

## THE EXISTENCE OF GOD DÉMONSTRATED.

## THIRD ARTICLE.

THIS visible universe, having been put into existence and reduced to harmonious unity by an outward cause, reveals God as the absolute, self-existent, infinite being. It implies reference to Him as the circumference of a circle regards in all its points the centre, as the mighty river requires a spring from which it is derived, and as the mass of the diffused light presupposes the sun from which it is sent forth. Thus God is known from the physical order. But besides the physical there is also the metaphysical and moral order. It is our intention to show that they likewise imply as their first source and principle the absolute self-existent being, and that, the existence of the Divinity being denied, they are as impossible and unreal as an effect without a cause is contradictory and absurd. We shall, therefore, from them, as from new points of departure, arrive at the existence of God.

Let us first reason from the metaphysical order. Yet as this consists, not of existing or produced beings, but of the essences abstract from existence, we cannot in this kind of argumentation strictly proceed from the effect to the cause. Nevertheless, we argue also *here* not a priori, but a posteriori. For the metaphysical essences also require a sufficient reason by which they are established and a ground on which they rest. Inferring, therefore, from them the absolute Being as their foundation, we ascend from the consequence to the principle, and from the issue to the fountainhead, which is, properly speaking, argumentation a posteriori. This proof for God's existence, the sixth in our series, has not been given by S. Thomas in the same terms, though the principles on which it is based, are quite his, and frequently recur in his works. S. Augustin, however, makes frequent use of it, and in proposing it develops the loftiest ideas of his great genius.<sup>1</sup>

We know the things of this world not only as to their existence, but also as to their essences. We not only perceive man to exist, but we also understand his nature, the very being whereby he is what he is. The same may be said of a great many other objects of our cognizance. Even we not only conceive the natures of many things, but we also know how to decompose them into their ultimate components, and how again to compose of these by new combinations essences of objects not yet apprehended. From the

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<sup>1</sup> De libero arbitrio, lib. ii., cp., 2-13.

notion of the essences we deduce by comparison judgments, which serve us as main principles of all our demonstrations. If on the same essences we further reflect, we discover in them attributes quite different from those of the physical order. They do not imply actual existence, but are abstract from it and mean only the aptitude to it. They are necessary, immutable, eternal, universal; necessary, because they cannot be constituted but of certain component parts, and thus composed they cannot be but something apt to exist; immutable, because, remaining the same, they have always the same constituents; eternal, because they are abstracted from time, and hence are conceived to be such as they are at any time and before all time; universal, because they are found in many things and are truly predicated of them. Just the same characters we discover in the principles drawn from them; they, too, are necessary, immutable, eternal, universal. As an important consequence we must deduce from this that the metaphysical essences are neither nothing or unreal, nor a mere fiction of the mind. In fact, the essences, though not existing, cannot be absolutely nothing; for nothing is not apt to exist; it does not constitute the being itself of things; it does not express the nature of the existent; it is not composed of certain constituent parts; it is not the foundation of necessary principles. But all this is to be said of the essences. Nor are they a fiction of the mind, a mere product of our abstraction. For we see them embodied in the beings existing outside us; we find them made actual and concrete in the physical order; we perceive the universe to be constituted and put in order according to the principles flowing from them; nor could we even judge of the existing beings in another way, or understand the contrary to be possible in them, or not conceive from them these natures with all their constituents, the necessity of thinking so being forced on us by the objective reality of the things themselves.

The metaphysical essences, therefore, being neither nothing, nor a mere fiction of the mind, are of necessity something real. But on what sufficient reason does their reality rest outside us? True, they are expressed in this visible universe so as to be drawn from it by abstraction, yet for that they are not ultimately constituted by it in their objective reality. Already before something exists, it must be possible, and there must be an essence which is realized in it. Moreover, many an essence can be conceived which was not yet put into existence and may never be put into it. Besides, the essence of contingent beings is something quite different from their existence in the physical order, something abstracted from the same; it is only the aptitude to exist, and, therefore, has also quite different attributes. Their existence is contingent, mutable,

and temporal, whilst their essence is necessary, immutable, and eternal. But the contingent cannot constitute the necessary, nor can the mutable form the immutable, or the temporal the eternal. By what then are they real, or in other terms, wherein does the sufficient reason of their reality lie? They are real either by themselves or by another being. Were they real by themselves, they would be existing; for then they would be in themselves, outside of nothingness and outside of all causes, and whatever is such must be conceived to exist, as therein consists the very nature of existence. Nay more, they would, if real by themselves, be self-existent, because they would have by themselves that which constitutes existence, being in themselves, outside nothingness and outside all causes. Such the finite metaphysical essences are not, they are not existing, and much less are they self-existent. Hence they must be real by a being distinct from them, having in it the sufficient reason of their reality. Now by what is this being real? Is it real by another one again? May it be so or not, there must be a first reason of reality just as well as there is a first cause of existence. But the first reason of reality must be real by itself and no more by another being, as the first cause of existence is existing by itself and dependent on no other one. It having been proved above that the being which is real by itself is also existing of itself, it follows that the first or ultimate sufficient reason of the metaphysical essences is the absolute self-existent being. The same conclusion we may arrive at, if we consider the attributes of the metaphysical essences. They being necessary, immutable and eternal by themselves, their ultimate sufficient reason, too, must be necessary, immutable and eternal, and it must be so by itself. But that which is necessary, immutable, and eternal by itself, is the absolute being actually existing; for, indeed, the being that stands in itself and by itself necessarily, immutably, and eternally is not merely possible, but must needs exist. Hence it is necessary that God, the absolute self-existing being, actually exists as the ultimate sufficient reason or foundation on which rests all essences are constituted in their reality, are necessary, immutable, and eternal, are the forms of all the existent, the unchangeable objects of our knowledge, the founts of all principles a priori, the firm base of all science.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> It may be said that as the contingent is not the foundation of the necessary, so also the individual cannot be the foundation of universal, and that hence it is unconceivable how God, being individually one, is the first reason of the universality of the metaphysical essences. The solution of this difficulty is easy. The universality of an essence is founded on its finiteness and contingency as to existence. Hence God, being the ultimate or first sufficient reason of all finite essences, is also the ultimate foundation of universality.

This proof not only shows the existence of God as the universal source of all that is, of the possible as well as the existent, the essences as well as the existence of all things, but it also discloses us the infinity of his perfection in a new way. For as the essences of possible and existing beings are not restricted, neither to a certain number nor to a certain degree of perfection, the reason neither on which they rest, nor the source from which they spring, can be limited in its being. Were this finite and restricted itself, it could be the origin of essences only within a certain number or below a determinate degree of entity. Moreover, there is also the metaphysical essence of the infinite being. The infinite essence, though it may be conceived from the finite, cannot be founded but on a being of unlimited perfection. For although it may be conceived by the negation of the limits we find in this universe, yet it is in itself not founded on negation, but on reality; which, as the foundation and the thing founded on must be in proportion, cannot be but infinite.

The question, however, might be put how the infinite can be the foundation and last reason of the finite. It is neither by His intellect, nor by His will, nor by His power that God is the source of all essences. The divine power regards the effecting of things; from the divine will proceed love or hate; but as love and hate so also effecting presupposes as its object a being, which must at least be intrinsically possible, and hence already imply a metaphysical essence. The divine intellect does not effect truth, but presupposes it, and forms its conceptions not arbitrarily, but draws them from its object. It, consequently, by its ideas does not create the metaphysical essences, but conceives them from the objective order. That being, therefore, must be their ultimate sufficient reason from which the divine intellect draws them; for this knows all things from their first principle and their supreme source. But the object, from which God derives all knowledge, and in which He contemplates all truth, is His own infinite essence. It is, in reality, not difficult to understand how on the Divinity the essences of all finite beings can be founded. The perfections of the divine essence are communicable and imitable. Now that which is a communication or imitation of them is of necessity a being too, and hence is constituted by an essence; yea, the more a thing must be a perfect being, the more distinctly the divine likeness is expressed in it, and the more fully divine perfection is communicated to it. However, all that is outside God and has received being from Him cannot be but finite; wherefore it participates His being imperfectly and bears only a faint likeness of Him. There is for this reason between things divine and not divine an endless distance. Hence it is that the communicability and imita-

bility of the divine essence is not exhausted by any being outside itself, however many they may be, and that finite essences are possible beyond any definite number, and beyond any determinate degree of perfection. Thus not only the indefiniteness of the finite essences is accounted for, but also the manner is pointed out, in which they are real. Though they have their own reality, yet they have it not in themselves and outside their foundation, but within this latter. Nevertheless they are not identical with the divine essence, for they constitute beings quite different from it; nor are they contained in it formally, for nothing that is limited can be as such in God. They are implied in the infinite perfection of the divine essence eminently, and flow, as it were, from the same by its communicability, not as its parts or its attributes, but as its likenesses and faint resemblances. Yet, though they are not formally contained in the divine essence, they are so in the divine intellect, because this, contemplating the same infinite essence and fully comprehending its communicability, conceives all the particular natures of finite beings, to which its perfections may be communicated, and which, as imperfect images, may imitate and manifest them.<sup>1</sup>

God having thus been shown as the ultimate foundation of the metaphysical order, it still remains to infer His existence from the fact that He is the author and the end of the moral order. This we shall do by the seventh proof.

The moral order is for rational beings evidently necessary. That which is good, we all are convinced, is to be done, that which is bad is to be avoided. In each single man the lower appetite must be subordinate to the higher, and in social life justice and charity must be observed, the inferior must be subject to the superior, and the

<sup>1</sup> See S. Thomas, S. Theol. p. i., qu. 14, art. 6; qu. 15, art. 2. In commenting on S. Thomas, Card. Toletus says: "*Deus per essentiam suam ut multis participabilem cognovit in ipsamet omnium verum exemplaria distincte.* In hujus declarationem nota, quod essentia divina, quum sit actus infinitus ac consequenter infinitæ virtutis et potentæ, innumeris modis extra se communicabilis est ac participabilis, et hoc quia semper imperfecte participatur, nec integre extra se communicari potest. Haec autem participabilitas, ut ita loquar, est et natura ipsius essentia ideo, quod Deus necessario participabilis est. Per hanc autem participabilitatem, scilicet, ut melius dicam, per hoc quod Deus est communicativus et potens facere, et participetur, creaturæ incipiunt habere esse possibile necessarium, quod non est aliquid esse in creaturæ intrinsecum, sed sola Dei potentia et participabilitas necessaria. Unde creaturæ sunt necessario possibiles, sicut et essentia necessario est participabilis; quamvis creaturæ nondum dicantur per hoc complete possibiles, ut post dicitur. Nota secundo, quod Deus per hanc essentiam participabilem se intelligens cognoscit suam essentiam absolute et ut multis participabilem; immo infinitis modis. Et tunc distinguens in se omnes modos format exemplaria creaturarum omnium possibilium, ac in se omnes illas distincte cognoscit sub esse exemplari illo. Et tunc creaturæ dicuntur complete possibiles, quia a Deo non procedunt nisi mediante intellectu." Enarratio in Sum. Theol., p. i., qu. 14, art. 6.

private welfare yield to the public. All mankind perceives such an order to bind with necessity all human beings, and even all rational beings of a similar nature, unchangeably, invariably, under all circumstances, at all times, and in all places. If there are some who boast of no more being impressed by the necessity of morality, they either speak against their conviction, or they have violently stifled the interior voice of their conscience. Wheresoever rational nature is not thwarted and vitiated, there the binding necessity of the moral order is deeply felt and ever acknowledged. Of what kind is this necessity? It is not physical, for the moral order regulates our free actions, and it always lies in man's power to observe or transgress it. Much less is it metaphysical, which would make a moral fault absolutely impossible. Nor is it a mere dictate of our reason that simply reveals us some invariable truth. If one offends against the simple principles of reason, he is considered to act foolishly and to contradict oneself either in his judgments or in his doings, yet nobody thinks him therefore to have contracted a guilt. Thus we judge of a fault against a mathematical or a merely speculative truth, or against the rules of arts. But he that performs actions contrary to the principles of morality, is pronounced guilty of a crime, and subject to the loss of happiness as a well-deserved penalty, not only by those who are cognizant of his immoral act, but also by his own conscience.

If even a transgression is witnessed by nobody, and no earthly power can reach and avenge it, he who has committed it is therefore no less sure of a severe punishment to come on him. So sharp are sometimes these interior rebukes within the heart of the sinner, and so keen the presentiment of a future vengeance, that from the moment at which the evil act was perpetrated, peace and harmony have departed from him and made room to dismay and gloom. The moral order imposed on us is, hence, the sternest of all necessities; for although it leaves us the free use of our faculties, it nevertheless so enjoins on us the performance of certain actions and the omission of others as to render disobedience to itself the greatest disgrace, and to punish it unavoidably with the heaviest of all losses. Nor can such an exigency result from a merely subjective impulse, which forces us to judge so without objective truth. For we understand the necessity of the moral order and of the reparation of its breaches to arise from the very nature of rational beings, independently of our thoughts, and even of our existence; and this we perceive so clearly and so evidently as to think it most absurd that it should be only imaginary, or should, by any philosophical theories, be proved to be unreal. Likewise the moral order cannot be established by the autonomy or absolute sovereignty of our own reason, as after Kant many philosophers

have thought. For it binds us and is, if infringed on, avenged without and even against our will and our inclinations. We are fully conscious, not of having drawn it up by our conceptions and sanctioned it by our pleasure, but of having received it and of having understood its necessity to be founded on objective reality. In sum, the moral law, all its attributes considered, is an immutable, absolute necessity, laid on us from outside by a superior power for the purpose of putting order in the free actions of rational nature, as the physical laws are impressed on matter, to reduce it to harmony and unity.

From these characters of the moral order we can and must infer God to exist as its author and its last end.<sup>1</sup> To prove God to be the author of the moral law, we have to search into the nature of the power that has laid it on us. Such a power must be endowed with four attributes. It must be higher than any human being, and even than any rational being of a similar nature; it must be highly intelligent and most powerful, absolutely necessary in its existence, and immutable in its determination to maintain order and right. First, he who subjects another one to an unavoidable necessity is, doubtless, higher than he that is subjected. All men, therefore, being bound by the moral law,—and not only all men, but also all rational beings of a similar nature,—its author is of necessity higher than they all. Secondly, if order in general is the effect of an intelligent cause, the moral order much more, by which the free actions of rational nature are regulated, cannot take existence but from reason and intellect. Thirdly, the ultimate author of the moral law has sovereign power over all men and all finite rational beings which are similar to man as to nature, and must moreover know all their transgressions, in order to avenge them, and all their observances, in order to reward them. His power as well as his knowledge is, therefore, most extended and perfect. Fourthly, as the moral law is necessary and cannot be conceived not to be binding us in any condition and at any time, its author also must be necessary, both as to his existence and his determination to impose it upon us and to put it into execution; and such necessity, too, must be unconditional and independent of any circumstances.

Now what cause or what principle has such attributes? There is no other being of this kind than the infinite and self-existent. Whereas this has all the qualities required, any other being, since finite and contingent, is neither necessary as to its existence, nor absolutely unchangeable in the determinations of its will, nor sovereign in its power, and not itself subjected to the moral order. By its universal necessity, therefore, the moral law, that is written

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<sup>1</sup> See Card. Franzelin, *De Deo Uno*, Thes. III., p. 56.

in our hearts and promulgated by our reason, points out God, the self-existent, infinite being, as its sovereign author; He not existing, it would have no firmness and immutability, no sufficient reason, no real and solid foundation.<sup>1</sup>

Considering the manner in which our free actions are regulated, we conclude God to exist as the end of the moral order and as our supreme good. The object of the appetite in general is the good, the object of the will in particular the good that completely perfects rational nature. Yea, the very essence of the will consists in the tendency to happiness, or the possession of all good; and this tendency is implied in all its acts and gives energy to all its exertions. If we now bear in mind that order is put in a multitude of things by subjecting those which are lower to those which are higher, and these again to that which is the highest, in accordance, however, with each one's particular nature, it is not difficult to conceive how the free actions of our will are to be regulated. The essential conditions of order are fulfilled with regard to them, if they all so tend to the real object of happiness, that every limited good is desired as subordinate to the supreme unlimited good which fully satisfies and perfects our rational nature. But the limited good is then desired as subordinate to the supreme good, if the former is regarded as a means to attain the latter as our last end, and, consequently, if the supreme good is the motive, out of

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<sup>1</sup> With his wonted eloquence, Cicero infers God as the author of the natural law from its unconditioned necessity and universality, when he says: "Est quidem vera lex recta ratio, nature congruens, diffusa in omnes, constans, sempiterna, quæ vocet ad officium jubendo, vetando a fraude deterreat, quæ tamen neque probos frustra jubet ac vetat nec improbos jubendo aut vetando movet. Huic legi nec obrogari fas est, neque derogari ex hac aliquid licet, neque tota abrogari potest, nec vero aut per senatum aut per populum solvi hac lege possumus, neque est quaerendus explanator aut interpresejus alius, nec erit alia lex Romæ, alia Athenis, alia nunc, alia posthac, sed et omnes gentes et omni tempore una lex et sempiterna et immutabilis continebit, unusque erit communis quasi magister et imperator omnium deus: ille legis hujus inventor, discepatior, lator, cui qui non parebit ipse se fugiet ac naturam hominis aspernatus hoc ipso pœnas luet maximas, etiamsi cetera supplicia, quæ putantur, effugerit." —De Republica, lib. III., c. 22.

"True law is right reason, conformable to nature, universal, unchangeable, eternal, whose commands urge us to duty, and whose prohibitions restrain us from evil. Whether it enjoins or forbids, the good respect its injunctions, and the wicked treat them with indifference. This law cannot be contradicted by any other law, and is not liable either to derogation or abrogation. Neither the senate nor the people can give us any dispensation for not obeying this universal law of justice. It needs no other expositor and interpreter than our own conscience. It is not one thing at Rome, and another at Athens; one thing to-day and another to-morrow; but in all times and nations this universal law must forever reign, eternal and imperishable. It is the sovereign master and emperor of all beings. God himself is its author, its promulgator, its enforcer. And he who does not obey it flies from himself and does violence to the very nature of man. And by so doing he will endure the severest penalties, even if he avoid other evils which are usually accounted punishments."



which the limited good is loved and longed for. In such an order of actions, therefore, no limited good moves our will solely by itself; it is the supreme good which by its goodness lends motive power to any other good, concurs as the first and principal cause to all well-regulated actions, and connects them into one series.<sup>1</sup> On the supreme good, then, the whole moral order rests, as on the first efficient cause all other causes and all effects depend.

But in which object can this supreme good be found? What is it that can really bestow full happiness on man and perfect his rational nature? Is it something finite or something infinite, something merely possible or something existing? It must be the fulness of all goodness and all perfection; for else it could satisfy neither our intellect, which is capable of knowing all truth, nor our will, which longs after good without restriction—after all good. Hence the supreme good of man, the object of his happiness, must be infinite and is identical with the infinite being. Furthermore, this infinite good, the last end of the moral order, cannot be merely possible, but must needs exist. We grant, it is not always necessary that the final object of our desire already exists, it suffices that it is possible and is conceived as such. Yet in this case its effectuation is the end of our volition or operation. Now the infinite good, being essentially self-existent, cannot be produced by us; all that we can and will obtain by our actions is the real possession of it and the intimate union with it. But the unproduced being, the union with which constitutes our happiness, must be real and actually existing. The good, which neither exists, nor, if it does not exist, can ever come into existence, cannot be attained by our free tendency, nor can its possession satisfy and perfect our rational nature, nor can its attainment be considered as an object worthy of our desire, or as the motive impelling us to a whole series of actions tending towards its embrace, or as a rule of all our conduct. If, therefore, the infinite does not actually exist, there is no supreme good for man, no real object of our happiness; and, by consequence, the whole moral order has no standard, no real end, no unity, no object, which by its goodness moves us to its observance, which we may hope to attain as a reward for virtue, or may fear to lose in punishment for our transgressions. God not existing, there is nothing more absurd, nothing more contradictory than the existence of the moral order. It may at most be observed by the ignorant on account of self-deceit, but it must fall as soon as human reason begins to be enlightened. The materialist will pretend not to recoil from such a consequence, and even admit it willingly; however, it is to be denied that any one can conceive

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<sup>1</sup> S. Thomas, S. Theol., I., II., q. 1, art. 4.

morality to be absurd; its beauty and its necessity for the well-being of society, as well as the individual, is too evident.

The whole moral order, therefore, is entirely founded on God really and actually existing; His wisdom and sanctity have sanctioned it and laid it as an immutable necessity on rational nature; His infinite goodness is its first object, its end, its centre, its unity, its motive power and final cause. Without God morality is an absurdity, as human nature itself is a monster, because it is by its faculties irresistibly inclined to the pursuit of happiness which is impossible, and to an object as its last end which neither exists nor can exist.<sup>1</sup>

The existence of God as the lawgiver and sovereign of mankind, absolutely to be obeyed and adored, which we just have demonstrated from the nature of the moral law, is confirmed also by the unshaken and universal conviction of all nations. This proof, the eighth and the last, proceeds in the following way: First, the fact is to be stated that among all nations, and among the greatest part of men, the firm belief in the Divinity exists, then this belief is to be traced back as to its proper cause, to rational nature itself, struck by the evidence of truth.

There were, at any time, comparatively only few atheists over the earth, and those few ones were generally considered as criminals. Everywhere the mass of the people, the learned as well as the unlearned, the rulers as well as the subjects, always believed in the Deity; they honored it by private and public worship; they

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<sup>1</sup> Those who, with Colonel Ingersoll, denying the existence of God, profess the religion of the body, we might refer to a passage in Plutarch's famous treatise against Colotes, the Epicurean. It is as if the Grecian philosopher had known our latest atheists. "They," says he, "who condemn these things (God and justice) as if they were fables, and think that the sovereign good of man consists about the belly, and in those other avenues by which pleasure is admitted, are such as stand in need of the law, and fear, and stripes, and some king, prince, or magistrate, having in its hand the sword of justice; to the end that they may not devour their neighbors through their gluttony, rendered confident by their atheistical impiety. For this is the life of brutes, because brute beasts know nothing better nor more honest than pleasure, understand not the justice of the gods, nor revere the beauty of virtue; but if nature has bestowed on them any point of courage, subtlety, or activity, they make use of it for the satisfaction of their fleshly pleasure and the accomplishment of their lusts. And the wise Metrodorus believes that this should be so, for he says: 'All the fine, subtle, and ingenious inventions of the soul have been found out for the pleasure and the delight of the flesh, or for the hopes of attaining to it and enjoying it, and every act which tends not to this end is vain and unprofitable.' The laws being by such discourses and philosophical reasons as these taken away, there wants nothing to a beastlike life but lions' paws, wolves' teeth, oxen's paunches, and camels' necks, and these passions and doctrines do the beasts themselves, for want of speech and letters, express by their bellowings, neighings, and brayings, all their voice being for their belly and the pleasure of their flesh, which they embrace and rejoice in either present or future, unless it be perhaps some animal which naturally takes delight in chattering and garrulity." *Morals: Against Colotes, the Disciple and Favorite of Epicurus, c. 30.*

endeavored to appease its wrath for crimes committed, and to obtain blessings from its bounty, by sacrifices, bloody and unbloody; they dreaded punishment from it for their transgressions, and reward in the life to come for their virtuous actions. History, no less than all the monuments of antiquity that have come down to us, prove to be true what Plutarch wrote against Colotes, the Epicurcan. "If you," says he, "will take the pains to travel through the world, you may find towns and cities without walls, without letters, without kings, without houses, without wealth, without money, without theatres and places of exercise; but there was never seen or shall be seen by man any city without temples and gods, or without making use of prayers, oaths, divinations, and sacrifices for the obtaining of blessings and benefits, and the averting of curses and calamities. Nay, I am of opinion that a city might sooner be built without any ground to fix it on than a commonwealth be constituted, void of any religion and opinion of the gods; or, being constituted, preserved."<sup>1</sup> Other writers, historians and philosophers, amply confirm his statement. This, says Cicero, "may further be brought as an irrefragable argument for us to believe that there are gods, that there was never any nation so barbarous, nor any people in the world so savage as to be without some notion of gods. Many have erroneous notions of the gods, for that is the nature and ordinary consequence of bad customs, yet all allow that there is a certain divine nature and energy. Nor does this proceed from the conversation of men or the agreement of philosophers; it is not an opinion established by institutions or by laws; but, no doubt, in every case the consent of all nations is to be looked on as a law of nature."<sup>2</sup> Among the Christian writers, many alleged the necessary and universal belief of mankind as a proof for the existence of the true God against the heathen atheists and idolaters. "This is," says Tertullian, "the great crime of the heathens, that they did not acknowledge Him whom they could not ignore."<sup>3</sup> St. Augustine, too, remarked that God cannot be unknown to man. "Such," says he, "is the power of the true Deity, that from the rational creature, which has the use of reason, it cannot be entirely hidden. Few men excepted,

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<sup>1</sup> *Morals: Against Colotes*, c. 31.

<sup>2</sup> "Ut porro firmissimum hoc adferri videtur, cur deos esse credamus, quod nulla gens tam fera, nemo omnium tam est immanis, cujus mentem non imbuerit deorum opinio: multi de dis prava sentiunt—id enim vitioso more effici solet—omnes tamen esse vim et naturam divinam arbitrantur, nec vero id collocutio hominum aut consensus effecit, non institutis opinio est confirmata, non legibus; omni autem in re consensus omnium gentium lex naturæ putanda est." *Tusculan. Disput.*, lib. I, c. 13.

<sup>3</sup> "Hæc est summa delicti nolentium recognoscere, quem ignorare non posserat." *Apolog.*, c. 17.

in which the human nature is too depraved, all mankind owns God to be the maker of this universe."<sup>1</sup>

The very same facts we have to state of modern times, not only as far as Christian nations are concerned, among which the knowledge and the worship of God are most developed, but also with regard to the barbarians discovered in the forests of the New World. Whoever was acquainted with them, whoever had studied their languages and had for a longer time observed their customs, found them imbued with the idea of a Deity and addicted to the practice of a religion. We do not, however, say that their knowledge was well evolved, and that their worship was without gross superstition; we, on the contrary, with Cicero admit that they were plunged in grave errors; yet we also with Cicero insist on the undeniable and universal fact of their being convinced of the existence of a Supreme Lawgiver, and their adoring a Supreme Being.

That this conviction was most firm, unshaken, and forced on them with necessity is evident from the actions to which it prompted them, and from the opposite tendencies which it had to withstand. The Divinity believed in always binds man not only to worship it, but also to observe the moral law imposed on him; to reconcile it by severe penance after sin, and to gain its favor by virtue and piety. Are not such actions on the one hand most difficult and often requiring the sacrifice of our dearest interests? and are they not, on the other hand, performed by all nations for the honor of God? A belief impelling man to such feats must be deeply rooted in his soul. Besides, this conviction could not take hold of man without overcoming many and great hindrances. It was resisted by all the passions of the human heart, which were to be checked by it; by the grossest vices, which at once blunted the mind for the supersensible and rendered the existence of God, the severe avenger of sin, dreadful; by the barbarousness of so many nations, which seemed to have deadened in themselves the capacity of perceiving the spiritual and immaterial. The monstrosity of errors concerning God and religion, embraced by the various nations, and the contradictions of the learned respecting His nature and His attributes, might seem to have made the very idea of a Deity absurd and imaginary. Advanced science was ready to discover every false reasoning, and to lay open any weak point or unsound tenet which served as a basis to religious belief. Atheism did everything it could to ridicule religion, to incite man to throw

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<sup>1</sup> "Hæc est vis veræ divinitatis, ut creaturæ rationali jam ratione utenti non omnino ac penitus possit abscondi. Exceptis enim paucis, in quibus natura minimum est depravata, universum genus humanum Deum mundi hujus fatetur auctorem." In Joan. Tract., 106.

off the yoke of a supreme lawgiver, and to regain liberty for the human passions. Yet the conviction of a God existing was not weakened by all these hindrances and assaults; it was not rooted up by science; it, on the contrary, outlived all philosophical systems hostile to itself, and in consequence of such conflicts became but more enlightened, and was maintained with more firmness. Mankind, therefore, everywhere and at any time admitted God's existence with immutable firmness; which firmness was not blind and unreasonable, but had stood any kind of discussion, and had grown by careful examination only the stronger. We hence must infer that the conviction regarding the existence of the Deity implies a steadiness equal to necessity, and must have been irresistibly impressed on the human race.

The universality and the necessity of the belief in God being proved, it is not difficult to trace it back to its true origin. The cause of it must evidently be also universal and necessary. But there is only one such cause,—rational nature itself, struck by the evidence of objective truth. I shall first prove this by a general reflection, and then speak of the particular causes resorted to by the atheists. If the intellect embraces a false opinion, it is not led to do so by its own nature, for this tends to truth, but by the influence of the will, which, if there is no compelling evidence in the object, either does not apply the understanding to a sufficient consideration of the question to be affirmed or negated, or determines the same to assent or dissent by the preponderance of its own inclination. Now there is no reason at all why the will should bend the intellect to an erroneous opinion of God's existence. To do so the will should have been allured by some good it hoped to attain, the existence of a Supreme Being and Lawgiver being admitted, and should have yielded to some bad propensity, it being certainly immoral to avert the intellect from truth and to plunge it into error, in a matter of so great importance. To what corrupt proneness of the human heart could this falsehood correspond, and what advantage hoped for could prompt it to so wicked an influence? As it was shown above, God is opposed to all disorderly inclinations of our will; He restrains its liberty; He commands the control over our passions, and forbids their gratification; He threatens with the severest punishments those who do not comply with the most difficult laws of the moral order; He demands the greatest sacrifices of the human heart, and promises for them only an invisible reward in the life to come. This being so, the will, following its evil propensities, cannot lead the intellect to the belief in the existence of God, but is, on the contrary, most inclined to resist and, if possible, to hinder its embracing that conviction. Experience amply confirms this. Those who

desire to indulge in their pride, lust, or avarice, struggle against the existence of a Supreme Lawgiver, whilst those whose passions are under the control of reason are never enemies of the Deity. We may lay it down as a certain rule that the more the human will is upright and honest, the firmer man's belief is in God, and that the more the will is overpowered by wicked desires, the stronger is man's opposition against God. The belief in the Divinity, therefore, is certainly not the effect of the will through some ill motive inclining us to untruth.

Should it even happen that to some the existence of a Supreme Divine Power might promise advantage, and that others were at first simply overawed by their authority, or deceived by their false reasons, no malice of the will thus having any part in their belief, there could, nevertheless, in this way, neither a universal nor a necessary conviction be produced. There would be a great many others who, for the sake of their liberty and the gratification of their passions, were interested in the denial of a Supreme Being, and who, therefore, by no false reasons and by no mere saying of their betters, could be induced to admit its existence. For doctrines which imply the heaviest duties and the greatest sacrifices are not adopted by man but after careful examination and for quite cogent reasons. On the same account also those who have once been deceived in a matter of this kind will never stick to their opinions with unchangeable firmness, but will rather always be ready to search into its grounds, and to give it up as soon as doubt is possible and reasonable.

Hence there is absolutely no influence of the will contrary to truth, which determined the intellect to the firm conviction of God's existence. Even it would be most absurd to admit that any power of whatever kind, whether intrinsic or extrinsic to us, could so prevail on the mind as to force on it a false conviction, or to move it irresistibly to a wrong assent. For such a possibility would presuppose that the human intellect equally tends to truth and to falsehood, and may embrace one and the other with the same firmness. This being granted, the veracity of reason would be destroyed, and all certainty overthrown. It is, consequently, rational nature itself from which the immutable belief in God springs. The intellect, however, its nature consisting in the tendency to truth, cannot adhere to an object with firmness and necessity, unless this be with either extrinsic or intrinsic evidence revealed to us as it is in itself; and such evidence must be the more striking, the more the propensities of our will are opposed to its admission. Hence the conviction of mankind regarding the existence of God must be traced back to rational nature, struck by the evidence of truth.

Nevertheless, the atheists resort to other causes to account for man's belief in God. They attribute it to education, to the frauds of priests and lawgivers, to fear, to ignorance. But none of these causes is universal and necessary, as the effect is which they are said to have produced.

Education is different among different nations, even in different families, and in different times; and moreover the principles imbibed by it are frequently changed in later years in consequence of studies, experience, and conversing with men of different views, particularly if they are opposed to the human passions and propensities and based on no solid foundation. The authority of the priests already presupposes the belief of the people in a Deity, and so does that of the lawgivers. Moreover how should we explain the uniformity and universality of this error spread among all nations? Should we perhaps think that all rulers and priests over the earth entered into a conspiracy, in order to at once deceive the whole human race, and that this conspiracy was never betrayed and never discovered? Was ever a similar fact known? Can it be conceived to be possible, the hostility and jealousy of the different rulers, the barbarity of so many nations, and the lack of intercourse between the different countries of the earth being taken into account? But the possibility of such a conspiracy being granted, could a few kings and priests by deceit and false reasons peacefully induce all nations, and among them the wisest and most learned men, to embrace the unalterable belief in God's existence without any doubt and suspicion, though they were in consequence of it subjected to the hardest duties and to the loss of their liberty, and though some enlightened and rightminded atheists tried by all means to undeceive them? Indeed such an admission requires more than blind faith. It is, in truth, to be astonished how our modern atheists can swallow down this monstrosity and for the sake of civilization demand the same to be done by all mankind, whilst out of mere delicacy of their intellect they find an insurmountable difficulty in thinking that the produced existences have their ultimate cause in an unproduced being.

Ignorance is not common to all men. Among many highly civilized nations there were men of great wisdom, as well as uprightness, which they proved more strikingly by the purity of their life, the greatness of their exploits, and their heroic self-sacrifices for the common welfare, than the atheists show their intrinsic worth and their learning by their boastfulness and their somewhat obscure morality. Now as these heroes believed in God and found themselves confirmed in their conviction by their deep studies and researches, so also, whilst they enlightened their age and advanced knowledge and science for many centuries, they promoted their

fellow-citizens in piety and religion. Nor can the opinion of God be with unchanging firmness maintained through ignorance; this is repugnant both to the nature of our intellect and to the inclination of our will.

The fear also of the unknown powers of nature or of threatening evils is neither as universal as the thought of a Supreme Being, nor so strong as to produce in us a belief which by no reflection could be weakened or thrown off. Not all that believe in God can be said to be timid and faint-hearted. Yea, if dreadful evils are coming down on us, those who worship God and obey His law bear them with unflinching courage and constancy, and those, on the contrary, who pretend out of mere strength of mind to despise the Divinity show most weakness and despair. The idea itself we have of God does not point to fear as its adequate cause. If terror forced us to believe in Him, we should consider Him only as a dreadful power armed with thunders and lightnings; yet we love Him as a father and revere Him as the source of all good. At last, though the fearful events in nature impress on man the idea of a great supramundane power, so as to overwhelm even atheists and to extort from them the confession or the invocation of God, it ought to be proved that thus the existence of a Supreme Being is not rightly inferred and believed in; this, however, is impossible. Such occurrences remind man too forcibly of his own weakness and dependence as to leave in him still the idea of his own sovereignty, and as not to arouse in him the thought of a superior sway and invisible Providence. It is for this reason that, as already Tertullian remarked, in such circumstances also atheists against their will acknowledge a higher power over themselves and implore its help.

It thus being impossible to find any accidental cause proportioned to the universal and firm conviction which the whole human race has of God's existence, we again have to conclude that rational nature itself, struck by the evidence of truth, must be its origin. For rational nature is common to all men, and gives necessary assent to its judgments, not in consequence of any subjective impulse, or blind instinct, or deceitful appearance, but on account of the evidence of truth which has flashed upon it.

From this it follows that on the one side God is manifested by His creation very distinctly, and that, on the other hand, the human intellect is particularly fitted to discover and to infer Him from this visible world. So in reality it is. Led by the principle of causality, which we daily apply to numberless events, man cannot observe this universe with its changes, its contingency, and its order, or experience the operation of his own mind with all its weakness and dependence, without gathering a first, independent



cause of all. He may in this way form an idea of God not in every regard perfect, he may argue not according to a scientific method, yet he will attain by common-sense reasoning at least an imperfect knowledge and an obvious certitude of His existence, firm enough as to withstand all doubts and objections. Just on this account the cognition of God's existence is said by many Christian writers of ancient times to be inborn to man, not as if innate ideas were to be admitted, as Plato taught, but because, as St. Thomas explains,<sup>1</sup> the principles of cognition, that is to say, the power of reason, by which we easily rise to the existence of a Supreme Being, is native with us as a constituent part of our nature. By this, however, we do not intend to deny, but rather we willingly grant, that also tradition and authority contributed a great deal to the spreading of the universal and firm belief in God. Nor are we thus inconsistent with our own tenets. From what we have said it follows at most that tradition, inasmuch as it supported this conviction of mankind, must have been endowed with extrinsic evidence. Nevertheless, according to Sacred Scripture and the teachings of the Church, that too must be maintained that from the visible creation also unaided reason *can* deduce the existence of God with certainty.<sup>2</sup>

But if the cognition of God's existence is necessary and forced on us with evidence, atheism seems to be impossible, and our free will has in adopting or rejecting it no part at all. This objection deserves our attention, as its solution will throw much light over the question. The contemplation of the universe and the experience of himself leads man to search into the ultimate cause of the contingent and the mutable. Whenever in this inquiry he allows reason its natural course, he cannot but arrive at the absolute and Supreme Being as the cause of all contingent existence; and to this conclusion, although drawn without scientific method, he will adhere with firmness. Yet man may by the corruption of his free will also thwart the tendency of reason by not letting it apply itself to the unprejudiced consideration of truth and by bending it nearly violently to the objections raised against the existence of a first cause. If this deflection of the intellect from seriously considering the reasons for the existence of God lasts, atheism becomes habitual, and may, though unnatural in itself, be maintained with less repugnance of the mind. Thus the firm belief in God

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<sup>1</sup> "Dei cognitio nobis dicitur innata esse, in quantum per principia nobis innata de facili percipere possumus Deum esse." In Boëth. de Trinit. Prooem., qu. 1, art. 3, ad. 6. See also Card. Franzelin, De Deo Uno, Thes. vii.; T. Kleutgen, Philosophie der Vorzeit, I. Band, n. 435-444.

<sup>2</sup> Sap. cp. 13; Acts xiv., 16; xvii., 27; Rom. i., 20. Concilium Vatic., Constit. Dogm. de Fide Cathol., cp. III.

results with necessity from rational nature, if this is permitted to follow its congenial tendency, and yet will be prevented or suppressed, if nature itself is spoiled or thwarted within us. Wherefore St. Augustine remarks that all in whom reason has dawned have the notion of God, and that the whole human race acknowledges Him to be the maker of the universe; those alone excepted who have vitiated their own nature. This fully agrees with the doctrine of St. Paul (Rom. i. 18), who assigns the ignoring of the true Deity not to the incompetence of the human intellect, but to the wickedness of the will, detaining the truth of God in injustice.<sup>1</sup>

To sum up the several proofs advanced for the existence of God, it is evident we can and must by many ways rise to Him from the beings of this visible universe; from their production, their contingency, their finiteness, their mutability, their order, their metaphysical essences, from the moral law written in our hearts, from the unshaken conviction of all mankind. From all these points of view we arrive at the conclusion of His existence with full certainty, from each one we derive a new perfection of His; and, gathering what from them all we have inferred, we know Him to be the first, unproduced cause, self-existent, absolutely necessary, infinite, and immutable in all His perfections, the former of the astounding order of this world, the firm foundation and the eternal author of the moral law, endowed with boundless power and wisdom and unchangeable sanctity, the source of all truth and all essences of existing and possible beings, and the eternal archetype of all that is. No being, we have thus understood, can be without Him, in whatever regard it may be considered; its essence cannot be real without His essence existing as its foundation; its existence cannot be produced without His unproduced being; its contingent nature has no sufficient reason to exist without His necessary existence; its changes cannot take place without His unchanging entity as the source of all perfections received; its order cannot have been effected but by His wisdom and power; its free action, if it is rational, cannot be regulated by a fixed rule and directed to an end answering our nature, He as the Supreme lawgiver and as the highest good not existing. God, therefore, is the first principle from which all things spring, and the last end to which they all return, the ultimate foundation of all the three orders, the physical, metaphysical, and moral, and for this reason also the ground of all science, which not being attained, nothing is thoroughly known and fully understood, and which not standing by itself, no truth can be necessary, immutable, and eternal.

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<sup>1</sup> See Sylvester Maurus, S. J., *Quaest. Theolog., de Deo Uno et Trino*, qu. 15.

However, by our eight proofs we might be said to have demonstrated the existence of a Supreme Being, but not of one personal God as thought by the theists. Also the pantheists admit an absolute, unproduced being, yet conceive it to be indistinct from this universe. No less do the polytheists believe in the Divinity as the cause of this world, but they imagine it to exist, not in one, but in many divine beings, united and subordinate to one another. Can human reason not disentangle itself from these heathen views? Do the proofs set forth by Christian philosophers not furnish us with another idea of God than one that is consistent with all the errors of deism? Undoubtedly we are to deny this. But how shall we prove the Supreme Being to be one, not only as to nature but also as to number? Or how shall we evince with cogent reasons that the first cause has produced the universe, not so as to be immanent to it, but so as to be distinct from it?

Let us first treat of pantheism. All the forms of modern pantheism suppose God not to be distinct from the world. May He now be said to be identical with it as the unity or the sum of all its constituent parts, or immanent to it either as its form and its soul, or as the substance underlying its phenomena, or has the germ of all its evolutions? To evidence the distinction between God and the universe, it is above all necessary to call our attention to the essential attributes of both. God is self-existent, absolutely necessary, infinitely perfect, and so determined by this essence that any other degree of perfection than He actually possesses is in Him metaphysically impossible; whence He is also absolutely immutable. The beings, on the contrary, which are constituent parts of this universe are, as nobody can doubt, produced, contingent, mutable, and finite. They are produced because they came into existence with a beginning; contingent, because they can be conceived as not existing, and many of them even have a liability to destruction; mutable, because they, in reality, change continually, losing perfections which they had, and acquiring others which they had not before; finite, because they are limited in every regard, in their extension, their duration, their powers, their cognition. And if the particular beings are produced, contingent, mutable, and finite, the universe also constituted by them must needs be such. It cannot be self-existent, necessary, and immutable, for a whole or a collection cannot have perfections entirely and essentially excluded from its constituents, its reality being no other than that of all the component parts united. Not being self-existent, it is also not infinite, but finite. God, then, being essentially self-existent, necessary, infinite, and immutable, the universe, on the contrary, being produced, contingent, finite, and mutable, they cannot be one and the selfsame being, unless we are to predicate

at once quite contradictory attributes of the same thing, self-existence together with dependence on an efficient cause, absolute necessity together with contingency, absolute immutability together with mutability, absolute infinity in being together with finiteness. But it may for this reason be granted that God is not, as materialistic pantheism holds, identical with the universe, inasmuch as He is the whole of its constituent parts, and it may nevertheless be said that He is the substance and the world its modifications or evolutions, whether immanent to it or emanant from it, or that He is the indeterminate principle and the world its determinations, whether real or ideal, or that He is the soul and matter the body informed by it, as spinozism, evolutionism, idealism, hylozoism use to maintain. All these different forms of pantheism are no less repugnant to the divine nature than materialism. They all suppose the Divinity to be imperfect, finite, and subject to changes. According to them the divine essence is in itself unreal, and obtains concrete existence and full determination only in the different natures and evolutions of the universe, so however that each one of these natures and evolutions is finite and transient, and the whole of them is only indefinite, but never actually and strictly infinite, always changing and growing, but never perfect and complete. But an essence which is determined, developed, and realized by always changing and ever finite existences and evolutions is in itself indeterminate, undeveloped, and unreal, and in its perfections always varying, always deficient, and limited. Hence the Divinity can by no means be immanent to the universe as the substance is to its modifications, or the germ to its evolutions, or the soul to the body.

At the same conclusion we arrive, if we consider the simplicity of the divine nature. That which is infinite is also essentially and in every respect simple. In every composition each component part is finite, since it is less perfect than the whole to which it belongs, and is accomplished and perfected by the other parts with which it is united. But from the addition of finite parts an infinite being cannot arise. For every part added being limited, there remains of necessity after every addition a limit also in the whole. Moreover, could even by the union of finite parts an infinite multitude or magnitude be made up, this would still throughout its whole extension retain all the imperfections implied in each component's nature, the lack, for instance, of life, cognition or intellect. The infinite can for the same reason not be thought to enter into composition with another being. For whatever unites itself to something else is by union completed and must, consequently, be in itself imperfect, or in other words, must have the capacity of receiving a perfection, and hence be of itself in

lack of the same.<sup>1</sup> Now, in all pantheistic systems God is thought either to be compound or to enter into composition with other beings. For He is a body, if He is conceived to be the universe or to have secreted it from Himself, or He is joined to a body, if He is said to be the soul of the material world, or He is the substance to be united with everchanging accidents and determinations, if He is thought as the substratum of the mundane phenomena. Since, then, the infinite, self-existing being cannot be immanent to or identical with this universe, we must infer that God is not the substance in which the natural appearances inhere, that He has not produced this world as His own modifications or evolutions, but has made it out of nothing a being subsistent in itself, and that hence, though He supports it by His power and fills it with His presence, yet He is substantially and essentially distinct from it. We must from this further deduce that the first cause is a personal Deity. It is a substance, for as it exists entirely by itself and independently of anything else, it must also exist in itself and without dependence on a subject of inhesion; it is moreover a rational substance, since it is intelligent and even the source of all intellectual power, and quite a complete rational substance, which does not belong to another being and is not subordinate to another subject, but subsists in itself, because being infinite and absolute, it is completion and independence itself. But a complete rational substance subsistent in itself is a person.<sup>2</sup>

We think to have thus sufficiently evinced the absurdity of pantheism, and pass over to the refutation of polytheism. The first proof for the oneness of God we again take from His self-existence. God exists by Himself, or by virtue of His own essence, hence the divine essence as such must be existing, or rather identical with existence. But whatever exists is individual, not universal. The divine essence therefore must include individuality, or in other terms, be individual of itself. But again, whatever is individual can, without losing its proper being, not be communicated to many subjects. Consequently, the divine essence neither can be common to several gods. Hence by the necessity of the divine essence itself there can exist only one God. S. Thomas illustrates this reasoning by a striking example. We distinguish, says he,<sup>3</sup> in Socrates that whereby he is man, and that whereby he

<sup>1</sup> See S. Thom., S. Theol., p. I., qu. 3.

<sup>2</sup> S. Theol., p. I., qu. 29, art. 3.

<sup>3</sup> S. Theol., p. I., qu. 11, art 3. "Manifestum est, quod illud unde aliquid singulare est hoc aliquid, nullo modo est multis communicabile. Illud enim, unde Socrates est homo, multis communicari potest, sed id, unde est hic homo non potest communicari nisi, uni tantum. Si ergo Socrates per idesset homo, perquod est hic homo, sicut non possunt esse plures Socrates, ita non possent esse plures homines. Hoc autem convenit Deo; nam ipse Deus est sua natura, ut supra ostensum est. qu. 3, art. 3. Secundum igitur idem est Deus et hic Deus. Impossibile est igitur esse plures deos."

is this man, that is, Socrates. That whereby he is man can exist also in others, but that whereby he is this man Socrates is only in him. If now Socrates were man by the same reality or the same intrinsic principle by which he is this man, and if, consequently, manhood and that whereby he is Socrates were identical, there would be only one man as there is only one Socrates. Just so it is with regard to God; in Him the essence by which He is God is also the sufficient reason why He is this God, or in other words, His essence is also His individuality.

But is not, indeed, Socrates by the same reality by which he is man, also this man? Is not the distinction between essence and individuality a mere abstraction, not real at all in nature? It seems then that the reasoning of St. Thomas proves nothing, because it either proves too much, as it shows the impossibility of many individuals of any essence, or at least does not exclude that also among several gods each one's nature is of itself existent and individual. True, the distinction between essence and individuality results from our abstract consideration of intelligible objects; still two things must well be borne in mind. First, neither essence nor individuality are unreal, but both are found in nature, not separated, yet connected and identified. Secondly, the formal object of the conception of essence is not the same as that of the conception of individuality; for though we consider by them the same thing existing in nature, we, nevertheless, regard it under different aspects; by the one we conceive its constituent parts, as it has them in common with other similar things, by the other we conceive its manner of existing as it is peculiar to it; by the one we conceive its distinction from any other nature, by the other its numerical distinction from any other concrete being. If, therefore, according to our conceptions, the divine nature is said to imply individuality in itself, whilst the same is denied of other essences, this means nothing but that God's essence consists of such attributes as can be common neither to other natures nor to several concrete subjects, and that, on the contrary, other essences are such as exclude only identity with other natures, but not communicability to many subjects. This peculiarity the divine essence has, because it must, on account of its being identical with existence, be conceived as individual and hence incommunicable; whereas other essences do not involve individuality or can be thought without it, because their attributes do not include existence, which is always and alone individual. The oneness of God is, therefore, rightly inferred from His self-existence.

His infinite perfection is another source from which we may derive it. God is essentially the fulness of all being, the plenitude of all perfections. But if there were a plurality of gods, individ-

ually distinct from one another, none of them would be the infinite ocean of all being ; for as things individually distinct exclude one another from the compass of their entity, it being the very nature of distinction that one thing is not the other, also of several gods none would possess the reality which constitutes the others in their individuality. Each one would, therefore, have not the plenitude, but a share of being. Nor will it avail to object that one god may contain all the perfection of the others, and thus, notwithstanding his individual distinction, be infinitely perfect. One thing may contain the other's perfection, either formally, or eminently, or virtually ; formally, if the perfection which is found in the one exists in its very form and peculiarity also in the other ; eminently, if the perfection of the one exists in the other, not in its proper form, but in a higher and more excellent manner ; virtually, if one is able to produce the other's perfection. One god would undoubtedly contain the perfection of the others formally, but this would not prove him to possess the fulness of being ; for the same nature or form of perfection existing in several beings renders these only similar, but does not destroy their individual distinction or confound their reality. Hence, though of two gods each one formally contained the other's perfection, still neither of them would comprise his equal's individual entity. Virtually the perfection of one god could not be contained in the other, because all divine perfections are essentially self-existent and unproduced. Nor can eminently the perfection of the one be in the other, because in this supposition one god would be superior to the others, and consequently he alone would be infinite. For this reason several gods would have quite a different reference to one another than the finite has to the infinite. The finite is also, as to its individual entity, contained in the infinite virtually and eminently ; but the individual entity, as such, of one divine being would not be really contained in that of the other ; and, therefore, the existence of the finite does not lessen the perfection of the infinite, but one god would of necessity void the fulness of the other.<sup>1</sup>

Furthermore, if one god does not contain the individual being of the other, he neither includes the finite essences founded on, and the finite existences produced by the same. Each god would then be the source and the centre of a physical, metaphysical, and moral order of his own, by no means and under no respect dependent on other divine beings. This gives further evidence that as soon as deities are multiplied in number, none of them is endowed with the fulness of all reality, each one possessing only

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<sup>1</sup> See St. Thomas, S. Theol., p. I., qu. 11, art. 3.

a share of being, and containing, as to their essence and existence, also only a portion, and not the whole of finite beings. An obvious comparison illustrates this conclusion. The monarch who has no equals and on whom all other princes are dependent, is much more powerful than he who has equals quite independent of him. For of monarchs who are equal to and independent of one another, none has more than a limited power, while he who is unequalled and on whom all others depend, is the highest among them and has a universal and unlimited sway. So also that being to which nothing is equal and on which everything depends, must be more perfect than that which is equalled and of which others are independent. By having equals independent of itself, a being necessarily becomes limited; by being unequalled and having all things dependent on itself, it is unlimited. Hence we infer, with Tertullian,<sup>1</sup> that the quality of being the highest is a pure perfection, which, consequently, must be predicated of God, and that it can be realized only in one subject, wherefore God is only one; yea, we must conclude that to have no equals and to be superior to any other thing, is not only a perfection, but the constituent of infinite perfection. The plurality of gods, therefore, is evidently repugnant to the divine essence. By the very fact that this latter is thought to be multiplied in subjects individually and absolutely distinct, it can no longer be conceived to be infinite.

The first cause, then, is of necessity one single personal God, substantially distinct from the world, it being contrary to its self-existence and its infinite perfections to exist in several subjects absolutely distinct, or to consist of parts, or to be composed with another entity, or to vary in its evolutions.

Hence from this visible universe reason not only derives the existence of a first and unproduced cause, but also quite consequentially deduces the oneness and the elevation of the same over all that is finite. By the power of our intellect, which was imparted us like a spark of the eternal divine light, we rise to the purest perfections and the loftiest eminence of God; we reach Him, though imperfectly, by our reasoning as He is from all eternity, in the unlimited fulness of being, absolutely one and simple, yet comprising all and containing all, supereminent above all that is, yet the

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<sup>1</sup> Contra Marcionem, lib. i., cp. 3: "Quantum humana conditio de Deo definire potest, id definitio, quod et omnium conscientia agnoscet, Deum summum esse magnum, in æternitate constitutum, innatum, infectum, sine fine, et cetera. Quæ erit jam conditio summi magni? Nempe ut nihil illi adæquetur, id est, ut non sit aliud summum magnum; quia si fuerit, adæquabitur, et si adæquabitur, non erit jam summum magnum, eversa conditione et, ut ita dixerim, lege, quæ summo magno nihil sinit adæquari. Ergo unicum sit necesse est, quod fuerit summum magnum. Duo ergo summa magna quomodo consistent, cum hoc sit summum magnum: par non habere, par autem non habere uni competat, in duobus esse nullo modo possit."



centre and the source of all goodness and all perfection. Sound reason is, therefore, not at variance with supernatural revelation, but fully agrees with the dogma of faith concerning His divine attributes as exposed by the Vatican Council. "The Holy Catholic Apostolic Roman Church," we read in its first Dogmatic Constitution, "believes and confesses that there is one true and living God, Creator of heaven and earth; almighty, eternal, immense, incomprehensible, infinite in understanding and in will and in every perfection; and that since He is one single, altogether simple and unchangeable spiritual substance, He is to be declared to be really and in essence distinct from the world, most happy in Himself and of Himself, and unspeakably exalted above all things which exist and can be conceived besides Himself."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Sancta Catholica Apostolica Romana Ecclesia credit et confitetur, unum esse Deum, verum et vivum, Creatorem ac Dominum cœli et terræ, omnipotentem, æternum, immensum, incomprehensibilem, intellectu ac voluntate omnique perfectione infinitum; qui cum sit una singularis, simplex omnino ac incommutabilis substantia spiritualis, prædicandus est re et essentia a mundo distinctus, in se et ex se beatissimus, et super omnia, quæ præter ipsum sunt et concipi possunt, ineffabiliter excelsus."—Dogmatic Constit. de Fide Cath., cp. ii.