great an efficacy in seeing, as the Divine essence has to the effect of being seen.

Reply to Objection 15. There is a threefold medium both in bodily and in intellectual vision. The first is the medium "under which" the object is seen, and this is something perfecting the sight so as to see in general, without determining the sight to any particular object. Such is bodily light in relation to bodily vision; and the light of the active intellect in relation to the passive intellect, in so far as this light is a medium. The second is the light "by which" the object is seen, and this is the visible form whereby either sight is determined to a special object, for instance by the form of a stone to know a stone. The third is the medium "in which" it is seen; and this is something by gazing on which the sight is led to something else: thus by looking in a mirror it is led to see the things reflected in the mirror, and by looking at an image it is led to the thing represented by the image. In this way, too, the intellect from knowing an effect is led to the cause, or conversely. Accordingly in the heavenly vision there will be no third medium, so that, to wit, God be known by the images of other things, as He is known now, for which reason we are said to see now in a glass: nor will there be the second medium, because the essence itself of God will be that whereby our intellect will see God. But there will only be the first medium, which will upraise our intellect so that it will be possible for it to be united to the uncreated substance in the aforesaid manner. Yet this medium will not cause that knowledge to be mediate, because it does not come in between the knower and the thing known, but is that which gives the knower the power to know*.

Reply to Objection 16. Corporeal creatures are not said to be seen immediately, except when that which in them is capable of being brought into conjunction with the sight is in conjunction therewith. Now they are not capable of being in conjunction with the sight of their essence on account of their materiality: hence they are seen immediately when their image is in conjunction with the sight. But God is able to be united to the intellect by His essence: wherefore He would not be seen immediately, unless His essence were united to the intellect: and this vision, which is effected immediately, is called "vision of face." Moreover the likeness of the corporeal object is received into the sight according to the same ratio as it is in the object, although not according to the same mode of being. Wherefore this likeness leads to the object directly: whereas no likeness can lead our intellect in this way to God, as shown above: and for this reason the comparison fails.

* Cf. Ia, q. 12, a. 5

Objection 1. It would seem that after the resurrection the saints will see God with the eyes of the body. Because the glorified eye has greater power than one that is not glorified. Now the blessed Job saw God with his eyes (Job 42:5): “With the hearing of the ear, I have heard Thee, but now my eye seeth Thee.” Much more therefore will the glorified eye be able to see God in His essence.

Objection 2. Further, it is written (Job 19:26): “In my flesh I shall see God my Saviour [Vulg.: ‘my God’].” Therefore in heaven God will be seen with the eyes of the body.

Objection 3. Further. Augustine, speaking of the sight of the glorified eyes, expresses himself as follows (De Civ. Dei xxii): “A greater power will be in those eyes, not to see more keenly, as certain serpents or eagles are reported to see (for whatever acuteness of vision is possessed by these animals they can see only corporeal things), but to see even incorporeal things.” Now any power that is capable of knowing incorporeal things can be upraised to see God. Therefore the glorified eyes will be able to see God.

Objection 4. Further, the disparity of corporeal to incorporeal things is the same as of incorporeal to corporeal. Now the incorporeal eye can see corporeal things. Therefore the corporeal eye can see the incorporeal: and consequently the same conclusion follows.

Objection 5. Further, Gregory, commenting on Job 4:16, “There stood one whose countenance I knew not,” says (Moral. v): “Man who, had he been willing to obey the command, would have been spiritual in the flesh, became, by sinning, carnal even in mind.” Now through becoming carnal in mind, “he thinks only of those things which he draws to his soul by the images of bodies” (Moral. v). Therefore when he will be spiritual in the flesh (which is promised to the saints after the resurrection), he will be able even in the flesh to see spiritual things. Therefore the same conclusion follows.

Objection 6. Further, man can be beatified by God alone. Now he will be beatified not only in soul but also in body. Therefore God will be visible not only to his intellect but also to his flesh.

Objection 7. Further, even as God is present to the intellect by His essence, so will He be to the senses, because He will be “all in all” (1 Cor. 15:28). Now He will be seen by the intellect through the union of His essence therewith. Therefore He will also be visible to the sense.

On the contrary, Ambrose, commenting on Lk. 1:2, “There appeared to him an angel,” says: “God is not sought with the eyes of the body, nor surveyed by the sight, nor clasped by the touch.” Therefore God will by no means be visible to the bodily sense.

Further, Jerome, commenting on Is. 6:1, “I saw the Lord sitting,” says: “The Godhead not only of the Father, but also of the Son and of the Holy Ghost is visible, not to carnal eyes, but only to the eyes of the mind, of which it is said: Blessed are the pure in heart.”

Further, Jerome says again (as quoted by Augustine, Ep. cxlvii): “An incorporeal thing is invisible to a corporeal eye.” But God is supremely incorporeal. Therefore, etc.

Further, Augustine says (De Videndo Deo, Ep. cxlvii): “No man hath seen God as He is at any time, neither in this life, nor in the angelic life, in the same way as these visible things which are seen with the corporeal sight.” Now the angelic life is the life of the blessed, wherein they will live after the resurrection. Therefore, etc.

Further, according to Augustine (De Trin. xiv.), “man is said to be made to God’s image inasmuch as he is able to see God.” But man is in God’s image as regards his mind, and not as regards his flesh. Therefore he will see God with his mind and not with his flesh.

I answer that, A thing is perceptible to the senses of the body in two ways, directly and indirectly. A thing is perceptible directly if it can act directly on the bodily senses. And a thing can act directly either on sense as such or on a particular sense as such. That which acts directly in this second way on a sense is called a proper sensible, for instance color in relation to the sight, and sound in relation to the hearing. But as sense as such makes use of a bodily organ, nothing can be received therein except corporeally, since whatever is received into a thing is therein after the mode of the recipient. Hence all sensibles act on the sense as such, according to their magnitude: and consequently magnitude and all its consequences, such as movement, rest, number, and the like, are called common sensibles, and yet they are direct objects of sense.

An indirect object of sense is that which does not act on the sense, neither as sense nor as a particular sense, but is annexed to those things that act on sense directly: for instance Socrates; the son of Diogenes; a friend and the like which are the direct object of the intellect’s knowledge in the universal, and in the particular are the object of the cogitative power in man, and of the estimative power in other animals. The external sense is said to perceive things of this kind, although indirectly, when the apprehensive power (whose province it is to know directly this thing known), from that which is sensed directly, apprehends them at once and without any doubt or discourse (thus we see that a person is alive from the fact that he speaks): otherwise the sense is not said to perceive it even indirectly.

I say then that God can nowise be seen with the eyes of

* Cf. Ia, q. 12, a. 3

the body, or perceived by any of the senses, as that which is seen directly, neither here, nor in heaven: for if that which belongs to sense as such be removed from sense, there will be no sense, and in like manner if that which belongs to sight as sight be removed therefrom, there will be no sight. Accordingly seeing that sense as sense perceives magnitude, and sight as such a sense perceives color, it is impossible for the sight to perceive that which is neither color nor magnitude, unless we call it a sense equivocally. Since then sight and sense will be specifically the same in the glorified body, as in a non-glorified body, it will be impossible for it to see the Divine essence as an object of direct vision; yet it will see it as an object of indirect vision, because on the one hand the bodily sight will see so great a glory of God in bodies, especially in the glorified bodies and most of all in the body of Christ, and, on the other hand, the intellect will see God so clearly, that God will be perceived in things seen with the eye of the body, even as life is perceived in speech. For although our intellect will not then see God from seeing His creatures, yet it will see God in His creatures seen corporeally. This manner of seeing God corporeally is indicated by Augustine (De Civ. Dei xxii), as is clear if we take note of his words, for he says: "It is very credible that we shall so see the mundane bodies of the new heaven and the new earth, as to see most clearly God everywhere present, governing all corporeal things, not as we now see the invisible things of God as understood by those that are made, but as when we see men. . . we do not believe but see that they live."

Reply to Objection 1. This saying of Job refers to the spiritual eye, of which the Apostle says (Eph. 1:18): "The eyes of our [Vulg.: 'your'] heart enlightened."

Reply to Objection 2. The passage quoted does not mean that we are to see God with the eyes of the flesh, but that, in the flesh, we shall see God.

Reply to Objection 3. In these words Augustine speaks as one inquiring and conditionally. This appears

from what he had said before: "Therefore they will have an altogether different power, if they shall see that incorporeal nature": and then he goes on to say: "Accordingly a greater power," etc., and afterwards he explains himself.

Reply to Objection 4. All knowledge results from some kind of abstraction from matter. Wherefore the more a corporeal form is abstracted from matter, the more is it a principle of knowledge. Hence it is that a form existing in matter is in no way a principle of knowledge, while a form existing in the senses is somewhat a principle of knowledge, in so far as it is abstracted from matter, and a form existing in the intellect is still better a principle of knowledge. Therefore the spiritual eye, whence the obstacle to knowledge is removed, can see a corporeal object: but it does not follow that the corporeal eye, in which the cognitive power is deficient as participating in matter, be able to know perfectly incorporeal objects of knowledge.

Reply to Objection 5. Although the mind that has become carnal cannot think but of things received from the senses, it thinks of them immaterially. In like manner whatever the sight apprehends it must always apprehend it corporeally: wherefore it cannot know things which cannot be apprehended corporeally.

Reply to Objection 6. Beatitude is the perfection of man as man. And since man is man not through his body but through his soul, and the body is essential to man, in so far as it is perfected by the soul: it follows that man's beatitude does not consist chiefly otherwise than in an act of the soul, and passes from the soul on to the body by a kind of overflow, as explained above (q. 85, a. 1). Yet our body will have a certain beatitude from seeing God in sensible creatures: and especially in Christ's body.

Reply to Objection 7. The intellect can perceive spiritual things, whereas the eyes of the body cannot: wherefore the intellect will be able to know the Divine essence united to it, but the eyes of the body will not.

Whether the saints, seeing God, see all that God sees?*

Suppl. q. 92 a. 3

Objection 1. It would seem that the saints, seeing God in His essence, see all that God sees in Himself. For as Isidore says (De Sum. Bon. 1.): "The angels know all things in the World of God, before they happen." Now the saints will be equal to the angels of God (Mat. 22:30). Therefore the saints also in seeing God see all things.

Objection 2. Further, Gregory says (Dial. iv.): "Since all see God there with equal clearness, what do they not know, who know Him Who knows all things?" and he refers to the blessed who see God in His essence. Therefore those who see God in His essence know all things.

Objection 3. Further, it is stated in De Anima (iii, text.

7), that "when an intellect understands the greatest things, it is all the more able to understand the least things." Now God is the greatest of intelligible things. Therefore the power of the intellect is greatly increased by understanding Him. Therefore the intellect seeing Him understands all things.

Objection 4. Further, the intellect is not hindered from understanding a thing except by this surpassing it. Now no creature surpasses the intellect that understands God, since, as Gregory says (Dial. ii.), "to the soul which sees its Creator all creatures are small." Therefore those who see God in His essence know all things.

* Cf. Ia, q. 12, Aa. 7,8

Objection 5. Further, every passive power that is not reduced to act is imperfect. Now the passive intellect of the human soul is a power that is passive as it were to the knowledge of all things, since “the passive intellect is in which all are in potentiality” (De Anima iii, text. 18). If then in that beatitude it were not to understand all things, it would remain imperfect, which is absurd.

Objection 6. Further, whoever sees a mirror sees the things reflected in the mirror. Now all things are reflected in the Word of God as in a mirror, because He is the type and image of all. Therefore the saints who see the Word in its essence see all created things.

Objection 7. Further, according to Prov. 10:24, “to the just their desire shall be given.” Now the just desire to know all things, since “all men desire naturally to know,” and nature is not done away by glory. Therefore God will grant them to know all things.

Objection 8. Further, ignorance is one of the penalties of the present life*. Now all penalty will be removed from the saints by glory. Therefore all ignorance will be removed: and consequently they will know all.

Objection 9. Further, the beatitude of the saints is in their soul before being in their body. Now the bodies of the saints will be reformed in glory to the likeness of Christ’s body (Phil. 3:21). Therefore their souls will be perfected in likeness to the soul of Christ. Now Christ’s soul sees all things in the Word. Therefore all the souls of the saints will also see all things in the Word.

Objection 10. Further, the intellect, like the senses, knows all the things with the image of which it is informed. Now the Divine essence shows a thing forth more clearly than any other image thereof. Therefore since in that blessed vision the Divine essence becomes the form as it were of our intellect, it would seem that the saints seeing God see all.

Objection 11. Further, the Commentator says (De Anima iii), that “if the active intellect were the form of the passive intellect, we should understand all things.” Now the Divine essence represents all things more clearly than the active intellect. Therefore the intellect that sees God in His essence knows all things.

Objection 12. Further, the lower angels are enlightened by the higher about the things they are ignorant of, for the reason that they know not all things. Now after the day of judgment, one angel will not enlighten another; for then all superiority will cease, as a gloss observes on 1 Cor. 15:24, “When He shall have brought to nought,” etc. Therefore the lower angels will then know all things, and for the same reason all the other saints who will see God in His essence.

On the contrary, Dionysius says (Hier. Eccles. vi): “The higher angels cleanse the lower angels from ignorance.” Now the lower angels see the Divine essence.

Therefore an angel while seeing the Divine essence may be ignorant of certain things. But the soul will not see God more perfectly than an angel. Therefore the souls seeing God will not necessarily see all things.

Further, Christ alone has the spirit not “by measure” (Jn. 3:34). Now it becomes Christ, as having the spirit without measure, to know all things in the Word: wherefore it is stated in the same place (Jn. 3:35) that “the Father... hath given all things into His hand.” Therefore none but Christ is competent to know all things in the Word.

Further, the more perfectly a principle is known, the more of its effects are known thereby. Now some of those who see God in His essence will know God more perfectly than others. Therefore some will know more things than others, and consequently every one will not know all.

I answer that, God by seeing his essence knows all things whatsoever that are, shall be, or have been: and He is said to know these things by His “knowledge of vision,” because He knows them as though they were present in likeness to corporeal vision. Moreover by seeing this essence He knows all that He can do, although He never did them, nor ever will: else He would not know His power perfectly; since a power cannot be known unless its objects be known: and this is called His “science” or “knowledge of simple intelligence.” Now it is impossible for a created intellect, by seeing the Divine essence, to know all that God can do, because the more perfectly a principle is known, the more things are known in it; thus in one principle of demonstration one who is quick of intelligence sees more conclusions than one who is slow of intelligence. Since then the extent of the Divine power is measured according to what it can do, if an intellect were to see in the Divine essence all that God can do, its perfection in understanding would equal in extent the Divine power in producing its effects, and thus it would comprehend the Divine power, which is impossible for any created intellect to do. Yet there is a created intellect, namely the soul of Christ[†], which knows in the Word all that God knows by the knowledge of vision. But regarding others who see the Divine essence there are two opinions. For some say that all who see God in His essence see all that God sees by His knowledge of vision. This, however, is contrary to the sayings of holy men, who hold that angels are ignorant of some things; and yet it is clear that according to faith all the angels see God in His essence. Wherefore others say that others than Christ, although they see God in His essence, do not see all that God sees because they do not comprehend the Divine essence. For it is not necessary that he who knows a cause should know all its effects, unless he comprehend the cause: and this is not in the competency of a created intellect. Consequently of those who see God in His essence, each one sees in His

* Cf. Ia IIae, q. 85, a. 3 † Cf. IIIa, q. 16, a. 2

essence so much the more things according as he sees the Divine essence the more clearly: and hence it is that one is able to instruct another concerning these things. Thus the knowledge of the angels and of the souls of the saints can go on increasing until the day of judgment, even as other things pertaining to the accidental reward. But afterwards it will increase no more, because then will be the final state of things, and in that state it is possible that all will know everything that God knows by the knowledge of vision.

Reply to Objection 1. The saying of Isidore, that “the angels know in the Word all things before they happen,” cannot refer to those things which God knows only by the knowledge of simple intelligence, because those things will never happen; but it must refer to those things which God knows only by the knowledge of vision. Even of these he does not say that all the angels know them all, but that perhaps some do; and that even those who know do not know all perfectly. For in one and the same thing there are many intelligible aspects to be considered, such as its various properties and relations to other things: and it is possible that while one thing is known in common by two persons, one of them perceives more aspects, and that the one learns these aspects from the other. Hence Dionysius says (Div. Nom. iv) that “the lower angels learn from the higher angels the intelligible aspects of things.” Wherefore it does not follow that even the angels who know all creatures are able to see all that can be understood in them.

Reply to Objection 2. It follows from this saying of Gregory that this blessed vision suffices for the seeing of all things on the part of the Divine essence, which is the medium by which one sees, and whereby God sees all things. That all things, however, are not seen is owing to the deficiency of the created intellect which does not comprehend the Divine essence.

Reply to Objection 3. The created intellect sees the Divine essence not according to the mode of that same essence, but according to its own mode which is finite. Hence its efficacy in knowing would need to be infinitely increased by reason of that vision in order for it to know all things.

Reply to Objection 4. Defective knowledge results not only from excess and deficiency of the knowable object in relation to the intellect, but also from the fact that the aspect of knowableness is not united to the intellect: thus sometimes the sight sees not a stone, through the image of the stone not being united to it. And although the Divine essence which is the type of all things is united to the intellect of one who sees God, it is united thereto not as the type of all things, but as the type of some and of so much the more according as one sees the Divine essence more fully.

Reply to Objection 5. When a passive power is perceptible by several perfections in order, if it be perfected

with its ultimate perfection, it is not said to be imperfect, even though it lack some of the preceding dispositions. Now all knowledge by which the created intellect is perfected is directed to the knowledge of God as its end. Wherefore he who sees God in His essence, even though he know nothing else, would have a perfect intellect: nor is his intellect more perfect through knowing something else besides Him, except in so far as it sees Him more fully. Hence Augustine says (Confess. v.): “Unhappy is he who knoweth all these” (namely, creatures), “and knoweth not Thee: but happy whoso knoweth Thee, though he know not these. And whoso knoweth both Thee and them is not the happier for them but for Thee only.”

Reply to Objection 6. This mirror has a will: and even as He will show Himself to whom He will, so will He show in Himself whatsoever He will. Nor does the comparison with a material mirror hold, for it is not in its power to be seen or not to be seen.

We may also reply that in a material mirror both object and mirror are seen under their proper image; although the mirror be seen through an image received from the thing itself, whereas the stone is seen through its proper image reflected in some other thing, where the reason for seeing the one is the reason for seeing the other. But in the uncreated mirror a thing is seen through the form of the mirror, just as an effect is seen through the image of its cause and conversely. Consequently it does not follow that whoever sees the eternal mirror sees all that is reflected in that mirror: since he who sees the cause does not of necessity see all its effects, unless he comprehend the cause.

Reply to Objection 7. The desire of the saints to know all things will be fulfilled by the mere fact of their seeing God: just as their desire to possess all good things will be fulfilled by their possessing God. For as God suffices the affections in that He has perfect goodness, and by possessing Him we possess all goods as it were, so does the vision of Him suffice the intellect: “Lord, show us the Father and it is enough for us” (Jn. 14:8).

Reply to Objection 8. Ignorance properly so called denotes a privation and thus it is a punishment: for in this way ignorance is nescience of things, the knowledge of which is a duty or a necessity. Now the saints in heaven will not be ignorant of any of these things. Sometimes, however, ignorance is taken in a broad sense of any kind of nescience: and thus the angels and saints in heaven will be ignorant of certain things. Hence Dionysius says (Div. Nom. iv) that “the angels will be cleansed from their ignorance.” In this sense ignorance is not a penalty but a defect. Nor is it necessary for all such defects to be done away by glory: for thus we might say that it was a defect in Pope Linus that he did not attain to the glory of Peter.

Reply to Objection 9. Our body will be conformed to the body of Christ in glory, in likeness but not in equality,

for it will be endowed with clarity even as Christ's body, but not equally. In like manner our soul will have glory in likeness to the soul of Christ, but not in equality thereto: thus it will have knowledge even as Christ's soul, but not so great, so as to know all as Christ's soul does.

Reply to Objection 10. Although the Divine essence is the type of all things knowable it will not be united to each created intellect according as it is the type of all. Hence the objection proves nothing.

Reply to Objection 11. The active intellect is a form proportionate to the passive intellect; even as the passive power of matter is proportionate to the power of the natural agent, so that whatsoever is in the passive power of matter or the passive intellect is in the active power of the active intellect or of the natural agent. Consequently if the active intellect become the form of the passive intellect, the latter must of necessity know all those things to which the power of the active intellect extends. But the Divine essence is not a form proportionate to our intellect in this sense. Hence the comparison fails.

Reply to Objection 12. Nothing hinders us from saying that after the judgment day, when the glory of men and

angels will be consummated once for all, all the blessed will know all that God knows by the knowledge of vision, yet so that not all will see all in the Divine essence. Christ's soul, however, will see clearly all things therein, even as it sees them now; while others will see therein a greater or lesser number of things according to the degree of clearness wherewith they will know God: and thus Christ's soul will enlighten all other souls concerning those things which it sees in the Word better than others. Hence it is written (Apoc. 21:23): "The glory of God shall enlighten the city of Jerusalem*, and the Lamb is the lamp thereof." In like manner the higher souls will enlighten the lower (not indeed with a new enlightening, so as to increase the knowledge of the lower), but with a kind of continued enlightenment; thus we might understand the sun to enlighten the atmosphere while at a standstill. Wherefore it is written (Dan. 12:3): "They that instruct many to justice" shall shine "as stars for all eternity." The statement that the superiority of the orders will cease refers to their present ordinate ministry in our regard, as is clear from the same gloss.

* Vulg.: 'hath enlightened it'