PREFACE

ALBERT THE GREAT

INTRODUCTION
   I. The Life and Works of Albert
   II. Albert and the Dionysian Tradition

TEXT
   Commentary on Dionysius' Mystical Theology

THOMAS AQUINAS

INTRODUCTION
   I. The Life and Works of Thomas Aquinas
   II. Introduction to the Texts

TEXTS
   Inaugural Lecture (1256)

Texts on Prayer:
   Commentary on the Sentences, Book 4, distinction 15, Question 4
   Quaestiones Disputatae De Veritate, Question 6, Article 6
   Summa Contra Gentiles III, chapters 95-96
   From The First Lectures on St. Paul
   From The Lectures on St. John
   From The Lectures on St. Matthew
   Prayer: Summa Theologiae II. II, Question 83
   From The Commentary on Romans

Texts on the Contemplative Life:
   Prologue to the Commentary on Boethius' De Hebdomadibus
   Active and Contemplative Life: Summa Theologiae II. II, Questions 179-182

Texts on Religious Life:
   Obedience and the Vows: De Perfectione, Chapter 13
   Obedience: Summa Theologiae II. II, Question 104, Article 5
   Sin and The Rule: Summa Theologiae II. II, Question 186, Article 9
   Study: Contra Impugnantes Dei Cultum et Religionem, chapter 11
   Quodlibetal Question I, Article 14
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Foreword

In a previous volume, Early Dominicans (Classics of Western Spirituality, 1982), I expressed a hope that the two outstanding thirteenth-century Dominican doctors of the church, St. Albert the Great and St. Thomas Aquinas, would find their own place among the Classics of Western Spirituality. This present volume is the fulfilment of that hope.

Neither of the two is a "spiritual writer" in the sense to which we have become accustomed, but both are, in different ways, significant for the history and understanding of Christian piety. Both represent instances, recognized and canonized by the church, of a type that has not always enjoyed a good press in devout circles: both are unambiguously Christian intellectuals. Albert, we may say, is almost the apotheosis of curiosity, while Thomas stands for fearless lucidity. In their different
ways both were men who kept their eyes open and were not afraid to look at what they saw, though in the case of Thomas the eyes of the mind were paramount.

It is obviously not possible in a single volume to do justice to the range of interests of either of the two saints. From the voluminous works of Albert I have selected only one, his commentary on the *Mystical Theology* of the elusive Greek writer of about A. D. 500 who hid behind the name of Dionysius the Areopagite. In my introduction I have tried to situate Albert in the Western Dionysian tradition. He is significant as a theologian who resisted both the obscurantism of twelfth-century negative theology and the devotionalist reading of Dionysius, which eventually led to *The Cloud of Unknowing* and St. John of the Cross. Even he was unable to recapture the full breadth of the authentic Dionysian vision, but he did manage to retrieve a fair amount of it, in spite of the obstacles posed by inadequate Latin translations and a somewhat misleading tradition of interpretation. And his appreciation of Dionysius is something that he passed on to his German Dominican disciples and followers, not the least of whom is Meister Eckhart. One of the many exciting scholarly projects currently going on is the rediscovery of the German Dominican tradition, of which Albert is un-

- xii -

doubtedly the progenitor, and which has a characteristic stamp of its own, distinct from the Thomist tradition with which the Dominicans are normally and naturally identified.

The writings I have chosen from the corpus of Thomas' works are more immediately related to some of the standard topics of spirituality. In particular I have presented a substantial dossier on prayer, ranging from near the beginning of Thomas' career to near its end. Thomas more or less created the scholastic treatise on prayer and achieved a clarity on the subject that it is hard to find elsewhere except in his disciples. It is fascinating to watch as he gradually achieves this clarity. The subject of contemplation and the contemplative life seems not to have interested him nearly so much, and his treatise on it in the *Summa Theologiae* is, in some respects, disappointing; but it is still instructive to see what he has to say and to note what he does not say. Finally, I have selected a variety of texts illustrating Thomas' views on religious life, many of them shaped by the controversial needs of his own time and, as a result, perhaps surprisingly, all the more pertinent to the controversies (including some "undeclared controversies") of our own time.

I have made no attempt to provide a general introduction to the thought of either writer as a whole. Since Albert is the less well-known, I have tried to give some idea at least of the temper of his thought. In the case of Thomas there are excellent books available to help us understand his philosophy and his theology, so I have contented
myself with a few remarks on the texts actually included in this volume.

Since the language of thirteenth-century theology is not always easy for the modern reader, I have not been shy of supplying notes. No doubt everyone will find some places where my notes are unwanted and others where a note is looked for in vain; such is the lot of commentators and those who read them. But I have done my best to anticipate puzzles and, insofar as I could, to shed light on them.

Unfortunately there is still a great deal of obscurity surrounding the lives of both saints. I have therefore thought it best to offer a fairly long biography of each of them and to indicate at every step the evidence on which I have based myself. Anyone who wants to can of course ignore the documentation, which is cited extensively in the notes, but it should be borne in mind that much of what I say is controversial and that we are still a long way from having a "standard" biography of either Albert or Thomas. The main outlines are tolerably secure, but the details have to be fought for. I have tried always to find such solid evidence as is available and then, ruthlessly at times, eliminate even those fantasies that have been hallowed by generations of historians. It would have been unworthy of our two subjects to do otherwise. How far I have succeeded in reaching the truth about their lives, time will perhaps tell; I hope that at least I have taken a small step forward.

Both Albert and Thomas make frequent references to earlier sources, and I have tried to identify these sources as precisely as possible, a task in which I have naturally been much helped by the work of earlier editors. Biblical references are cited in accordance with the Latin text of the traditional Vulgate, which was the bible used by our two writers, and biblical texts are translated afresh from the Vulgate in the light of contemporary commentaries and the specific purposes for which they were quoted by Albert or Thomas.

It remains to thank the many people who have helped me during the many years that have gone to the gestation and the making of this book. I must especially mention the late Osmund Lewry, O. P., who read through the typescript of the section devoted to St. Albert with meticulous care, even though he was already a very sick man; his comments were invaluable to me. I must also express my gratitude to Ulrich Horst, O. P., for sending me material on Albert that I was unable to find either in Rome or in Oxford. My treatment of St. Thomas has benefited from the kindness of several of my confrères. Various members of the Leonine Commission—and they are the real experts—have helped me in sundry ways, and Louis Bataillon, O. P., in particular has been most generous in sharing his learning with me. Albert Patfoort, O. P., in a series of lengthy conversations, sparked off several profitable trains of thought and put me straight on a number of points.
Leonard Boyle O. P. helped and encouraged me in a variety of ways and, in the final stages of the composition of the book, he kindly read through the typescript and commented on it, as well as generously agreeing to write the Preface. No English Dominican can approach St Thomas without being conscious of Herbert McCabe O. P., who has made himself, for generations of students, the interpreter par excellence of Thomas' thought. Not least I must thank the Paulist Press and the editors of this series for their patience and indulgence, and also the friends, colleagues and students, who have allowed me to try out on them all or parts of the typescript in successive phases of its evolution, and particularly Marcus Hodges O. P., Michael Doyle O. P. and last, but far from least, Brian Davies O. P.

Preface

By any measure, this is a remarkable volume. It is not simply a translation, with commentary, of passages from Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas on prayer, the contemplative life, the ideal of the theologian, the religious life or mystical theology. It is really two books in one. For there is also, and with much originality, an unravelling of the tangled sources of the life of Albert and a pruning, at times ruthless, of some traditional accounts of that of Thomas.

The selection of passages for translation is adroit. The translations are deft and the annotations scholarly. As an introduction to the lives and spiritual teaching of two of the greatest Dominican authors of the Middle Ages, Father Tugwell's work here is easily the most clear-headed and stimulating in English, or indeed in any language.

ALBERT THE GREAT

Introduction

I. THE LIFE AND WORKS OF ALBERT

When Albert died in 1280 he was already something of a legend. Even in his own lifetime, contrary to all normal academic etiquette, he was being treated as an "authority" in the schools, on a par with the ancients; and a Dominican preacher in Paris could refer with evident proprietary satisfaction to "our philosopher, bishop Albert." Albert's friend, fellow-Dominican and pupil, Ulrich of Strasbourg, describes him as "so godlike (divinus) in every branch of knowledge that he can aptly be called the wonder and the miracle of our time." Unfortunately, though, there is still a great deal of uncertainty about the biographical details of this remarkable man.

At the time of his death he was more than eighty years old; that is solidly attested. So he was born toward the end of the twelfth century. He called himself "Albert of Lauingen," but this might mean either that he was born in Lauingen, a small town on the Danube not
far from Ulm, or that Lauingen was his family name. The medieval biographers mostly assume the former interpretation, and they have in general been followed by modern writers; Scheeben found confirmation of Albert's childhood in Lauingen in a text in De Animalibus 7.1.6.65, where Albert comments on the habits of fish that he had observed "in my estate on the Danube," but this can equally well, if not better, be understood not of the family home, but of the episcopal residence where Albert lived as bishop of Regensburg. There do not appear to be any explicit childhood reminiscences in Albert's works which unambiguously indicate where he grew up.  

Recently the possibility that Lauingen should be taken as a family name has received more attention. Albert's brother Henry, also a Dominican, was known as Henry of Lauingen, and there is some evidence that the Lauingen family had Austrian connections as well as those closer to the place from which the family name derived. This makes it possible that we should look much further afield for Albert's birthplace. But in the absence of any more conclusive evidence, it is best to retain the traditional belief that he was born in Lauingen.

Medieval sources say that Albert came of knightly stock, which in the usage of the period would mean that his family did not belong to the nobility. But they were presumably quite well off, since as a young man Albert and his friends used to go out into the fields with retrievers and catch birds with the help of half-tamed falcons. And if, as seems likely, another personal reminiscence refers back to Albert's youth, it also suggests a background of leisure and prosperity: Albert tells us that he and his companions sometimes stood around for hours watching eagles fighting with swans; when eventually the eagle won and brought the defeated swan back to earth, a servant would run and pick up the swan, scaring off the eagle in the process. According to several medieval biographers Albert became a Dominican at the age of about sixteen, which is impossible if he was over eighty in 1280, unless he was one of the first people to join the Order, in which case we should expect this fact to have been noticed and commented on. Johannes Meyer simply says that he was a "young man" when he became a Dominican, and this tallies with Bacon's comment that he entered the Order as "a boy," allowing for Bacon's intentions as a debunker.

The earliest sources give us no precise information about when or where Albert became a Dominican, though they leave it to be inferred that it was in Germany. Thereafter there is a double tradition, which is something of an embarrassment to Albert's biographers. The anonymous Cologne legenda, whose date is controversial but which precedes Peter of Prussia (c. 1485), says that Albert was received into the Order by Jordan of Saxony while he was a student in Italy, and it
is clear that the source of this report is an autobiographical account in the *Vitae Fratrum* of how an unnamed student in Padua was converted by Jordan's preaching and, after various doubts and delays, sought and received the Dominican habit from Jordan. A fairly early German manuscript of the *Vitae Fratrum* (Leipzig 818) identifies this Paduan student as Albert. The Cologne legenda goes on to tell how, after a few years, Albert was sent to Cologne to be the priory lector there. On the other hand there was also a Cologne tradition that it was in Cologne itself that Albert joined the Order. Peter of Prussia is plainly aware of both

- traditions and is conscious of being controversial in arguing for Padua, on the evidence of the *Vitae Fratrum* and of Albert's own writings. He goes on to suggest that Jordan, having received Albert in Padua, sent him on more or less immediately to Cologne. Peter's interpretation of the evidence did not convince everybody. Johannes Molitoris, more or less Peter's contemporary, stated very precisely that Albert entered the Order in Cologne under the second prior, Leo, who succeeded Jordan's friend Henry in 1229. Rudolph of Nijmegen tried to reconcile all the evidence on the assumption that Albert was received by Jordan in Padua and was then sent to Cologne as lector under the priorship of Leo, which is only a chronologically more precise version of what we find in the anonymous Cologne legenda. The main difficulty with Rudolph's theory is that there seems to have been a relatively early tradition that it was not in Cologne but in Hildesheim that Albert began his career as a lector. Probably the theory that he was first a lector in Cologne was intended to reconcile the evident fact that Cologne was his home convent with the belief that he joined the Order in Padua.

That Albert visited Italy as a young man is certain. He tells us that he was in Venice when he was young and went to see a "picture" of a king's head that had been found in a freshly carved piece of marble: "All of us who were there knew it had been painted by nature." Evidently the young Albert had a reputation among his associates as a natural philosopher, because they asked him why the "forehead" was distorted and he duly gave them a physical explanation.

That he studied in Padua is also very likely. We know that he was in Padua at some stage in his life, and it is surely significant that in his list of cities he singles out for comment "Padua, in which a studium of letters has long flourished" and "Paris, the city of philosophers." There is no reason, then, why the identification of Albert as the hero of the story in the *Vitae Fratrum* should not be correct. And since it is improbable that there was anything like a formal university faculty of Arts in Padua when Albert was young, Bacon's charge that he had never received a proper training in philosophy would be to some extent substantiated, if it was in Padua that he studied.
true that he had not graduated in any recognized faculty, and Bacon was certainly right in pointing out that at this time the arts and philosophy were not being taught

within the Order. But this does not mean that Albert had not received quite a good education from some school, presumably one run privately by some Master. As we have seen, he is already treated as a scientific "expert" by his friends in Venice, and also it must have been before his entry into the Order that he acquired his familiarity with some of the writings of Aristotle. 39

So we may take it as true, then, that Albert was a student in Padua, in which case it was probably there that he succumbed to the preaching of Jordan, who was famous for his ability to "lure" students into the Order. 40 But far too little is known of the early development of the teaching of arts and sciences in Padua for us to be able to base any dating of Albert's moves on it. 41 We have only one reasonably secure date. Albert several times mentions that he was in Lombardy during a severe earthquake, 42 and this has convincingly been identified as the one that caused considerable damage and was felt throughout northern Italy at Christmas 1222. 43

We can assume, then, that Albert was in Lombardy by the end of 1222, but this does not necessarily mean that he was in Padua. According to the Vitae Fratrum his uncle was with him when he made the acquaintance of the Dominicans and prevented him from joining the Order impetuously without time for reflection. It is possible that this uncle was living in Italy in the service of the German emperor 44 and that Albert was with him there for some time before he became a Dominican.

It has come to be commonly asserted that it was in 1223 that Albert received the habit in Padua, but this assertion seems to rest solely on one of the letters of Jordan of Saxony, which Scheeben is quite right to dismiss as irrelevant. 45 The letter in question describes how successful Jordan has been in recruiting students in Padua, including the sons of "two great German counts," 46 and Albert has been assumed to be one of the latter. But, as we saw earlier, Albert was not, so far as we know, the son of a great German count. The dating of almost all of Jordan's letters is conjectural, and Scheeben quite properly points out that Jordan was in Padua on several different occasions. 47

Peter of Prussia cautiously abstains from attempting to date Albert's reception of the habit, but his reconstruction of what happened is well-argued and is probably correct: Albert was received into the Order in Padua, but was sent, more or less immediately, to

Cologne, in accordance with Jordan's known practice of sending new recruits back to their own countries. 48 And if Molitoris' evidence is sound (and it may well come from some document in Cologne),
Albert's actual arrival in Cologne must be dated to late 1229 or early 1230, in which case it was presumably in 1229 that he heard Jordan preaching and yielded to his charm. \(49\) This is the only date directly proposed by our sources, and there does not seem to be any warrant for rejecting it. Albert was then in his thirties when he became a Dominican, and that is within the conventional meaning of "young man" \(\textit{iuvenis}\). \(50\)

Our next date is supplied by the well-attested tradition noted above, that Albert's first appointment as lector was in Hildesheim. The Dominican priory in that city was founded in 1233, \(51\) so Albert cannot have been an official lector before that date. \(52\) As a relatively mature recruit, it is quite likely that he opted to make his vows without a probationary period or without a full year anyway, \(53\) and we may guess, though we cannot know, that he began his theological studies as soon as he arrived in Cologne. By 1235 the Dominican constitutions contained a law that nobody could be appointed a "public doctor" without first doing four years of formal study, but we do not know when this rule was introduced. \(54\) Certainly at least one year of formal study was envisaged in the 1220 constitutions. \(55\) It is, I suggest, not unlikely that Albert spent his first year in Cologne as a student and then, in view of his maturity and talents, was given some teaching to do while he completed his own studies. It is well-attested that he lectured on the Sentences twice in Cologne, \(56\) and this appears to refer to the period before his graduation in Paris. \(57\) It could well be that he lectured on them as a kind of apprentice lector, on the analogy of a bachelor of the Sentences, before he was formally appointed lector of Hildesheim.

In 1233 at the earliest, then, Albert was officially appointed a lector and sent to Hildesheim where, if we may trust a late report, he put his knowledge of natural philosophy to good effect by ridding the priory refectory of flies. \(58\) Thereafter he was lector \textit{in Vriburgo}, at Regensburg ("for two years") and at Strasbourg, from where he was sent to Paris. \(59\) \textit{In Vriburgo} could mean either Freiburg-im- Breisgau, where the Dominicans accepted a site in 1233 and began to establish themselves in about 1235, \(60\) or Freiberg in Saxony, where the Dominican priory was founded in 1236. \(61\) In either case

Albert would almost certainly have been the priory lector required by the constitutions as part of the founding community in any new house. \(62\) It has generally been assumed that it was to Freiburg-im- Breisgau that Albert was sent, \(63\) but there is nothing to prevent the alternative interpretation, which is favored by Weisheipl, \(64\) and indeed there is some evidence to support it. In 1240, Albert tells us, he was in Saxony and "saw a comet near the north pole," \(65\) which squares with his being the lector of Freiberg in Saxony at the time. Also we know that at some stage in his life he visited the mines in Freiberg and Goslar, \(66\) going far
out of his way to do so, because of his interest in mineralogy, and this could well refer to his journey from Hildesheim to Freiberg and to expeditions made from Freiberg.

On the basis of these considerations, it is tempting to infer that Albert remained in Hildesheim and Freiberg for some years, and then spent his two years in Regensburg in 1240-42 or 1241-43 and moved to Strasbourgh in 1242 or 1243 and Paris in 1243 or 1244. The difficulty with this chronology is that it does not seem to allow enough time for Albert to have achieved all the writing that we know he did in Paris before 1246. We know that he was working on book II of his commentary on the Sentences in 1246, and before that he had already commented on books I and III, and before that he had already completed a fairly substantial *Summa de Creaturis*. If he only arrived in Paris in 1243, it is difficult to see how he could have accomplished so much, particularly as he had first to absorb the Aristotelian learning, which is much in evidence even in the *Summa de Creaturis*. So we cannot rule out the possibility that Albert visited Saxony for some reason that we do not know in 1240, and that he was lector in Freiberg rather earlier. If we assume that he went there as a member of the founding community, he could have been lector there in 1236-37, in Regensburg in 1237-39 and in Strasbourgh in 1239-40, in which case he could have been in Paris as early as 1240.

At some period during this first phase of his teaching career Albert composed his earliest known work, *De Natura Boni*, which reflects a familiarity with those works of Aristotle that had been available in Latin for some time, as well as the standard classical and theological authorities (Cicero, Seneca, Augustine, the Glossa Ordinaria); there is no sign of any of the new material that was causing such excitement in Paris (new and more complete translations of Aristotle and the works of Arab and Jewish philosophers).

From the tasks he was given it appears that Albert was held in some esteem by his brethren and that he was expected to contribute to the development of his rapidly expanding province. According to Scheeben, Albert enjoyed other, even more impressive signs of his brethren's confidence in him: they elected him diffinitor to a Provincial Chapter during this period, and probably also sent him as diffinitor to the General Chapter in Bologna in 1238, where he secured half the votes in the election of the new Master of the Order. But the sole authority for all this is a statement by Galvano della Fiamma, whose fantastic improvements upon historical facts are notorious. Most scholars properly discount the whole alleged episode.

The real honor paid to Albert by the Order was the decision that he should lecture on the Sentences in Paris with a view to becoming a Master in Theology. At this time Paris was the only international study-house that the Dominicans had, and even to be sent there as an
ordinary student was no mean privilege, seeing that each province was only allowed to send three students there a year. But the chances of becoming a Master were even more restricted. The Order possessed two chairs of theology in Paris and, although we are in the dark about many of the details concerning the early Dominican Masters, it seems probable that the Order had so far done little to exploit these chairs systematically for the benefit of the provinces at large. No clear procedure was yet established for providing friars to hold the chairs, and Guerric of St. Quentin and Godfrey of Bléneau had apparently been left in possession of them for quite some time.

In 1246 the General Chapter initiated a move to extend the possibilities of study at the highest level by creating four new international study-houses (studia generalia), one each in the provinces of Provence, Lombardy, England and Germany. It is tempting to wonder whether sending Albert to Paris was not already part of a plan to open up the academic resources of the Order more effectively. The decision to send him there was presumably made by the Master of the Order. If it was in 1241 or 1242 that the decision was made, it can be seen as one of a series of moves characteristic of the generalate of John of Wildeshausen. In the late 1240s it is noticeable that there is a rapid turnover of Dominican Masters in Paris, and sending Albert from Germany, then a few years later the lector of Montpellier, Elie Brunet, and finally Thomas Aquinas of the Roman province in 1251, indicates at least a rudimentary policy of not allowing the two Parisian chairs to be totally dominated by the Parisian brethren. And a concern about the supply of lectors is also evident in the ruling of the 1245 General Chapter that all priors who could be usefully employed as lectors must stop being priors.

When Albert arrived in Paris, perhaps in 1241 or 1242 and certainly not later than 1243, the renowned scripture scholar, Hugh of St. Cher, was provincial of Paris, a position he held until he was made a cardinal in May 1244. He was succeeded by Peter of Rheims, who himself became a bishop in 1245, and then Humbert of Romans became provincial. The two Dominican Masters were still Guerric and Godfrey, though we do not know whose bachelor Albert became. Guerric probably died either toward the end of 1244 or at the beginning of 1245. By 1247 Godfrey was in the pope's entourage.

In Paris Albert encountered a whole new intellectual world. By now almost the whole Aristotelian corpus was available in Latin and was being avidly studied, in spite of considerable uneasiness on the part of the ecclesiastical authorities. But it was largely through the Arabs that Aristotle had been brought back to the West, and their Aristotle was part of an essentially Neoplatonist package. He brought with him the pseudo-Aristotelian Liber de Causis, derived from the Elements of Theology by Proclus, one of the last great pagan Neoplatonists, and he
was accompanied by the works of the Arab commentators, especially Avicenna and, slightly later, Averroes. And in addition to this wealth of supposedly Aristotelian learning, which was often in fact more Platonist than Peripatetic, a veiled Platonism was also exercising a considerable influence through the writings of "Dionysius the Areopagite," which had begun to enjoy a new vogue in the twelfth century.

Albert eagerly absorbed all this new intellectual nourishment. In his earliest Parisian writing, the *Summa de Creaturis*, finished (insofar as it was finished) by about 1244 at the latest, he is already confidently handling most of the available works of Aristotle, and he shows himself well-acquainted with a range of Islamic philosophers. And, as we shall see, he was not afraid to tackle some of the more controversial topics being debated in the schools.

After lecturing on the Sentences, Albert became a Master in Theology in 1245, perhaps taking over the chair that had been vacant since the death of Guerric. He taught for a further three years as Regent Master and then, in 1248, he was sent back to Germany to preside over the new studium generale in Cologne.  

While he was still a Master in Paris an aristocratic young Neapolitan had been sent to join the Dominican community in St. Jacques by the Master of the Order, to put him beyond reach of his family, whose ambitions for him were devastated by his decision to become a Dominican and who had resorted to all possible means to divert him from his chosen path. This young man, Thomas d'Aquino by name, arrived in Paris in 1246, and he seems to have attached himself to Master Albert. He copied down in his own hand the lectures that Albert was giving on the *Celestial Hierarchy* of Dionysius, and his copy served as the original on the basis of which the university stationers proceeded to publish the work. When Albert was sent to Cologne, young Thomas went with him and continued to record the lectures on the rest of the Dionysian corpus.

Thomas was a reserved, quiet young man, whom the brethren nicknamed "Dumb Ox"; but bit by bit his talents emerged, and Albert is said to have commented one day, "We call him a dumb ox, but the time will come when he will make such a bellowing in his teaching that it will sound in the whole world."

Among Albert’s other students at this time were his devoted admirer, Ulrich of Strasbourg, and Bl. Ambrose Sansedoni.

From now on Albert was an increasingly public figure and the relative abundance of documentation makes it easier to keep track of him. The "lector of Cologne" was called upon to intervene and advise in a variety of local affairs and in 1252 he was appointed, together with Hugh of St. Cher (at this time papal legate in Germany), to negotiate a settlement in the long-standing dispute between the archbishop of
Cologne and the citizenry.  In the course of his life he was frequently to be asked to undertake similar diplomatic missions.  

In 1254 he was elected provincial of the German Dominicans at the Provincial Chapter of Worms.  He had apparently already been appointed vicar of the province, presumably either by the General Chapter or by the recently elected Master of the Order, Humbert of Romans, and in this capacity he presided over the Provincial Chapter. The German provincial had responsibility for a dauntingly large territory. By now there were thirty-six priories and perhaps almost as many monasteries of nuns scattered over an area including Switzerland, Austria, Belgium and the Netherlands in addition to the whole of Germany, and the province spilled over into parts of what is now France and Yugoslavia. There was also a missionary house attached to the province in Riga, Latvia.  The provincial was supposed to visitate all the houses in his charge, and the very chapter at which Albert was elected insisted that the brethren must observe the traditional practice of travelling everywhere on foot, barring very exceptional circumstances. The General Chapter of 1255 was clearly determined not to make life any easier for provincials and forbade them to have private bedrooms (as a lector Albert would have got used to having his own room), and it also warned people not to travel to chapters except on foot and called for a stricter observance of the ban on carrying money when on a journey.  The German Provincial Chapter of 1257 fired three priors for travelling on horseback.  According to Peter of Prussia, Albert fully conformed to the Order's constitutional requirements, covering the length and breadth of his enormous province on foot, begging his bread as he went. We cannot be certain that Albert visited every single house in person, but the extent of his travels can be seen from the widely separated places mentioned in his writings in connection with his observations of natural phenomena, from Latvia to France, from the Alps to the English Channel.  It seems likely that a great many of these observations were made in the course of Albert's travels as provincial. He also had to attend Provincial Chapters at Regensburg (1255) and Erfurt (1256), and the General Chapter in Paris in 1256.  

Our sources do not give us a very personal or intimate picture of Albert as provincial. Three new priories came into existence during his term of office, but it is not known that he was personally involved in any of them. He also received the vows of the first nuns in the recently established monastery near Soest, the famous "Paradisus."  The excerpts quoted from Provincial Chapters during his provincialate show him insisting on such traditional observances as poverty and silence, and on a careful screening of preachers before they are allowed to preach in public.  He was clearly a conscientious
superior, but we may wonder how far his heart was in this kind of work. As we have seen, his long journeys on visitation gave new scope to his unbounded curiosity about the world around him, and his responsibilities as provincial did not make him abandon his writing. It was while he was provincial that he wrote his important *De Anima*. 108

In 1256 Albert got caught up, in a small way, in the conflict between the seculars and the mendicants, which had at one stage looked like crippling the work of the mendicants entirely. 109 Early in the year the Parisian secular Master, William of St. Amour, the friars' most virulent opponent, had produced a particularly inflammatory pamphlet, *De Periculis*, and this had been delated to the pope, thus bringing to a crisis the long and bitter dispute in which the heads of the two main mendicant Orders, Humbert of Romans and John of Parma, and the leading mendicant theologians in Paris, including St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Bonaventure, had been involved. All was now set for a decisive condemnation of William. In September the pope, Alexander IV, appointed a commission of cardinals to examine *De Periculis*. All that remained was the formal judgment. And at this stage, rather mysteriously, Albert turns up at the papal court in Anagni. One early source implies that he had gone there on his own initiative, which seems an unlikely thing for a conscientious provincial to have done. 110 The other major sources claim that he had been sent for by the pope precisely in view of the condemnation of William, 111 but this seems rather implausible too. The mendicant theologians had had ample opportunity to present their case, and the matter was now in the hands of the pope's commission of cardinals, which included two distinguished Parisian theologians, Eudes of Chateauroux and the Dominican Hugh of St. Cher; it is not at all clear why they should need any further theological advice from Germany. 112 So why send for Albert?

It is most unlikely that Albert, with the responsibility for his province on his shoulders, went to Italy without being summoned. So the suggestion is tempting that maybe he was sent for in connection with some quite different affair. 113 Anyway, however he came to be there, there is no doubt that he was consulted about the condemnation of *De Periculis* and his reaction is revealing. He

tracked down a copy of the book, paid to have the use of it, and managed to get it transcribed overnight, with the help of several scribes, and then studied it in the twenty-four hours before the consistory met. 114

Apart from assisting at the condemnation of William of St. Amour, we know that Albert gave a public refutation, at the papal court, of the Averroist doctrine of the non-individual nature of the agent intellect, which he later wrote up as a book, *De Unitate Intellectus*. 115 It is tempting to suppose that this was the real purpose for which he had
been summoned to Anagni. In 1255 the Arts faculty in Paris had issued new regulations, in which the study of the books of Aristotle played an important part. It is quite conceivable that Alexander IV was disquieted by this. Already William of Auvergne (†1249) had felt obliged to argue against the "Aristotelian" and Islamic doctrine of the non-individual soul. If the pope wanted to consult someone about how he should react to the new Arts syllabus in Paris, Albert would by this time be well-established as the leading ecclesiastical authority on Aristotelianism, and so he would be an obvious person to send for. And the fact that Alexander IV made no move to censure the Parisian syllabus might reflect Albert's conviction that the philosophers have to be met on their own ground with "arguments and syllogisms," not just with dogmatic censures.

How long Albert remained at the papal court we do not know, but there is no reason to suppose that he remained in Italy until the General Chapter due to meet in Florence at Pentecost 1257, because this was a diffinitors' Chapter and did not involve provincials. We may reasonably suppose that, as a dutiful provincial, Albert returned home to his province, though it seems he took time to see the sights of Rome on the way.

The General Chapter of 1257 absolved Albert from the chore of his office, but he appears nevertheless to have been at the subsequent Provincial Chapter in Augsburg, and our sources give the impression that he presided at it. Conceivably the news of his absolution from office had not yet reached Germany. We do not know when the Provincial Chapter was held, but Albert was certainly in Augsburg at the end of August. He preached a series of sermons during the octave of the feast of St. Augustine in various churches, including that of the Dominican nuns, of whom he was evidently fond since he later remembered them in his will. In his sermon on 30 August, which was preached in the Dominican church, he refers to his recent trip to Italy, mentioning his sight-seeing in Rome and the reflections it prompted (how much better the ancient Romans were than we are today, saving only that we have the faith and they did not). In another public sermon on Sunday he reported how he had confessed to the pope that he was overawed by him, to which the pope replied, "I am earth, I am dust, I am nothing."

By March 1258 at the latest Albert was back in Cologne in his old job of lector (Regent of the studium generale). And as usual we find him being called upon to advise and arbitrate and act as witness to various transactions. At least once the pope used him as his agent. Clearly people trusted his judgment and his impartiality.

In June 1259 he was appointed by the Master of the Order, Humbert of Romans, to a special commission at the General Chapter of Valenciennes, whose brief was to draw up a plan for the organization of
studies throughout the Order. It is clear from the membership of the
commission that Humbert wanted Dominican studies to be modelled
on the pattern of the University of Paris: apart from Albert, the other
members of the commission were Bonhomme, Florent de Hesdin,
Thomas Aquinas and Peter of Tarentaise, who were all Parisian
Masters. As a result of their work, the Order for the first time officially
adopted a policy of providing a full program of studies, at least for the
brighter students, including the arts (and therefore philosophy) as well
as theology. This was a momentous innovation and represented a
triumph for Albert, who had been insisting for years on the importance
of philosophy. Other points of interest are that all the brethren are
expected to attend the classes given by the lectors, including priors
and other lectors who are free; study of a fairly formal kind is evidently
envisaged as a full part of Dominican observance, not just as
something that the friars pass through as part of their formation. Also
lectors in the more important studia are to have a bachelor, just like
the Masters in the universities. 128

Albert had secured for his Order an educational program after his
own heart, but his personal work as an educator was rudely interrupted
early in 1260. On 5 January Alexander IV appointed him bishop of
Regensburg, and at the same time wrote to the canons of
Regensburg telling them to accept Albert as their pastor; 129 their own
candidate had refused the bishopric. 130 A rumor of what was going on
reached the ears of Humbert, who promptly sent an impassioned letter
to Albert, pleading with him to refuse the papal injunction. This famous
document, which incidentally reveals what an important man Albert
was in Dominican eyes, is worth quoting in full:

Brother Humbert, useless servant of the friars of the Order of
Preachers, to his dearest brother in Christ, Albert, lector of Cologne,
eternal salvation in heaven and may he shine in the world with the
splendour of his merits and example.

A rumour has just reached me, in a letter from the Roman curia, and
it has pierced my heart to the quick and would have shattered me
completely if it had not been counteracted by the holy and firm
confidence that I have in you in all good. We have been given to
understand that they are saying in the curia that a decision has been
made that you are to be raised to some episcopal rank.

It is not difficult to believe that the curia might have made such a
decision, but no one who knows you would ever think it possible that
you might be inclined to consent to such a decision. How could anyone
believe that at the end of your life you would be willing to blot your
own glory like this and that of the Order which you have made so
glorious? Dearest, dearest brother! If you yield like this, no one in our
Order or in any other kind of poor religion will ever resist again the
temptation to pass over to a position of rank; they will all cite your
example as an excuse. If people in the world hear of this, they will all misunderstand you and everyone else who has made profession in a religion like ours, thinking that we do not love poverty but only put up with it for as long as we cannot escape from it.

Please do not let yourself be moved by any advice or entreaties from our lords in the curia; such things quickly and easily become a matter of ridicule and mockery there. And do not be defeated by any annoyances you have re-

ceived in the Order—the Order loves and respects everyone, but it specially boasts of you in the Lord. Even if you had suffered far worse annoyances than you ever have or ever will, annoyances which would have defeated anyone else, you are quite sensible enough to know that your own gigantic shoulders can support them cheerfully, as is proper. Do not let yourself be turned aside by any papal precepts; in cases like this such precepts are reckoned to be mere words, not meant sincerely, and they have never been known finally to constrain anyone who seriously wanted to resist them, and this kind of holy disobedience for a time usually enhances rather than damages people's reputations.

Consider what has happened to people who have allowed themselves to be drawn into this kind of thing. What do people say of them? What do they achieve? What is their position? How do they end up? Turn over in your heart the enormous difficulties and perplexities involved in ruling the churches in Germany and how difficult it is there to avoid offending either God or man. And how will your soul endure being tangled up all day long in worldly business and living with the continual risk of sin, when it has such a love for the scriptures and for purity of conscience? If it is a harvest of souls that they want from you, bear in mind what a countless harvest of souls will be utterly lost if you change your status like this—all those souls which you undoubtedly gain not only in Germany but almost everywhere in the world by your reputation and example and writing. And it is far from certain what sort of harvest you might gain as a bishop. Dearest brother, you see our whole Order rescued from the greatest tribulations and enjoying anew the greatest consolation; what will it be like if you plunge it into even deeper distress by any act of yours?

I would rather hear of my favourite son being laid out on a bier than of his being exalted on a bishop's throne, if this would mean that I did not lose my hope of firmness in such matters and that everyone would not have to depart from this world in sorrow. I kneel before you in my heart, I adjure you by the humility of the undefiled Virgin and her Son, do not abandon your position of humility. What the enemy's pride and cunning has perhaps obtained for the harm and upset of many people, I hope it will rebound on his own head, to your and our double
The question of whether Dominicans should become bishops or not had been bothersome from the beginning. St. Dominic was known to have refused several bishoprics, and this was interpreted as a gesture of humility and refusal of grandeur, though in fact it is probably better seen as the expression of a concern to prevent the preaching ministry becoming confused with or being limited by other kinds of responsibility or authority. The story that Dominic specifically rejected the idea of his friars becoming bishops is almost certainly apocryphal. From quite early on there were Dominican bishops whose reputation remained high in the Order, like Guala, bishop of Brescia; Constantine, bishop of Orvieto; and Humbert’s own predecessors as provincial of Paris, Peter of Rheims and Cardinal Hugh of St. Cher. What complicated the issue was that ecclesiastical preferment provided the obvious way out for people who had entered the Order, maybe with enthusiasm, but who then found its discipline and austerity irksome; according to Jordan of Saxony it is not surprising if they turn out not to be very edifying bishops. From Jordan onward successive Masters of the Order and successive General Chapters tried to shut off this possibility of escaping from the Order by seeking promotion in the church. In 1260 the constitutional position was that no Dominican could accept a bishopric without permission from his provincial or from the Master of the Order, unless he was “constrained by such a command that it would be mortal sin to disobey it”; the penalty for becoming a bishop contrary to this ruling was expulsion from the Order. But Humbert was almost certainly exaggerating when he suggested that everyone, inside and outside the Order, would be scandalized if Albert became a bishop. The almost exactly contemporary Vitae Fratrum certainly reports Jordan’s explanation of why friars make bad bishops, but Hugh of St. Cher is mentioned several times with out embarrassment as having become a cardinal, and in his slightly earlier Chronicle Gerald de Frachet gives the impression of being rather proud of the Dominican bishops and cardinals. Thomas of Cantimpré only heard about Albert becoming a bishop when he had already written about three quarters of his De Apibus— up to II 49.5 he refers to magister Albertus, but in II 51.11 he adds postea Ratisponensis episcopus—but Albert’s elevation seems in no way to shock him, and he continues to cite him as an edifying example (for example, in II 57.50). In the 1270s Stephen Salagnac regards the Dominican bishops as one of the glories of the Order, though he also notes with approval the friars who refused such honors.
Albert must have pondered deeply the ambiguities of his situation. On 1 March he is still functioning as "lector of Cologne," and by then he must have had both the papal letter and that from Humbert for several weeks. In the end, as Bernard Gui tells us, "he accepted the bishopric of Regensburg under constraint." "Under constraint" echoes the very language of the constitutions, and it is more than likely that Gui is correctly indicating Albert's verdict, that the pope's command was such that it could not be disobeyed without mortal sin. Humbert could dismiss such papal precepts lightly, but then he was far more familiar with the curia than Albert was, and he had witnessed the devastating volte-face of Innocent IV who turned against the friars at the end of his life, becoming a figure of malevolent myth in some Dominican circles. Thomas of Cantimpré tells us with evident glee that he was struck down as soon as he signed the Bull that effectively hamstrung the work of the mendicants and never left his bed again, and when he died soon afterward his soul was seen by a convenient visionary being handed over to Francis and Dominic for judgment. Humbert could be cynical about popes and their curias, but Albert, as we have seen, was overawed by the papal majesty and edified by the papal humility. After two months or so of reflection he evidently came to the conclusion that the pope's behest must be obeyed. On 29 March he quietly entered Regensburg and spent the night in the Dominican priory, and the following day, which was Maundy Thursday, he formally took possession of his see. When and where he received episcopal consecration is not known.

It was no easy task that had been assigned to Albert. His predecessor had been induced to resign the previous October, after a spate of very serious accusations, and was saved from being censured only by meekly retiring into obscurity. He had incurred enormous debts and, according to Alexander IV, his diocese was in a thoroughly bad way, materially and spiritually. Albert was appointed in the hope that his sound judgment and eloquent doctrine would set the diocese back on its feet.

According to the Dominican constitutions even friars who were exempt from the Order's jurisdiction, such as those who were bishops, were expected to abide by the Order's discipline in fasting and in their style of dress. Whatever Humbert's fears may have been, Albert did not find much opportunity for self-indulgence, even if he was looking for it. When he took possession of his episcopal residence there was "not a drop to drink in the cellar nor a single grain of wheat and not even an egg to eat." As for his style of dress, all we know is that his footwear amused the populace, who gave him a nickname that Weisheipl pleasantly translates "Boots the bishop."

The medieval biographers mainly give us an edifying picture of Albert's humble and spiritual way of life as a bishop, but Tolomeo of
Lucca is probably nearer the truth when he suggests that Albert found himself in a "pit" of secular affairs most unlike the tranquillity he had enjoyed in Cologne. On the very day of his enthronement he was approached by the emissaries of an abbey wanting the renewal of an exemption from tithes, and he cannot have paid off the debts of his diocese, which apparently he did, without devoting at least some of his attention to financial matters. It may be true that he entrusted the secular business of his diocese to "reliable people in whom there was no greed," but it is not the work of a day establishing a good staff to handle all the business of a diocese.

Apart from restoring the finances of his see, Albert was expected by the pope to improve its spiritual condition. He must have travelled around a certain amount to acquire his nickname, so he presumably visitated the parishes of his diocese, and he at least made arrangements for the visitation of the monasteries in his territory, though it is not clear whether he visitated them himself. In September 1260 he attended a meeting of the bishops of the province of Salzburg, which took certain steps to bolster up church discipline and prevent financial abuses.

As always, Albert found time to pursue his studies as a naturalist and to do some writing. During his short episcopacy he apparently wrote a commentary on Euclid and more or less completed his massive De Animalibus. In the Middle Ages an autograph copy (or so it was supposed) of his commentary on Luke was preserved in the Dominican priory of Regensburg, which was believed to have been written while Albert was bishop of the city, but this is probably not quite accurate.

In the spring of 1261 Albert set off once again for the papal curia, evidently with the intention of resigning his see. He reached Viterbo after the pope's death on 25 May, but he seems not to have returned to Germany. A document of 23 December shows that his vicars were still running the diocese in his absence. But although Urban IV was elected on 29 August, it was not until the following spring that Albert's resignation was accepted.

It was no doubt while he was at a loose end in Italy that Albert went travelling. In some place, which he describes as Campania iuxta Graeciam, he was delighted to discover a translation of Aristotle's De Motu Animalium. Presumably the place in question was in southern Campania, near the Greek-speaking community in Calabria.

What happened after Albert's resignation is not entirely clear from the sources, which, in any case, have a rather garbled account of the whole episode of Albert's episcopacy. He appears to have retained a pension from his diocese, and he probably stayed on in the papal court. In October 1262 the papal court moved to Orvieto, and by this time Thomas Aquinas was probably already in residence there in
the Dominican convent, so presumably Albert enjoyed renewing his acquaintance with his talented pupil.

In his regained leisure Albert continued to work on various writings. He probably completed the *De Animalibus*, if he had not already done so, and a book based on his new-found translation of *De Motu Animalium*. He was also perhaps working on some New Testament commentaries. If there is any substance to the story that the commentary on Luke was written during Albert's time as bishop of Regensburg, it could be that he did some work on it during his stay at the papal court at the time of his resignation. His comment on Luke 22:26 reflects the tone of a man still sore from the trials of office:

In the early church not much attention was paid to power, but people took note of humility and examples of charity.... Nothing is less burdensome than to govern your subjects in humility and meekness, so long as the times permit it. But when the number of wicked people obliges a prelate of the church to proceed with severity and grim discipline, then it becomes intolerable for him, as it did for Moses, unless you enjoy pomp so much that you are willing to put up with or even encourage the wicked, as the prelates of our time do, who are representatives of Sardanapolis rather than of Jesus Christ.

The commentary on Luke was apparently not completed until later, and it was preceded by that on Matthew, so Albert was presumably writing that too while he was in the papal entourage.

From February 1263 until the death of Urban IV on 2 October 1264 Albert, now nearly seventy if not already in his seventies, was the pope's special envoy in Germany. His initial mandate was to organize support for the pope's plans for a new crusade to liberate the holy places, and he was given full power to recruit assistant preachers, to raise money, to grant dispensations to people willing to become crusaders. Urban was clearly deeply committed to his rather unrealistic hope that a crusade could be mounted, and he relied on Dominicans for help in propagating the idea. Albert seems also to have become the pope's troubleshooter in a more general way in Germany. We find him engaged in a variety of tasks, including being vicar general of the archdiocese of Cologne, presumably because relations between the archbishop and the city were making it impossible for the diocese to function normally. The extent to which Albert's probity and impartiality were trusted is indicated by the readiness of the bishop of Augsburg and Count Ludwig von Öttingen to give him the decisive voice in settling a long-standing dispute between them.

Albert was certainly in Germany by early May 1263, and he celebrated the feast of the Ascension (10 May) with his beloved Do
minican nuns in Augsburg, to whom he granted an indulgence. But, considering his age, he seems to have travelled around with impressive speed and energy (though presumably no longer always on foot). He was in Polling on 5 May, Augsburg on 10 May, Donauwörth on 13 May, Würzburg on 27 May, Frankfurt on 5 June.  

With the death of Urban IV Albert's papal commission automatically lapsed. On 4 December 1264 Albert, no longer styling himself "Preacher of the Crusade," is named as one of the arbitrators in a dispute in Würzburg, and since one of the witnesses is a Dominican named Henry it has been suggested that Albert had settled in Würzburg because his brother, Henry, was living there. But another document from Würzburg from December 1265 is witnessed by no less than two Dominicans called Henry, neither of whom is Henry of Lauingen, so it would be rash to assume that the Henry of 1264 was Albert's brother. It is not until 1274 that we have any sure evidence that Henry of Lauingen was at Würzburg. But whether or not his brother was there, it does seem likely that Albert did settle at Würzburg with the Dominicans. We hear of him there several times between 4 December 1264 and 23 December 1265, and we do not hear of him anywhere else. For 1266 we have no documentation, but in the spring of 1267 we find him at Würzburg again, so the presumption is that he had been living there continuously since 1264, working as always at his writing and responding to the calls of those who needed the help of his prudence and authority. It was almost certainly in Würzburg that he completed his commentary on Luke. 

In 1267 the energetic old man set off on another round of travels. On 6 May he granted an indulgence to those who visited the Dominican church of Regensburg on certain days, but we cannot be sure that he went to Regensburg in person. On 14 July he was at the Cistercian nuns' monastery of Burtscheid, near Aachen. In August and September he was in Cologne, and on 29 April 1268 he consecrated the Dominican church in Esslingen. After that he seems to have settled for a while in Strasbourg, where his friend and disciple Ulrich of Strasbourg was the Dominican lector. 

As a retired bishop, Albert was not subject to the jurisdiction of the Dominicans, and we have seen that the medieval biographers' claim that when he resigned his bishopric he returned immediately to the discipline of the Order and to his teaching in Cologne is untrue. But there are two, unfortunately rather enigmatic, letters from the Master of the Order that seem to indicate Albert was and was known to be willing to undertake work for the Order. One of them thanks Albert for what he has done for the Order in Strasbourg in terms which imply that he has been teaching there. The other shows that he had been asked to go to Paris to teach and had expressed a willingness to do so in principle "if only he had a lector" (this condition is
mysterious to us); instead he is now asked to go and lecture in Cologne, where the clergy are apparently clamoring for his presence. The language of these letters makes it clear that Albert is being addressed not as a subject, but as a bishop willing to do the Order any favor that is within his power. Since we know that Albert was in or around Strasbourg in 1268-69 and that he was certainly back in Cologne in 1270, these letters can safely be dated to this period, and it was presumably in 1269 that he was asked to go to Paris, no doubt to replace Peter of Tarentaise, who had vacated his chair of theology in that year to become provincial of Paris.

So Albert, in spite of his pension and his independence of the Order's jurisdiction, is still very much a Dominican, and in some of his letters he refers to himself as "of the Order of Preachers," not just as "ex-bishop of Regensburg"; and his will leaves us in no doubt about the genuine bonds of mutual affection that linked him with his brethren. He had the good of the Order at heart and was still willing to do what he could to foster it, and in accordance with his own special gifts that meant in particular a readiness to go on being a teacher.

So in 1269 or 1270 Albert returns at last to his beloved convent of Cologne, to spend his remaining years as the grand old man of the studium. But he was by no means left in peace. Right through to August 1279 he is still being called upon to do all sorts of episcopal odd jobs and to lend his wisdom and authority to sundry transactions and negotiations, and at least sometimes these motley tasks involved travelling quite a distance from Cologne. When Ulrich of Strasbourg was provincial (1272-77) he leaned heavily on Albert's support.

On 7 May 1274 the second Council of Lyons opened and it seems reasonably certain that Albert was there. According to Peter of Prussia he spoke on behalf of Rudolf of Hapsburg's candidacy for the kingship of the Romans, and this is not implausible. Rudolf was certainly a considerable benefactor of the Dominicans later on, and it looks as if the Dominicans, including Ulrich of Strasbourg, had supported his candidacy before he became king.

The facts about Albert's declining years are difficult to disentangle from the legends. In January 1279 he declared in his will that he was in good health, and as late as 18 August he was still capable (or was regarded as being capable) of doing routine ecclesiastical business. On the other hand, fears that he was going senile are ascribed to the brethren as early as 1274.

In the canonization process of St. Thomas we are told, on the authority of Albert of Brescia, that Albert learned miraculously of the death of Thomas in 1274 and suddenly burst into tears. We learn from Bartholomew of Capua, on the other hand, that when Albert "heard of" Thomas' death (with no suggestion of a miracle) he wept so much and so often that the brethren were afraid that he was "light-
headed" because of his old age. \textsuperscript{201} Bartholomew's source is Ugo of Lucca, whom he calls "provincial of Tuscany," but Ugo stopped being provincial in 1304 \textsuperscript{202} and Bartholomew was giving his evidence on 8 August 1319, \textsuperscript{203} so it is not unreasonable to doubt the accuracy of some of the details of his story. Ugo was apparently a student of Albert's in Cologne at some time, but not necessarily in 1274; it is not until 1277, as we shall see, that his presence in Cologne is most securely attested. But if Albert was still teaching in 1277, he can hardly have been senile in 1274.

The source of Albert of Brescia's story can only be conjectured, but it looks as if the Italian Albert had been a student of the German Albert, and it is probably a Cologne story that he is reporting. In that case it is not absurd to believe that there was a tradition in Cologne that Albert was deeply upset to hear of the death of Thomas (which is not difficult to accept), and that Albert of Brescia, in accordance with his own taste for miraculous revelations, added a supernatural spice to what was originally a fairly ordinary human occurrence. If some of the brethren found Albert's reaction excessive, which is not impossible, that does not suffice to prove that Albert was in fact light-headed because of old age. After all, he was probably far more aware than most of his students were of the importance of the philosophical and theological enterprise in which he and Thomas had been engaged, and in the ordinary course of events it should have been the younger man, not the older, to carry on the struggle for it.

Bartholomew of Capua also informs us, still on the authority of Ugo of Lucca, that a rumor reached Albert in Cologne that Thomas' writings were being impugned in Paris, and Albert determined to go to Paris to defend them. The brethren were afraid that he was too old for such a journey, and in particular they were worried that he might tarnish his reputation if he should turn out to be failing in his memory and intellect. But Albert would not be dissuaded; he went to Paris, summoned the university (\textit{studium generale}) and delivered a rousing defense of Thomas. Ugo apparently accompanied him. Then the old man went back to Cologne and had all the works of Thomas read to him and declared that "Thomas had completed everyone's work until the end of the world and that it was useless for anyone to work thereafter." \textsuperscript{204}

This much loved story of Thomas' venerable master going to Paris to defend his works has been severely criticized, \textsuperscript{205} but it is unlikely that Bartholomew, who is normally a reliable witness, simply made it up or that Ugo had fabricated it out of nothing. On the other hand, it is odd that the fairly numerous Parisian accounts that survive of the events of 1277 contain no mention of any visit by Albert, nor does the Cologne tradition (apart from the evidence of Ugo as mediated by
Bartholomew) preserve any memory of Albert undertaking such a momentous journey.

What makes the story historically attractive is that an intervention by Albert could help to explain what actually happened in 1277. The stage was all set for a formal censure of Thomas in Paris, and it was only prevented by a direct veto from some of the cardinals meeting in conclave to elect a new pope. The bishop of Paris, Stephen Tempier, had to content himself with a condemnation of a list of mostly Thomistic propositions taken from the writings of Giles of Rome. As early as 1277 Godfrey of Fontaines was able to use Albert's barely finished *Summa Theologiae* precisely in support of Giles' condemned theses. Either a copy of Albert's *Summa* had found its way remarkably quickly to Paris, or specially tailored excerpts had been made available for use in the controversy over Thomas' doctrines.

It seems likely that the Master of the Order, John of Vercelli, who was in Paris at this time, had taken steps to thwart Tempier's moves against Thomas. And it is surely not improbable that he had solicited the support of Albert. It may be difficult to believe that Albert actually went to Paris in person—Bartholomew of Capua may have misunderstood Ugo's story or remembered it in an exaggerated form. But he may well have sent some extracts from his *Summa* that he thought would be useful. And it is quite conceivable that he summoned his own studium generale in Cologne to listen to an address based on the text, "What praise is it to the living to be praised by the dead?" applying "living" to Thomas and "dead," surely, to himself and not, as Bartholomew says, to "the others." If this is the story brought back by Ugo, it could have grown in Bartholomew's mind during the intervening fifteen years into the much more dramatic tale of the old man actually going to Paris and summoning a meeting of the Parisian studium generale (the university).

It is also obviously possible that Albert then set himself to a study of the writings of Thomas (which he may well not have read exhaustively before). But it is highly unlikely that he declared that Thomas had put all future theologians out of business for the rest of time.

If Ugo's testimony is to be trusted thus far, then Albert was still teaching in 1277. But according to Tolomeo of Lucca, Albert's memory, at least in matters of learning, failed badly about three years before his death, "as an example to others." More vaguely Henry of Herford reports that "at last, broken by all his work and by old age, his mind began to wander"; as an illustration of this he tells us how one day the archbishop of Cologne went to visit Albert and when he knocked on the door Albert replied from within, "Albert is not here." Tolomeo's source is probably Ugo or some other Italian student of Albert's, while Herford is drawing on a German tradition. Their agreement makes it reasonable to conclude that there is a basis of truth in the allegation
that Albert became a bit absent-minded in his last years. The "three years" specified by Tolomeo suggest that the story brought home by Ugo (or whoever it was) was that Albert's memory actually failed while Ugo (or whoever) was there as his student; and the comment "as an example to others" implies that this failure of memory was fairly sudden and public. And this must be what underlies the tradition, first found in Luis of Valladolid, that Albert actually had to abandon a lecture in mid-course and then never lectured again. \textsuperscript{210} Maybe it was not literally in mid-lecture that Albert failed, but it is not difficult to believe that he had to abandon a projected lecture course and, since the old man seems to have been a living legend, word would no doubt have got round and been exaggerated.

There seems to be no reason, then, why we should not accept that Albert taught until 1277, then had to give up because of his failing memory, and that in the period immediately before his death his mind began to wander a bit.

The more elaborate stories that some of the sources relate can without hesitation be regarded as legendary accretions. \textsuperscript{211} On 15 November 1280 Albert died in the Dominican convent in Cologne. He was beatified in 1622 and canonized as a doctor of the church in 1931. In 1941 he was officially made the patron saint of natural scientists.

* Albert's career shows that he was a competent administrator and a conscientious religious and ecclesiastical superior. The number of occasions on which people had recourse to his arbitration indicates his reputation for integrity and fairness, and his fearlessness in dealing with people is illustrated by a story he himself told in one of his sermons:

A thief was caught once and I interceded for him with an important judge. The judge refused to listen to me, so I said to him, "What are you talking about? You are a greater thief than he is. He stole three pence, but you have stolen a thousand marks." When he heard this he had the man freed, and he blushed. \textsuperscript{212} If this is how Albert talked, it is a wonder that he did not make more enemies. But it looks as if all sorts of people felt confident in his honesty and in his practical wisdom, and so he kept on being asked to resolve tedious disputes and seems not to have refused his services when they were wanted.

But his life's work and his great joy was in study and teaching, whether in the classroom or by writing.

That enjoyment is best which is happiest. And the happiest is one which cannot be touched by guilt or pain. And that is the enjoyment
which people have in their hearts with wisdom, because no sin ever approaches wisdom. I have often spent the whole night like this, never suspecting that even two hours of the night had passed. 213

Of Albert's devotion to study there can be no doubt. The breadth of his reading and the volume of his writings, composed in the course of a life busy with other duties, make it easy to believe that he did indeed often sit up all night. Since he travelled on foot he could not, like John Wesley, read while he rode, but he could make use of his travels in other ways. Great reader that he was, he was also an inveterate looker at things and he clearly liked talking to the people he met about everything under the sun in the hope of gleaning bits of information. His works reveal observations made all over the place and give us charming glimpses of him chatting to elderly fishermen about the noise made by fish when they mate 214 or to veteran hunters and falconers. 215 He liked his friends to tell him about curiosities they had encountered. One of his colleagues in Cologne, whom he describes as *curiosus experimentator*, delighted him with his report of a peculiar magnet possessed by the emperor Frederick. 216 And he must have had a reputation for appreciating such things, because while he was teaching in Paris he was given a pearl full of images of snakes. 217 He apparently once possessed (perhaps before he joined the Order) a horse that suffered from a cold in the nose, and after he returned to Cologne in 1257 he seems to have kept a snake that got drunk one day and went flopping round the cloister; he also had a puppy with one white eye and one black eye. 218

Nothing seems to have eluded Albert's interest. He studied the laying habits of different kinds of flies, 219 checked out (and found to be untrue) a common belief about the nesting of vultures, 220 noticed that people's urine goes a different color when they fast ("as we sometimes do"); 221 he doggedly offered pieces of metal to any ostriches he met, to see if it was true that they would eat them (he found that they refused). 222 Albert could unhesitatingly endorse Aristotle's sentiment: "There are wonders to look at in all the things of nature." 223 "The whole world is theology for us, because the heavens proclaim the glory of God." 224

Albert was not only an omnivorous student, he was also a dedicated teacher, and he particularly enjoyed it when he could share his intellectual enthusiasms and discoveries with his brethren. Although he was patently a very zealous pedagogue, what delighted him most was the intellectual companionship that he found in a Dominican studium. In his writings he generally refers not to his "students" but to his "companions" (*socii*). It was his great joy "to seek the truth in the pleasure of companionship" (*in dulcedine societatis quaerere veritatem*). 225 It was in this context that Albert could venture at times to be somewhat outrageous. When he was appointed Regent of the
new studium generale in Cologne the Dominican constitutions still forbade the study of "the books of the pagans," except with special permission from the Master of the Order or from a General Chapter; the brethren were to confine their studies to "theological books." But within two or three years Albert was lecturing on Aristotle's *Ethics*, of which a new translation (the first to contain the whole work) had recently been completed by Grosseteste. His lectures were faithfully recorded by his student, Thomas Aquinas. When he returned to Cologne in 1258 he apparently lectured on Aristotle's works on animals.

As a Regent Master, though, Albert's official responsibility was the teaching of theology and, in particular, the exposition of scripture, and there is no reason whatsoever to believe that he neglected this task or that he would have been allowed to retain his position as Regent for long if he had neglected it. Nor is there the slightest reason to imagine that Albert was reluctant to devote his attention to the word of God. "Anyone who lacks the consolation of the Spirit falters spiritually through thirst and hunger; the body needs food if it is to stand firm in the battle, and it is the same with the spirit: unless it is fed with the word of God and with God's charm (*dulcedo*), it will inevitably abandon its work, power will fall from its hands. So we need often to be nourished by the charm of the word of God." At the end of his life Albert was working on theological writing and especially on his scriptural commentaries. And this final phase of his writing is the fulfilment of his many years of teaching; the vast bulk of his philosophical writings did not originate in lecture courses.

Albert's reputation as being chiefly a philosopher is not entirely fair to him, but it is not difficult to see how it arose. He was firmly persuaded of the importance of philosophical studies and in response to the persistent demands of his students (his "companions") he undertook the colossal task of "making intelligible to the Latins all the parts of philosophy." He could see that this was needed, and his aim was to produce what would be "useful to students." His project was a far more elaborate and developed version of the more traditional one undertaken at approximately the same time, in about 1250, by his English confrère, Robert Kilwardby, whose *De Ortu Scientiarum* may well have been composed at the request of his superiors to provide an introduction to the whole range of philosophy and the arts for Dominican students. But although much of his life was devoted to expounding Peripatetic thought, Albert was not prepared to be cowed by the authority of "the philosopher": "If you believe that Aristotle was a man, then no doubt he could make mistakes like the rest of us." Albert was no uncritical partisan: "You cannot be a complete philosopher without knowing both philosophies, Aristotle's and Plato's." And he seems to have been rather annoyed when people regarded...
him as necessarily adhering to the Aristotelianism he was concerned, for pedagogical reasons, to expound. 239

The gigantic exposition of Peripatetic philosophy was the largest, but it was not the only work written for the sake of others. At some time in the mid-1270s Albert replied seriously, if perhaps somewhat speedily, to a letter from Giles of Lessines in Paris, who asked him—addressing him as "true enlightener of minds"—to comment on fifteen propositions ascribed to some university Masters supposed to be among the best philosophers and clearly related to the thirteen propositions condemned by the bishop of Paris in December 1270. 240

The *Summa Theologiae* was also written in response to the request "of the brethren and many others." 241 More specifically it was written for the sake of lectors who have only limited access to books, evidently lectors working outside the main study-houses. 242

Albert's output was enormous, even though the authenticity of some of the writings ascribed to him is still in dispute. The current critical edition is envisaged as running to thirty-nine volumes of certainly genuine works. Unfortunately there is still much uncertainty about the exact chronology of all these works. The *Summa de Crea-
turis* must have been completed by about 1244. The commentary on the Sentences was well under way by 1246, but was not completed until after Albert's return to Cologne, in about 1249. The Dionysian commentaries were also begun in Paris, but the lectures on most of the Dionysian works were delivered in Cologne, the whole corpus being finished in 1250. The exposition of Aristotle, complete with extra treatises to fill the gaps left by the philosopher's own works and not excluding the pseudo-Aristotelian *Liber de Causis*, occupied Albert from about 1250 until about 1270. The scriptural commentaries, which may have been revised more than once, probably date between about 1262 and 1274 or even later. The *Summa Theologiae* was certainly not completed until after the Council of Lyons in 1274, to which Albert refers. 244 Albert also wrote some devotional verse, but it is not known how much or when he wrote it. 245

The popular *De Adhaerendo Deo* is certainly not by Albert, in spite of its traditional ascription to him, 246 and the two treatises on the Mass have recently been subjected to a close scrutiny resulting in the conclusion that they are probably not genuine. 247 The treatise on prayer, which was attributed by its editor to Albert, is also not at all likely to be by him. 248

Albert was evidently prepared to give unstintingly of his time and energy for the sake of his brethren and others, as St. Dominic had done before him. All the same, a certain tetchiness does from time to time appear in his writings. In 1271 he, like St. Thomas and Kilwardby, received from the Master of the Order, John of Vercelli, a list of forty-three questions with a request that he comment on them.
Apparently the trouble had started in Venice. Someone, presumably one of the lectors there, was propounding ideas that were found disturbing. Baxiano of Lodi, also a lector there, had written to Thomas asking for an urgent response and shortly afterward the students too had written to Thomas, adding a few extra perplexities. Thomas replied courteously and clearly, but plainly the situation was not eased and the Master of the Order became involved and decided to seek the opinion of three of the Order's leading theologians. Thomas dropped all he was doing—and does not disguise from the Master the inconveniences caused to him, and he hints fairly clearly that he considers that he has gone beyond the call of duty in taking all this trouble. He also complains that he has received the list of questions with no indication of the contexts in which they were raised. But, once again, he responds patiently and generously. He insists that most of the questions are not properly doctrinal at all, and he warns that dogmatic interventions in philosophical disputes can easily lead to a fiasco. Wherever possible he tries to find a benign interpretation of the matters raised, even though it is clear that some of the questions arouse little interest in him.

Kilwardby, in his response, also seems concerned to provide a serious answer, and on one mathematical question he expatiates at considerable length. He seems to have found it quite an interesting task responding to the Master's letter.

Albert, by contrast, intimates that he is replying only because of his affection for John of Vercelli; he is nearly blind from old age and would rather be attending to his prayers, he says, than replying to "the questions of an undisciplined mind." He actually deals with the questions at greater length than Thomas does, but clearly he is getting more and more annoyed as he goes on. He makes no attempt to sympathize with what the propounder of the disputed theses might have been trying to get at, and he generally gives the impression that only someone who was philosophically illiterate would ever have raised such questions. From question 15 onward his comments become positively rude. "This question is not much good," "this comes from some silly fancy," "utterly silly," "this is ridiculous," "only a madman would say this.

Thomas sees nothing wrong, in an appropriately academic context, in debating whether the soul of Christ came ex traduce; Albert says the question is "fatuous."

Albert may have suffered from failing eyesight in 1271 as he claims, but he was far from having abandoned writing. He was still as
concerned as ever to provide books that would be useful to his brethren. But he had his own ideas about what would be useful and did not like wasting his time on fools.

And he had worse than fools to contend with. Every now and then he gave vent to his anger at those among his own brethren who made light of philosophy, mocking what they could not be bothered to understand, who could see no point in his laborious efforts to make Peripatetic philosophy intelligible to the Latins. And the opponents of philosophy in the Order were not just the people who looked back nostalgically to the early days when (or so it was maintained) the brethren were usually to be found in church saying their prayers (like the friar who was believed, according to Humbert, to have gone "silly from too much devotion" and expressed profound disapprobation of the brethren in Paris who were not generally to be found in church). There was clearly a "market" for stories about friars who lost their faith through too much philosophical speculation, and Jordan complains about people who sacrificed study to "unintelligent devotions;" but the most troublesome problem was posed by the attitude of some of the Order's academics. In 1231 a Dominican theologian, preaching a university sermon in Paris, criticized people "who have learned the language of the Spirit perfectly well, I mean theology, but then they speak it like barbarians, corrupting it with philosophy; once people have learned metaphysics they never stop talking about points and lines in their theology. People like that clothe the king in soiled, torn raiment." Not long before Albert went to Paris, Richard Fishacre, a Dominican Master in Oxford, expressed surprise at people who "so enjoy the embrace of the vulgar servant (philosophy) that they pay no attention to the mistress (theology)" and who can scarcely be torn from secular studies "when they are too old to beget children." Even the founder of one of the Dominican chairs in Paris, John of St. Giles, had preached that the saints study only those things they will have to answer for on the day of judgment, while "we want to know how the world and the sun were made and other irrelevant things, instead of caring about the things for which we shall be held to account." The business of scholars, he declared, is to study the scriptures and in particular to study in the book of conscience. Even after Humbert's commission on studies had secured a recognized place for philosophy in the Dominican curriculum, the traditional ban on secular learning retained its place in the constitutions and there is evidence of a continuing embarrassment about Dominicans studying philosophy, in spite of Humbert's own explanation of why it should be studied. Even in the development of the biography of Albert we can detect a certain uneasiness about his philosophical interests.
Although Albert's wholehearted acceptance of scientific and philosophical studies was in the mainstream of the Dominican tradition, as it unfolded in subsequent centuries, he must sometimes have felt that he was a lone voice crying in an unsympathetic wilderness. But, even apart from the apostolic need for Dominicans to be able to deal competently with the speculative questions with which they were faced by their contemporaries—and intellectual innocence often raises questions with profound implications for faith, which it takes considerable intellectual sophistication to deal with—Albert could not have begun to understand the attitude of people who go through their lives in devout unawareness of all the fascinating traces of God that can be found in all his works. "The whole world is theology for us." In De Animalibus 11. 2.3.84-85 Albert paraphrases Aristotle's famous apologia for the study of even the most dingy creatures, and his slight adaptation of Aristotle's words strongly suggests that he was recreating the philosopher's sentiments from his own heart. It is difficult, he says, to study the heavens, but it is worth it, even if the results are meager, because "the lover of anything, when he really loves it a lot, is in anguish and strives to comprehend anything he can of what he loves, however little. This is what it means to be a lover. His comprehension of that little bit is dearer to a lover than the comprehension of anything else which he does not love so much, even if he can understand much more of it." On the other hand, he goes on, it is worth studying the creatures of earth too, even the least attractive of them: "That nature which creates the animals, as the cause of all causes, as that which gives them shape, when it is known it will be a cause of great delight to those naturalists who can understand the true proximate causes of their natures, even if he looks at them in some dingy, ignoble animal. That is why we ought to look at the forms of animals and rejoice in him who is their artificer who made them, because the artistry of the maker is revealed in the way he works." 268

It was as a teacher and writer that Albert made his most notable contribution to the church of his time, but he was far from being exclusively an academic. He was always a preacher and a priest as well. The study of his sermons has only relatively recently been seriously undertaken, but it seems likely that a considerable number of them have survived. 269 Albert appears to have been in demand as a preacher in the vernacular as well as in Latin, and it is interesting to see how integrated his philosophy is into his Christian vision. Even in sermons addressed to ordinary congregations he establishes his points by an entirely harmonious use of philosophical and theological authorities.

Albert gives us a clue to his ideals as a pastor in his comment on John 10:1. "The sheepfold is the Christian religion.... It is made up of seven things, if it is going to be useful to the sheep. It must be soft with
bedding to lie down on, clean to rest in and warm, it must offer solid protection, it must be provided with food for nourishment, it must have spacious accommodation and it must have unity so that the flock can congregate there. The softness comes through the gentleness of prelates, the cleanliness through chastity, the warmth through charity, the solidity through fortitude, nourishment through instruction in the word of God, spaciousness through a generous distribution of material goods and unity through unanimity." The gentleness of prelates is contrasted with ecclesiastics who are quick to resort to punishments and condemnations.  

The ideal of "unanimity" is spelled out in one of Albert's published sermons: "The apostle says, 'Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep, sharing each other's feelings.' He means that if you want to be in unity with everyone, you should make your heart like your neighbor's heart, so that when he is happy, you are happy, and you grieve with him when he is grieving. But some people are like stones that have so many rough edges that they cannot possibly be put together with other stones to make a wall; wherever you put them their awkward shape immediately pushes out other stones. There is no way they can be joined together. Similarly if my heart is in distress and you are happy, your happiness sticks into me like an ill-shaped stone, so that our feelings cannot possibly come together." Albert goes on to point out that some people are far more truly "excommunicated" than the objects of the most formal ecclesiastical censures, because they are separated from their neighbors in their hearts, refusing to enter into their joys and griefs.  

Albert evidently brought to his pastoral work the same bluntness that made him so successful as an arbitrator. "I have sometimes enjoined a long fast of bread and water on people who never sinned mortally, not actually as a penance, but to mortify a root of evil in them, because I could see that they were inclined to self-indulgence." He had a high ideal of freedom and was convinced that there could be no human freedom for people who were at the mercy of their own comforts. But he was not taken in by false austerity. Visiting the convents of his Order he noticed that some friars were exaggeratedly enthusiastic in their participation in the liturgy or in undertaking fasts beyond the norms of the community, and his comment on them is brutally frank: "They are aspirants to the infirmary and in no time they are clamoring to be cosseted, with their headaches and their backaches and so on."
He liked people to enjoy their religion and had no objection to them showing it in rather rowdy ways of celebrating in church.

Of Albert's own piety we know little. He had a great devotion to our Lady, that seems certain. Thomas of Cantimpré, who sat at Albert's feet for some time, assures us that Albert was so devoted to prayer by day and by night that he recited the whole psalter almost every day, which it is difficult to believe; maybe he recited the penitential psalms every day. It is not difficult to accept the story that Albert used to declare that he often obtained by prayer the understanding of something that he could not master by study.

What sane Christian intellectual would say otherwise?

Henry of Herford gives us a charming picture of Albert's last years in Cologne, which there is no reason to disbelieve and which surely depicts the accumulated habits of a lifetime, adapted to the realization of impending death:

He prayed fervently and freely proclaimed the word of God to the people at suitable times and he pleasantly and affectionately gave good advice and useful counsel to people who asked for it. With the charm of his eloquence he led the minds of his hearers wherever he wanted. In sum, living in Cologne he studied, dictated, wrote, prayed, sang psalms and often wept pleasantly from devotion. Every day he visited the place where he would be buried, reciting the vigils for himself as if he were already dead. In a garden or some other secluded place he used frequently every day to retire alone to sing some song to the blessed Virgin with sighs and tears. He was honored and venerated by everybody, regulars and seculars, old and young, small and great.

Albert's fame has for long been overshadowed by that of his pupil Thomas Aquinas, but, even apart from his role in shaping Thomas' intellectual development, he had a distinct and lasting influence on subsequent philosophy and theology. The independence and vitality of the German Dominican tradition is only now becoming fully apparent, and Albert is at the source of it. Hugh Ripelin of Strasbourg, within Albert's lifetime and under his influence, wrote one of the most successful theological handbooks of the period, the Compendium Theologicae Veritatis. Other followers of Albert include Ulrich of Strasbourg, Dietrich of Freiberg, Meister Eckhart, Berthold of Moosburg. The translations of Proclus made by William of Moerbeke made the Platonist affinities of Albert's "Peripateticism" more obvious, and the German Dominicans are characterized by an avowedly Platonist bias, culminating in the great commentary on Proclus by Berthold. Dietrich of Freiberg also continued Albert's scientific interests and made some quite important contributions of his own.
In the fifteenth century "Albertism" came to be recognized in some circles as a distinct school, which could at times enter into conflict with Thomism. In his own alma mater of Padua Albert came to be very influential in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and indeed he was held in high esteem in Italy as a whole in this period. Dominican intellectuals were currently more engaged in a revival of Thomism, and it was chiefly lay philosophers who were attracted to Albert, but the Dominicans certainly did not forget him. Albert retained a prominent position in Dominican bibliographies and there was a succession of more or less ample biographies of him, culminating in those of Peter of Prussia and Rudolph of Nijmegen in the late fifteenth century. Early in the sixteenth century Alberto di Castello commented that Albert was "a very famous teacher" and that "the number of his writings is almost infinite and they are very well-known."

II. ALBERT AND THE DIONYSIAN TRADITION

By the middle of the thirteenth century, when Albert began to lecture on the Dionysian writings, "Dionysius the Areopagite" was well-established as an important source for Western theologians. His books were available to scholars in Paris in large volumes containing more than one translation and a rich abundance of glosses and commentaries. His assumption of the persona of St. Paul's Athenian convert went unchallenged, with the result that he enjoyed almost apostolic authority. It is not surprising that, after lecturing on the standard textbook of Latin theology, as he was obliged to do as Bachelor of the Sentences, Albert should turn his attention to this outstanding monument of Greek theology.

The first significant appearance of Dionysius in the West occurred in 827 when the Byzantine emperor Michael the Stammerer presented a copy of the Dionysian corpus to Louis the Pious. "Dionysius" the author was promptly identified with St. Denis of France and, on the eve of the latter's feast day, the manuscript was solemnly deposited in the abbey of St. Denis, a few miles from Paris, where we are told it immediately yielded a good crop of miracles. In about 832-35 the abbot of St. Denis, Hilduin, produced the first Latin translation. Abbot Hilduin's knowledge of Greek was rather inadequate to the task and his translation was decidedly opaque.

Later in the century Charles the Bald commissioned a new translation from an eccentric Irish scholar who had been at his court since about 850, John the Scot, generally known by the rather Homeric name he gave himself, Eriugena. He completed his version in about 862. He also composed a commentary on the *Celestial Hierarchy*. The discovery of Greek theology made a deep impression on him, and he proceeded to translate other works, including the very Dionysian *Ambigua* of St.
Maximus. He also wrote a book of his own, *Periphyseon*, in which he tried to synthesize the Augustinian tradition with that of the Greeks.  

In 875 another excellent Greek scholar, Anastasius the Librarian, made a translation of the scholia found in many Greek manuscripts of the Dionysian works and added a few extra comments of his own. The Greek scholia derive from St. Maximus and John of Scythopolis and Anastasius was careful to distinguish between the two scholiasts, but later copyists were less careful and the whole commentary was known to Albert simply as the work of Maximus.  

In the twelfth century there was a revival of interest in both Eriugena and Dionysius. Honorius Augustodunensis produced a book, *Clavis Physicae*, which is little more than a précis of Eriugena's *Periphyseon*, and substantial parts of the *Periphyseon* were interpolated into the Anastasian scholia (which is how they were known to Albert). Hugh of St. Victor wrote a large commentary on the *Celestial Hierarchy*, which enjoyed a considerable success. And John of Salisbury persuaded his tame translator, John Sarracenus, who had probably already composed his own commentary on the *Celestial Hierarchy*, to make a new translation of the entire Dionysian corpus, a project whose usefulness was greatly enhanced by the abbot of St. Denis' success in acquiring new Greek manuscripts for Sarracenus to work on.  

The degree to which Eriugenist and Dionysian ideas had penetrated, often anonymously, into Western theology by the end of the twelfth century can be seen, for instance, in a passage in John of Salisbury to which E. Jeaineau has recently drawn our attention:  

As Augustine says in his *De Ordine*, "God is best known by not knowing." ... And elsewhere, "Ignorance of God is the truest wisdom."  

The first quotation does genuinely come from Augustine, but the second is derived from Dionysius by way of Eriugena, and the combination of the two texts is also found in Eriugena. As Jeaineau comments, "We are here in the presence of a theology more radically negative than that of Augustine. The Augustine cited in this passage is an Augustine revised and corrected by Dionysius." And the result has an unmistakably "Eriugenist flavor."  

The Latin tradition had always, in a mild way, acknowledged the transcendence of God and the consequent impossibility of any created mind attaining to full knowledge of him, but both philosophically and theologically its tendency was far less insistent on this point than that of the Greeks. Marius Victorinus was prepared to follow the Neoplatonists in saying that God is above being and, as such, above mind and knowable only by not-knowing; but the exigencies of Trinitarian theology obliged him all the same to abandon the Plotinian strict separation between the utterly transcendent One
and Being. And so, as R. A. Markus observes, "we find the 'negative theology' characteristic of the Neoplatonic framework receding into the background with Victorinus." Augustine, in common with a widespread Christian tradition, simply identifies God with Being. And Plotinus' confidence that the human mind has it in itself to rise to the highest heights had not yet been superseded by the later Platonists' belief that the mind is completely fallen and can only be united with God by the gracious act of his own condescension to us. Nor did the succession of crises that sharpened Augustine's doctrine of grace do anything to make Augustine rethink his position on this point; it underlined the helplessness of the human will rather than the incompetence of the mind. There was no serious challenge to the view espoused in the Confessions, that the mind can rise to the vision of God, but we are morally incapable of sustaining this vision.

In the Christian East the controversy with Arianism forced a much more emphatic development of the belief that God dwells in "inaccessible light" (1 Tim. 6:16), beyond the reach of any created intellect. Arius' contention that it is impossible for God really to have a Son provoked the response that we do not know and cannot know enough about God to set such limits to what is possible for him. Some of the Arians apparently retorted that we can know God as well as he knows himself. The orthodox in return insisted even more strongly on the unknowability of God. Some of the Greek fathers developed a corresponding spirituality of unknowing, such as we find in Gregory of Nyssa and Evagrius Ponticus. Where Augustine looks forward to a final, beatifying vision of God as he is in his own substance, Gregory of Nyssa and Evagrius are inspired rather by the lure of the unfathomable and inexhaustible mystery of God.

Fifth-century Platonism, as we find it in Proclus, goes even further than Plotinus in emphasizing the mysteriousness and elusive

-41-

ness of God. To safeguard the utter transcendence of the One a new intermediary is postulated between It and the realm of multiple beings, namely the Henads, representing the origin of participated unity. Of the One itself we cannot strictly say anything, not even that It is one. But our minds can be directed toward the One by a meticulous analysis of all that they can understand and at the end they are carried beyond themselves by entrusting themselves to the inspiration and act of God, so becoming united with him. Where Plotinus attributes this final self-transcending move to love, Proclus attributes it to faith and connects it with religious ritual (theurgy), in which God acts upon us to take us beyond the limits attainable by philosophy. The theme of God's love for us, which had in general only been adumbrated in earlier Platonism, receives a remarkable exposition in Proclus.

Whether or not it is Proclus himself who provided Dionysius with the philosophical tool that lent itself so admirably to the exposition of his
deeply Christian worldview, it is clearly Proclus' kind of Neoplatonism that he adopted. With its help he evolved a statement of Christian truth in which the utter transcendence of God is affirmed as strongly as ever, so that no names or concepts strictly reach the reality of what he is; but at the same time God can and should be named by all names. The structured complexity of created beings is nothing less than the structured and riddling revelation of God. All that we find in creatures comes ultimately from God and so must, in some higher way, pre-exist in him. The God who makes darkness his hiding-place beckons us to himself through the alluring but unfulfilling creatures with which he has surrounded us. Everything is at once a revealing and a hiding of God; it is both like him and unlike him. We are therefore raised to the knowledge of God by conjugating affirmative and negative theologies: God is everything that can be said about anything because nothing exists that does not in some way derive from him, but at the same time he is not anything that we can see or grasp with our minds. The negations may, in a sense, be more accurate than the affirmations, if only because they make a more cautious claim, but they must not be misunderstood. To say that God is not whatever it may be is not to say that he lacks some characteristic or property, but rather to indicate that he transcends the limits connoted by our normal use of words. For instance, we might say that someone who is totally in sensitive to music is "not musical"; in so doing we are indicating simply a lack on the part of that individual. But we might also hesitate to say that Mozart was "musical"; the little boy next door may be musical, but Mozart—? The word hardly begins to do justice to his talent. In the same way, but with more metaphysical rigor, we can say that God is "good," but we must also insist that he is not "good" in the trivial way that a meal or an opera or even a saint is good. The goodness of a saint is only a pale reflection of what God is. There is thus a close relationship between Dionysius' negative theology and his liking for the prefix hyper: both are ways of intimating that God is always more than whatever we can say about him.

If God is revealed in his creatures, he is also revealed in his words. We have no access to him apart from his self-disclosure and should not venture beyond what he has said about himself; and his whole revelation of himself is centered upon Christ, who is his Word and the foundation of all his creatures. But this revelation of God in Christ involves the whole range of teaching offered to us in the bible, whose words share in the riddling quality of the things that make up creation. What is said of God in scripture must therefore be interpreted once again by the conjunction of affirmative and negative theology.

But God is beyond both our affirmations and our negations. We are united with him in the darkness of unknowing by submitting ourselves in faith to the deeds of God, wrought in the Incarnation and
made available to us in the sacred rites of the liturgy. Christ is the principle of "theurgy" as well as of "theophany"; in him we are acted on by God as well as enlightened. Where earlier negative theology had, perhaps, tended to foster a rather narrow kind of spirituality, bidding us concentrate on God by leaving behind all that is not God, Dionysius' negative theology is more subtle, inviting us into a kind of dialectical relationship with the lush richness of biblical language, metaphysical speculation and, above all, liturgical celebration. Even while passing beyond everything, we have to accept everything as being the indispensable vehicle for us of God's act and his self-disclosure. This is particularly evident if it is correct, as has been suggested, that Dionysius' Mystical Theology is a kind of hinge linking the Divine Names (together with the lost or perhaps unwritten Theological Outlines and Symbolic Theology) with the Celestial and Ecclesiastical Hierarchies. If this interpretation of the Dionysian corpus is correct, as I believe it to be, then the more or less speculative endeavor to understand the significance of the various ways in which God is talked about comes to its head and its apparent bafflement in the Mystical Theology, and then we move on by entering into the hierarchical ministration of the acts of God in the angelic choirs and then in the rites of the church. The words of God ("theology") are fulfilled and completed in the deeds of God ("theurgy").

Unfortunately when Dionysius' writings came to the West the full, rich content of his doctrine seems not to have been much appreciated, except perhaps by Eriugena himself. The main consequence of his arrival and of Eriugena's own works was a greatly enhanced sense of the transcendence of God. This can be seen, for instance, in some glosses on Boethius emanating from Auxerre, where Eriugena's influence was strong. Eriugena's insistence on the inadequacy of human language to talk about God was taken to heart and its influence was boosted during the eleventh and twelfth centuries by a growing interest in grammar and semiotics and, in due course, logic. But the need to combine negative theology with affirmative theology was much less appreciated, and the link between negative theology and the sacraments was lost sight of entirely.

What remained, then, was a rather isolated conviction that none of our words properly apply to God. But without the genuine Dionysian complement, that our negations do not properly apply to God either, we are left simply with a vacuum, in which it is far from clear that we can talk meaningfully about God at all. And the vacuum can hardly help but be filled with some kind of affirmative theology, which will in turn operate without the moderating influence of negative theology.

Thus Abelard, in his discussion of the problem of reconciling the unity of the Godhead with the Trinity of Divine Persons, says,
I do not find it surprising if the nature of the Godhead, unique as it is, calls for a unique way of talking. It is only fair that something widely removed from all creatures should be talked about in a widely different way of speaking and that that unique majesty should not be constrained by a common, public form or speech, that what is utterly incomprehensible and ineffable should not be subject to the same rules as everything else.

Abelard then quotes Plato (on the authority of Macrobius) as not having dared to say what God is, "knowing of him only that he cannot be known by any human being." But this does not commit Abelard to any really negative stance on talking about God. When we use words about God they are "shifted from their usual meanings," but the crucial point is that God has reserved it to himself to give us knowledge of himself, "and so he has himself manifestly disclosed to us what he is." A similar position is adopted in the Abelardian Sententiae Parisienses, which again quote Macrobius and insist that the philosophers "could not fit any words to God by which they could define or demonstrate what God is"; but Christ himself has taught us about "the essence of God." The subtle Dionysian attitude both of confidence in and of reserve toward all that we say about God, including the words of revelation, has turned into a much simpler dissociation between philosophy and faith, and between words in their ordinary senses (which cannot do justice to God) and words of faith (which apparently can do justice to God).

Gilbert of Poitiers makes a similar and even more rigid distinction between the theological use of words and their use in other "faculties" or disciplines. And he goes much further than Abelard in limiting the extent to which the human mind can know God. God is not any kind of "something," and so the mind is deprived of the help of its usual concepts in trying to understand him. The only way we can understand God—and Gilbert maintains that we can understand him—is by stripping away from him all the usual ways in which we qualify things, leaving only the bare notion of "Being." And this stops far short of any "complete understanding" or "comprehension" of God, because there is no positive characterization of him for us to latch on to. Nevertheless Gilbert evidently felt free to develop a highly technical and sophisticated theology.

As is well known, people like St. Bernard were not at all happy with the more speculative theology that was developing in the schools. Abelard was denounced by William of St. Thierry to Bernard and Bernard forced a public confrontation, resulting in the condemnation of Abelard. One of the points raised against Abelard was his contention that the names "Father," "Son" and "Holy Spirit" do not
strictly apply to God, and William of St. Thierry is clearly impatient of any subtle distinction between senses of words in such matters. Later on similar moves were made against Gilbert of Poitiers. It is fairly clear that Abelard's opponents did not understand what he was trying to do, and Gilbert seems to have escaped condemnation chiefly because nobody could keep up with his subtle explanations or compete with his patristic erudition. The opposition accused both Abelard and Gilbert of being too "philosophical," and at least in germ there is probably a valid point there: the separation of negative theology from affirmative theology makes possible a very technical theological language uncontrolled by either the norms of ordinary discourse or the modesty attendant upon negative theology.

In Thierry of Chartres there seems to be a more genuinely Dionysian or Eriugenist influence, and he does not claim such a radical autonomy for theological language as Gilbert does, but he leaves it unclear how any real knowledge of God can be possible. "It is the practice of authors, when they speak about God, since God has no name, to use many names to speak about him so that they can thereby intimate what they think about him." This has an authentically Dionysian ring about it. The impossibility of forming ordinary sentences about God is stated in a way which anticipates Albert: strictly speaking God can be neither a subject nor a predicate, so sentences about God can never work in quite the same way as ordinary sentences. When we form propositions about him, we are using words only in a metaphorical sense (translative), to "hint" at what God is through some image or negation. We hint at what he is like, at his "quality which is above all quality and is a quality-less quality" and so on. We apply words to God without their normal substance (res), as when we say that the fields are "smiling" without meaning that there is a real smile there. Since God eludes all our categories, he cannot be signified by any word or comprehended by any intellect. He is not even to be called a "being," since he is rather the "beingness" of all beings, and our words apply properly only to beings. That is why we can understand what he is not better than what he is—a sentiment ascribed to Augustine, but it is in fact surely more Dionysian and Eriugenist than Augustinian.

The only real problem in all this is that if all our talk about God is metaphorical, how can we actually understand any of it? As Albert points out, metaphorical language is parasitic on non-metaphorical language.

In the mid-twelfth century we find a very extreme statement of the autonomy of theological language from Hugh of Rouen:

Whatever can be said of God as God must be understood in his way, not ours.... Whatever words and utterances are adopted to signify God no longer belong to any of the grammarians' parts of speech, but they
mean something in a divine way, not in the manner of grammarians, rhetoricians or logicians. God is always what he is and cannot be delimited or described or defined, because he is incomprehensible. 

As Evans says, "These are words of proper caution ... but they are also, in a sense, a counsel of despair." 

In the course of the twelfth century this negative streak in Latin theology was reinforced from several directions. Translations were being made of some of the Muslim and Jewish philosophers who had themselves been influenced by the same kind of Neoplatonism as Dionysius. Avicebron, for instance, whose *Fons Vitae* was translated by Gundissalinus, while maintaining that knowledge of the "First Essence" is the very goal for which the human race was made, declares that we can have no direct knowledge of it, since it is "above everything" and "infinite"; the only knowledge we can have of it is indirect, through creatures. And we can only know "that" it is, not what it is or what sort of thing it is or why it is. 

In addition, extra Greek sources were becoming available in Latin, including John Damascene's *De Fide Orthodoxa*, which begins with an emphatic denial of the possibility of any created intellect grasping God, and Chrysostom’s homilies on St. John, which contain an equally strong denial that God in himself can be seen by any angelic or human mind. 

A curious indication of how these various currents could flow together is provided by the anonymous *De Causis Primis et Secundis*, in which Avicenna, Eriugena, Dionysius (known apparently only through Eriugena) and Augustine are all exploited, and which concludes with an unmitigatedly negative declaration that "the principle of principles defeats all thought and understanding and all the powers which rank after it, and it is God most glorious." 

Our Avicennist, writing probably around the turn of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, represents somewhat of an aberration. More typical is Alan of Lille, in whom an avowedly Dionysian-Eriugenist tradition merges with an easily recognizable though unacknowledged dependence on Gilbert of Poitiers. His *Summa "Quoniam Homines,"* written c.1160, begins with a typically Gilbertist denunciation of people who do not understand the special nature of theological language, the meaning of whose words is not "natural but miraculous." "Terms taken from the natural order are transferred to theology and wonder at their new meanings and seem to clamor for their old meanings." Because of a failure to appreciate the distinctness of theological discourse, people "who are scarcely capable of understanding a pantomime" force their way into "divine conversations" and, because they have not first consulted the liberal arts (the "queen's doorkeepers") and so lack a proper introduction to the "royal way of theology," "sink into various errors, ineffably ruined" when they try to ascend to what is ineffable.
In the more or less contemporary *Regulae Theologicae* Alan spells out in considerable detail how words work in theology. His guiding principle is taken from Dionysius: affirmations about God are *incompactae*, whereas negations are true. 69 By *incompactae* Alan understands *incompositae*: all genuine propositions involve "composition," they propose a connection between two properly distinct notions ("This piano is out of tune": it is not intrinsic to pianos to be out of tune, nor is out-of-tuneness confined to pianos). But in the case of God no such distinct notions are strictly appropriate because of the well-known principle that "whatever is in God is God." 70 So when we say that "God is just," we are not making a connection between a God who is in principle conceivable without justice and a justice which is distinct from the very being of God, so it is only in appearance that we are predicating something of God; our affirmation is *incompacta*. 71 The second presiding principle is that no name is properly applicable to God, not even "Being," though that seems to be less improper than most. 72 There seems to be an unbridgeable gap between the reality of God (to whom in fact "being" belongs most properly) and our words (we can only improperly say that "God is"), 73 which leaves us perplexed as to how we can even know that "being" does most properly belong to God or indeed what it might mean to make such a claim. Alan's explanations are far from satisfying. Taking up the doctrine we have already met in Thierry he contends that when we apply words to God it is only the "name," not the "reality" (res) that is being transferred to him. 74 Even in the case of an attribute like "justice," the word applies only "causatively" to God; what we mean in calling God "just" is that he causes justice. 75 So even if this is intended to say something about what God actually is (and Alan is explicit that such causative predication is intended to refer to God's "substance"), 76 it is not clear that it can ever succeed.

In the *Summa "Quoniam Homines"* Alan produces a massive battery of authorities, both theological and philosophical, to support a radically negative theological position. 77 We cannot really know God nor, obviously, can we name him, except negatively, in the sense that we can know what God is not. Even "being" is only ascribed "equivocally" to God. 78 Our minds (and here Alan is again following Gilbert) can only understand things by latching on to their properties, and God has no properties. 79 This obviously raises the question whether even in heaven we can have any positive knowledge of God, and if we cannot, what of the promise that we shall see God "face to face"? To this Alan can only say that we shall see and understand God differently in the hereafter, but for the moment we cannot understand how this is possible. Somehow in heaven our "intellect will be changed so that it will not require the help of forms." 80
At two points, then, Alan has to resort to unexplained, miraculous changes: theological language acquires its meaning "miraculously" and the beatific vision is possible only because of an alteration in our intellect that we cannot hope to understand here and now. Because of this, he can on the one hand enunciate a negative theology that is far more confident of itself than Dionysius would allow, while at the same time developing an almost aggressively positive system of theological propositions, which seems to be largely unchecked by the precautions of negative theology. At the beginning of his *Regulae* he gives the impression of revelling in the technical and abstruse nature of theological language: it is a Fachsprache like any other, calculated to confuse the uninitiated. It is not hard to feel about him as some people felt about Gilbert, that he is engaged in verbal sophistry which has little to do with the realities of Christian faith and life. Such a response would certainly be unfair, but it would not be incomprehensible.

The penetration of Greek theology and, to a lesser extent, Islamic philosophy into Western thought resulted, then, chiefly in a rather exaggerated negative theology that, precisely because of its exaggeration, did not seriously interact (as it does in Dionysius and Eriugena) with affirmative theology. The perfectly sound claim that it is something to do with what God is, not just a temporary accident, that no created intellect can grasp him as he really is, leaves a real epistemological problem about how we can aspire to the vision of God in heaven. And if all our talk about God rests simply on an equivocal use of words, it is not clear that we can ever succeed in really talking about God at all, in which case all theology, however sophisticated it may seem to be, is no more than an empty playing with words.

In the twelfth century this "orientalizing," negative theology was by no means unchallenged. As we have seen, an attempt was made to secure the condemnation of Gilbert of Poitiers, who was famous for his knowledge of the Greek fathers. And Hugh of St. Victor, for all his interest in Dionysius, protested warmly against what he understood to be Eriugena's doctrine that even in heaven we see God only indirectly, by way of "theophanies": "Away with their fancies with which they try to cloud the light of our minds! They must stop coming between us and our God with these images of theirs! Nothing can satisfy us except God himself." The most influential of all the products of twelfth-century theology, the Sentences of Peter Lombard, seems largely unaffected by Greek theology, and it was this text that became the basis for the teaching of systematic theology in the universities in the thirteenth century.

It was in the thirteenth century, though, that matters really came to a head. According to the very plausible interpretation proposed by Contenson, it was not oriental theology as such that precipitated the
crisis, but the attempt to apply Aristotelian epistemology to the problem left unresolved, as we have seen, by twelfth-century theologians; namely, how it is possible for our minds to know God.  

Early in the thirteenth century David of Dinant ventured on a very optimistic appropriation of the Aristotelian doctrine that the intellect and its object become identical in the act of understanding; the results were rather pantheistic and were condemned in 1210. 

In reaction to this condemnation, some theologians moved toward the other extreme. Even William of Auvergne, whom we shall be meeting again shortly, toyed with the idea that we see God only through a "likeness" of him received by our minds (clearly the Aristotelian species intelligibilis). Alexander of Hales at first opted for a frankly Eriugenist position, that God's essence becomes apparent to us only in its conjunction with his intellectual creatures, just as light becomes visible only because it illuminates the air. Others, including the Dominican Master Gueric of St. Quentin maintained that God's essence is seen, but not as essence. Hugh of St. Cher's postil on John 1:16 declares bluntly that even in heaven we shall not see the essence of God; we shall see him "as glory, as goodness, as truth." All of this must have seemed very small beer to people looking forward to the "full" enjoyment and vision of God promised by Peter Lombard. William of Auvergne for one was not content, in spite of his own earlier doctrine, with anything less than "the most complete and clear vision of the Creator" (perfectissima lucidissimaque visio creatoris). And William of Auxerre, in his highly popular Summa Aurea, espouses a purely Augustinian theory, basing our knowledge of God on his essential presence in the soul: at the moment, even though by grace the veil of sin and the veil of "the letter" is removed, our intellect is too weak to apprehend God directly, without the "veil of creatures," in spite of his immediate presence in us; but in the hereafter this obstacle will be removed. In 1241 William of Auvergne, by now bishop of Paris, together with the Masters of the University, issued a formal condemnation of several propositions, of which the first is that "the divine essence will not be seen in itself either by any human being or by any angel." The ninth proposition is that "whoever has better natural endowments will of necessity have more grace and glory," which almost certainly reflects a Neoplatonist doctrine of hierarchy, apportioning divine illumination strictly according to ontological status. The other condemned propositions do not directly concern us here but, as M. D. Chenu has shown, they all seem to derive from an essentially oriental theology.
Exactly who was the author of the condemned propositions is not known for certain, but they are presented in some sources as emanating from mendicant circles, and it is clear that the Dominicans were immediately affected. Successive Dominican chapters insisted on the books of the brethren being corrected to eliminate the condemned doctrines, and the manuscripts of Hugh of St. Cher show various attempts to implement this ruling. Guerric of St. Quentin, who had previously maintained that God’s essence, as such, is not known to the blessed, made a sort of public retraction by presiding over a new disputation on the subject and pronouncing the opposite conclusion.

The condemnation of 1241 represented a victory for those who were disillusioned with the attempt to accommodate the Christian hope of the beatific vision to a general, philosophical epistemology. The conviction that we can have a real knowledge of God was taken to be a primary datum; if philosophical epistemology could not cope with it, so much the worse for epistemology. Before the condemnation William of Auvergne denounced the “Aristotelian” doctrine that there can be no true knowledge of individuals on the grounds that “this error prevents and altogether denies the glory of human souls, which is the most complete and clear vision of the Creator,” since, in William’s view, the Creator is “very individual” (singularissimus).

Some years later, probably in the mid-1250s, St. Bonaventure alludes to the epistemological problem posed by the lack of proportion between God and the soul and, instead of trying to deal with it, he simply dismisses it, on the grounds that “if proportionality were necessary for knowledge, the soul would never reach the knowledge of God ... by nature, by grace or by glory.” This is tantamount to saying that it must be possible for us to know God, even if there is no way that we can know God.

Before we turn to Albert himself, there is another Dionysian tradition that must be noted, which seems to have been entirely unaffected by the epistemological controversies or the condemnation of 1241. Where Eriugena and his conscious or unconscious followers tended to reinterpret Augustine in the light of Dionysius, this other tradition absorbed Dionysius into an essentially Augustinian tradition, according to which we know God precisely by loving him. In the twelfth century one of the most persistent exponents of this doctrine was William of St. Thierry, according to whom:

As our outward senses are related to bodies and bodily things, so our inward sense is related to the things that are like it, that is, the things of reason and the things of God or spiritual things. The interior sense of the soul is the understanding. But it has a greater and worthier sense and a purer understanding than these, namely love. It is by this sense that the Creator himself is perceived by his creatures, it is by this
understanding that he is understood, inasmuch as God can be perceived or understood by any creature.  

The absorption of Dionysian negative theology into this perspective can be seen in the treatise *De Natura et Dignitate Amoris:*

The natural light of the soul, the power of sight created by the author of nature for us to see God with, is charity. There are two eyes involved in this power of sight, always trembling with a natural eagerness to see that light which is God: love and reason. When one of them strives without the other, it does not achieve so much, but when they help each other, when they become a single eye, they can do much.... Each of them has its own kind of burden: one of them, reason, can only see God in what he is not, but love refuses to rest except in what he is. What can reason grasp or discover, for all its endeavours, of which it would dare to say, "This is my God"? All it can discover of what he is is what he is not.... But love prospers the more because of its failure and grasps the more by means of its ignorance. Reason seems to progress through what he is not to what he is, but love disdains what he is not and rejoices to fail in what he is.

William's doctrine of knowledge by love is summed up in his famous phrase, "love itself becomes (our) understanding" (*amor ipse intellectus*), a phrase which must be taken at its face value, as J. M. Déchanet has shown.

In the early thirteenth century Thomas Gallus, a canon of St. Victor in Paris who later became abbot of Vercelli, developed the theme of knowledge by love in his extensive Dionysian writings, which included a paraphrase of the *Mystical Theology*, brief notes on it and finally a substantial commentary on it. In his view Dionysius' references to union with God have to be taken as indicating a special faculty in us that goes beyond the limits of our understanding, and this faculty is the "peak of our affectivity," which gives us a supra-intellectual "knowledge" of God:

Our mind has a faculty of understanding (which we may call the "theoric intellect"), by which the mind looks at what is intelligible. The mind also has a faculty of union, which we understand to be the peak of our affections, which is properly brought to perfection by the love of God, and this extends the nature of the mind through its exercise, and by it the mind is joined in contemplations (*theoriis*) which surpass both its nature and its exercises. It is by this faculty of union that we have to know the things of God, not in the sobriety of our understanding, but placing ourselves above ourselves, united to God with all our power.

Gallus wrote his Dionysian paraphrases and commentaries in Vercelli, between his arrival there in 1224 and his death in 1246. According to the dating established by G. Théry, the paraphrase of the *Mystical*
Theology and the large commentary both belong precisely to the period of the Parisian condemnation. After Gallus' death another distinguished scholar, Peter of Spain (later Pope John XXI), wrote a series of commentaries on the Dionysian corpus, in which he closely follows Gallus' interpretation. The unknowability of God is strongly affirmed, in spite of the condemnation of 1241, and knowledge is even taken to be a hindrance to the "contemplation of the divine incomprehensibility." God is "beyond the notion of being and beyond the understanding of any mind, so he is neither knowable by us nor comprehensible." But nevertheless there is another kind of knowledge: in this life "the most worthy knowledge of all that could fall under the heading of 'understanding' is perfect union with God by means of an ecstasy of love." This kind of union "suspends all intellectual activity." After Peter of Spain the doctrine of the "peak of affectivity" is maintained by Hugh of Balma, who again insists that at this level there is no room for any activity of the intellect. From Gallus and Balma this affective and at least unintellectual reading of Dionysius passes to its most famous exponent, the author of the Cloud of Unknowing.

When Albert came to Paris in the 1240s, the issue of "Eastern" theology was a live and delicate one in Dominican circles. The attempt to provide a viable epistemological account of how we know God had apparently reached an impasse and had, in the process, brought negative theology into a certain disrepute; the only form of negative theology that was quite unaffected was one which posited a non-intellectual way of knowing God by love, which by-passed rather than settled the epistemological problem.

Albert, it is quite clear, was not prepared simply to abandon the attempt to interpret Christian claims to present or future knowledge of God in terms of some coherent epistemology, and it is precisely on the subject of epistemology that he found himself most seriously at odds with the Latin tradition. On just the issue that had provoked the "anti-oriental" backlash, he aggressively opted for a frankly "oriental" view. For a full statement of his doctrine of how the intellect functions and how it comes to the knowledge of God— and it is evident that his position is Aristotelian with a strong dose of Neoplatonism, both Dionysian and Islamic—we have to wait for books written after the completion of the Dionysian commentaries. But at least in germ the same doctrine is already contained in the commentary on the first book of the Sentences and in the Dionysian commentaries themselves, so there does not seem to have been any essential change in his attitude.

At the beginning of the section of his De anima devoted to the intellect Albert announces emphatically that "in settling these questions we utterly abhor what the Latin doctors say." His objection to
the Latins is that they follow Plato too much and suppose that the mind somehow contains within itself all that is needed for knowledge, with its own private supply of universals. Albert makes fun of these private universals, which could never be the basis for any objective knowledge of reality as it exists outside the soul and which would mean that no two individuals could ever be said to have the same knowledge. And against the idea of knowledge being somehow innate he affirms the Peripatetic doctrine that the mind acquires knowledge from things, not from itself.

One of the main points of controversy arising out of this concerns the soul's self-knowledge. The Augustinian tradition maintained that the soul has, in principle, a direct, immediate knowledge of itself and all that is in itself, including God. This theory is mentioned in the commentary on the *Mystical Theology*, and Albert opposes it firmly. He insists, with Aristotle, that we acquire knowledge of our own minds in the same way that we acquire knowledge of anything else. What we are is not intrinsically luminous to us, it has to become an object of understanding to us.

On certain crucial points, then, Albert is a loyal Peripatetic. But this is far from being the whole of his epistemology, as we see in his fascinating treatment of Augustine's recantation of the claim that "any truth that is known is inspired by the Holy Spirit":

Four things are needed in the soul if it is to receive any knowledge of truth: the possible intellect, which is ready to receive it; secondly the agent intellect, by whose light the abstraction occurs of the forms in which the truth or the particular truth resides; thirdly the reality (res) which is present as an object either through an image of itself or in its own right—this is what the truth is about; and fourthly the principles and axioms which are as it were the instruments which arrange in due proportion the possible, impossible and necessary connections and separations, on the basis of which the particular truth is received. Of these four the first is purely receptive, the second is simply a source of light, the third is what receives light from the agent intellect and gives to the possible intellect the light of a specific truth, and the fourth is moved as an instrument and in turn moves the conceptual connections and separations with regard to the matter in which truth is known or sought. Some philosophers have concluded that these four things suffice for the knowledge of any truth which is subject to our reason. But we must rather say that the light of the agent intellect is not sufficient by itself without being directed by the light of the uncreated intellect.... This can happen in two ways, depending on whether there is simply a twofold light or whether there is a threefold light. The light is twofold if the mind is joined to the light of the uncreated intellect, and that light is the "interior teacher." But
sometimes the mind is joined to an angelic intellect as well as to the
divine.... This is what Dionysius calls the leading back of our hierarchy
through the hierarchy of the angels. Augustine says this happens in
many ways. And this is what some philosophers call the "link-up of
intellects," because they too said that nothing is seen except by way of
the first light.

So, to return to the question whether a new grace is needed, we must
say that if any gift freely given by God is called "grace," then no
knowledge comes about without grace. Indeed one philosopher has
said that even if we have a habitual knowledge of something, that
knowledge will not become actual unless the mind turns to the light of
the uncreated intellect. 123

Even without identifying all the sources of this remarkable passage,
we can see at once that its doctrine is essentially Neoplatonist, though
Albert himself may have been unaware of this; 124 and Albert seems to
have remained faithful to it throughout his life. 125

The combination of this Neoplatonist illuminationism and the
Aristotelian denial of any immediate and primitive intellectual self-
knowledge gives Albert a philosophical basis for a very rich and
profound Christian intellectualism, such as we find in several passages
in the De Intellectu et Intelligibili, in which we are surely entitled to
recognize his own convictions, not just his interpretations of what he
took to be Peripatetic doctrine: 126

Our intellect is more closely joined to imagination and the senses
than it is to the first agent intellect, and so it is dark and, with regard
to things which are in principle thoroughly separate from matter, it is
like the eye of a bat with regard to sunlight. For this reason it has to be
imbued with

-57-

physics first, and then with mathematics, so that once it has been
strengthened in this way by many lights coming from many
intelligibles it can rise to the understanding of the things of God. And in
all these intelligibles, when it becomes an effective understanding of
any of them, it discovers both itself and the agent intellect.... But
though it is closer to physics and mathematics because of its
connection to the body, it is really more akin by nature to the things of
God, and so it discovers more of itself in the intelligibles which pertain
to God than it does in those which belong to mathematics and physics.

Furthermore it seems true to say that, since anything which is only
potentially a knower actually knows nothing at all, the intellect knows
nothing at all unless it becomes effective. And from this it follows that
anyone who does not study philosophy knows nothing at all, neither
himself nor anything other than himself.... As long as the intellect
remains potential and in no way effective, it is impossible to know
anything other than oneself or oneself or even to know that one does
not know.... So Hermes reproached the uneducated in antiquity, saying
that such people paid no attention to anything human in their lives, but spent their days like pigs.

The possible intellect is potentially everything that can be understood. So it is not actually received except in as much as what is potentially understood becomes effectively understood, and it is completely obtained and received when it attains to the effective realisation of all the intelligibles which it potentially is. This is how human beings take possession of their own intellect.

Plato accordingly said that the truest definition of philosophy is "knowledge of oneself," and Alfarabi said that the soul is placed in the body in order to discover and know itself, and he claims that Aristotle said this, but I have not found where he said it.... The reason for all this is that the first image of the light of the first cause to be joined to space and time is the human intellect, and so it must be a kind of likeness of everything that comes into being through the light of the first cause, it must enfold all these things, being a receptacle of some in as much as it is an image of the first cause and of others in as much as it is joined to space and time; in both it has to take possession of itself....

This makes it evident that the contemplation of wonderful truths is the highest delight and the most natural occupation, in which people's whole human nature, precisely as such, blossoms, particularly in the contemplation of the things of God, because it is particularly in these that the intellect discovers itself in its proper nature, because human beings, precisely as human, are essentially intellect.... This reveals how it is by study that the intellect takes possession of itself.

Now let us talk about the understanding which some of the oldest philosophers call "assimilative" or "assimilating," and in doing so let us also clarify the soul's perfection, which arises from all the kinds of understanding alluded to. "Assimilative understanding" is that in which human beings rise to the divine intellect, which is the light and cause of everything, insofar as it is possible and lawful and in a way which is proportionate to them. This comes about when the intellect has become fully actual and has taken possession of itself and of the light of the agent intellect and, on the basis of the lights received from everything and of its self-knowledge, it reaches out in the lights belonging to the intelligences and so gradually ascends to the simplicity of the divine intellect. From the light of its own agent intellect it passes to the light of intelligence and from there it reaches out to the intellect of God....

Strengthened in that light (of intelligence) the intellect rises to the divine light, which has no name and is unutterable, because it is known by no name of its own, becoming known only as it is received. And it is received first in intelligence, which is the first effect to be caused, and when it is uttered it is uttered with the name of intelligence, which is...
the effect it causes, not with any name of its own. So Hermes said that
the God of Gods is improperly grasped by a name which is not properly
his own.... So the human intellect is joined to its final goal and its light
and united with that light it shares in somewhat of his Godhead....

Notice that in all these kinds of understanding the possible intellect is
as it were primary and the foundation. The light of the agent intellect is
a disposition in it and a kind of basis for the understanding of
principles, and the understanding of principles is the basis for effective
understanding, and effective understanding is the basis for taking
possession of the intellect, because here particularly the soul acquires
knowledge of itself; and possession of one's own intellect is the basis
for the assimilative intellect, which rises step by step from lower light
to higher light up to the light of the divine intellect, and there it stops
as having reached its destination. Since everyone naturally desires
knowledge, the goal of everyone's desire is to come to rest in the
divine intellect. 127

There is a similar message in the commentary on the Metaphysics:
Since all human beings naturally desire knowledge and desire is not
unlimited, it must be possible to bring this desire to an end in some
form of knowing. And this can be nothing other than the knowledge of
that which is the cause and light of all beings and all objects of
knowledge, and this is no other than the divine intellect.... This is why
Averroes says in his comment on book XI of the Metaphysics of
Aristotle that the question of the divine intellect is the one which all
human beings desire to know. 128

The human intellect becomes aware of itself by understanding other
things, and by an "analysis" (resolutio) of its own light (once it has
discovered this through coming to understand things) it comes to the
"first, pure intellect." "This is what is most pleasant and most desirable
in contemplation (theoria), this is what every being that has an
intellect naturally desires to have actual knowledge of and to
contemplate." 129 The "first, pure intellect" is, of course, God. 130

In these writings Albert is not expressly developing his own views,
and he objected to people supposing that he endorsed all that he said
in his expositions of what he took to be Peripatetic philoso
phy. But so much of the same doctrine of the intellect recurs in his
other works, and his comments are sometimes so enthusiastic, that it
is difficult to believe that he would really insist on disowning it.

The highest thing that the soul can have while it is in the body is at
least sometimes to reach the pure intellect in its mind. And if, once it is
freed from the body, what it sometimes fleetingly attains in the body
becomes continuous, that will be supreme joy and the kingdom of
heaven. 131
The intellectual nature of beatitude is affirmed already in the early work *De Resurrectione* with the same quotation from Averroes that we find in the *Metaphysics* commentary, and it is reaffirmed in the commentary on Dionysius' *Divine Names*, again with the same text from Averroes.

The hypothesized "intelligence" that is the *primum causatum*, mentioned in the text cited from *De Intellectu et Intelligibili*, is easily identified with suprahuman intellectual beings, that is, the angels, and as we have seen, Albert is quite willing to ascribe an important role to the angels in the illumination of the human mind, so the passage through the light of "intelligence" to the divine light needs little comment, if any, to make it acceptable to him.

Above all, Albert's illuminationist doctrine of the intellect allows him to develop a theory of how we come to know God. In the early *De Resurrectione* he was content to say, like William of Auxerre, that God "is in the intellect in his own right, that is, substantially, because he is in every essence. So for him to be seen all that is needed is the removal of any obstacle that is in the way. And there are two such obstacles: the imperfection that goes with this present wretchedness and our being turned in another direction. Since both of these are removed by beatitude, in beatitude we shall see him as he is." In the commentary on the *Divine Names* Albert gives us a much more precise account of how God is in the soul, and it presupposes already the doctrine later expounded in *De Intellectu et Intelligibili*: "God is essentially present in the soul, not as any kind of nature of the soul, but as a certain light of the intellect, and this is sufficient for him to be known by the intellect; indeed because of his being in the soul like this he is known under the appearance of anything that is understood, as the philosophers say about the agent intellect. In the same way we know of God 'that' he is by way of our knowledge of any creature."

We know God through his works, then, essentially because he is implicitly present in our actual *knowing* of creatures. The divine being of God is the principle of all knowledge, because it is the "first light"; our intellect receives him as a "principle," and if we could know him perfectly (which we cannot) we should be able to derive a knowledge of everything from our knowledge of him. All knowledge derives from God's own knowing, the light which is the causal principle of all knowing; but actual knowledge is received by different creatures in different ways, and our human way is laborious and circuitous.

The divine intellect is the "cause and light of all beings," the "intellect which is the mover in all of nature," and for Albert this does not just mean some remote Aristotelian deity moving all things simply by attracting them, without in any way being concerned for them, nor does it mean a remote Platonist principle acting in all things,
but not deigning to be cognizant of individuals or particulars: it means the creator God whose knowledge is the source of the whole reality of all things in all their particularity.  

God is the source of the existence of all things, and at the same time, as the primordial Intellect, he is the source of the intelligibility of all things, and it is this latter which most interests Albert. Our minds approach God by way of the intelligibility of his creatures, discovering themselves and the light that is in them in the process. Bit by bit, as they exercise their own intellectual powers, they move toward an ever simpler, more comprehensive view of things, in which the light, which comes from God and enlightens angelic and (in a more diffuse and obscure way) human intellects, is apprehended more clearly.

The Aristotelian principle that it is only in understanding other things that the mind takes possession of itself is, of course, an admirable justification for Albert's own wide-ranging interests. He evidently took seriously and found congenial the belief that the intellect takes full possession of itself only when it realizes to the full its capacity to understand all that can be understood. But this is not simply a justification of curiosity; it is an application of the Dionysian principle that God, who is not adequately named by any name, must be given all names. Any narrowing of our intellectual interests would in fact shut out ways in which we are meant to be led to God. Precisely because the light of God is discovered only indirectly through the intelligibility of his works theology cannot profitably be undertaken as a narrow specialization. The link between negative and affirmative theology is fully restored in all its amplitude.

Albert's view of how we ascend to the knowledge of God leaves no room for any kind of shortcut. Nor does it leave room for any kind of specialized faculty for union with God, such as Gallus posited. And the idea that there might be some kind of non-intellectual knowledge of God receives very short shrift from Albert: if we cannot know God by the intellect, "it is clear that we cannot know him in any other way." And if we are to know God by the intellect, it must be by the whole, ordinary process of intellection, beginning with the "possible intellect." (Albert cannot really accommodate the popular distinction between a "higher" intellectual power directed toward God and a "lower" power directed toward creatures.)

If all intellectual activity depends on an illumination that comes from God, it is obvious that there can be no radical division between natural knowledge and faith. The proper object of faith is the First Truth, which is the source of all knowledge, not just knowledge of the truths of faith, so the distinction between faith and natural knowledge is a distinction within an essentially coherent illumination from God: "Without a light to enlighten the intellect our possible intellect cannot receive any knowledge; it is by this light that the possible intellect
becomes an eye to see with. This light is natural with regard to our receiving knowledge of natural things, it is freely given (gratuitum) with regard to our receiving the objects of belief, and it is glory with regard to our receiving what beatifies us." 147 And the illumination of faith functions in the same way as any other illumination: light enables us to see but does not determine what we see, and the light of the agent intellect enables us to know but does not determine any particular object of knowledge; in the same way the light of faith enables us to believe, but does not of itself specify any object of belief. 148 The actual content of faith comes to us, like any other kind of knowledge, through the senses 149 —through hearing ser-

-63-

mons, reading the bible and so on. This is why, as Albert says in the Mystical Theology, there is need both for the inward teaching of God and for an "external teacher." 150

The salient characteristic of faith, as distinct from ordinary knowledge, is that by it we believe certain things to be true that are not susceptible of rational proof, 151 though it is important to note that they are not susceptible of rational refutation either: if they could be refuted, we should have to believe the refutation as well as the refuted article of faith, so two contradictories would have to be true at the same time, which is impossible. 152 Natural knowledge is limited in its scope, but it is not, in Albert's view, unnatural for the mind to be carried beyond the limit of its own resources. The abandonment of intellectual activity recommended in the Mystical Theology is interpreted by Albert to mean only the abandonment of the intellectual activity which is "connatural" to the intellect, 153 that is to say, the activity which is sustained by the powers with which the human mind is born. But it is precisely the intellect that is carried beyond its innate capacity by the higher illumination it receives from God, and this does not involve any essential change in its nature. 154 It is, as Albert makes clear in his commentary on the Mystical Theology, an intellectual union with God that is our final goal. 155

The light of faith is not an alternative to, let alone a negation of, the mind's natural way of functioning, it is precisely a strengthening of the mind, enabling it to do better and more surely the very thing that it is naturally designed to do. "The bodily vision of some creatures, like the bat, is totally shattered by the light of the sun, but the vision of other creatures, like human beings, is capable to some extent of looking at the sun, but because it is weak it cannot do so without the eyes trembling; other creatures, like the golden eagle, have their vision so strengthened that they can see the sun in the round. In the same way the mental vision of people who are held down by earthly affections and bodily images is material and is totally rebuffed by the divine radiance, but if their vision draws away from these things into intellectual speculation then it becomes immaterial, but it is still
trembling, because it looks upon the things of God from afar, as it were, with the principles of reason. But if it is strengthened by the light of faith it ceases to tremble." 156

There is a fine passage in the commentary on the *Divine Names* that develops a similar point:

"This reason" (divine reason) "is the simple truth of what exists, which itself exists ... and divine faith is about it" (it is the proper object of the faith we have about God). "It is pure," by contrast with the truth there is in other sciences, inasmuch as some impurity overflows into them from the things on which they are based; "it is not erroneous," as against the truth which is derived from reasoning, which is often liable to error because of the way things shift around. "It is knowledge of all things," in that it pours out knowability on all things, which is the situation of the first truth.

Next he defines faith, of which this truth is the object. First he gives the definition and comments on it, then he explains why he said, "If knowledge unites those who know.... "

So first he says that "faith is an abiding" and firm "establishment of believers," and this is interpreted in two ways: it "establishes" believers "in the truth" through their assent to it and it establishes the truth in them, placing it in their minds, in the minds, that is, of "believers who have a simple knowledge of the truth" in the first truth, "in unalterable steadfastness," inasmuch, that is, as someone remains unalterably in the one faith which also unites all the faithful. And the cause of this unchangeable steadfastness is indicated next: it is of the nature of knowledge to be "unitive," and this is understood in two ways: of the object of knowledge, because perfect knowledge makes us stand firm in the one, simple "whatness" of something, and also of the act of knowing, because at first the act of knowing is unsteady and wanders round various ideas, but once it gets a probable idea of something it sticks to one idea, but is nervous there because it is afraid of its opposite; but when it has perfect knowledge and enters into the proper and essential cause of something, then it stands firmly in one place, and this is the reason why all those

who know something are at one in a single knowledge of the truth. 157

Neither Dionysius nor Albert would actually want to claim that faith gives us "perfect knowledge" in this life, but it is clearly implied that faith does give us the same kind of solidity as perfect knowledge. Whereas opinion is always unsettled because of its "fear of the opposite," both faith and knowledge give us a kind of certainty, and faith has at least some advantages over any other kind of knowledge, because of its direct reliance on the "first truth." And Albert seems to have no hesitation in treating faith as a kind of knowledge: although
faith and reason differ in us, "they belong to the same genus, namely \textit{natura cognoscitiva."} \footnote{158} 

Faith, however, cannot be regarded simply as a "given," allowing us to rest on our laurels. It shares with the investigation of truth the responsibility for bringing our reason to perfection, \footnote{159} presumably by sharing in its own way the task of reason, which is to explore reality so that the general principles known by our intellect are applied and we come to a real understanding of things. By faith we have access to more material, which we can explore; and theology is the exploration of it. \footnote{160} In his commentary on St. John, Albert says he likes the "ancient" view of faith, found in St. Gregory, which differentiates between two facets of faith: "believing is thinking together with assent" (\textit{cogitare cum assensu}). As assent, it is simply a given, a "changeless foundation"; but as "thinking" it is clearly open to all kinds of development. \footnote{161} "In faith ... we first assent to the first truth for its own sake, then we look for reasons, so that we can to some extent understand what we believe." \footnote{162}

The wonderful humane and intellectual perspective opened out to us by faith is indicated by St. Albert in his comment on John 8:31-2, "Jesus said to the Jews who believed in him, 'If you abide in my word, you will truly be my disciples and you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.'":

"Jesus said to those who believed in him." They were already beginning to be free, in that they had been called to faith. "You have been called into freedom, brethren, only do not make freedom an occasion for the flesh" (Gal. 5:13). Faith is the beginning of freedom, because it makes people know what freedom there is in grace. Therefore he speaks to these believers as to people who already understand freedom. "Let people with understanding speak to me, let a wise man hear me" (Job 34:34). "If you abide" with perseverance, intelligence and obedience "in my word." With perseverance, so that you meditate on it by study; with intelligence, so that you understand the mystery of the Holy Spirit in it; with obedience, so that you fulfill it by practicing it in what you do. On the first of these it says, "Persevere in discipline; God offers himself to you as to his children" (Heb. 12:7), and God's children are free. On the intelligibility of the words it says, "Understand what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything" (2 Tim. 2:7), and "I will give you understanding" (Ps. 31:8). On obedience, "Cursed is anyone who does not abide in the words of this law and who does not accomplish them in practice" (Deut. 27:26), and "If you hear the voice of the Lord your God in order to do and to keep all his precepts, which are my command to you today, the Lord your God will make you higher than all the peoples who live on the earth" (Deut. 28:1), than those who live in earthly desires, that is, because you will be free and will be master
of them. See how it is the beginning of true freedom thus to abide in the Lord's word.

"You will truly be my disciples." A true disciple is one who is truly imbued, without any error, with the teachings of his master. And this is how freedom grows. As the philosopher says, we call people free if they are their own cause. And as it says in book ten of the Ethics, a human being is just intellect—all the rest that is in us is not human but animal. And the intellect is perfected in the study of the things of God, not in anything else. "If you are outside the instruction of which all have been made partakers, then you are bastards and not children" (Heb. 12:8), as if to say, "You were not born of free stock, but of a bastard, servile stock." "The Lord God opened my ear and I do not contradict, I have not gone away" (Is. 50:5). "In this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35), because it is love which makes you hold to my instruction. "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word" (John 14:23). A true disciple is one who holds to the instruction he received, just as it was imparted by his master. "Learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart" (Matt. 11:29).

"And you will know the truth." This brings true liberty to perfection. Knowledge of the truth is the knowledge of that by which things truly are what they are, and this is no other than the divine art and wisdom which is proposed to us in the words of God. It is by God's art and wisdom that things truly are what they are. Because of certain other principles things fall from the truth of their being, inasmuch as they are material and mutable and inclined to sag away from what is true. "Sanctify them in truth; your word is truth" (John 17:17). And it says of the Word in John 1:14, "Full of grace and truth." "I am the way and the truth and the life" (John 14:6). "Truth abides and is strong for ever" (3 Esdras 4:38). "Truth prevails over everything" (ibid. 3:12). And so it frees us from the futility of changeability and is the principle which makes freedom itself perfect.

There follows, "And the truth will set you free." And this is the completion of true liberty. "Creation itself will be set free from enslavement to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God" (Rom. 8:21). "The Jerusalem which is above is free, and that is our mother" (Gal. 4:26). So the word of the Lord, as being the truth, frees us from the coercion and constraint of futility. As the word of grace, it frees us from enslavement to guilt and sin. As the word of almighty God, it frees us from enslavement to wretchedness. First it gives us the freedom of nature, then it gives us the freedom of grace and thirdly it gives us the freedom of glory.

If the study of the liberal arts already gives us a certain freedom, faith leads us into a far greater freedom, because it gives us access to
the word of God, the study of which, if undertaken perseveringly and obediently, will eventually bring us to the complete fulfilment of our intellectual nature and to complete moral freedom.

-68-

The theological study, which alone is fully satisfying to our minds, cannot be isolated from the study of the arts though. At the end of his life Albert is still insisting on this. "Theology in itself is the first of all sciences, but it comes last in the order of our study and investigation. This is why Alfarabi says that it is in the study of theology that the philosophers have ended their lives." 166

It is rather surprising, at first sight, that Albert was not prepared to regard theology as essentially and simply a speculative science, for all his intellectualism. Both in the early commentary on the Sentences and in the late Summa Theologiae he cites Titus 1:1-2 to identify theological truth as being secundum pietatem, inseparable therefore from the practice of the Christian life and the hope of salvation and everlasting bliss. In the Summa he concludes that theology is a practical science, in the commentary on the Sentences that it is neither speculative nor practical, it is an "affective science," bringing both mind and heart to their proper perfection. 167 This does not mean that theology is not a genuine science; it is a science, an organized body of knowledge with its own proper consistency. And even in the commentary on the Sentences it is indubitably correct to say that Albert's view of beatitude is an intellectual one: the "truth which beatifies" beatifies precisely by being the truth which fully satisfies the intellect. 168 What Albert is concerned to deny is surely the tendency we have noticed in the twelfth century for theology to become just another specialization which could, in principle, be mastered by anyone who was competent, without its engaging and shaping a whole human and Christian life. In calling theology an "affective science" Albert is by no means proposing to subject theology to the control of that affective piety that was already beginning to define itself against learning and intellectualism. On the contrary, he is refusing to concede that there is any tension between piety and theology; he is locating piety in the heart of the intellectual discipline of theology.

In the commentary on the Sentences Albert is still struggling to find the best way to express himself and he uses phrases like intellectus affectivus that suggest an affinity which is certainly not really there between his doctrine and that of Gallus. In his later works he abandons this kind of terminology almost entirely.

One of the crucial problems involved in the attempt to determine the nature of theology was the very vexed question of the precise nature of faith. The traditional data made it difficult for early thirteenth-century scholastics to see faith precisely as a form of knowledge. St. Augustine had insisted on the voluntary nature of
belief, which suggested that faith had to be located in the will. Faith had also to be interpreted as a virtue, and it was generally accepted that the object of all virtues was some practical good, whereas the object of knowledge was always some truth. In accordance with this problematic Albert locates faith, in the commentary on the Sentences, as not being a kind of scientia, because the knowledge (cognitio) it involves comes more from affection than from reason, from love in the will rather than from rational proof. Faith is situated in "affective" rather than speculative understanding. Knowledge may be the "matter" of faith, but it is affection that actually makes it faith and has the dominant role in faith. Faith is a kind of virtue, rather than a kind of scientia. If it is objected that faith's object is truth and that therefore it belongs to the domain of the speculative intellect (and could therefore not be a virtue unless we are prepared to say that all speculative achievements count as a virtue), Albert proposes in reply a distinction between the kind of truth that is the goal of speculation and the kind of truth that "beatifies the intellect." Speculative truth consists in "the complete account of something" and involves a "kind of movement from the thing to the intellect." Beatifying truth, by contrast, is outside the mind and is not an "account of something" but a "something" (res), "a light of eternal happiness" that is the "goal of an understanding which is moved by love for this truth."

Albert is well aware of the awkwardness of this position. It seems to entail that the object of faith is not truth as such, but truth viewed as good (secundum rationem boni), and this was indeed the doctrine, for example, of Philip the Chancellor and of the first Dominican Master in Paris, Roland of Cremona. But in Albert's judgment this is "no solution," because the truth has to be valued in its own right, precisely as truth. Otherwise it is difficult to see how we can escape saying that we believe something to be true just because we find it attractive (or "helpful," as people say these days), which would be a disastrous concession to wishful thinking. But then it is hard to see how Albert has not already made such a concession in declaring that the light of faith "convinces the reason by a kind of love in the will."

In the Dionysian commentaries we find Albert telling a very different story. The essentially cognitive nature of faith is affirmed there, as we have seen. He can still allude, without comment, to the voluntary quality of faith as a virtue that informs our conscience rather than persuading us with arguments, so that we are not constrained to believe by any rational proofs. But there is no longer any question of our being "convinced by love" to go beyond what can be demonstrated by the principles of reason. The divine light is not a proposition, it is true, but "it is a reality (res) which convinces the intellect." It convinces the intellect directly, it seems, by its sheer actuality.
On one point, at least, the development of Albert's theory of the intellect enabled him to come to a clearer understanding of faith. In the commentary on the Sentences one of his concerns was to insist that faith directs us toward a reality outside our own minds, in which our hope of beatitude is vested, and he contrasts this with the "account of a thing" that is the goal of intellectual speculation. But when he turned his attention to the subject of the intellect, he acquired, as we have seen, a hearty distaste for the "Latin" theory, which made the whole intellectual process a purely private, internal affair going on within the individual mind. His own view gave the intellect itself more of an outward orientation. What makes our understanding an understanding of some specific reality is the reality itself which is being understood (ipsa res). 

On this view it is precisely as an intellectual virtue that faith directs us to something outside our own minds, and this is no doubt why Albert is now able to say that faith unites all believers, which he was earlier not prepared to say.

The orientation of the intellect toward that which is outside itself means that there is no essential contradiction between the "ecstatic" structure of its natural workings and the "ecstatic" nature of faith, on which the text of Dionysius obliges Albert to comment. Exploiting the ambiguity of the word ἔκστασις Dionysius remarks that many people will suppose the believer to be "beside himself" (to have suffered an "ecstasy"), not realizing that he has indeed undergone an "ecstasy" (in a good sense) in "stepping out" quite properly from error. Albert, willfully or otherwise, misconstrues the sentence and takes extasis in a stronger sense than was intended here by Dionysius: "The believer has undergone an ecstasy for truth, that is, he has been placed outside himself in divine truth."

This is the excessus referred to in MT 1, on which Albert comments that it means "not holding oneself back within reason's own principles"—it does not, as Albert explains at some length, necessarily involve excessus in the sense of rapture or ecstatic trance.

The insertion of faith into a more general account of the working of the intellect does not mean that Albert has lost interest in the affective component in our knowledge of God. Even apart from his lifelong conviction that knowledge of God is our highest and most satisfying joy, he still wishes to ascribe a certain role to our affections in the very process whereby we come to know God; but his more developed intellectual theory allows him to state more precisely what this role is. "There is a kind of science which is about things beyond the reach of reason, so the knowledge of these things has to be received from some higher nature by participating in its light.... Although science is the perfection of our understanding, yet it is by the perfection of our affectivity (affectus) that we draw near to God and participate in his..."
light; this is how our understanding is brought to perfection with regard to things which cannot be had simply by human reason." There is no question of affectivity taking over the role of the intellect, but if we are to get beyond the limits of our own rationality we need a greater share in the divine light than is given to us in purely natural knowledge, and there are moral presuppositions for such a sharing. Purity of heart is what immediately disposes us to receive the vision of God.

There is also an affective coloring to any genuinely Christian knowledge of God. In a famous passage in the _Divine Names_ Dionysius refers to Hierotheos as "not just learning about the things of God, but undergoing them (δυνόνομα μαθᾶν ἄλλα καὶ παθῶν τα δεῖκά)." Albert comments on this: "'Also he was perhaps taught the things of God by a diviner inspiration,' diviner than teaching or study, that is, 'not only learning' from others 'but also undergoing divine things,' being moved in his affection about them, 'and by his very sympathy for them,' by his affection for the things of God ... 'he was made perfect for union with them,' union with the things of God in heart and mind, 'and for faith,' that is, for the certain knowledge of spiritual things.... This is called a diviner way because thus the things of God are perceived, in a way, experientially, just as someone who is suffering from a wound has a more certain knowledge of what a wound is than someone who only hears about it or sees it, and someone who tastes wine has a better knowledge of its pleasant flavor." A text like this does not contradict Albert's conviction that our union with God is fundamentally intellectual, it draws out one aspect of what intellectual union with God means: the certainty of faith is not like the certainty that a cogent rational argument produces, it is much more like the certainty which comes from a direct perception of something. What convinces the mind to assent to the first truth is not a proposition but a reality, and the reality of God cannot properly be apprehended dispassionately. In the commentary on the _Mystical Theology_ Albert distinguishes between the ability to form propositions and real knowledge (realis scientia), that is, knowledge which actually touches in some way the res, the reality, of God, and this knowledge is "part of beatitude" and so cannot be divorced from its affective component. The idea that we could have a real knowledge of God that was not, to some extent, beatifying is simply incoherent.

So faith has a necessary affective component precisely because it is concerned with the reality of God, not just with words about him; but this very insistence on the reality of God means that the status of our talk about God has to be examined carefully. If, as several twelfth-century theologians maintained, the relationship between theological and non-theological use of words is one of equivocation, then theology will tell us nothing about the reality of God unless we can unscramble
the equivocation and determine what the words actually mean when they are used theologically. And if we can do no more than say that they have "miraculous new meanings," then all we shall be able to achieve is the arrangement of more or less coherent verbal patterns, without having the remotest idea what we are actually talking about. If the only kind of bank that I am familiar with is the kind that deals in money, and have no acquaintance with the other kind "whereon the wild thyme blows" (and perhaps try to arrive at some idea of what "wild thyme" is by imagining a nightmarish world in which savage clocks chime irregular hours according to some scheme of chronometry untamed by arithmetic), then I shall quite strictly not have a notion what the bard is talking about, and shall not be any the wiser for being told that he is using words in miraculous new senses. Similarly if all theological language is metaphorical, theology will at most be a vaguely suggestive expression of people's religious aspirations; it will not have any capacity to tell me anything about what God really is. If none of our language properly applies to God and all we can do is transfer words to him without the "things" (res) they signify, then we can never be sure we are really saying anything about God at all. And it is no good appealing to some kind of direct experiential knowledge of God, which would render words superfluous, if it is true, as Albert believed in common with most of his contemporaries, that in this life we never have a direct encounter with God unmediated by creatures.

In Albert's view the res that convinces the mind to cleave to the first truth is the divine light itself, but this does not in itself present us with any specific object. It would be more correct to say that it is like the sheer fact of daylight than that it is like direct perception of any particular thing. You cannot argue with daylight (though you can draw the curtains and shut your eyes, if you want to); it "convinces the mind." But if we actually want to see something, there has to be something there for us to see. The light of faith enables us to believe, but it does not of itself give any content to belief, and the content comes largely from words (the words of the creeds, the words of the bible, and so on). So if faith does in some way confront us with the reality of God it must be, in this life, largely through the medium of words. And these must, then, be words that really do succeed, however inadequately, in putting us in touch with God himself.

Thirteenth-century theologians had learned from Aristotle at least one linguistic gambit they could use to escape from the twelfth-century dilemma. Instead of having to decide simply whether theological usage was univocal, metaphorical or equivocal, they could also consider the possibility that it might be analogical. Barclays and Chase Manhattan are both banks in the same sense (univocally). The bank where I keep my overdraft and the bank where I keep my wild
thyme are banks in two quite unrelated senses, apparently connected only because of a linguistic accident, so here "bank" is equivocal. As for yon Cassius' lean and hungry look, he may indeed have been dieting and he may be pining for his lunch, but his look is "hungry" with reference to a different appetite and can properly be regarded as metaphorically hungry, a use of language justified by the evident similarities between different kinds of appetite. But what about that shockingly fine specimen, the Earl of Blandings' brother? He has a healthy look, a healthy body and a healthy ap-

-74-

petite. Here, according to medieval Aristotelianism, we have a case of analogy. The look and the appetite are certainly not healthy in the same way as the body, but they are called healthy with reference to the same health that makes us call the body healthy. 196

This notion of analogy suggests a promising way of upgrading theological language. If we say (in the manner of Alan of Lille) that words like "good" are applied to God causally (we call God "good" because he causes goodness), then it is not clear that they really tell us anything about God, though Alan evidently wanted them to do so. But in the Platonist perspective of an Augustine or a Dionysius any goodness in creatures is not just caused by God, it is a participation of some kind in God's goodness. We certainly cannot say that God is good in just the same way that a sausage is good. Sausages, unfortunately, can be bad, so being a sausage is not the same as being a good sausage, whereas for God to be God and for God to be good are exactly the same, in accordance with that most basic of medieval theological rules that God is whatever he has. But could it not be the case that there is some real common referent involved in both God's goodness and that of the sausage, like the common referent involved in the healthy appetite and the healthy body? Albert is not prepared to go so far as that. Full-fledged analogy requires that there be something in common, and there is nothing that is strictly common to God and creatures; it would never be proper to cite God and a creature as two instances of the same thing, even with all the refinements introduced by the notion of analogy. But there is a kind of halting analogy, after all: even if there is, strictly, nothing in common between God and creatures, creatures do, in their various ways, "imitate" God. We call a sausage good with reference to its being a sausage, not with reference to the divine nature; but a good sausage is still, in its own dim way, a reflection of the goodness of God. There is something in God that is responsible for there being a world in which things like sausages can attain to excellence. Creatures are obviously unlike God, but they are also, however palely, like the God who made them. Albert therefore concedes that there is an "analogy of imitation" between God and creatures, even if there is no full analogy. 197
On this basis we can now take a further step. Of course all our language is human language and, as such, is inadequate for talking about God. But does that mean that we are confined to transferring words to God without the reality which they signify? If in at least some cases the link between our talking about creatures and our talking about God is an "analogy of imitation," that suggests that in some cases God has a prior claim on certain words. Albert therefore makes a distinction between what words mean (the reality they signify) and the way in which we learn how to use them. It is from God the Father that all fatherhood is named, according to St. Paul (Eph. 3:15), but it is obviously from the fatherhood we encounter among creatures that we learn to talk about fathers. So the meaning of the word can be said to apply properly to God; what is inadequate is its *modus significandi*, the way it functions in our human language. This means, then, that we must distinguish between words that properly refer to creatures, which can only be used metaphorically of God, and words that really do indicate genuine attributes of God. And when negative theology bids us negate all that we say of God, we must distinguish between different kinds of inadequacy in our language: in some cases we are not denying that the reality indicated by the word belongs to God; we are just reminding ourselves that we cannot properly state what it means for it to belong to God.

Instead of a simple declaration, then, that all human language is inadequate, Albert gives us a rather more nuanced doctrine: Divine names are formed in two ways: (1) from things which in reality belong to God first and only secondarily to creatures, and these are the names which blessed Dionysius calls "mystical," such as "being," "life," "intellect," "wisdom," "goodness." "Mystical" in Greek is the same as "secret" in Latin, and a "mystical name" is so called because (owing to the character imparted to words by the way they are instituted) it signifies imperfectly and partially something that exists in God perfectly and totally, and sometimes it suggests that something is an accidental property which exists substantially in God and is the divine substance. Because of this the divine reality which it names remains hidden from us, because we know that the reality is higher than the name and that our tongues fall short of declaring it.... Affirmations are inadequate because the way that names function in our language (their *modus significandi*) is at odds with the divine reality, particularly in three ways: they present as complex a reality which is of infinite simplicity; they present imperfectly what is absolutely perfect; and they sometimes present as an accident something which is really substance. So Anselm says that "Father" and "Life" and so on actually come down to our level from God, but we are more at home with
“father" meaning a human, fleshly father than we are with "Father" meaning God. (2) In the case of symbolic names God is designated by transferring some property that belongs to bodies to a spiritual sense. He is called "stone," for instance, because stone is solid and provides a solid basis for building on, so in a spiritual sense God's truth is solid and is the foundation for our whole spiritual edifice. 199

So only some names of God are metaphorical, and in their case negative theology has the simple task of reminding us that God is not really a stone or a lion, that he is not really angry or drunk. But some names of God are not metaphorical, they are "mystical" and apply primarily to God; in their case negative theology comes in to insist that they do really apply to God, and that therefore we cannot fully know what they mean. It is particularly with reference to these mystical names that the importance of holding together negative and affirmative theology is apparent: affirmative theology must not exaggerate its competence in talking about the reality of God, but negative theology must not degenerate into pure negation, 200 its aim is to clarify how we are talking about God, not simply to stop us talking about God. The mystical names of God are, according to Albert, the subject of two books of the Dionysian corpus, the Divine Names and the Mystical Theology, corresponding to the two ways in which these names can be considered: "They can be viewed in terms of the flowing out from the cause of the effects it causes, which participate in a secondary way in the content of some name, and this is how they are dealt with in the Divine Names; or they can be viewed in terms of the way in which an analysis of the caused effects traces them back to their cause and the meaning of the name, as it exists in the cause, is left unknown because of the transcendence of the cause, and this is how the names are dealt with in the Mystical Theology." 201 These are obviously complementary approaches: one emphasizes that we are talking about God and explores the manifestation of God in the intelligible structure of creation, while the other emphasizes that we are talking about God and so leads us back from creation to the transcendent mystery that lies hidden within the whole process of revelation.

It is, incidentally, interesting to contrast Albert's interpretation of the distinction between mystical and symbolic names with that of William of Auxerre. According to William, 'Mystical theology, which is called 'mystical,' that is, 'hidden,' names God by means of what it hiddenly perceives about God through some intellectual vision or contemplation, as when it calls God 'sweet,' 'beloved,' and so on. In both symbolic and mystical theology God is named by means of creatures, but in symbolic theology he is named from external creatures, whereas in mystical theology he is named by way of inner, hidden and more worthy effects which the soul receives above itself from the contemplation of God,
and the soul imposes such names through the gift of wisdom, to which it belongs especially and properly to know experientially what God is like (\textit{qualis sit deus})."\textsuperscript{202}

Albert's much more objective understanding of what the mystical names signify is patently facilitated by metaphysical considerations, but it would be wrong to see it as a purely philosophical doctrine. At the beginning of the \textit{Divine Names}, as in the \textit{Celestial Hierarchy}, Albert points out that the \textit{habitus regens} in this science is faith, and specifically "the faith, as it is passed on to us in sacred scripture."

And, following Dionysius, he interprets this strictly. "Our intellect might think that, though it has to be guided by the practice of sacred scripture in its exposition of the divine names, it could legitimately discover something about God by reason beyond what is in scripture. Dionysius excludes this and says that we must say and think nothing about God except what is passed on to us by sacred scripture, so that we reserve to God himself the knowledge of himself in anything which is not given to us in scripture."\textsuperscript{204}

Every science has its own basic principles, and in the case of theology its "principles" consist of scripture.\textsuperscript{205} And it should not be forgotten that in this period any intellectual discipline was intimately associated, if not identified, with its "set books," so that the very word \textit{scientia} could be used to refer to such authoritative writings.\textsuperscript{206} \textit{Theologia} as a science is inseparable from \textit{theologia} as the word of God in scripture. In the case of other disciplines it would be a sign of intellectual weakness to follow "authority" too uncritically. But in theology the "authority" in question is not just human authority; it rests on the infallible "reason" of God, and so it is rational for us to submit to it unhesitatingly, even if we do not always understand the reason for what is said.\textsuperscript{207}

It is this submission to scripture that gives theology its special solidity and certainty.

Intellectual speculation has no right to try to supplement or to criticize the data of revelation. But scripture is meant "to enlighten our intellect,"\textsuperscript{208} and this calls for sustained and intelligent study, and this is where we may benefit from the tools supplied by philosophy and other disciplines. A naive devotion to the mere text of scripture will lead only to "childish fancies." It may be true, as St. Gregory said, that "sacred scripture is a river in which sheep paddle and elephants swim," but this does not justify even the simple faithful in resting content with the mere symbols in which the scriptural message is often clothed, because even the literal meaning of the text should be located, not in the symbols themselves, but in what they signify.\textsuperscript{209}

Mystical theology, then, is located firmly within the enterprise of Christian reflection on the word of God, and it is an intellectual discipline, even if it requires a mind strengthened by a supernatural light so that it can go beyond its natural limits in the "ecstasy" of faith.
Albert’s analysis of theological language leads him to a relatively optimistic view of our ability to say things that do really apply to God, to ascribe the substance, the res, of at least some of our words to him, and not just the words without their res. But at the same time he is keenly aware of how little we actually know God, and he is clearly far from unsympathetic to the "oriental" theology that provoked the condemnation of 1241.

The epistemological problem of how any created intellect can know God, which Bonaventure could dismiss so breezily in his quaestio disputata, was for Albert a very serious question.

In the De Resurrectione Albert makes a valiant, if not very successful, attempt to deal with the issues involved in the claim that we shall see God directly in heaven, a claim which the 1241 condemnation made it necessary to endorse, and in any case Albert seems to be persuaded that if we cannot ever attain to a genuine knowledge of God then our whole intellectual life (and therefore our whole life) will be eternally doomed to frustration. But there are problems. Only an infinite act of understanding could cope with an "infinite intelligible," and that is what God is; and our intellectual capacity is finite and so there seems to be an irremediable disproportion between it and God. We also need to show that there is some procedure whereby our minds could know God without either actually being God (which would bring us back to the pantheism condemned in 1210) or needing some intelligible form of God, which would leave us with a knowledge of God by way of something which is not God, and that would be merely a "vision in theophanies," such as Hugh of St. Victor had reprobated and which some people believed to have been condemned as heretical in 1241.

To evade the second kind of difficulty Albert falls back on an Augustinian notion of immediate knowledge of God by virtue of his real presence in the intellect, which we cannot see now because of the conditions of life in this world (particularly the flesh and sin) and because our attention is turned elsewhere, hindrances which will both be removed in the hereafter. Our immediate knowledge of God is thus to be understood on the model of our immediate knowledge of ourselves, and Albert even goes so far as to say "God will present himself to us without any medium, just as he sees himself without any medium."

To deal with the problem of disproportion and with the patristic authorities marshalled against the possibility of any direct vision of God, Albert resorts to distinctions in true scholastic vein. Taking up a phrase from 1 John 3:2 he distinguishes between seeing something "as it is" and seeing what something is, the latter meaning an exhaustive vision of all that something is. Clearly in this sense we cannot see what God is, and in this sense, as Damascene says, God is "incomprehensible and boundless, known by none, the sole
contemplator of himself." But we can see God "as he is," Albert maintains, and seeing something "as it is" means "seeing its existence (esse) or being (essentia)." This rather underdeveloped distinction seems to rely heavily on the analogy of bodily vision: when the long-awaited visitors from Alpha Centauri eventually decide to land, we shall no doubt see many exotic pieces of equipment "as they are," without having the remotest idea what they are.

This still leaves the problem of disproportion. The only possibility of coping with something infinite, Albert suggests, is by finding some way in which it is finite. There is no chance of our intellect being able to delimit what God is, but it can handle God's attributes, and in reality any of God's attributes is God, so if our minds can reach any of them they will in fact be reaching God's essence. This also provides the answer to the problem raised by Chrysostom: if God's essence is simple, then all those who see it must be seeing the same thing, yet "one praises it as glory, another as majesty, another as holiness and another as wisdom." The answer is that "though any attribute, as it exists in God, is the divine essence, yet as perceived by the intellect the attributes are distinguished by what they connote. And that is why one praises God as glory, another as wisdom and another as majesty." What is "connoted" by the divine attributes is their derivatives in creation (their reality in God being what they denote), and if this is the source of their distinction it might be felt that Albert has not sufficiently established that knowledge of God by way of his attributes is any different from knowledge of him through creatures, and his implied suggestion that the attributes of God are somehow "finite," which must mean that we can "define" them in a way that is impossible with the question "what" God is, surely prompts us to wonder whether it is not at the level of their created counterparts that they are thus definable, rather than at the level of their existence in God. And if these anxieties are legitimate, we may further suspect that Albert has not sufficiently distinguished between the vision of God that we shall have in heaven and the knowledge of God we can have by faith here on earth.

In his account of the "mechanics" of the vision of God, at this stage, Albert is essentially at one with the Augustinian critics of "oriental" theology, but in his account of what we shall be able to see he stops a long way short of the utterly complete and clear vision of God to which William of Auvergne aspired, and he concedes a great deal to the Dionysian contention that "complete ignorance is the way to know him who is above all that is known": 'Complete ignorance' means 'ignorance of the complete,' that is, ignorance of what God is; the most perfect knowledge of God is the vision of him together with the recognition that we are powerless to reach 'what' he is. He is thus known to be above all knowledge and all mind. And
this is what Job says, that all who see him look on him from afar" (cf. Job 36:25).  

In the commentaries on the Sentences and on Dionysius' *Celestial Hierarchy* we can see that Albert's position has already matured considerably. He now repudiates the suggestion that the divine attributes might provide a way round the problem of God's infinity: God is "infinite in any one of his attributes." Precisely as infinite he cannot be known, except in the sense that we can know that he is infinite. But because he is simple and because we are not talking of any kind of infinite bulk, knowing God incompletely does not mean knowing just a "part" of God (as we might see just the tail of a mouse, which would not of itself tell us much about the rest of the animal). So there is no radical impossibility about our knowing God (who is infinite), even though we cannot know him precisely in his infinity—only God can have that kind of thorough knowledge of himself.  

God, according to a phrase inspired by Damascene, is "an infinite ocean of substance," entirely eluding any attempt to say what he is. So our minds are rather in the position of people gazing out to sea: they are definitely looking at the sea, but at the same time they are not looking at anything precisely defined.  

The question of proportionality was largely sidestepped in *De Resurrectione* by means of the Augustinian doctrine of knowledge by presence in the intellect. If God is really there the whole time and it is only the nuisance of this present life that prevents us from seeing him, then clearly the soul just is, as Augustine claimed, capable of God (*capax Dei*).  

Our inability to see him is no more than a temporary, if tiresome, fact about us. In the commentary on the Sentences Albert becomes less and less happy with this scenario. In book I he is still essentially relying on the model of the intellect's awareness of itself: "The divine substance is seen by all the blessed; as to how it is seen, without wishing to preempt further discussion we say that it is seen unmediatedly by conjunction, in such a way that God offers himself to our intellect in his own substance, just as the intellect does to itself." But there is no longer any hint that this immediate vision of God was all along a possibility lurking within the soul. The lack of proportion between God and us has to be taken seriously, and Albert now maintains that naturally there really is no such proportion; it is only "by the help of God" that our minds can rise up to become capable of seeing God.  

Once a more active role is ascribed to God in making it possible for us to see him, the question of "theophanies" begins to demand more attention. The use of this term was integral to the Eriugenist interpretation of the Dionysian hierarchical worldview, and had been interpreted to involve (a) that God is seen, even by the angels and the
blessed, only indirectly by way of "images," and (b) that the vision of God is accorded to the angels and saints strictly in accordance with their position in the hierarchy of being, so that lower beings receive only the illumination that passes down to them through higher beings and therefore do not actually see God. 219 Both conclusions were condemned in 1241 and "theophany" became a word to be avoided. But Albert is now no longer prepared to leave the word in the hands of its enemies, whom he accuses of "insulting holy books" and "presumption." 220 His own maturing theory of the intellect makes possible an interpretation of theophanies that allows for a direct vision of God: in intellectual as in bodily vision there has to be some kind of light to make things visible (or intelligible), but there has also to be a specific visible (or intelligible) object, and it is this that determines what in particular is seen (or known). A created intellect needs to be reinforced by a light from on high if it is to see God, and this light may come either directly from God or through the mediation of higher created beings, but the role of intelligible object, which determines the content of the act of understanding, is God himself, God’s own substance. 221 So Albert distinguishes between purely symbolic theophanies, which have no place in the beatific vision, and theophanies that are perfectly compatible with the beatific vision: We may see an object which is truly God in a divine light that is not God (that is, a light which flows to us from God through created intermediaries, which fortifies the mind to see God himself). We may also see an object which is truly God in a divine light which is God: "God himself is in all the blessed as a kind of light, making them into a likeness of himself through their participation in him." 222 In this way Albert is able to revive the Eriugenist doctrine that we see God by participating in God and to allow room even in heaven for a process of illumination that respects the structural interdependence of created intellects, without any denial of the immediacy of the vision of God. The spiritual solipsism which can, even if rather unfairly, be deduced from Plotinian or Augustinian doctrine, is thus shown to be unnecessary: the richly coherent cosm

-83-

mos of later Neoplatonism in which all beings are connected with each other in multiple ways does not exclude the possibility of direct intellectual union between any created mind and God.

In the commentary on the fourth book of the Sentences Albert formally and finally rejects the Augustinian knowledge by presence: substantial presence of something in the soul is not a sufficient basis for understanding. The mind understands itself in the same way that it understands anything else. Albert concedes this, but with an unexpected reservation: there is no other way of interpreting understanding, "provided we know what we are saying or understanding. But in heaven it will not be like this. There the
unbounded light of the Godhead, which is God himself, is united with the agent intellect and poured out substantially over the whole soul and fills the soul, and in this way the soul will be full of God who is its bliss." 223 It is by being united directly with God like this that the blessed soul will "understand" him, but it seems to be a rather odd kind of understanding, if it excludes knowing what we are talking about or understanding. In fact Albert seems to be proposing to us a state of complete, but rather vague, luminosity, in which nothing in particular is understood.

In the later Dionysian commentaries Albert moves with much greater confidence toward a coherent and surprisingly Eriugenist doctrine, in which the notion of theophanies plays an important part. It is in terms of theophanies that Albert manages to do justice to both sides of the dispute that resulted in the 1241 condemnation, showing that it is possible for a created intellect to have a direct vision of God's essence, that such a vision is not ineluctably confined to the natural capacity of any given being, and that in spite of the simplicity of the divine essence it can truly be seen directly by different intellects in different ways.

Let us look at some texts from the commentary on the Divine Names:

"Seeing" means actually making contact with the thing seen.... It also means running your eye over something. As Euclid shows, anything that is seen is seen from the vantage point of the corner of a triangle, whose apex is in the eye and whose base is in the thing seen.... The thing is seen along a line dividing the triangle, and so it is not seen all at once, but by passing from one point to another. When we have run our eye over the whole thing, we can be said to have seen the whole thing. In this sense God cannot be seen by running our mind's eye over all that he is.

... Although God is simple in his substance, he is multiple in his attributes, whose principle (ratio) exists truly in him without any real plurality. If we saw God by surveying his substance with the knowledge of "what" he is, then all who see him would see and praise him in the same way. But as it is he is seen only in the sense of an immediate contact with his substance, in whatever way he makes himself present (se obiicit). And since he makes himself present to one in one light (secundum unam rationem) and to another in another light, one sees what another does not see, although they are all seeing his substance, because knowledge and goodness and everything that can have a ratio [i.e., more or less, everything that can properly be predicated of God] is God's substance.

... A created intellect has no proportionate capacity to know God by its own natural endowments, but it is made proportionate inasmuch as it is helped by enlightenments or theophanies coming down to it from God; even so it is not made capable of seeing "what" God is, but only
of seeing him by a real contact with his substance, in accordance with whatever way he makes himself present in one or another light (sub tali vel tali ratione). \footnote{224}

The life of glory is a perfection above nature, in which nature without grace is incompetent; so since it is not granted in accordance with the power of nature, since it increases the capacity of nature, though without destroying nature, it can come about that a being whose nature is lower can be brought to the level of some being of a higher nature or even beyond it. \footnote{225}

The intellect, making contact with God's substance, knows him either in some image, as in this life in which we know God in a mirror and enigmatically, or immediately, as in heaven. The intellect is not proportionate just by its nature to this contact, but it is made proportionate by the light of glory coming down to it and strengthening it and raising it above its nature; and this is what is meant by saying that God is seen by way of theophany and participation, inasmuch as different intellects are strengthened in different ways to see God. \footnote{226}

Albert's whole scheme presupposes that no created intellect can see "what" God is, so that we are all entirely dependent on the various ways in which God strengthens our minds and the various lights in which he proposes himself to our thus strengthened minds. And Albert's doctrine is quite unambiguous on this point. Even the highest angels do not know "what" God is. \footnote{227} All that is proportionate to our understanding is "that" God is (quia est). \footnote{228} And even this is perhaps going too far: "A created intellect cannot perfectly reach God in such a way that no knowledge of him remains outside it; it is joined to him as to something transcending its capacity, indistinctly (sub quadam confusione) because there can be no knowledge 'what' he is, since he is unlimited, or of 'why' he is, since he has no cause, or even a distinct knowledge 'that' he is, since he has no remote cause or effect proportionate to him, \footnote{229} so neither on earth nor in heaven can anything be seen of him except an indistinct 'that he is' (quia confusum), although God himself is seen more or less luminously according to different kinds of vision and different kinds of seer." \footnote{230}

The knowledge "that" God is is apparently "proportionate" to our minds, and this calls for a more precise statement of what is meant by saying that our minds do not naturally have any "proportion" or capacity for the knowledge of God. There was a tradition, going back to St. Paul, that some kind of knowledge of God is possible to us by way of his creatures, independent of the gift of faith. St. John Damascene specified that the knowledge "that" God is is implanted in us by nature, and Albert accepts this. \footnote{231} Such a claim is entirely coherent with Albert's belief that God is present in us as a light in our minds, so that he is known, implicitly, in our knowledge of anything, as the ground of
all intelligibility. But if knowledge "that" God is is natural to us, and knowledge "that" God is is all we shall have even in heaven, what becomes of the alleged

"strengthening" of our intellect by some supernatural influx of light?

In response to a suggestion that our knowledge of God is perfected in heaven and must therefore move on from knowledge "that" to knowledge "what" or "why," Albert replies very firmly, "Our knowledge will not be perfected with a different kind of knowledge, either knowledge 'what' or knowledge 'why,' but with another way of knowing 'that': we shall have an unmediated vision 'that,' where now we have only a veiled and enigmatic vision in a mirror." 232 The supernatural reinforcement of our minds does not enable them to do something quite different from what they could do naturally; it enables them to do more fully what they could already, to some extent, do. Albert is fully serious in his concern that the supernatural should not be envisaged in any way that jeopardizes the natural. However much a created intellect may be enhanced by grace or glory, its understanding will always be conditioned by its own nature. 233 Albert does not believe that some miraculous change will overtake our intellectual or perceptual powers in heaven. The text in the pseudo-Augustinian De Spiritu et Anima, which suggests that in heaven our senses will be turned into reason and our reason into intellect and our intellect into understanding (intelligentia), 234 is interpreted by Albert to mean only that the lower powers turn to the higher powers and receive a kind of overflow from them so that they too can share in their enjoyment; he explicitly denies that they are "drawn out of their own natures." 235

All that our minds are capable of, then, is an indistinct knowledge "that" God is, a knowledge which is, to start off with, simply implicit in the sheer fact that we can understand anything at all. This purely natural and indirect knowledge of God can be enhanced in various degrees, for instance, by the light of faith, that res convincens intellectum, the sheer fact of illumination contained in the fact that we find the articles of belief credible. Inasmuch as we are united with the light of God, we can come to know the unknown God more and more, 236 but even in heaven, even with the light of glory, we cannot get beyond an indistinct knowledge "that" God is; he remains for us an "infinite ocean" of which we know more truly what it is not than what it is. 237 What is new in heaven is that we shall meet this brute fact of light directly, instead of meeting it indirectly in its reflection in the intelligibility of God's works, whether of grace

or of nature. But does this mean, then, that there is nothing for us to see except a vague, unbounded luminosity?

Vistas of infinite and indeterminate light no doubt appeal to some people, and if that is all that there is to be known about God, the
comparative mystics will have no difficulty in proving that all religions are really one and that the systems of doctrine that divide them are no more than hopeless attempts to formulate the ineffable. There have presumably always been people who prefer their religion to provide uplift and inspiration, without requiring them actually to believe anything in particular. In the Middle Ages Eriugena could perhaps be read (inaccurately, to be sure) as recommending a rather nebulous deity, when he announced that even God does not know what he himself is, because he does not have any particular "what" to know. This doctrine was duly passed on in Honorius Augustodunensis. 

238 Avicenna also denied that God has an essence or quiddity. 239

William of Auvergne had little sympathy for any such imprecise divinity. In his view it is impossible to speak either about God or to God unless God is "intelligible and nameable as an individual (singulariter)," unless he can be clearly picked out and distinguished from everyone and everything else. Any philosophy that could not accommodate this clearly locatable individuality of God was automatically disqualified. If we cannot identify God as an individual, to whom shall we pray, whom shall we worship, how shall we know we are not worshipping the wrong God? 240

St. Albert is definitely not happy about calling God "individual." Apart from the problem that God is not "an individual" (he is three Persons), the term individual suggests only improperly the real uniqueness of God. In principle, wherever there is one individual there could conceivably be more than one; even if in fact we have only one sun in our sky, there is no absolute reason why we should not have half a dozen. To call God "an individual" (singularis) suggests that he might always turn out to be merely one God among several, and "God," according to St. Albert, properly has no plural. 241 On this view William of Auvergne's anxiety is somewhat misconceived. The problem is not how we identify the right God, so that we do not worship the wrong one, but how we make sure we do not worship anything which is not God. And if this is the right way to formulate the problem, it is not really necessary to "pick out"

-88-

God, so long as we remember not to worship anything that we can pick out. But this still leaves the other side of William's anxiety, which was mentioned earlier on, that if we cannot know God as an individual, our whole hope of beatitude collapses. Are we really looking forward only to an eternity of gazing out into (supernatural) space?

Albert certainly does not accept that God actually is indeterminate. The contention that God has no quid est is explicitly repudiated: God is "a kind of quiddity and essence"; there is something "intrinsically intelligible in God, by which he is distinguished from others." 242 Although God "is infinite in every way, in his essence, in his power and in every other way that is conceivable in him," 243 Albert does not want
this to be understood as implying that God is fuzzy at the edges: "Though God is not measured or limited by anything created, he is measured by himself and so in a way he is finite to himself, though not to us." 244

The trouble is that God is "infinite" as far as we are concerned and "what" he is is therefore indeterminate in our minds. He is not properly to be thought of as an "object" to any created intellect. 245 All the same, Albert is not prepared to leave us simply with a vast, unfocused luminosity to gaze at. In his commentary on Dionysius' fifth epistle he formally raises the question: If it is God who enlightens us, then how can it also be God who perfects our intellect, since the perfection of the intellect requires that it should have some definite object to know? And it is not light that provides the mind with any definite object; the mind comes to intellectual fulfilment in the form of actual understanding because its intellectual light is particularized by the thing understood.

Albert answers that God brings the intellect to its fulfilment by acting in two ways. He enlightens the mind (this picks up the doctrine formulated in the commentary on the fourth book of the Sentences that God unites himself with our agent intellect), but he also "brings it to a particular knowledge, inasmuch as he is something particular (quiddam determinatum), particularized not by matter, but by his nature and the attributes of his nature and inasmuch as there are Persons with their own particular properties." 246

So God is not in any ordinary sense an "object" for the intellect, yet he takes the place of the thing known. How are we to understand this? In the commentary on the fifth epistle Albert refers us back for the rest of his discussion of the vision of God to the commentary on the first epistle, where Dionysius makes the devastating comment, "If anyone who sees God understands what he has seen, then he has not seen God himself, but only something that is his.... Perfect ignorance in the best sense is how we know him who is above all that is known." Since understanding and mental vision are essentially the same thing, Albert takes Dionysius to be propounding the startling paradox that "anyone who sees God does not see God, but only something that is his," that is, something that derives from him, and he comments accordingly:

When he says that anyone seeing God does not see him, this must be understood in terms of a vision of "what" God is or a distinct vision "that" he is, and God is not seen in either of these ways; all there is is an indistinct and inadequate vision "that" he is, and this is true both on earth and in heaven, as we have already said.

When he says, "but only something that is his," this must be understood with reference to the starting-point of vision, because vision always begins with some effect of God's, either one in which the intellect sees, as in a mirror, or one by which it sees, as with light. But
the intellect is fixed on God himself as the goal (terminus) of its vision, because the intellect receives God's effects and plunges itself in him and sees God himself....

The "perfect ignorance" Dionysius recommends is taken to mean that "we know ourselves to be failing completely to comprehend God because of his excellence.... And so it is clear that Dionysius does not mean that God is not seen in any way, but that he is seen precisely in our ignorance of him." 247

If we put these comments on the epistles together with the passages cited earlier from the Divine Names, it is reasonably clear what Albert's doctrine is. God unites himself with our minds as light; he also confronts us with himself, indirectly on earth and directly in heaven, but our minds cannot really take him in as an "object" because we can only attain to an indistinct knowledge "that" he is. But God presents himself to us, obiicit se, almost "objectifies himself" for us, "under this or that ratio," as goodness or wisdom or whatever.

These are surely the "somethings that are his" that we see and that are a way of reaching a real vision of God, which begins with some effect of his. It is through God's effects that we have a distinct grasp of his attributes (which in him are simply himself). And in as much as it is by participating in God that we know him, it is surely not least by discovering the effects of his attributes in ourselves that we see him in the light of them. Thus we do have a real and immediate vision of God in heaven, but simply as such it provides no specific content for our intellect. Inasmuch as God provides the content as well as the light for our intellect, it is in terms of his attributes, on which we can get some intellectual purchase because of their visibility in God's effects. Starting from these effects, we see through them to God who is presenting his substance to us (which is not really distinct from his attributes) precisely by knowing that we are not capable of comprehending what God is. It is quite literally in our ignorance, our not-knowing, that we actually see God in himself, because it is the not-knowing that takes us beyond the intelligible effect of God to the reality of the attribute of God that it manifests, and so to the essence of God, that sheer presence whose very transcendence delights the intellect supremely. 248

If this interpretation of Albert's doctrine is correct, then the position he has reached by the end of his Dionysian commentaries is, as I have suggested, surprisingly Eriugenist. Unlike Eriugena he does formally allow for an unmediated vision of God's essence, but as such this unmediated vision is unintelligible to us. What makes it intelligible is that God presents himself to us in the light of his attributes, which are distinct and intelligible to us because of their manifestation in creatures. So what actually gives intelligible shape to our vision of God is the vision of God's effects become entirely transparent to himself,
and this is precisely what Eriugena believed. It is God who is seen, but he, as it were, nuances the vision of himself in different ways for different people, so that it is in terms of theophanies that the vision of God becomes, as it were, manageable to them. And this is just how Eriugena's twelfth-century follower, Honorius Augustodunensis, interprets the "many mansions" of John 14:2.

It is clear that any theory like this of how we see God requires the sort of theory we were looking at earlier of how we talk about God. If theophanies are to provide a real, direct vision of God, then it must be possible to ascribe real attributes to God which, in him, actually are his substance but which are at the same time real in their own right, so that the affirmation of them does genuinely succeed in saying something about God, even if, because of the inadequate modus significandi of all our language, the affirmation needs to be capped by a negation.

We can also see how important the Mystical Theology is in Albert's view of the Christian life. There is real continuity between the vision of God in heaven and our attempts to develop our faith into a theological science on earth. Even in heaven we have only an indistinct vision of God's essence, as such, and whatever distinctness there is comes from an increasingly perspicuous knowledge of how the attributes of God are manifested in his works. Thus there has to be a rich affirmative theology, culling signs and riddling disclosures of God from all his creatures and all his words. But if this elaborate and no doubt lengthy process is to debouch into a vision of God himself, every light has to be transcended. If it is "transcended" without first being affirmed, there will be no revelation, no theophany; but equally if it is affirmed without being transcended, then we shall stop short of the knowledge of God that is possible to us.

* "God is seen precisely in our ignorance of him." This is the abrupt conclusion to Albert's commentary on Dionysius' first epistle. And it might appear to make God painfully remote. But if this is how it strikes us, we need to look carefully at our reaction. There is a very proper way to make God remote from us, namely, the removing of our comfortable false gods, our idols. Negative theology reminds us of just how many things are not God. The patron saint of a later and rather different kind of "mystical theology," St. John of the Cross, tears away our domesticated deities with almost insolent ruthlessness. If we feel that St. Albert is "taking away our God," maybe our "God" was never really worth having anyway.

But if we are concerned, not with some comfortable godling, but with the God who is the maker of all things, visible and invisible, the God who is the Father of immeasurable majesty, the God who is the Son in whom all things were made, the God who is the
Holy Spirit, the Lord, who spoke through those very uncomfortable gentlemen, the prophets, then it is surely not really true that it is negative theology, as presented by Dionysius, as interpreted by Albert, that makes God "remote." Precisely because God is inaccessible and incomprehensible, there can be no shortcuts to him, and in that sense he is "remote"; nor can there be any specialist faculty in us that can by sheer concentration of energy get through to him. But what this leaves us with is the incredible abundance of ways in which God gives himself to us. If Dionysius and Albert are right, we are bumping into God the whole time. It is negative theology, properly understood, which validates the apparent paradox that God has no name and yet every name is God's name. If there is, strictly speaking, no entirely adequate way of talking about God, there is also no way of talking about God that is entirely inadequate either. And this means that theology can never be allowed to degenerate into an esoteric Fachsprache. And it is not only academic theology that is prone to the temptation to false expertise; piety too has its experts and its jargon. Negative theology dethrones the idols with their professional guardians and gives us back the breadth and richness of the church, with its innumerable ways of talking and behaving, in which, of course, some of us have competences others lack, but the most important thing about all of us is that we are incompetent with reference to God.

If we take Dionysian negative theology seriously, it frees us from the various tyrannies that narrow our religious language and practice. Unduly self-confident affirmative theologies take some ways of talking and some ways of behaving too seriously, and deprive all the rest of any significance. But it is surely trivial gods who make most of life trivial. The God of St. Albert, who is the source of all being and of all intelligibility, of course cannot be seen simply as "a being" or as "an intelligible object," 251 but this means that we do not turn to him by naively turning away from other beings and other possible objects of our mental attention; he sheds a light of intelligibility and significance upon everything and it is in everything that we encounter him. This gives us back the whole giddy vocabulary of the bible, 252 it gives us back a whole world of fascinating creatures to study, it gives us back the whole range of sacraments and sacramentals, 253 of liturgies and devotions. Of course it warns us not to be duped into supposing that any of these things "is" God,

but it also warns us not to be taken in by any simplistic assertion that they are not God. In knowing them we are, at least implicitly, beginning to know God.

Precisely because God is incomprehensible, a variety of ways of approaching God can be real ways of approaching him. If we forget this, we cannot help but subvert the lawful freedom of God's children.
Conversely, no way is entirely adequate. If we forget this, then our ways of piety will become impenetrable barriers between us and God; as Albert's follower Meister Eckhart warns us, if we seek God "with some particular way," we shall find a way and lose God. 254 If certain particular ways of talking about God come to be taken as fully clear and satisfactory accounts of what God is like, our very clarity will do much to obscure our apprehension of him. The modern dogma, for instance, that "God is a person" can be given a perfectly serviceable sense, as long as we do not imagine that it tells us what God is in a way that we can understand. If we omit the negative corrective, as most of the devotees of this slogan appear to do, then not only do we produce some rather bizarre theologies, not only do we cut ourselves off from many centuries of Christian tradition, but we also trap ourselves in assumptions about the Christian life that may actually make life rather miserable for us. When we pray, according to the ancient definition, we are talking to God. If "God is a person," then talking to God must be talking to a person. But then very often saying our prayers is not a bit like talking to a person in any ordinary sense. 255 If God's love for us and our love for him have to be interpreted rigorously and relentlessly as "personal" love on both sides, this is likely to conjure up all kinds of associations, which will in many cases be frequently disappointed. Why not allow ourselves other and more varied ways of talking? Why not, just for a treat, see what it is like to call God "Truth" and see what light the love of truth can shed on what it means to love God? Neither "person" nor "truth" will alone be enough for us to live off indefinitely, but the more numerous our avenues of approach are, the more likely it is that we shall find God infinitely intimate to us and supremely enjoyable.

St. Albert gives us a vastly spacious view of life, but he too was drawn to God in his own way. His most famous disciple, St. Thomas Aquinas, did not agree with his master on how we shall see God in heaven. Even as a child, we are told, young Thomas wanted an answer to the question, What is God? 256 As an adult theologian he ventured to assert that in heaven we shall get the answer to this question and see what God is (de ipso Deo videtur non solum quid non est, sed etiam quid est). 257 H. F. Dondaine suggests that the difference in doctrine between the two saints reflects a difference in spirituality: "St. Albert likes to imagine the vision of God as an encounter with the Infinite, a being plunged into it or a blind gazing over the limitless ocean of substance. But St. Thomas defines the essential desire of the spirit as an aspiration to see what something is; he has understood the agony of the great philosophers, dissatisfied with only knowing of God 'that' he is." 258

Dondaine may well be right in supposing that there was a difference of spiritual temperament between Thomas and Albert, and it is perhaps
true that Albert had more of a taste for infinity than Thomas did. St. Catherine of Siena certainly liked the idea of God as a "boundless ocean." But I do not believe that the crucial factor lies there. For Thomas the question, What is it? may well have been paramount, but Albert—in this perhaps more truly Aristotelian than Thomas—harps at least as much on the further question, Why? May we not perhaps detect a personal note in Albert's comment near the beginning of his exposition of the Metaphysics?

God does not put to rest our desire for knowledge precisely inasmuch as he is God or as a particular nature existing in its own right, but rather inasmuch as he is the highest cause of things, whose knowledge causes being, because this is how he is the principle and light of all that is known, just as an art is the principle and light of all artifacts.

Would it be too far from the truth to suggest that the ratio under which God especially showed himself to Albert was that of being the cause of all intelligibility, the ultimate explanation of everything? My suspicion is that for Albert beatitude would have to include, even if only as the minutest part of it, the opportunity to say, "So that's why flies lay their eggs on white walls!"

Notes
Part I


5. Tolomeo of Lucca, Hist. Eccl. XXII 19 (L. A. Muratori, Rerum It-

-96-

alicarum Sciptores XI [Milan 1727], col. 1151). Bernard Gui, MOPH XXII p. 125. J. Meyer, QF 12 p. 50, QF 29 p. 40. Luis (p. 755) says that he was "about 87" and Peter says that he was exactly 87 (p. 303); the value of this more precise figure is uncertain, but it could be correct.


7. Luis p. 752; Meyer, QF 12 p. 49; Peter p. 78; Alberto f. 139r. Also some manuscripts of Albert's Metaphysica (cf. Col. XXI i p. XV). Rudolph (p. 8) adds that the family name was Bollstadt, but this is almost certainly his own conjecture (cf. Scheeben pp. 5-7).

8. Scheeben, Albertus Magnus (Bonn, 1932), p. 22; cf. Scheeben p. 7 n. 28; Freed pp. 63-64.

9. This view has most recently been espoused by Weisheipl, Albert p. 38. Since then it has been attacked by B. Schmidt (Col. XXI i p. XV) on two grounds: Albert would not have referred to his episcopal palace of Donaustauf as villa mea, since it was not a villa but a castrum; and there are reasons for believing that De Animalibus was completed before Albert became a bishop. But if, as Schmidt contends, villa has to
be translated "town," it seems odd that Albert should refer to Lauingen as "my town"; and it is far from proved that villa cannot refer to an episcopal estate (cf. J. F. Niermeyer, Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon Minus [Leiden, 1976], p. 1102). And, as Schmidt concedes, his arguments for the dating of De Animalibus are not conclusive. It seems certain that the Quaestiones de Animalibus can be dated to 1258 (Schmidt, p. XVI), and this work does refer, once, to "our book De Animalibus" (Col. XII p. 169:58), but the reference is totally vague (cf. Col. XII p. XLIV) and could be taken as a sign that the De Animalibus was still more of a project than a reality. Little can be inferred with any certainty from the fact that a Parisian manuscript contains an earlier draft of a single page from the beginning of De Animalibus; the dating of this manuscript no later than 1260 is not controversial (cf. Schmidt, p. XVI), but there seems to be no reason why someone should not have culled a page discarded by Albert from a work that was still in progress. Unless better arguments are proposed against it, it seems to me that Albert's "estate on the Danube" can most naturally be taken as referring to his episcopal residence, not his birthplace.

10. Anim. 8.2.6.110 is an explicit but not localized reference to the childhood experience of Albert and his friends, so it is not unreasonable to take nobis in 8.2.6.111 as referring to the same period—no other group has been mentioned to which the plural could refer (Albert does not use the plural when he only means himself); and 8.2.6.111 is explicitly located in "upper Swabia."


12. Freed p. 66. That Henry was Albert's blood brother is proved by Albert's will (QF 16 p. 33).

13. Freed pp. 68-9: a Henry of Lauingen is known in Austria c.1176; ibid. p. 64 for a late thirteenth-century Lord Hartmann of Lauingen in Augsburg, known as "the Bavarian" (which could in this period refer to Austria). Freed argues fairly plausibly that Albert's brother Henry could be identical with the Henry of Lauingen who is known as a canon of Friesach in Carinthia between 1232 and 1241 (ibid. pp. 66-7).

14. Freed pp. 63-4, is lured by Scheeben into looking for a place on the Danube (cf. note 8), and so wonders why Henry became a canon so far from home (ibid. p. 68). But it is not impossible that the family home was in Carinthia. Albert gives us presumably first-hand information that the peasants in that part of the world lure dormice to hibernate in specially prepared places in the woods and then use them...
for food (Anim. 22.2.1.103). The medieval biographers did not necessarily have any evidence for Lauingen being Albert's birthplace except their knowledge of his name. The fact that a chapel was built in Lauingen in Albert's honor in view of his hoped-for canonization in about 1320 (Luis, p. 757) proves only that people believed or at least wanted to claim that Albert was born there.

15. Herford p. 201; Meyer, QF 29 p. 103; Peter p. 78; Alberto f. 139r.

16. Freed pp. 64-5. But if Lord Hartmann of Lauingen, attested in Augsburg in 1280, is to be connected with Albert's family, then they had clearly gone up in the world (as did some other knightly families according to Freed, ibid. p. 65).

17. Anim. 8.2.6.110.

18. Anim. 8.2.4.72.

19. Herford p. 201; Luis p. 752; Peter p. 78. Peter's story is self-contradictory: Albert cannot both have been 87 in 1280 and been received into the Order by Jordan at the age of 16. Rudolph (pp. 9-11) clearly saw the contradiction and abandoned the claim that Albert joined the Order when he was 16.


21. Bacon, Compendium Studii Philosophiae 5, ed. cit. p. 426. It is not clear that Bacon is even intending to make a specific point about Albert; he remarks generally that a great many Dominicans enter the Order as "boys" under 20 years of age. Although he specifically mentions Albert and Thomas, he does not, in so many words, claim to have any knowledge of the ages at which they became Dominicans.

22. Herford p. 201; Luis pp. 752-3.


27. Peter pp. 79-82.


29. Vincentius Justiniani, Compendiosa Vitae Descriptio... B. Alberti, with Bibliae Mariae Opus a B. Alberto Magno... Conscriptum (Cologne, 1625), pp. 40-1. Apart from Justiniani's quotations, the chronicle of Iohannes Molitoris is lost.


32. Herford p. 201. Peter, p. 90, follows Herford very closely, but changes "first" to "next," to allow for a previous period as lector in Cologne. Meyer has clearly received a confused tradition that has Albert lecture on the Sentences in Cologne and then become a lector "for the first time" in Hildesheim (QF 26 p. 156). It is clear that the traditional datum, which has to be accommodated, is that Albert was first a lector at Hildesheim.

33. Justiniani p. 11 implies that Molitoris maintained that Albert was sent to Cologne as a lector under the priorship of Leo, but the text actually quoted (pp. 40-41) does not substantiate this. As Scheeben suggests (pp. 11-12), Molitoris' reference to Albert's assignation to Cologne may well concern a later occasion.

34. Mineralia II 3.1 (B 5 pp. 48-9; AT 82).

35. Meteora III 2.12 (B 4 p. 629a; AT 123); Summa de Creaturis II 10.5 (B 35 p. 119b).


39. De Natura Boni, written before he went to Paris (cf. P. Simon, Col. XXV i pp. V-VI), reveals a knowledge of those texts of Aristotle that had been available for some time, including the Metaphysics and some of the Naturalia. The public study of these works was banned in the University of Paris in 1210 and 1215 (Chart. I pp. 70-1, 78-9) and the ban was renewed in 1231 until such time as a suitably bowdlerised
version could be produced (ibid. p. 138), but in some other places a more liberal attitude prevailed (e.g. Toulouse, see Chart. I p. 131).


41. As Scheeben tries to do (pp. 12-13).

42. Meteora III 2.9, 2.20 (B 4 pp. 626, 638; AT 121, 122).


44. This is suggested by Scheeben p. 13.

45. Scheeben p. 11. The historians who give 1223 as the date of Albert's entry into the Order all rely on B. M. Reichert, "Das Itinerar des zweiten Dominikanergenerals Jordanis von Sachsen," in S. Ehes, Festschrift zum 1100 jährigen Jubiläum des deutschen Campo Santo in Rom, Freiburg i. Br. 1897, pp. 154-5, or more recently on B. Altaner, QF 20 p. 70, both of whom base themselves on the presumed dating of Jordan's letter 20.

46. MOPH XXIII p. 24.

47. QF 35 p. 17 n. 20.


49. Scheeben p. 12; accepted without comment by Freed p. 67.

50. Iuventus was as imprecise a term as "youth" is today, in spite of various attempts to define it, but it was readily extended well beyond the age of 30. Isidore regards it as continuing to the age of 50 (Etymologiae 11.2.5). Thomas of Cantimpré actually regards adolescentia (which comes before iuventus in the usual scheme) as lasting up to the age of 35 (De Natura Rerum I 80, ed. H. Boese [Berlin 1973], p. 81).

52. The claim that he was already a lector in 1228 (Loë p. 277) rests on the evidence of Leg. Col. and Justiniani (not Molitoris, if Scheeben pp. 11-12 is correct) and it is to be explained as an attempt to reconcile the statement that Albert entered the Order in Cologne under Leo with the belief that he entered the Order in Padua. It is of no guaranteed historical value.

53. For the Dominicans' tendency to do without a probationary period before profession, see S. Tugwell, AFP 53 (1983) pp. 5-52. M. H. Vicaire, AFP 54 (1984) pp. 24-5 note 76, denies my contention that before 1220 the Order made no provision at all for a probationary period, but he does not answer my arguments and his case rests (a) on Prim. Const. I 13 (on the novice master), which he dates to 1216, and (b) on a papal Bull of 7 February 1217 (MOPH XXV no. 81). But the Bull only refers to profession and cannot prove anything about the presence or absence of provision for a probationary period before profession. And Vicaire himself acknowledges elsewhere that it is not certain that Prim. Const. I 13 antedates 1220 (Histoire de St Dominique, 2d ed. [Paris, 1982], II p. 48 n. 118), and in any case novitius only means "newcomer" and can apply without the slightest difficulty to someone who has already made profession (cf. Tugwell, p. 21).

54. Prim. Const. II 30, ed. A. H. Thomas, De oudste Constituties van de Dominicanen (Louvain, 1965); for the dating cf. ibid. pp. 289-90. During Albert's life there were several different editions of the constitutions, which are cited here according to their chronological appropriateness: the edition made by Raymund of Peñafort can be found in AFP 18 (1948) pp. 29-68, that promulgated by Humbert of Romans in ASOP 3 (1897-8) pp. 31-60, 98-122, 162-81. "Prim. Const." refers to the text edited by Thomas.

55. Prim. Const. II 31. II 20 (also from 1220) allows for the possibility of some people being sent for further study.

56. Herford p. 201; Peter p. 90.

57. In the sources the lectures on the Sentences are mentioned before the appointment as lector of Hildesheim, and this leads to a rather awkward text in Meyer (QF 26 p. 156), whose very awkwardness confirms that we are dealing with traditional material. And once Cologne was erected as a studium generale it is likely that Albert, as Regent, would not be expected to lecture on the Sentences, anymore than a Regent Master would in Paris (cf. Weisheipl, Albert, p. 21).
58. Alberto f. 140r (presumably from Jakob of Soest).

59. Herford p. 201.


61. QF 4 p. 11.


64. Weisheipl, Albert, p. 20.

65. Meteora I 3.5 (B 4 p. 504). The comet appeared at the end of January and was visible for several months (Scheeben pp. 20-1).

66. Mineralia III 1.10 (B 5 p. 72).

67. Ibid. 1.1 (B 5 p. 59).

68. II Sent. d.6 a.9 (B 27 p. 139a).

69. See R. A. Gauthier, Leonine XLV i pp. 256*-7*.

70. See Scheeben pp. 20-21 for a reminder that we do not necessarily know all of Albert's moves in these years.

71. See above, note 39.

72. There were five houses at the time of the first Provincial Chapter in 1225 and thirty houses by 1241. Cf. Freed, The Friars and German Society pp. 210-5.
73. Scheeben pp. 21-22.

74. AFP 10 (1940) p. 354.

75. Cf. Loë p. 278; Callaey and Weisheipl simply do not mention it.


77. A pioneering study of the Dominican Parisian Masters by H. Denifle in Archiv für Literatur- und Kirchengeschichte des Mittelalters 2 (1886) pp. 167-182 indicated the importance of the list of Masters in the Chronicle of Gerald de Frachet (MOPH I pp. 334-5). In Revue Thomiste 8 (1925) pp. 501-521 P. Mandonnet attempted to attach precise dates to Gerald's list, and in the process advanced the theory that the two Dominican chairs, at least from the time of Albert, were allocated in accordance with the principle of retaining one chair for the Paris province and one for members of the other provinces; this alleged principle of one 'intern' chair and one 'extern' chair has apparently acquired canonical status; according to Weisheipl, Thomas p. 65, it was laid down by a General Chapter. The dating of the Masters was taken further by P. Glorieux in his standard Repertoire des Maîtres en Théologie de Paris au XIIIe siècle, Paris 1933-4. Unfortunately both Mandonnet and Glorieux resorted to extremely fanciful procedures in order to arrive at their dating, and it is highly doubtful whether the alleged principle governing the allocation of the two chairs has any validity, at least in the time of Albert and Thomas. It is only in the fourteenth century that there is clear evidence for a principle of alternating between intern and extern candidates for the two chairs, and even then it is misleading to speak of intern and extern chairs. Gui provides dates for the accession of new Dominican Masters for a few years at the beginning of the fourteenth century (MOPH XXII pp. 131-4), which seem to be mostly accurate. We learn that in 1301 both Masters were members of the Paris province. In 1302 a German (Eckhart) became a Master, together with another Frenchman. In 1303 or 1304 (cf. Memorie Domenicane NS 10 (1979) pp. 219-220) Remigio dei Girolami received the title of Master, but he had already been away from Paris for two or more years and never taught there as a Master. In 1304 two more members of the Paris province became Masters. Thereafter there seems to be an alternation between the Paris province and other provinces up to 1314. From 1311 onwards the General Chapter assigned people to be bachelors of the Sentences in Paris, and it is clear that there is a rigorous principle of alternating between the Paris province and other provinces at work (MOPH IV pp. 55, 60, 62, 69, 75, 86, 104, 110, 118, 125 etc.). Alternating intern and extern bachelors did not necessarily lead to an alternation between
intern and extern Masters, and the 1316 General Chapter ruled that the practice of alternating Masters should be dropped,

-102-

in favour of a system whereby the first to lecture on the Sentences would automatically be next in line for a chair (MOPH IV pp. 91-2). The 1317 Chapter, however, ruled that the principle of alternation was to be resumed and retained (MOPH IV p. 102). This did not necessarily mean that the chairs as such, though, were to be designated as 'intern' and 'extern'; the 1317 Chapter itself decreed that whoever was the next to incept in Paris should take over the chair which Pierre de la Palu had been holding since 1314 (MOPH IV p. 104; MOPH XXII p. 133). The 1317 Chapter refers to alternation as an 'approved custom' in the Order, but insufficient dates have been established to enable us to know when it became customary. At any rate any such principle is clearly excluded by the earliest known capitular legislation: the 1264 Chapter said that the two chairs must be filled 'without regard for nationality' (MOPH III p. 125). In principle, the 1220 Constitutions made the General Chapter responsible for the deployment of Dominican manpower, but in practice it is likely that this responsibility devolved upon the Master of the Order and the provincials. The 1264 Chapter (loc. cit. ) refers to 'superiors' promoting people to Parisian chairs, and tries to tidy up the situation by deputing the Master of the Order to take control of such promotions himself, and this thereafter seems to have been the normal practice (cf. MOPH III pp. 125, 126, 130, 142, 150, 155, 161). Already in 1251 it was clearly the Master of the Order who felt responsible for sending someone to prepare for Mastership in Paris, the someone, in the outcome, being Thomas Aquinas (Tocco, FVST pp. 801, Ferrua p. 48), and it is hard to see who sent Albert to Paris, if it was not the Master of the Order. If we take Gerald's list of Masters as being arranged in chronological sequence, then Albert was the first to graduate after Guerric and Godfrey, who succeeded Hugh of St Cher and John of St Giles. John of St Giles left Paris in 1233 (QE I p. 100), and Hugh was certainly provincial of France by March 1237 (M. C. Guigue, Grand Cartulaire de l'Abbaye d'Ainay, Lyons 1885 II pp. 134-5) and may well have been provincial some years earlier, and he was possibly prior of Paris before that (QE I p. 195).

78. MOPH III pp. 34-5. Since this was a proposal to change the constitutions, it only became law after it had passed through two more chapters, so it became effective in 1248 (MOPH III p. 41).

79. In Gerald's list we find, following Albert, Laurence de Fougières, Stephen de Venizy, William of Étampes and John Pointlasne. Stephen and John are already Masters in 1248 (Chart. I p. 210), so if Gerald's list
is chronological and accurate, this must mean that Laurence became a Master in 1245 or 1246, Stephen in 1246 or 1247, and William in 1247 or 1248. If Stephen was, as one manuscript suggests, the author of the propositions condemned in Paris in 1241 (Chart. I p. 171), he must have been

80. Élie was lector of Montpellier in May 1247 (J. Guiraud, Cartulaire de Prouille [Paris, 1907], Il p. 240). By 1253 he and Bonhomme were the two Dominican Regent Masters (Chart. I p. 280, referring back to document no. 219). In Gerald's list Bonhomme is mentioned before Élie, but this still leaves several possibilities open. Perhaps the succession was William—Bonhomme and Albert—Pointlasne—Élie. Granted the anti-Dominican statute of February 1252 (Chart. I pp. 226-7), we should presumably have heard complaints about it if the Dominicans had had a new Master incept between then and 1253, so Élie and Bonhomme were surely both already in possession in the academic year 1251-52. Laurence de Fougières, although probably a member of the Paris province, went from Paris to teach in Toulouse in 1235 (QE I p. 100), so sending him back to Paris to graduate as a Master can also be seen as part of a policy of increasing the supply of Masters to the provinces.

81. Cf. below, p. 211.

82. MOPH III p. 32.

83. MOPH XVIII pp. 79-80; Eubel I p. 77.

84. There has been some confusion about the succession of provincials in Paris. Salagnac and Gui both state that Peter of Rheims was provincial when he was made bishop of Agen in 1245 (MOPH XVIII p. 80, MOPH XXII p. 31), so the common assertion that Humbert was provincial immediately after Hugh cannot be correct. But he must have been provincial in time for the General Chapter of 1246 (MOPH III p. 36:3-5 cannot refer to Peter, who was a bishop by this time).

85. According to a story reported by Gerald de Frachet (MOPH I pp. 274-5), Guerric's death occurred in Paris, while Jean de la Rochelle was still there. Jean died in February 1245 (cf. P. Michaud-Quantin, ed., Jean de la Rochelle, Tractatus de Divisione Multiplici Potentiarum Animae
[Paris, 1964], p. 8), but he was apparently already in Lyons, in connection with the preparations for the forthcoming council, by Advent 1244, since he is known to have preached there for the curia (Schneyer, Repertorium III p. 710, no. 97). So Guerric must have died in about November 1244, or at the very latest before February 1245. Gerald's story implies that Guerric was still Regent Master at the time of his death. Godfrey's presence in Paris is attested up to January 1247, judging from a sermon in MS Arras 759, which appears to be a collection of Parisian sermons (Schneyer, Repertorium VI p. 104 no. 168), but he was not necessarily still Regent Master.

86. Kaeppeli, Scriptores II p. 16.

87. Albert's presence in Paris is attested in May 1248 (Chart. I p. 210);

88. P. Simon, Col. XXXVII pp. VI-VIII. Thomas' manuscript of Albert's Dionysian lectures is now Naples, Bibl. Naz. I B 54.

89. Tocco FVST p. 79, Ferrua p. 46.


92. Loë, p. 282. It appears that it was in fact Albert who arranged the settlement, which Hugh did little more than confirm (Scheeben pp. 33-4).

93. For a convenient summary, see Callaey pp. 486-91.

95. Scheeben p. 36. Cf. G. Gieraths, Die Dominikaner in Worms (Worms, 1964), pp. 24-6. On vicars of provinces, see G. R. Galbraith, The Constitution of the Dominican Order (Manchester, 1925), pp. 149-50. In principle the prior of the house where the provincial chapter was to be held automatically became vicar in the absence of a provincial (Const. II 3, AFP 18 [1948] p. 50), but judging from an inchoation made in 1246 this system was not found to be ideal [MOPH III p. 35:12-21]; however the 1247 Chapter did not approve the inchoation, so no change was made in the constitutions.

96. For the priories, see Freed, The Friars and German Society pp. 21015. In the case of the nuns it is often difficult to know exactly what their relationship was to the Dominicans in this period, but in one way or another the German Dominicans probably had responsibility for a great many monasteries; see H. Wilms, Das älteste Verzeichnis der deutschen Dominikanerinnenklöster, QF 24 (Leipzig, 1928).


98. Peter p. 204.


100. MOPH III pp. 76-7.

101. Peter p. 205.


104. Meyer (Scheeben pp. 157-8) gives Regensburg as the place of Albert's second provincial chapter and Erfurt as that of the third, and this corresponds to the sequence in QF 1 p. 31. Rudolph (p. 25) gives Augsburg second place and puts Regensburg in fourth place, but he is probably dependent on Peter (p. 205) and misunderstands the significance of what Peter says (cf. Scheeben, p. 39). The sermons ascribed to Albert at the Regensburg chapter indicate that the chapter
coincided with the feast of the Nativity of Our Lady, 8 September (AFP 34 [1964] pp. 73-4).

105. Milan (1255) was a diffinitors' chapter, which would not involve Albert as provincial, but Paris (1256) was a provincials' chapter (Galbraith, p. 255).

106. For the new priories see Freed, The Friars and German Society pp. 210, 215. For the Paradisus see QF 24 p. 92.


108. This is indicated by one of the manuscripts; see Col. VII i p. v.


111. Thomas of Cantimpré, De Apibus II 10.23; Herford, p. 197.

112. Dufeil pp. 197-282; Dufeil makes it clear that neither Bonaventure nor Thomas was at the papal court at the time of the condemnation of William (p. 261).

113. This is suggested by Dufeil, p. 261.

114. Herford p. 197. Loë p. 284 confidently asserts that Albert arrived in Anagni on 4 October and that the consistory was held on 6 October, but none of the sources he lists actually mentions either date. The Bull condemning William is dated 5 October (Potthast 16565; Chart. I pp. 331-33; BOP I pp. 317-18), so if Herford's report is accurate Albert must have arrived on 3 October.

115. Albert recounts the circumstances in Summa Theol. II tr. 13 q. 77.3 (B 33 p. 100b).


118. De Unitate Intellectus Prol. (Col. XVII i p. 1); Summa Theol. II tr. 13 q. 77.3 (B 33 p. 75a). Cf. Peter pp. 238-9. Albert adopted the same position later on in XV Problemata (Col. XVII i p. 34:53-7). If a philosophical opinion were to be condemned simply on dogmatic grounds, it would appear that the issue was reducible to a contradiction between philosophy and theology, which could lead either to a theory of "two truths" (this is alluded to in the passage referred to from Summa Theol., and it is clearly what Bishop Tempier was afraid of: cf. Chart. I p. 543; cf. P. Wilpert, ed., Beiträge zum Berufsbewusstsein des mittelalterlichen Menschen [Berlin, 1964], pp. 149-52) or to a general rejection of philosophy by theologians. This is why Albert insists on a philosophical refutation of the Averroists; their tenets must be shown to be bad philosophy, not just dogmatically erroneous.

119. Contrary to what is affirmed by Weisheipl, Albert p. 36.

120. Galbraith p. 255; we know it was a diffinitors' chapter, for instance, from the appointment of a diffinitor at the previous Roman provincial chapter (MOPH XX p. 20).

121. AFP 34 (1964) p. 59; RTAM 36 (1969) p. 114. The claim that Albert became Master of the Sacred Palace at this time (Leg. Col. p. 275) derives from Thomas of Cantimpré's statement that while Albert was at the papal court he expounded St. John's gospel and epistles at the request of the pope and cardinals (De Apibus II 10.24). This part of the De Apibus antedates Albert's episcopacy, so there can be no question of any confusion between Albert's earlier visit to the papal court and his later stay there in 1261-63. But Thomas explicitly presents the exposition of St. John as part of the refutation of William of St. Amour, not as a course of lectures in the papal studium (on which see R. Creytens, "Le 'Studium Romanae Curiae' et le Maître du Sacré Palais," AFP 12 [1942] pp. 5-83), so there are no good grounds for inferring that Albert stayed on at Anagni for any length of time after 5 October.

122. MOPH III p. 89:1; Meyer (Scheeben p. 158); Peter p. 205.

123. There was no fixed time for the holding of provincial chapters; each chapter appointed the time and place for the next one, the only proviso being that it had to be later than the General Chapter (Const. II
7, AFP 18 [1948] p. 55). Thus provincial chapters could be held any time from June onward (cf. Scheeben, p. 37). But there is something mysterious about German provincials. Albert was absolved in 1257, but his successor was not elected until 1258; his successor was absolved in 1259 (MOPH III p. 101:1), but the next provincial was not elected until 1260. He was absolved in 1263 (MOPH III p. 121:5), but seems to have taken no notice; he was absolved again in 1265 (MOPH III p. 131:1), and this time a successor was elected immediately (QF 1 p. 13; cf. Archiv der deutschen Dominikaner 4 [1951] p. 83). There was perhaps an ambiguity about the consequences of

absolution from office; in 1263 the General Chapter directs that when priors are absolved from office a specific time has to be indicated beyond which they are not to go on being prior (MOPH III p. 120:25-27), which implies that an absolved superior could be regarded as remaining in office until his successor took over. In the case of provincials this would mean interpreting amoto in Const. II 3 (ASOP 3 [1897-88] p. 106) as meaning literally "moved away," not just "removed from office" (as the provincial of England was absolved and assigned to Germany in 1261, MOPH III p. 110:32-5).

124. QF 16 pp. 32-3 (the date must be interpreted as January 1279, the year being regarded as beginning at the Annunciation, not on 1 January).

125. RTAM 36 (1969) pp. 114, 132. Schneyer shows that the only possible dates for these sermons are 1257 and 1263 (AFP 34 [1964] p. 67); since the report refers to fratri Alberto it is clear that Albert was not yet a bishop, so 1257 must be the date.


129. Loë pp. 287-8; Potthast 17737-8.
130. Scheeben p. 54.


132. MOPH XVI pp. 146, 177.


137. MOPH I pp. 32, 173.

138. MOPH I p. 335.

139. MOPH XXII pp. 37, 118.

140. Loë p. 288.

141. MOPH XXII p. 34.

142. Thomas of Cantimpré, De Apibus II 10.21.


147. Loë p. 291; Scheeben p. 63; Weisheipl, Albert p. 38.


150. Loë p. 289; Scheeben p. 58.

151. Scheeben p. 59.


154. Loë pp. 290-1; Scheeben p. 60.

155. Loë p. 290; Scheeben p. 61.

156. This dating is suggested by P. Hossfeld at the conclusion of his article in AFP 52 (1982) pp. 115-33. P. M. J. E. Tummers still proposes the much vaguer dating "between c. 1235 and c. 1260" in his edition of part of the text, Albertus (Magnus) Commentaar op Euclides Elementen der Geometrie (Nijmegen, 1984), I, pp. 72-3.


158. Leg. Col. p. 276; Peter pp. 264-5; Rudolph pp. 47-8.

159. Cf. B. Schmidt, Col. XXI i pp. XIV-XVI (and see above, note 9).

160. The date is secured by a document dated 1261 indicating that the abbot of Oberaltaich gave Albert a sum of money to take to Alexander IV which he was unable to deliver owing to the pope's death (Monumenta Boica XII [Munich, 1775], p. 101). Albert must have set off before Alexander's death was known, and he must have reached Viterbo after 25 May 1261.


163. De Princ. Motus Proc. 1.2 (Col. XII p. 48:69-71). For the date see Weisheipl, Albert p. 574 (correcting ibid. p. 36); there is no reason to suppose that Albert made any significant detour in 1256.
164. Herford p. 201; Alberto f.140r. This is confirmed by Albert's will (QF 16 p. 32). Gui's statement that Albert immediately "returned to the Order's poverty" (MOPH XXII p. 34), taken up in the later tradition (Meyer in Scheeben p. 156; Leg. Col. p. 277; Peter p. 267; Rudolph p. 50) seems not to be based on any precise knowledge of what happened straight after Albert's resignation.

165. Heinrich of Würzburg ("the Poet"), in his De statu curiae Romanae 879-82, refers to an outstanding philosopher at the papal court, probably with reference to these years: Est illic aliquis qui, si combusta iaceret, Inventor fieret, philosophia, nove; Erigeret meliore modo novus editor illam Vinceret et veteres artis honore viros. Grabmann suggested that this is an allusion to Albert ("Ist das 'philosophische Universalgenie' bei Mag. Heinrich dem Poeten Thomas von Aquin?" Historisches Jahrbuch 38 [1917] pp. 315-20). On Heinrich, see F. J. Worstbrock, Verfasserlexikon III (Berlin, 1981), cols. 924-6. Grabmann's identification of Heinrich's philosopher as Albert has been accepted by several scholars: Scheeben p. 70; Weisheipl, Thomas p. 148; H. Stehkämper, "Über die geschichtliche Grösse Alberts des Grossen," Historisches Jahrbuch 102 (1982), pp. 73-4.

166. See below, pp. 218-19.


168. Cf. B. Geyer, Col. XII p. XXIV (except that Geyer dates Albert's discovery of the text to 1256, on which see above, note 163).

169. B 23 p. 682; quoted in this connection by Peter, p. 268 and by Scheeben, p. 64.


172. BOP I pp. 421-6.

173. Loë p. 313; Scheeben p. 74.

174. Loë p. 296; Scheeben pp. 72-3.

175. Cf. Scheeben p. 76.
177. Scheeben p. 78; Weisheipl, Albert p. 40.
178. Scheeben p. 142.
181. Scheeben, pp. 142-3.
182. AMDU p. 138.
183. Loë pp. 299-301.


-110-
185. Tolomeo of Lucca, Hist. Eccl. XXII 19; Herford, pp. 201-2; Leg. Col. p. 277; Peter pp. 270-1; Alberto f. 140r.

187. See below, p. 225.

188. Loë, p. 315; Scheeben, pp. 149, 153. He is also referred to as "OP" by others: Scheeben pp. 152-3. It may be significant that all these documents date from after Albert's return to Cologne.

189. QF 16 pp. 32-3.
191. QF 1 p. 13.
192. Finke pp. 80, 82, 84-5.

193. Weisheipl, Albert p. 42, claims that "there is no evidence whatsoever" that Albert was at the council. It is true that Albert's name is not found among the bishops who signed some of the conciliar
documents (cf. P. Frowein, "Der Episkopat auf dem 2 Konzil von Lyon (1274)," Annuarium Historiae Conciliorum 6 [1974] pp. 307-31), but as a retired bishop Albert would not have been at the council in a diocesan capacity, so this is not surprising. But we do possess a letter of his written in Lyons on 12 May 1274 (Scheeben pp. 151-2), and if he was in Lyons at this time it was surely in order to assist at the council, as Peter claims he did (pp. 279-80). Also in Summa Theol. II tr. 18 q. 122 a.2 (B 33 p. 396) Albert claims that the council obliged the Greeks to recognize simple fornication as a mortal sin; there is nothing in the conciliar decrees to justify this remark, but the letter of Girolamo d'Ascoli to the pope in preparation for the council contains the comment that the Greeks "do not believe simple fornication to be a mortal sin" (B. Roberg, Die Union zwischen der griechischen und der lateinischen Kirche auf dem II Konzil von Lyon [Bonn, 1964], p. 230; cf. A. Franchi, Il Concilio II di Lione [Rome, 1965], pp. 171-2). It looks as if Albert had inside information about the council, and this reinforces the likelihood that he was there himself.

194. Peter p. 280.
195. Finke pp. 120-1.
196. Finke pp. 87-8, plausibly identified by Finke as belonging to this period.
197. QF 16 p. 32.
198. Loë p. 308.
200. FVST p. 358, Ferrua p. 299. This was adopted into Gui's legenda (FVST p. 208, Ferrua p. 179), from where it passed to Luis (p. 754) and Peter (pp. 277-78).
201. FVST p. 382, Ferrua p. 324.
202. AFP 4 (1934) p. 137.
203. FVST p. 370, Ferrua p. 313.
204. FVST pp. 382-3, Ferrua pp. 324-5; the story of Albert's intervention in Paris is also mentioned by Galvano, AFP 10 (1940) p. 359.
205. Scheeben, "De Alberti Magni discipulis," pp. 201-7; Weisheipl, Albert pp. 43-5; Eckert p. XXVII.

206. On this episode, see below pp. 236-38.

207. In fact Albert appears to be challenging Thomas in Summa Theol. I tr. 1 q.3.2 (Col. XXXIV i p. 12:35-8; cf. ibid. p. XVII).


211. Luis pp. 754-5; Peter pp. 300-2; Rudolph pp. 68-9; Alberto ff. 139, 141r. They all connect Albert's sudden loss of memory with a promise alleged to have been made to him by our Lady at the beginning of his Dominican life, but the details are different in each source. According to Luis and Rudolph, Albert was afraid that his faith would be corrupted by philosophy and our Lady promised that before he died all philosophical "cunning" would be taken from him and he would end his days in "childlike innocence"; according to Peter and Alberto, he was not very bright as a student and asked our Lady for a gift of understanding of philosophy, which she gave him, but with the warning that it would be taken away before he died. Alberto adds that this was to be a punishment for choosing philosophy instead of theology. There is absolutely no reason to believe that Albert was lacking in intellectual ability as a young man; his alleged fear that he would be unable to stay in the Order because of his intellectual incompetence is no more than a distorted version of the dream reported in MOPH I p. 188 (which does not mention any intellectual inadequacy). The anxiety that philosophy might corrupt faith does not square with anything we know about Albert. And all these stories seem to rest on the assumption that Albert spent his life teaching philosophy, which is untrue. The divergences between the different accounts make it clear that this is legendary and apologetic material being developed according to the whim of each writer. The whole lot of it can safely be disregarded.


213. From one of Albert's sermons, AFP 34 (1964) p. 56.

214. Anim. 5.1.2.18.
215. Anim. 5.2.2.65; 23.1.9.

216. Mineralia II 2.11 (B 5 p. 40b).

217. Mineralia II 3.1 (B 5 p. 49; AT 83).


219. Anim. 5.1.4.31.

220. Anim. 8.2.4.69.


222. Anim. 23.24.139.

223. Aristotle, Part. Anim. 1.5 (645a16-17); Albert, Anim. 11.2.3.86.


226. Const. II 14 (AFP 18 [1948] pp. 65-6). This was insisted on at the General Chapter of 1249 (MOPH III p. 47:22-4) and reaffirmed in 1277 (MOPH III p. 190:32-4) in terms suggesting that some lectors were not giving as much time to lecturing on the bible as they were expected to.

227. Col. XIV i pp. V-VI.

228. Col. XII p. XLV.


231. The Job commentary is dated to 1272 or 1274 in the manuscripts (cf. AMDU p. 139). The Summa Theol. refers to the Council of Lyons in 1274 (cf. above, note 193); the authenticity of the work, which had been called into question (cf. Col. XXXIV i pp. V-XVI for a discussion of this), seems to be placed more or less beyond doubt by the fact that Godfrey of Fontaines was already citing it as Albert's as
early as 1277 (R. Wielockx, ed., Aegidii Romani... Apologia [Florence, 1985], pp. 40-1).


234. Physica I 1.1 (Col. IV i p. 1).

235. Politica Epil. (B 8 p. 803).


237. Physica VIII 1.14 (B 3 p. 553b; AT 33b).

238. Metaphysica I 5.15 (Col. XVI i p. 89:85-7).

239. Politica Epil. (B 8 pp. 803-4); Metaphysica XI 2.1, XIII 2.4 (Col. XVI pp. 482:23-9, 599:61-6); De Causis II 5.24 (B 10 p. 619; AT 5).

240. Albert's reply is in Col. XVII i pp. 31-44. For the date and circumstances, see below, pp. 237 with note 359.

241. Summa Theol. I 1 Prol (Col. XXXIV i p. 5).

242. Summa Theol. II tr. 18 q.122.4.2 (B 33 p. 402b).


244. For the dating of the Summa de Creaturis see R. A. Gauthier in


248. A. Wimmer, ed., De Forma Orandi (Regensburg, 1902). Wimmer edited the work from a manuscript without any ascription and argued for Albert's authorship, but the work is elsewhere attributed to Vincent of Beauvais (QE I p. 238b). The fact that it follows the writings of Peraldus very closely makes me wonder whether it should not be ascribed to him. In any case, there is absolutely no warrant for the ascription to Albert.


259. MOPH I p. 112.

261. M. M. Davy, Les Sermons Universitaires Parisiens de 1230-1231 (Paris, 1931), pp. 340-41. "Points and lines" were much used in discussions of how we know God and of the relationship between God and creatures (e.g., Albert, DN 1.21, 2.48, Col. XXXVII p. 11:41-59, pp. 75-6).

262. Davy p. 84.

263. Davy p. 279.


265. General Chapters often give the impression of a fear that philosophy is liable to oust theology: e.g., MOPH III pp. 159:33-4, 174:234, 197:3-4, 209:3-5. In 1278 the Roman provincial chapter decreed that outsiders were not to be admitted to philosophy lectures (MOPH XX p. 49).

266. Ed. Berthier I pp. 435-9, II pp. 42-4. The suggestion made by Stehkämper, p. 89, that Humbert was attacking Albert in his commentary on the Rule, ed. cit. I p. 465, is absurd; Humbert is ridiculing people who drop names just to show off. It is clear that Humbert held Albert in high esteem. It may well be Albert who is the 'quidam philosophus' referred to in his sermon material II 70 (Humberti quinti generalis sacrosancti Ordinis Predicatorum magistri sermones ad diversos status, Hagenau 1508, f. K 1r) for a saying about magistrates being worse thieves than the crooks they sentence (cf. above, p. 28).

267. Cf. above, note 211.


272. From one of Albert's sermons, AFP 34 (1964) p. 57.


274. From one of his sermons, AFP 34 (1964) pp. 55-6.

275. Ibid. p. 55.


277. De Apibus II 57.50.

278. Suggested by Scheeben, p. 29.

279. Peter, p. 86.


285. Part of the text is published in L. Sturlese, ed., Bertoldo di Mossburg, Expositio super Elementationem Theologicam Procli (Rome, 1974). A complete edition is promised in the Corpus Philosophorum Teutonicorum; so far two volumes have been published (1984, 1986).


288. See Weisheipl, Albert, pp. 537-63.


290. On the biographical tradition, see Scheeben pp. 1-3.


Part II

1. On the form in which the Dionysian corpus was available to Albert, see H. F. Dondaine, Le Corpus Dionysien de l'Université de Paris au XIIIe siècle (Rome, 1953).

2. H. Urs von Balthasar, Herrlichkeit II (Einsiedeln, 1962), p. 154, suggests that St. Thomas realized that Dionysius was later than Proclus, since in Super Lib. de Causis Expos. 3, ed. H. D. Saffrey (Fribourg/Louvain, 1954), p. 20 he says that Dionysius corrects Proclus; but in fact Thomas only claims that Dionysius corrects a Platonist doctrine illustrated by Proclus, and there is no clear evidence that he ever called into question the traditional ascription of the Dionysian writings to the apostolic period.


5. Eriugena's translation, together with the Greek text and all the other Latin versions, is found in P. Chevallier, Dionysiaca (Bruges, 1937). His commentary on the Celestial Hierarchy is edited by J. Barbet in CC Cont. Med. XXXI (Turnhout, 1975). The first three books of the Periphyseon have been edited by I. P. Sheldon-Williams (Dublin, 1968, 1972, 1981); otherwise we are still dependent on the unsatisfactory edition in PL 122. On Eriugena, see R. Roques, ed., Jean Scot Érigène et l'histoire de la philosophie (Paris, 1977); G. Schrimpf, Das Werk des Johannes Scottus Eriugena, Beiträge NF 23 (Münster, 1982); J. J. O'Meara, Eriugena (Oxford, 1988).


7. The most significant part of the text is edited by P. Lucentini, Honorius Augustodunensis: Clavis Physicae (Rome, 1974).


12. The first text is Augustine, De Ordine 2.16.44. For the second, cf. Dionysius, Ep. 1 (PG 3:1065A), but none of the translations has "wisdom" (sapientia) here; the Dionysian text (with "wisdom") together with the text from Augustine occurs in Eriugena, Periphyseon, ed. Sheldon-Williams, I p. 190:32-3, II p. 162:26-8.


20. Gregory of Nyssa, especially his Life of Moses; Evagrius Ponticus, especially his De Oratione, of which a translation by Simon Tugwell is available from the Faculty of Theology, Oxford University (published in 1987).


28. DN 1.6 (PG 3:596A).

29. DN 9.7 (PG 3:916A).

30. On the need to practice affirmative and negative theology simultaneously, see the perceptive comments of Rorem, pp. 88-90.


32. MT 1.2 (PG 3:1000B), Ep. 1 (PG 3:1065A); cf. CH 2.4 (p. 82), DN 8.6 (PG 3:893C).

33. Cf. Rorem, p. 90; Eriugena makes an excellent comment on this in Periphyseon I, ed. cit., pp. 76-78.

34. DN 1.2 (PG 3:588C).

35. CH 2.5 (p. 86).

36. Rorem remarks quite correctly that Dionysius' whole theological method is essentially a technique of exegesis (pp. 88-9).

37. MT 1.2 (PG 3:1000B).

38. MT 1.3 (PG 3:1001A).


42. EH 3.5 (PG 3:432B).


47. Ibid. I 7.

48. Ibid. III 116.

49. A. Landgraf, Écrits théologiques de l'école d'Abélard (Louvain, 1934), pp. 5-7.


55. Ibid., pp. 99, 190-1.

56. Ibid., p. 191.

57. Ibid., p. 195.

58. Cf. Dionysius, CH 2.3 (p. 78); Eriugena, Periphyseon I p. 84.

59. Albert, Dion. MT 1 (Col. XXXVII p. 455:58-61). The claim that is sometimes made that "metaphor is primary" (e.g., J. Coulson, Religion and Imagination [Oxford, 1981], p. 11, interpreting Coleridge) may well be true, in the sense that often we use metaphorical language first, and only by a process of subsequent reflection move on to less metaphorical language, and in the sense that the less metaphorical language may often do less justice to what we want to say; but non-metaphorical language still presupposes the possibility of saying something that is not metaphorical. It may be very right and proper for Romeo to say,

    But, soft! what light through yonder window breaks? It is the east, and Juliet is the sun. Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon, Who is already sick and pale with grief (Romeo and Juliet, Act 2 Scene 2).

    It would be much less right and proper for him simply to recite the stage direction, "Juliet appears above at a window." Nevertheless it would not be right for Romeo to talk like this were it not for the truth of the literal statement contained in the stage direction.

60. PL 192:1252AB.

61. G. R. Evans, p. 118.


63. Ibid. V 24, p. 301.

64. Burgundio's Latin version of John Damascene, De Fide Orthodoxa, ed. E. M. Buytaert (New York, 1955), chap. 1, especially pp. 11-12. This translation was probably made c. 1153-4; cf. ed. cit. p. XIV.


67. Ibid. pp. 139-40.

68. Alan of Lille, Summa "Quoniam Homines" (hereafter SQH), ed. P. Glorieux, Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire 20 (1954) pp. 113-364; the reference here is to SQH 1, p. 119. Alan also insists on the special nature of theological language in his Expositio super Orationem Dominica 4, ed. N. M. Häring, Analecta Cisterciensia 31 (1975) p. 159.

69. Dionysius, CH 2.3 p. 79.


72. Ibid. XX-XXI, XXXIX; cf. SQH 9b, p. 143.

73. Regulae XX.

74. Ibid. XXVI.

75. Ibid. XXI.

76. Ibid. XXI 4.

77. SQH 8, pp. 134-5.

78. Ibid. 10, p. 145.

79. Ibid. 8b, p. 137.

80. Ibid. 8e, pp. 138-9.


85. PL 175:955A.

86. Edited by the fathers of the Collegio S. Bonaventura (Grottaferrata, 1971, 1981).


93. I Sent. d.1 ch. 3.2 (ed. cit. I p. 57).

94. William of Auvergne, De Universo II. II ch.92, ed. cit. I p. 946bG.


96. There has been some controversy over the date of the condemn -121- nation; it now seems reasonably certain that it occurred in 1241 and was repeated in 1244. See J. G. Bougerol, AFH 80 (1987) pp. 462-66.

98. For the full text see Chart. I pp. 170-2.


104. William of Auvergne, De Universo II. II ch.92, loc. cit.

105. Bonaventure, Quaestio Disputata de Trinitate I a.1 n.10, Quaracchi vol. V (1891), p. 46.


Hales also states that in heaven we shall see God "by love alone," I Sent. d.3.12 II, Quaracchi, 1951, p. 43.

112. Paraphrase of DN 7; text in Dionysiaca p. 696.


115. Ibid. p. 267.

116. Until the long-awaited SC edition of Balma is published, the

-122-
most convenient text is in A. C. Peltier, ed., Omnia Opera S. Bonaventurae VIII (Paris, 1866), pp. 2-53.


122. MT 2 (Col. XXXVII p. 467:10-1).

123. I Sent. d.2 a.5 (B 25 pp. 59-60).
124. Albert's intention was to expound Peripatetic doctrine, including only such Platonism as was compatible with it (De Intellectu et Intelligibili 1.1, B 9 p. 478a). But then Albert took the thoroughly Neoplatonist Liber de Causis to be the crown of Peripatetic philosophy (De Causis 2.1.1, 2.5.24, B 10 p. 434a, 619a), though he was aware that it was not a genuine work of Aristotle's (B 10 pp. 433-35). Thanks to William of Moerbeke's translation of Proclus' Elements of Theology St. Thomas was able to identify the Liber de Causis for what it was (Super Lib. de Causis, Proemium, ed. cit. p. 3).

125. Cf. A. Schneider, Die Psychologie Alberts des Grossen, Beiträge IV/ 5-6 (Münster, 1903-6), pp. 347-8.


127. De Intellectu et Intelligibili II 6-9 (B 9 pp. 513-7).

128. Metaph. 1.1.5 (Col. XVI pp. 7-8).

129. Ibid. 11.2.11 (p. 498).

130. Ibid. (p. 498:42).

131. Ibid. (p. 497:65-9).


133. DN 3.16 (Col. XXXVII pp. 111-2); cf. DN 6.3 (p. 329:17): the essential constituent of eternal life is knowledge.

134. Cf. DN 4.67 (Col. XXXVII p. 175:65-70), Dion. Ep. 5 (ibid. p. 497:31-3). Albert rejects, however, the Neoplatonist emanationism that requires there to be a single intelligentia as the first step toward the production of multiplicity from the first cause: DN 7.3 (Col. XXXVII p. 339).

135. De Resurrectione IV 1.9 (Col. XXVI p. 328:40-46).


137. Ibid. 1.50 (p. 31:48-51).
138. Ibid. 7.25 (p. 357:3-4, 53-5).
139. Ibid. 4.69 (p. 179).
140. Metaph. 1.1.5 (Col. XVI p. 7:86-8).
141. Ibid. 11.2.11 (p. 497:51).
142. Cf. DN 7.3 (Col. XXXVII p. 339:45-51); XV Problemata X (Col. XVII i pp. 41-2).
145. Cf. Schneider pp. 446-55. The Islamic doctrine of the soul's two faces is united with the Augustinian distinction between "wisdom" and "knowledge" to suggest a fairly sharp dichotomy in, for instance, Gundissalinus, De Anima 10, ed. J. T. Muckle, Mediaeval Studies 2 (1940) pp. 98-101.
146. DN7.35 (Col. XXXVII p. 363:49-57).
147. Summa Theol. I 3.15.3.3 (Col. XXXIV i p. 81:9-15).
150. MT 1 (Col. XXXVII p. 456:25-38).
151. CH 1.1 (B 14 p. 8b, AT 36); DN 2.19 (Col. XXXVII p. 56:567).
152. DN 2.19 (Col. XXXVII p. 56:57-62).
154. Cf. below, note 38 to MT 1.
155. MT 1 (Col. XXXVII p. 460:74).
156. CH 1.1 (B 14 p. 12b).
157. DN 7.36 (Col. XXXVII pp. 363-4).

158. DN 7.31 (Col. XXXVII p. 360:6-8). On natura cognoscitiva see DN 4.69 (p. 179): it refers quite generally to any created knowing faculty, and is then differentiated into different specific kinds of intellectual capacity in angels, human beings, etc.

159. DN 7.1 (Col. XXXVII p. 337:37-8).

160. CH 1.1 (B 14 p. 8, AT 36).


162. III Sent. d.23 a.2 (B 28 p. 407b, AT 240).


166. Summa Theol. I Prol. (Col. XXXIV i p. 3:50-4).

167. I Sent. d.1 a.4 (B 25 pp. 18-19); Summa Theol. I 1.2, 1.3.3 (Col. XXXIV i pp. 8-9, 13).


169. On this whole problem, see G. Englhardt, Die Entwicklung der dogmatischen Glaubenspsychologie in der mittelalterlichen Scholastik, Beiträge XXX/4-6 (Münster, 1933).

d'Histoire Littéraire et Doctrinale du XIIe siècle II (Ottawa, 1932), pp. 174-91.

171. I Sent. d.3 a.3 (B 25 p. 95a).

172. Ill Sent. d.23 a.1 (B 28 p. 405b).

173. Ill Sent. d.23 a.2 (B 28 pp. 406-8).

174. Ibid. p. 408a.


176. Ill Sent. d.23 a.2 (B 28 p. 408a).

177. I Sent. d.3 a.3 (B 25 p. 95a).

178. DN 4.62 (Col. XXXVII p. 170:20-6); this is cited in an objection, but Albert does not criticize it in his response.


181. Earlier Albert denied that faith unites believers: De Incarnatione V 2.2 (Col. XXVI pp. 214-5). We noticed above Albert's complaint that the "Latin" view of the intellect makes it impossible for there to be any shared knowledge.


185. DN 7.36 (Col. XXXVII p. 364).
186. MT I (Col. XXXVII p. 457:60-1).

187. MT 1 (Col. XXXVII pp. 462-3).

188. DN 3.6 (Col. XXXVII pp. 104-5). Albert makes a rather partisan comment on this point in one of his sermons: "That we also surpass others in study is clear. We see that many young men in the order within four or five years overtake prominent masters who have studied for many years in Paris. Why is this? Because they learn to understand the scriptures by being inspired by the same Spirit who composed them" (AFP 34 [1964] p. 55).


191. DN 2.76 (Col. XXXVII p. 92). The standard Latin gloss on this passage interpreted passum to mean affectum, in line with Eriugena's translation (Vat. lat. 176 f.197v).

192. MT 1 (Col. XXXVII pp. 460:74, 463:53-7).


194. Cf. DN 2.18 (Col. XXXVII p. 56:1-5).

195. There might be a few exceptions such as St. Paul, but they do not talk about it; cf., for example, Rupert of Deutz, De Victoria Verbi Dei 1.4 (Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Quellen 5 [Weimar, 1970], p. 8).

196. Aristotle himself does not actually call this kind of situation "analogy," though he recognizes that this is one of the ways in which words work; cf. J. Owens, The Doctrine of Being in the Aristotelian Metaphysics (Toronto, 1951), p. 59. Aristotle discusses it in Metaphysics Γ 2.

197. MT 1 (Col. XXXVII p. 459:24-31). For an identical doctrine in the earlier Dominican theologian, Richard Fishacre, see Englardt p. 480. I take this occasion to mention that it would be beyond my competence and the scope of this introduction to attempt to define exactly the limits of Albert's originality.

199. I Sent. d.2 a.17 (B 25 p. 73).


201. DN 1. (Col. XXXVII p. 2).


203. CH 1.1 (B 14 p. 8b, AT 36); DN 1.4 (Col. XXXVII p. 2:68-9).

204. DN 1.11 (Col. XXXVII pp. 5-6).

205. DN 2.54 (Col. XXXVII p. 80:35-6).


207. DN 1.12 (Col. XXXVII p. 6:54-60).

208. DN 1.14 (Col. XXXVII p. 7:44-5).


210. IV 1.9.1 (Col. XXVI pp. 326-9).


212. See RTAM 19 (1952) p. 101. This problem is frequently alluded to: e.g., Alexander of Hales, II Sent. d.8.11 (Quaracchi, vol. 2 pp. 78-9); Hugh of St. Cher on John 1:16 (in RTAM 19 p. 120); Guerric (in RSPT 44 [1960] pp. 238-9).

213. Cf. I Sent. d. 3 a.4 (B 25 p. 95b).

214. De Resurrectione IV 1.9.1 (Col. XXVI p. 329:21-8).

215. I Sent. d.1 a.15 (B 25 pp. 34-37); Albert tries to explain how we can know something infinite in I Sent. d.2 a.4 (B 25 pp. 58-9).

216. CH 2.7 (B 14 p. 44a); Damascene, De Fide Orthodoxa 9, ed. cit. p. 49.

218. I Sent. d.1 a.15 (B 25 pp. 34-6).

219. Cf. CH 3.3 (B 14 p. 88).

220. II Sent. d.4 a.1 (B 27 p. 105); CH 3.3 (B 14 p. 88).

221. I Sent. d.1 a.15 (B 25 p. 37); II Sent. d.4 a.1 (B 27 p. 105); CH 8.5 (B 14 p. 237).

222. CH 4.6 (B 14 p. 118).

223. IV Sent. d.49 a.5 (B 30 p. 670). This is in part inspired by Avicenna's idea that after death the soul can be united with the agent intellect and so find eternal bliss (De Anima V 6, ed. cit. II pp. 148-50); cf. Contenson, Archives d'Hist. Doct. et Litt. 26 (1960); pp. 59-62.

224. DN 1.21 (Col. XXXVII pp. 10-11).

225. DN 6.9 (Col. XXXVII p. 332:75-81).

226. DN 13.27 (Col. XXXVII p. 448:38-47).


228. DN 7.25 (Col. XXXVII p. 356:61-6).

229. Cf. below notes 70-1 on MT 1.


231. DN 7.25 (Col. XXXVII p. 357:43-4); cf. Damascene, De Fide Orthodoxa 1, ed. cit. p. 12, and 3, p. 16.


234. De Spiritu et Anima 12 (PL 40:788). This seems to originate in Eriugena, Periphyseon I p. 56. It is also found in the Sententiae Anselmi, ed. F. P. Bliemetzrieder, Beiträge XVIII/2-3 (Münster, 1919), pp. 152-3.


236. MT 1 (Col. XXXVII p. 463:71-5).

237. DN 7.15 (Col. XXXVII p. 348:71-3).


241. MT 3 (Col. XXXVII p. 469:30-46); I Sent. d.2 a.22 (B 25 p. 84).

242. DN 7.25 (Col. XXXVII p. 356:45-57); DN 1.51 (Col. XXXVII p. 32:38-40).


245. Dion. Ep. 1 (Col. XXXVII p. 481:65-70). Obiectum was a "modern" word when Albert was writing, and its precise connotations in different authors need to be studied; in Albert's usage it seems to be closely linked to the idea of the natural "object" of our natural powers. See L. Dewan, "'Obiectum': notes on the invention of a word," Archives d'Hist. Doct. et Litt. 48 (1982) pp. 37-96, especially p. 38.

246. Dion. Ep. 5 (Col. XXXVII pp. 495-6).
This translation is based on the critical edition by Paul Simon in volume XXXVII of the Cologne edition of the works of St. Albert. I have occasionally ventured to express some doubts about the received text, but only in one case have I actually adopted an emendation into the translation. All such places are pointed out in the notes. In attempting to render Albert intelligible for English-speaking readers I have probably rather fallen between two stools. An unduly literal translation would yield the kind of version that is serviceable as a "crib," but which can scarcely be understood without constant reference to the Latin original. On the other hand I did not want to drift
too far from the words that Albert actually wrote: a paraphrase is not a translation. So I have tried, where it can be done without paying too high a price, to avoid barely anglicized Latin jargon, and this has meant a certain degree of paraphrase, or at least elaboration of the text. But there are still some passages where the uninitiated reader is likely to be puzzled, and I hope I have provided sufficient commentary to deal with such eventualities. Above all I have tried—though the results are perhaps a bit cumbersome—to avoid using latinate jargon that immediately suggests some totally irrelevant meaning in modern English. Thus, although it would be highly convenient to render sensibilis "sensible," I have respected the fact that the English word has taken on an entirely different career of its own, even though the alternative has been to use unwieldy phrases like "the things of the senses."

In addition to the text of Albert's commentary I have included a translation of Dionysius' Mystical Theology. For this I have used a Greek text edited by myself on the basis of the manuscripts available in Oxford, but the translation was actually made on the basis of Sarracenus' Latin version (which is what Albert used) in the light of Albert's comments. That is to say, I have tried to present the text of Dionysius as it was read and interpreted by Albert. Where the Latin version (or Albert's reading of it) is unusually bizarre, I have added a note explaining what seems to be going on.

To help the reader I have provided a fairly substantial commentary of my own, in which I have tried to shed light (a) on the arguments used by Albert, and (b) on the sources he cites. In this latter task I have obviously been much helped by Mgr. Simon's notes, but I have nevertheless pursued all Albert's explicit citations for myself, and I have sometimes come to conclusions that differ from those of Mgr. Simon. One of the difficulties is that Albert often cites imprecisely and the texts he has in mind have in fact matured in his own use of them, sometimes to the point where they bear little resemblance to their originals.

CHAPTER ONE
John Sarracenus' prologue. To Odo, abbot of St. Denis.

The Symbolic Theology ought to have come before the Mystical Theology, because St. Dionysius' own words make it clear that this was the work composed after the Divine Names. But, although I looked for it carefully, I was not able to find it in the parts of Greece where I was. If by any chance you manage to obtain it and the other books I mentioned to brother William, thanks to your monk who is said to have gone to Greece, please let me know. In the meantime here is my translation of the Mystical Theology. It is clearly called "mystical" because it is hidden and closed; in this kind of theology we rise to the knowledge of God by way of abstraction and at the end it remains a
closed and hidden secret what God is. It can also be called "mystical theology" because it too is a way in which much teaching about God can be obtained. The word myo, from which "mystical" comes, means "close" and also "learn" and "teach."

* "Truly God of Israel, the Savior, you are a hidden God" (Is. 45:15). From these words we can deduce four things about this teaching which is entitled Mystical Theology: its nature, its content, its audience and its objective.

  Its nature is alluded to in the word "truly." This is a feature common to the whole of sacred scripture; because we do not receive

  1 Sarracenus says literally, "to me your cleric," which is probably only a formula of politeness; it certainly refutes the suggestion that he was actually a monk of St. Denis.

  it on the authority of human arguments, which involve a large admixture of uncertainty and error, but on the authority of divine inspiration, which cannot contain any falsehood, it rests on undoubted truth. So Christ says to the Father, "Your word is truth" (Jn. 17:17). "God is truthful" (Rom. 3:4). "Which God promised, who does not lie" (Tit. 1:2). "God is not like us, that he should change or lie" (Num. 23:19). "It is impossible that God should lie" (Heb. 6:18).

  The content of this teaching is alluded to in the words "hidden God." It is called "mystical," that is, hidden, as the translator says in his prologue, because "in this kind of theology we rise to the knowledge of God by way of abstraction and at the end it remains a closed and hidden secret what God is." And so because the Godhead is hidden like this it says, "He dwells in inaccessible light and no human being has seen him or can see him" (1 Tim. 6:16). "No one has ever seen God" (Jn. 1:18). On this last text Chrysostom says that not even the heavenly beings have ever been able to see him as he is. 2 "No human being shall see me and live" (Exod. 33:20). "Each one beholds him from afar; see how God in his greatness defeats our knowledge" (Job 36:25-26).

  The sort of people to whom this kind of teaching is meant to be addressed is alluded to in the word "Israel," which means "very straight" and "a man who sees God." 3 This reveals the twofold perfection which is required of the student of this science: clarity of understanding in order to see God and right behavior in practice, which is how we come to such clarity or sharpness of understanding. The student should not be a child either in years or in manners,

  2 Cf. Chrysostom, Hom. on the Gospel of John 15.1 (PG 59:98); Latin text in RTAM 19 (1952) p.101. In 1 Sent. d.1 a.15 (B 25 p.34) Albert claims to have found this text "in the original" (i.e., in the actual
translation of Chrysostom, as distinct from a florilegium or someone else's citation of the text); in CH 4.5 (B 14 p.115) a similar text is ascribed to Damascene. The actual words cited by Albert are not found in Chrysostom or in Damascene, and "heavenly beings" (coelestes essentiae) perhaps suggests an influence from Eriugena (cf. Periphyseon I, ed. cit. p.66:34-6). Presumably Albert originally received this text as an unattached "authority," which he subsequently located in Chrysostom, but whose wording he did not bother to correct in the light of what Chrysostom actually said.

The interpretation of Israel as meaning vir videns deum was classic (cf. Lombard's comment on Ps. 75:2, PL 191:706A), in spite of Jerome's refutation of it (Hebr. Quaest. in Gen. 32:28, CC vol. 72 p.41), cited both in the Glossa Ordinaria and in Hugh of St. Cher's postil on Gen. 32:28. Jerome favors the interpretation "straight," which he gives in Greek: εὐθύτατος θεόν.

as the philosopher says in the Ethics about the student of political science. So Bernard also says, "It is presumptuous when impure people unworthily undertake holy reading before their flesh has been tamed and subjected to the spirit by the practice of discipline and before they have cast off and spurned the pomp and the burden of the world." "To whom will he teach knowledge and whom will he make to understand his message? People who are weaned from milk and torn away from the breast" (Is. 28:9). "We speak wisdom among the perfect ... no one with the resources merely of the human soul can grasp the things of God's Spirit" (1 Cor. 2:6, 14). "Do not give what is holy to dogs" (Mt. 7:6).

The objective of this teaching is alluded to in the word "Savior." Its goal is not just that we should acquire knowledge or, as in ethics, that we should "become good" by doing good works, but that we should go further and attain to everlasting salvation, where we shall encounter openly and without veil what is at present left hidden from us about God by way of negations. "To know you is the consummation of righteousness, and the knowledge of your righteousness and truth is the root of immortality" (Wis. 15:3). "I have seen the Lord face to face and my soul is saved" (Gen. 32:30).

After this preamble we must proceed to inquire about the name of this science, and ask why it is called "mystical." At the same time its aim will become clear to us.

(1) On the face of it, no science ought to be called "mystical." Anything that is known systematically is laid out in the open on the basis of its first principles, and once it is out in the open it is not hidden. So it would seem that no science, including this one, should be called "mystical" or hidden.

(2) Something which is completely hidden has more right to be called "mystical" than something which is at least clear in its starting point.
But this science, as we shall see in the third chapter, proceeds by denying things of God, and it starts with things that are clearly perceived by the senses, which it separates from God. But the divine Persons, which our author deals with elsewhere, are completely hid-


6. Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 2.2 (1103b26-8) says that the purpose of ethical study is not just speculative, it is that "we may become good."

-136-
den, so it seems that that is the science which should be called "mystical," not this one.

3) "Mystical" or "hidden" ought to apply particularly to whatever is furthest removed from our knowledge. But the distinction of the Persons in the Trinity is particularly remote from our knowledge. As Ambrose says, "It is impossible for me to know the secret of the Son's birth; our mind fails, our voice falls silent, and not only ours but that of the angels too." 7. So the teaching which discusses the distinction of the Persons appears to be the one which should be particularly called "mystical."

4) Augustine says that in some fashion he read in the books of Plato everything else contained in the prologue of St. John, but what he did not find there was "the Word was made flesh." So it is said of him that he could not even have an inkling of the mystery of "the Word was made flesh." 8. But the less something is amenable to the philosophers, the more hidden it must be from human reason. And Dionysius deals elsewhere with the mystery of the Incarnation, together with the distinctive properties of the Persons, as he implies in the chapter on Peace in the *Divine Names*, 9 so it is that science rather than this which should particularly be called "mystical."

5) Although we say that the philosophers had some kind of knowledge of the divine Persons by way of attributes appropriated to them, they had absolutely no knowledge of their proper attributes. 10. So surely the science which has the best claim to be called "hidden" and "mystical" is the one which deals with these proper attributes.

10. The proper attributes of the divine Persons (Fatherhood, Sonship, procession) are known only by revelation; but certain terms that apply strictly to the essence of God are traditionally "appropriated" to particular Persons, even though they belong to all three: for example, "power" can be ascribed to the Father, "wisdom" to the Son and "goodness" to the Holy Spirit. It is within the competence of philosophy to apply such terms to God, but since they properly belong to all three Persons, they do not lead to any real knowledge
of the Trinity. Cf. I Sent. d.3 a.18 (B 25 pp.113-4); St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theol. I q.32 a. 1, q.39 a.7-8.

7. Ambrose, De Fide 1.10.64 (PL 16 [1845]:543B).
8. Cf. Augustine, Confessions 7.9.13-4, 7.19.25. Albert does not perhaps make it as clear as he should that it is Augustine who did not have an inkling of the mystery of the Incarnation, not Plato, and that the words are Augustine's own.
9. Dionysius, DN 11.5, though this actually does not make it clear that the divine Persons and the Incarnation are discussed in the lost (or perhaps unwritten) work, Theological Outlines. But MT 3 makes it clear that the book did (or was intended to) include such a discussion.

(6) The certainty which any science possesses derives entirely from its first principles. So a science which is hidden even in its starting point is more to be called "mystical" than one which at least starts from something which is out in the open. But this science starts from things which are out in the open, because its procedure is to start with the objects of the senses and separate them from God. But the science of God's names is hidden in its starting point, because it shows how all the things which are manifest to us proceed from the hiddenness of the Godhead. So it is that teaching, not this, which should be called "mystical."

(7) That which transcends all beings is obscure to our knowledge, in that our knowledge is caused by beings. But in the Divine Names Dionysius taught us how to interpret all the divine names by way of transcendence. Therefore that is the science which ought to be called "mystical."

(8) As it says in the second and also in the first chapter of the Celestial Hierarchy, sacred scripture depicts the things of God with symbols, so that we will be led to the things of God in a way which is adapted to us via things which are known to us. So if this science is to be called "mystical" because it leads us from the things which are manifest to us and leaves us finally in the dark, then symbolic theology too should surely be called "mystical" because it too ends in darkness. In response to these points we may say that negative ways of

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11 Albert begins his exposition of the Divine Names with a comment on the eminentia (transcendence) of the names that are given to God (Col. XXXVII p.1), and this interpretation of Dionysius' exegetical principle is justified especially by DN 7.2 (cf. St. Thomas, I Sent. d.8 q.4 a.3). In Albert's view both DN and MT deal with God's "mystical" names; on the relationship between the treatments of them in the two works, see above, pp.77-78.
12 The first two chapters of CH contain an apologia for the use of symbolic language in scripture, stressing that such language can
both communicate the mystery of God to us in a way adapted to our capacity and at the same time protect the mystery from the profane. It also makes clear the link there is between symbolic theology and negative theology. *Ep.* 9.1, in fact, appears to identify symbolic theology with mystical theology, but in his commentary (Col. XXXVII pp.535-6) Albert points out that mystical theology, in the sense appropriate to the treatise of that name, is "materially" opaque, in that it takes away from us any "matter" which our minds can grasp, whereas symbolic theology is not, in that sense, opaque, in that it deals precisely with the "veils" that hide God from our direct vision, but which are not themselves obscure. So Albert does not want to deny that symbolic theology is "mystical," only to insist that the mystical theology of *MT* has a distinct quality of its own, namely, that it leads us further and further into the dark, whereas symbolic theology is, in its own way, concerned with a kind of divine condescension to the clarity we naturally prefer.

-138-

doing theology begin, as it says in the third chapter, by taking what is clear to us and perceptible to our senses and denying it of God. They proceed in this way, separating everything from God, so that our understanding is left with something unclear, from which all that it knows has been taken away and about which it cannot say what it is. Affirmative ways of doing theology, on the other hand, bring the hiddenness of the Godhead out into the open, inasmuch as they indicate how the things that are manifest to us proceed from a transcendent cause. For example, when God is called "good" this signifies that he is the one from whom all goodness in creatures is derived, and when he is called "Father" this means that he is the one "from whom all fatherhood in heaven and on earth is named." 13.

So because this teaching with which we are concerned here deals with the kind of separation performed by negations, whereas others deal with what we affirm about God, this teaching has more right to be called "mystical" than any others, because it leaves us in the dark, whereas other sorts of teaching bring us out of the darkness into what is manifest to us.

So we may reply to the points raised above as follows:

(1) A science which proceeds from our own reason's first principles lays open the conclusions to which it leads us. But this present kind of teaching does not start from principles like this, it begins rather with a kind of divine light, which is not a statement by which something is affirmed, it is a kind of reality which convinces the understanding to adhere to it above all else. And so it raises the understanding to something which transcends it, and this is why the mind is left with something of which it has no clearly defined knowledge. This light is analogous to the light by which our bodily vision is empowered to see things; the light as such does not give us specific knowledge of any
particular visible thing, since it is not the visible form of anything in particular. By contrast the light of rational principles in the mind is more like the specific forms of visible objects,

13  Eph. 3:15.


by which our vision grasps particulars, and so these principles lead to the specific knowledge of some definite object.

(2) Although the reality of the divine Persons is hidden, yet there is nothing hidden about the way in which we treat of them, because the affirmations made about them in Trinitarian theology, such as that the Father begets or that there are three Persons, bring our understanding out of the darkness of the Godhead into things which are clear, in which some pointer is found which is left in them by the first cause. 15.

The science under discussion here is called "mystical" with reference to the nature of its method, as has been said above.

This shows us the answer to points 3, 4 and 5 as well.

(6) A science, like anything else, ought to be designated chiefly with reference to its end-product. 16. So this science, which leaves us in the dark at the end, has a better right to be called "mystical" than the science of the divine names which shows us how to move from hiddenness to clarity, particularly as this latter science does not even consider its starting point precisely as something hidden, but as something which is made manifest by the procession of things from it, which resemble it analogously inasmuch as they imitate it.

(7) The transcendence which is considered in the *Divine Names* is the transcendence of the cause, and so the theology of the divine names does not stay in it as something hidden, it moves from it by way of its causality toward effects which are manifest.

(8) We begin any symbolic theology with things that are clear to us, but the natural direction in this kind of teaching is from what is hidden to what is manifest, because what is said metaphorically is secondary with respect to what is said properly. A metaphor cannot work except because of some relationship to what is said properly; for instance we
cannot know why God is said to be "sleeping" without first knowing in what sense he refrains from acting. 17. But

15. Albert is not denying that the Trinity is an incomprehensible mystery to us; his point is that the language used in Trinitarian theology is not in itself unfamiliar to us. We know what it means for someone to be a father, and there are various triadic structures in creation that point to the Trinity of divine Persons; these pointers are genuine traces (vestigia) of the Trinity stamped on creation by its maker (cf. I Sent. d.3 a.13-18, B 25 pp.102-14).


17. Dionysius comments on God's "sleep" in Ep. 9.6, and Albert suggests that the scriptural reference is to Psalm 43:23, "Wake, Lord, why do you sleep?"; Albert's interpretation, that God's "sleeping" means that he appears to be turning a blind eye to what is going on -140- what belongs properly to God is hidden, whereas metaphors are taken from what is manifest, so the movement of symbolic theology too is from what is hidden to what is manifest.

We must now proceed to the analysis of the book's structure. As the philosopher says in the second book of the Metaphysics, we should not try to investigate at the same time both the way in which some object is clarified and the object itself. 18. We must investigate first how it is to be clarified. So this book falls into two parts: the first determines how this kind of teaching proceeds, and the second, beginning in chapter four, contains the actual teaching.

The method involved in this teaching comprises two factors: the situation of the person conducting the discussion, and the method of the discussion itself. So the first part of the book falls into two parts, the first dealing with the situation of the person conducting the discussion, the second (in chapter three) dealing with the method of the actual discussion.

There are two facets of the situation of the person conducting the discussion: first knowledge and then union with God, because, as it says in the Celestial Hierarchy, "hierarchy is knowledge and action and, as far as possible, likeness to God and union with him." 19. So this first section is in two parts, the first dealing with how we know God, the second (in chapter two) with how we become one with him.

The first subsection is also in two parts, the first dealing with the situation of the teacher, the second with the situation of the student.

The procedure for someone teaching the things of God is to seek by prayer the gift of that truth about the things of God which is to be passed on to others, because any theological business has to begin with prayer, as it says in the third chapter of the Divine
on and not doing anything about it (dissimulans) is in line with that of the standard commentary by Peter Lombard (PL 191:434C). But Dionysius takes the "sleep" to mean also the hiddenness of what God keeps to himself and does not share with his creatures, and in his commentary (Col. XXXVII p.545) Albert interprets this as the transcendence of God's majesty.

18 Aristotle, *Metaph.* α 3 (995a13-4); in the Middle Ages book α was called "book two."

19 CH 3.1 (p.87).

-141-

Names. 20 So this first section falls into two parts, a prayer and a recapitulation.

(1) But surely prayer is not the proper procedure for teaching. It is the teacher's role to implant truth in the soul of the student, and the only way this can happen is by means of a quite different sort of utterance, indicating that something is true or false. 21 But the utterance of a prayer does not indicate anything to be true or false, so it seems that prayer is not the proper procedure for a teacher to adopt.

(2) Teaching is meant to pass from the teacher to the student. But in the case of truth that is won by praying for it the student can be in exactly the same position as the teacher, because what is in question there is not the relationship between teacher and pupil but their respective holiness. So again prayer appears not to be a proper procedure for a teacher.

(3) Against this, though, truth which is higher than our own knowledge cannot be received by us unless its own generosity is moved and it bestows itself upon us. And the truth which is being sought in the present instance is of this kind. Now it is only by prayer that God's generosity is moved, so prayer apparently has to be the procedure adopted by a teacher in this domain.

In response to this problem we may say, as Gregory does at the beginning of his *Moralia*, that we arrive at a grasp of the things of God more by prayer than by discussion. 22 The reason for this is that, since divine truth exceeds our rational powers, we cannot of ourselves lay it bare unless it deigns to give itself to us. It is itself the inner teacher, without whom the external teacher toils in vain, as Augustine says. 23 But this does not mean that external teaching is superfluous, because it is a kind of tool as it says in the psalm ("My tongue is the pen of a scribe," Ps. 44:2), and it makes an impression on the hearer's soul by means of utterances signifying truth or false-

20 *DN* 3.1 (PG 3:680D).

21 *Oratio* in Latin can mean either "statement" or "prayer"; the
definition of it in the former sense as "signifying something true or false" comes from Boethius (PL 64:454D).

22 There is a text very similar to this at the end of St. Bernard, *De Consideratione* 5.14.32, but no such text has been found at the beginning of Gregory's *Moralia*.

23 Albert is here summing up the essential thesis of Augustine's *De Magistro* in much the same way as he had done a few years earlier in *I Sent.* d.2 a.5 (B 25 p.59b).

hood. So, because of the two teachers involved, both kinds of utterance are necessary: statements (and this concerns the relationship between teacher and student) and entreaty.

This shows us how to answer the points raised above.

**On Mystical Theology. Dionysius, presbyter, to his fellow-presbyter Timothy. Chapter One.**

Supersubstantial Trinity, more than divine, more than good, inspector of the divine wisdom of the Christians, direct us to the more than unknown, more than resplendent and highest peak of the mystic Oracles, where the simple, separate and changeless mysteries of theology are veiled in the darkness of instructed silence which is hiddenly more than resplendent, which makes that which is most excellently luminous to shine down in utter obscurity and fills minds which have no eyes with more than beautiful brilliances in what is utterly impalpable and invisible. Let this then be my demand in prayer.

* Several questions arise about details of the text which need clarifying.

(1) Splendor is by its nature a kind of manifestation; but "manifest" and "unknown" are opposites. So the author appears to be contradicting himself when he says "unknown" and "more than resplendent."

(2) A thing is simple precisely because it is separate from matter, so the author seems to be wasting words in saying both "simple" and "separate." It is also superfluous to add "changeless," since immobility goes with both simplicity and immateriality.

(3) All instruction is given by means of some kind of word, whether inner or outer. And when a word is uttered, silence is broken. So the author seems to be harnessing two incompatible terms when he says "instructed silence."

The answer to these points is as follows:

(1) God is called "more than resplendent" in himself, but hid

-143-

den with regard to us, because things which are naturally the most manifest are related to our understanding as a bat's eye is related to sunlight. 24 Or we can say that God is hidden in himself in the
exaltedness of his nature, but more than resplendent inasmuch as he
gives himself to us.

(2) Among lower realities some things are simple from the point of
view of our way of understanding them, though in their actual
existence they are composite and dependent on matter; such are the
essences of things that exist in nature. Realities of this kind are
immobile and indestructible in themselves, but they are accidentally
prone to corruption in the subjects in which they inhere. 25. But God is
both notionally simple and in reality separate from matter, not
dependent on anything, because he is complete in himself, and he
does not move or change in any sense, not even accidentally. 26

(3) There is "silence," simply speaking, because we cannot say of God
"what" he is; but it is, relatively speaking, an "instructed silence"
inasmuch as we can say "that" he is.

The introductory greeting needs no comment, because it has been
expounded elsewhere 27 and its meaning is obvious, and the sig-

24 Aristotle, Metaph. α 1 (993b9-11).

25 Although a poodle, say, is a complex organism, and there cannot
be any poodle in existence that is not compounded of a
considerable number of parts, the idea of a poodle is simple—I do
not have to piece together the idea of a tail, the idea of fur, and so
on, to arrive at it, nor do I review a succession of thoughts when I
think "poodle." The idea of a poodle is "separate from matter"—I
could still think "poodle" even if there were no poodles left alive
anywhere in the world. And when I take my poodle for a walk, I am
not really taking "poodleness" for a walk, nor does "poodleness"
suffer when my beloved pet expires. Nevertheless, inasmuch as
"poodleness" only exists either in poodles or in people's minds, as
the various poodles in the world go about their business,
"poodleness" too, in a sense, shifts its location, and when a poodle
dies "poodleness" ceases to exist in that particular part of the world.
This is what it means to say that things like "poodleness" are
"accidentally" (though not in themselves) liable to movement and
corruption. Albert's point is that it is not superfluous for Dionysius to
list "simple," "separate" and "immutable" as distinct items.

26 Unlike "poodleness," God actually exists independently of all
materiality, nor is there any kind of complexity that can truly be
ascribed to him. Even such abstruse distinctions as that between his
essence and his existence are no more than a concession to our
own intellectual convenience and do not correspond to any real
distinction in God. And there is no sense at all in which God is liable
to change or corruption.

27 The greeting, "Dionysius, presbyter, to his fellow-presbyter
Timothy," is identical with that at the beginning of DN, on which
Albert's only comment is that "presbyter" means "bishop" and that they were both bishops (Col. XXXVII p.3).

-144-

ificance of the title is clear from what has already been said above, so without further ado let us pass on to the preliminary prayer.

So the author prays, "O supersubstantial Trinity," Trinity, that is, who make all things exist, 28 "more than divine," providing, that is, for things that do now exist, 29 "more than good," inasmuch as it directs all things to their goal, 30 "inspector of the divine wisdom" (wisdom about God) "of the Christians" (possessed by Christians), because he alone is perfectly able to contemplate himself; this is why Dionysius says "inspector," which suggests a very intimate kind of looking. 31 And he says "of the Christians" to distinguish this wisdom from the knowledge of God which even philosophers possessed, which was mixed up with a great many errors because of the weakness of human reason. "Direct us," because you alone perfectly see yourself, "to the highest peak of the mystic oracles," along the way by which we come as it were to something hidden by denying everything of him, as has been said above; "to the peak which is more than unknown ..., where" (on that peak) "the mysteries of theology are veiled," that is, hidden from us, "in the darkness of instructed silence which is hiddenly more than resplendent." Just as the light of the sun is too bright for us and produces a kind of darkness in our feeble eyes even though there is no darkness in the sun, so "in God there is no darkness at all," 32 but our eyes are darkened by the excess of his radiance, because they are powerless to cope with such splendor, and it is by this darkness that the things of God are hidden from us, the "simple mysteries, etc." This peak "makes that which is most excellently luminous" (the divine light) "shine

28 "Supersubstantial," taken in accordance with Albert's principle that all the divine names are to be expounded along the lines of eminentia causae, means that God is "more than substantial" because he is not just "a substance," he is the cause of all created substance, that is, the cause of the existence of all creatures. Cf. his comment on DN 1.54 (Col. XXXVII pp.33-4).

29 "Godhead" is interpreted by Dionysius as meaning the providence which "sees" everything and "runs around" everything to bring creation to its fulfilment (θειότης being derived from θεόσθαι or θεωρεῖν in the first sense and from θέων in the second): DN 12.2 (PG 3:969C), and cf. Eriugena, Periphyseon I p.60 (a text incorporated into the Latin interpolated Gloss). See Albert, I Sent. d.2 a.11 (B 25 p.65a); DN 12.7 (Col. XXXVII p.430).

30 According to Dionysius, DN 4.1-2, it is the outpouring of good from the primary Good that inspires all beings with the desire to be assimilated to the Good and so to come to their own perfection; cf.
Albert's commentary on this (Col. XXXVII p.129).

A typical medieval etymology, linking *inspectrix* with *intime spectans*. Dionysius' Greek actually means "inspector" in the sense of " overseer."

1 John 1:5.

-145-

down" (into our minds) "in utter obscurity," the obscurity of divine transcendence, because although the excess of this radiance leaves a darkness in us so that we fall short of comprehending God's transcendence, nevertheless because in some way we do attain to it by abandoning everything, our minds are deified and enlightened. And so he goes on: "and fills minds" (our minds and those of the angels) "which have no eyes" (no bodily eyes) "with more than beautiful brilliances" of divine illuminations in that highest point which is "utterly impalpable," because it is known by none of our outward senses, and "invisible" to our inner sight.

Then he recapitulates, "Let this then ..."; the meaning is obvious.

* As for you, my friend Timothy, with regard to mystic visions, with a strong contrition abandon the senses and the workings of the intellect and all that is known to the senses or the intellect and all that is non-existent or existent and, as far as possible, rise up in unknowing to imitate him who is above all being and knowledge. It is by an unrestrainable and unbound ecstasy from yourself and from everything that you will be carried upward in purity to the supersubstantial ray of divine darkness, removing everything and cut loose from everything.

See that no one who is uninstructed hears these things; none of those, I mean, who are shaped within beings and imagine that nothing exists supersubstantially above beings, who think they can know him who makes darkness his hiding place with their own kind of knowledge. If the divine teaching of the mysteries is above them, what are we to say of those who are more uninstructed, who construct an image of the cause which is above everything out of the lowest among beings and claim that it has nothing higher than these impious and manifold shapes

-146-
which they themselves have constructed? Of this cause we have both to posit and affirm all that is affirmed of beings, and, more properly, to deny it all, because the cause transcends everything. And we must not think that the negations contradict the affirmations; seeing that the cause is above all negation and all affirmation, we must believe it to be all the more above all lack. 35.

Next Dionysius deals with the stance of the student, and this section falls into two parts, the first indicating what the student's stance should be, the second proving it by authority.

The first part is divided into two: first the author deals with the student's stance in receiving teaching, then he deals with the communication of it to others.

The procedure which he teaches Timothy, to whom he is writing and who epitomizes the student, is to "abandon the senses and the workings of the intellect" with regard to mystic understanding, and to do so with "strong contrition," crushing them, as it were, under the divine light, and to abandon "all that is known to the senses or the intellect," because none of these things is God. "Known to the intellect" here means "comprehended by the intellect." 36. Similarly he must abandon "all that is existent" in fact and "all that is non-existent," being merely potential, because God is not categorized with other things that exist, as if he formed a class with them. And thus he should "rise to imitate God who is above all being and knowledge," inasmuch as the mind in which the image of God is reformed by habitual grace or glory actually imitates God. Another reading has "rise to be united with God," and this corresponds

35 If the negations were taken simply to be contradicting the affirmations, we should end up ascribing to God a lack of something, whereas God is actually beyond both affirmations and negations. The affirmation says that God does not lack whatever it may be; the negation insists that he does not have it in the limiting way in which we have our properties. But neither comes anywhere near actually describing God.

36 In the more common, weaker sense, God is obviously among the intelligibilia (things known by the intellect rather than perceived by the senses); so Albert takes Dionysius to be meaning something stronger here: God is not among those things of which the mind can have a comprehensive understanding.

-147-

to the other translation, which has "rise to unity," 37. that is, simplicity. And in this way he is to be "carried upward to the ray of divine darkness, removing everything" (abandoning everything) and "going out of himself unrestrainably," that is, not holding himself back within reason's own principles.
Several questions arise out of this.
(1) Why does the author instruct his student more carefully here than in his other books?
(2) Without the workings of the intellect nothing can be known. So since his aim is to bring his student into some kind of knowledge, he ought not to tell him to abandon the workings of the intellect, he ought rather to encourage him to take them up energetically.
(3) In the theological negations which are the concern of this science it is necessary to begin with the things of the senses, so he ought not to tell his student to abandon the senses.
(4) Nothing goes outside itself, so in bidding his student to do so he is apparently bidding him do something impossible.

The answers to these points are as follows:
(1) In his other books about God the things of God are brought to us by way of what is manifest to us, but in this book we have to go to God and become united with him. So this is the complete perfection of the knowledge of God, and therefore it calls for a greater perfection in the student.
(2) Dionysius bids us abandon the workings of the intellect which are connatural to us, not those which are in us by virtue of the divine light. 38.
(3) He bids us abandon the senses only inasmuch as we have to 37.

37 Albert seems to have had a defective text of Sarracenus, reading ad eius imitationem instead of ad eius unitionem. The "other translation" is that of Eriugena, which has ad unitatem.
38 The intellect, simply with its own resources, is not adapted to the knowledge of God, but it is made capable of knowing God by the illuminations which come down to it from God (DN 1.21, Col. XXXVII p.11:28-35); and this is not unnatural to the intellect, because the intellect possesses an inherent potentiality for such enlightenment by God (potentia obedientiae, ibid. 1.27, p.13:61-3) and, as we saw in the Introduction, all intellectual activity in fact requires some such enlightenment from on high (I Sent. d.2 a.5, B 25 pp.59-60; Dion. Ep. 5, Col. XXXVII p.496). And however much any created mind is boosted by supernatural illumination from God, it still works in the way which is natural to it (Dion. Ep. 1, Col. XXXVII p.481). "Far from being radically abolished, our natural or philosophical ways of grasping things are henceforth integrated, by means of their being subjected to the supernatural light, into the new epistemological edifice constituted by the mystical darkness of faith" (E. H. Wéber, AMDU p. 439).

-148-
abandon the delight we can have in them; he does not mean that it is wrong for us to go to God by way of the negation of things perceived by the senses.
(4) Nothing goes out of itself in the sense that it could exist outside itself, but its power can be extended above itself inasmuch as it is carried toward an object which is higher than itself, and this is what is being recommended here.

Next (a) he lays down the proper procedure in communicating this doctrine to others; after that (b) he replies to a question.

(a) First he debar哲学ers from sharing in this science, then idolaters. So first of all he says that Timothy must be careful here not to let anyone who is "uninstructed" in the doctrine of God "hear" these mystical teachings. He calls "unlearned" those whose hearts and minds are "shaped" by "beings," from which we receive knowledge, and so they do not believe that anything "exists supersubstantially above beings," incommensurably, that is, with beings. So even philosophers say that the first mover is proportionate to the first thing moved. 39. What they do believe is that they can know "him who makes darkness his hiding place" (God, that is) "with their own kind of knowledge," that is, by way of rational principles. In this way Augustine is said to have wanted in the conceit of his vain philosophy to comprehend with his human reason what the devout mind strives to apprehend with the liveliness of faith. 40.

But there are two difficulties:
(1) On the face of it, those who are not shaped like this by beings are already instructed, and as such they do not need to be instructed, and so it looks as if it is rather the people whose minds are shaped by beings who should be offered instruction.

(2) As the philosopher says, there are many people who have knowledge, but act in a way which contradicts their knowledge. 41. So there is no reason why some people should not be able to know the things of God, even though in their emotions they are shaped by beings.

39 Albert is probably thinking of the kind of discussion we find in Aristotle, Physics 8.6 and De Caelo 2.6, in which the first mover and the first moved are discussed strictly with reference to each other, so that little room is left for any real transcendence in the first mover.

40 The source of this citation is unknown, but cf. Bernard, Ep. 338.1 (where a similar comment is made about Abelard, not Augustine).

41 Cf. perhaps Aristotle, Eth. Nic. 7.1 (1145b12-3).

But if our emotions are infected by an unlawful love of things, we shall not
feel the sweetness of God's inspiration, and so, because of the lack of experiential knowledge, we may be able to form syllogisms and utter propositions, but we shall not have that real knowledge which is a part of beatitude.

So we may respond to the points raised as follows:
(1) It is not those who are already instructed who are to receive instruction, but people who are ready for the divine teaching because their hearts and minds have been purged from errors and lusts.
(2) What the philosopher is saying has to be taken as referring to the kind of knowledge which is based on rational principles, not on experiential knowledge.

Next Dionysius excludes idolaters from sharing in this teaching. He says that if the "divine teaching" about mystic realities is beyond all those who follow reason, it is much more beyond the "even more uninstructed" who only follow the senses and do not think that there is anything beyond the realm of the senses, but "construct an image" of God on the basis of "the lowest among beings." Such people are referred to in Romans as having "changed the glory of God into images of birds and serpents" (Rom. 1:23). They do not think that God is anything greater than these "impious" images which they themselves make.

(b) Since in defense of this error it might be possible to argue that God is the cause of everything and therefore everything must be predicated of him, so God is man and ought to be worshipped in human images, and similarly he ought to be worshipped in images of serpents and other things, Dionysius responds with an anthypophora 43 and says that God is the cause of everything yet in his

42 DN 2.9 (PG 3:648B).
43 A rhetorical technical term; hypophora is when a speaker raises an objection that might be made against the position he is expounding, anthypophora is the response to it (cf. Fortunatianus, Rhet. 2.27, in C. Halm, Rhetores Latini Minores [Leipzig, 1863], pp.117-8; Fortunatianus' definition is quoted by Martianus Capella, De Nuptiis 5.563). Albert interprets the

-150-

essence he is above everything. And so it is true that everything is predicated of him as cause, yet much more essentially everything is separated from him and he is not any one of them. And these "negations do not contradict the affirmations," because they do not concern the same point; the cause of all has to be situated above both negations and affirmations, because the "whatness" of God cannot be comprehended by way of either of them.

But this raises four questions:
(1) It does not seem possible to predicate everything of God. A cause which has nothing in common with what it causes does not share in the predicates which apply to what it causes. We do not say that the sun is a human being, but we do say that sun shining on the earth is the day, because the form of the sun, namely light, is what makes it day. 44. But God has nothing in common with any creature, generically, specifically or analogously. 45. Therefore things which are affirmed of creatures cannot be predicated of God. 46.

sequence of Dionysius' thought on the assumption that the conclusion of this paragraph is a response to a tacit objection raised by the people accused of idolatry.

44 According to Aristotelian physics human beings are generated "by human beings and the sun" (Physics 2.2 (194b13); cf. Albert, De Resurrectione tr. 1 q.2.10, Col. XXVI p.243:12-15; De Anima 3.1.5, Col. VII i p.171:10-2). The sun, as the primary physical cause of all that happens in the world, is the cause of human beings coming to birth, but it does not share in the predicates which apply to human beings, so it would be patently silly to call the sun a human being.

45 These are the three ways of having something in common that Aristotle lists, De Partibus Animalium 1.5 (645b27-8).

46 This point is stated more fully in the commentary on DN 13.22 (Col. XXXVII p.445:50-68). Two things have something in common in the sense that they belong to the same genus: a caterpillar and an orangutan have it in common that they are both animals. Or in the sense that they belong to the same species: two violins have it in common that they are both violins, though they are made of different wood, etc. In the case of analogy there has to be some common term and, if the analogy is to be a strict one, it has to be a term understood univocally: thus substance and accidents have "existence" in common; even though a red nose and a Red Indian exist in different ways, they exist in the same sense (red noses have only the kind of parasitic existence which is proper to accidents, but they could still be included in a list of red objects in the room on exactly the same footing as Red Indians, whereas red deans and redness could not be so included without the risk of objections being raised). But God is not of the same kind as any creature (no genus includes both God and creatures), nor is he of the same species as any creature, and we have to beware even of saying that there is an analogy between God and creatures in that both God and creatures "exist." When we say that "God is there" we are not making the same kind of statement as when we say "my pet gorilla is there." They are not items in the world in anything like the same sense. All that Albert will concede, as we shall see from his answer to this point, is that there is a reduced sort of analogy, an "analogy of imitation," between God and creatures: whatever it is that entitles
us to say

(2) We do not say that a knife-smith is a knife, even though he works by means of the concept of a knife, which he has in himself. So it does not look as if we should predicate creatures' names of God, even though the idea of all things is in him.

(3) The proximate causes of things are not always predicated of their effects or vice versa. Much less, then, the first and most distant cause.

(4) Affirmation and negation contradict each other formally when the same thing is both affirmed and denied with regard to a single object. And this is the case here. So it seems that the affirmations and negations involved do contradict each other.

In answer to this problem we must say that if an effect is to be predicated of its cause, there has to be something in common between the cause and the effect. This is why we say that, although God has nothing in common, generically, specifically or analogously with his creatures (in the sense that there is no single item found identically in him and in other things), nevertheless he does have something in common with creatures in the form of an imitative kind of analogy, in as much as other things imitate him to the extent that they are able. Some things imitate him only in being formed by his idea, such as things which do not pre-exist in him—for example, asses and stones in their own forms. These are not predicated essentially of God, but only causally. Other things imitate him as an image or likeness of him, and these pre-exist primarily in him, such as wisdom, goodness and so on. These things are predicated essentially and causally of him.  

The situation of the crafts

that some creature "is" or "is good" must be true in a prior (and, to us, incomprehensible) way in God.

A sculptor is a proximate cause of a statue, but we do not say that a sculptor is a statue; and remote causes are further from their effects than proximate causes and are therefore even less plausibly called by the name of their effects (cf. Albert on DN 5.31, Col. XXXVII p.321). But proximate causes do receive names from their effects when they operate at least causally by the transmission of some form from themselves (ibid. 5.32, p.322); the example of the sun and daylight cited above would be a case in point (and in Latin it is slightly more natural than in English to suggest that we talk of the sun in terms of day: for instance, in Latin you can say indifferently that the sun is rising or that the day is rising). So the point being made here is that proximate causes do not always share a common name with their effects; this means that the real question is whether there is anything in common between God and his effects. Once this has been clarified, Albert is quite right to say
that no specific answer is needed to the point raised here. 

By "essential predication" is meant claiming that some attribute genuinely belongs to something it is not.

man is different, because he is not the idea of the knife, although he has the idea of the knife in himself, whereas God is the idea of everything, as well as containing it, because he is whatever he has. 49. Therefore God in a certain way is susceptible of having all the names of things applied to him, just as we can apply the word "house" to the design and plan from which the house made of stone and wood is derived, as the philosopher says. 50.

This makes it clear what the answer is to the first three points. 

(4) In answer to the fourth point we must say that we affirm things of God only relatively, that is, causally, whereas we deny things of God absolutely, that is, with reference to what he is in himself. And there is no contradiction between a relative affirmation and an absolute negation. It is not contradictory to say that someone is white-toothed and not white.

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So the divine Bartholomew says that theology is both plentiful and minimal, and the gospel is broad and large and then again it is concise; it seems to me that he is noticing supernaturally that the good cause of all things is a matter of many words and at the same time of short utterance, and it is non-rational, having neither reason nor understanding, because it is placed supersubstantially above all things, and it appears unveiledly and truly only to those who pass over all that is impure and all that is pure and who climb above every ascent of all the holy limits and leave behind all divine lights and sounds and heavenly words and enter into the darkness where he truly is, as the Oracles say, 51 who is above all.

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to what something is in itself; by "causal predication" is meant calling A "x" because A causes x.

49 Cf. above, Introduction, Part II note 70.

50 Aristotle, *Metaph.* Z 7 (1032b12-4); cf. Albert, *DN* 4.62 (Col. XXXVII p.170:84-6), where there is the same phrase "stone and wood," apparently conflated from two other passages in Aristotle (1032b30 and 1033a15).

51 Exod. 20:21.

Dionysius has shown us the perfection required even of a student of this science because of the exaltedness and difficulty of its subject matter. So now he adduces two authorities to prove its difficulty, one from the apostle Bartholomew, the other from Moses.
The first falls into two parts: the citation of the authority and then the comment on it.

So he first says that we have explained that with reference to God’s essence everything is denied of him because of the height of his divine majesty, while at the same time everything is affirmed of him causally. "So therefore," because of this, "the divine Bartholomew" (the apostle) "says" in the gospel he wrote, which we do not use, 52. "that theology" (talking about God in general) is "plentiful" because of all God’s effects and images and "minimal" with regard to what we can truly grasp of God in the conditions of this life. And the gospel in particular, containing the teaching about the Word incarnate, is "broad" because of the number of its parables and "large" because of the depth of its meaning and its mysteries, "and then again it is concise," that is, short, with reference to its purpose, which is to reveal God to us, of whom we can grasp little at present. This is why the apostle cites Isaiah in connection with the gospel, "The Lord will make his word shortened upon the earth" (Rom. 9:28). 53.

Next Dionysius comments on the authority he has cited. "It seems to me" (this expresses humility) "that the divine Bartholomew is noticing supernaturally," moved, that is, by the divine light, "that the good cause of all things" (God) "is a matter of many words" inasmuch as he is talked about with the names of the things he causes, "and at the same time of short utterance" (of few words) because there is little we can say of him as he is in himself. And he says that he is "non-rational," because we cannot reason about him, "having neither reason" (definition) 54. "nor understanding"—this is to be

52 The existence of an apocryphal Gospel of Bartholomew is attested by several church fathers (cf. E. Hennecke, New Testament Apocrypha I [London, 1963], pp.484-507), but it is extremely unlikely that Dionysius is really quoting from it. His alleged quotation is designed to give added substance to his pseudonymous persona.

53 Isaiah 10:23, as found in the Septuagint.

54 This passage is held together by the word ratio, which Albert takes here to mean "definition." The underlying Greek probably means that God is "wordless" (ἁλογος), rather taken passively, in the sense that he cannot be comprehended by any understanding—"because it" (the cause) "is placed above all things" (in the exaltedness of its nature) "supersubstantially" (this refers to its manner of existing) "and it appears unveiledly" (as to our way of receiving it) "and truly" (as to its objective truth), and this is seen only by those who, in their movement toward God, "pass over" (transcend) "all that is impure" (material creatures) "and all that is
pure" (immaterial creatures) "and climb above every ascent of all the holy limits." This refers to the angelic "limits" and "limits" means the point at which a lower nature touches a higher, the highest point of the lower nature touching the lowest point of the higher. Since God is above all natures, all these limits have to be transcended if we are to come to him. "And leave behind" even "all divine lights and sounds and heavenly words," that is, the illuminations which God sends us but which are not God, "and enter into the darkness," that is, the hiddenness of the Godhead, the darkness being caused by our insufficiency, "where God truly is, who is above all, as the Oracles say," in the verse of the Psalm, "Darkness is under his feet" (Ps. 17:10).

There are several questions which arise out of this:

(1) The author seems to be contradicting himself. In the first chapter of the Celestial Hierarchy he said that "it is impossible for the divine ray to shine on us except veiled in a variety of sacred coverings," but here he says that it appears unveiledly to those who transcend everything. So on the face of it he is contradicting himself.

(2) To receive divine illuminations unveiledly is to be the first recipient of them, but this is not natural to human beings, because this is precisely where the human soul differs from the angels, as Alexander says. So at least in this life we apparently cannot see the things of God unveiledly.

(3) In the Celestial Hierarchy it says that a lower nature at its highest point touches the lowest extremity of a higher nature. So it is impossible for it to go beyond its limit. But the angels have a higher nature than ours, so it seems to be impossible for us to transcend the limits of angels, which is what the text literally says here.

(4) In the chapter on peace in the Divine Names he said that souls must first be united in themselves and then, through that intellect which is immaterial and simple, come to union with God. So it seems that we ought not to leave the angels behind (they are the immaterial
intellects), we ought rather to unite ourselves with them as far as possible in order to come to God.

(5) Divine lights are given to us to strengthen our understanding so that it can know God. But if you are moving toward some goal, you ought not to abandon what facilitates your ascent toward that goal. So apparently we ought not to abandon divine lights in order to know God, we ought rather to cleave to them strongly.

(6) What is the difference between divine lights and heavenly sounds and words?

The answer to these questions is as follows:

(1) The contemplation of God can be viewed in two ways. It can be viewed (a) with reference to the medium in which we contemplate God or the starting point of contemplation, and it is in this sense that Dionysius says in the *Celestial Hierarchy* that we cannot see the divine ray in this life without its covering of signs and effects, because "we now see in a glass and enigmatically." Or (b) contemplation can be viewed in terms of the goal of contemplation or the object which we seek by contemplation, and this is God himself, unveiled. And this is where we arrive ultimately, when we reach the level of purely intellectual natures. Rational investigation would be futile if it never arrived at intellectual union. And it is in this sense that Dionysius speaks here.

(2) All contemplators of God desire to see the same thing. So from that point of view there is no diversity at all. Diversity arises in the way in which God is seen, because it is natural for some of them to receive God without any veil, whereas for others it is natural to receive him under a veil.

(3) "Transcending" something in contemplation can mean two different things. If it refers to our power of contemplation, in that sense we cannot transcend or even equal the angels in this life, even though we are raised by the divine light above the capacity of our own nature; if it refers to the object of contemplation, in that sense we do transcend even the angels in contemplating, because what we are looking for is above everything. This is what it says in the Canticle,
"Shortly after I had passed on from them, I found him whom my soul loves" (Cant. 3:4).

(4) We ought not to be united with the angels as if they were our object, but we should be united with them through the lights which come down to us through them, by which we are raised up to the contemplation of God.

(5) We ought to cleave to the divine lights, that is, the illuminations sent us by God, but not as if they were our object; we should regard them as the medium in which our object is seen and as strengthening our intellect, but our desire does not stop at them, as if they were our highest good.

(6) There are two ways in which our intellect is raised toward God. One is the way of discovery, in which the intellect, as it were, rises up of its own accord toward God, and in this sense the divine lights guide it on its way, because light brings our faculty of sight to perfection and sight is the chief instrument of discovery. The other way is when our intellect is raised toward God by means of various signs which he sends us, in which we have a kind of experience of him, like the way in which words give us an impression of the things which they signify. Signs like this may be directed toward our emotions, filling us with a joy which cannot be explained or even conceptualized, and this is what Dionysius refers to as "sounds." Since our emotions cannot be enunciated, they are expressed by interjections, like the *jubilus* mentioned in the commentary on Psalm 46:6 ("God goes up with a *jubilus*"), "This is an unspeakable joy which it is impossible either to contain in silence or to express in words." 60 Or signs may be addressed to the intellect,

60 Lombard's gloss on Ps. 46 (PL 191:456A).

* It is not simply that the divine Moses is first of all commanded to be purified himself and then to separate himself from those who are not such, and after all this purification he hears the many-voiced trumpets and sees many lights brilliantly emitting pure and widely-radiating beams. Then he separates himself from the crowd and, with select priests, reaches the height of the divine ascents. And even so he is not with God, he contemplates not God himself— who is invisible—but the place where God is. I think this signifies that the most divine objects of sight or intellect are certain subordinate principles of things which are subordinate to him who transcends everything, by means of which his
presence, which is above all thinking, is shown riding above the intellectual heights of his holiest places. And then he breaks loose from all that is seen and all that sees and enters the darkness of unknowing, the darkness which is truly mystical, in which he shuts off all his cognitive impressions, and comes to be in that which is entirely impalpable and invisible, belonging totally to him who is above all, and to no one, neither himself nor anyone else, united to him who is utterly unknown by the cessation of all knowledge, for the best, knowing beyond mind by knowing nothing.

61 Secundum melius (κατὰ τὸ κρεῖττον) properly qualifies the "cessation of all knowledge" and means "in a good sense," to prevent misunderstanding—there are obviously bad ways of abandoning knowledge. The construction and the meaning have generally been missed by commentators and translators here, in spite of the parallel passage in Ep. 9.5 (which the translators generally get right) and the similar discussion in lamblichus, De Mysteriis 3.25 and the comparable use of the contrasting phrases κατὰ τὸ χεῖρον, κατὰ τὸ κρεῖττον elsewhere (e.g., several times in Damascius, De Principiis). The word order, both in the Greek and in the Latin, has tempted modern scholars, as it tempted Albert, falsely to link secundum melius with unitus, resulting in the translation "united for the best," which has to be adopted if Albert's commentary is to make sense.

Next Dionysius demonstrates both the difficulty of the subject matter and the need for serious preparation on the part of the student by using the example of Moses (Exod. 19: 10ff).

This part falls into two sections: first, the story itself, then its meaning.

So he says first that we have stated that anyone wanting to ascend to the mystery of the divine darkness must be cleansed of everything. For "it is not simply" (not without a mystery of great significance) "that the divine Moses is first of all commanded to be purified himself," both in his emotions, which must be purged of all earthly affections, and in his understanding, which must be purged of all that is not God. "And then" secondly he is commanded "to separate himself from those who are not such" (not pure, that is), to ensure that he is not defiled by consorting with them and that he does not share with them the holy things he sees. Thirdly, "after all this purification he hears the many-voiced trumpets," the multiple divine precepts, that is, resounding in his soul. And fourthly "he sees many lights" (divine revelations) "emitting beams" (different kinds of knowledge), "pure beams" (uncontaminated by material appearances), "widely-radiating" (covering many objects of knowledge which become known through these beams). Fifthly, "he separates himself from the crowd" (the
people), as it says in Exodus 20:21, "The people stood afar off and Moses went toward the darkness, where God was." Anyone who contemplates the things of God is separated not only from the impure but also from the imperfect. Sixthly, "with select priests" (priests chosen by God) "he reaches the height of the divine ascents," that is, the highest levels of divine contemplation, as it says in Exodus 24:1, "God spoke to Moses, 'Go up to the Lord, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abiu and the seventy elders of Israel.' " "And even so he is not with God," that is, he does not see God himself, "but" seventhly "he contemplates, not God himself—who is invisible—but the place where God is," that is, he sees him in his most outstanding creatures, in which he is, as it were, enthroned. And this comes from Exodus 33:20-21, where the Lord says to Moses, "No human being shall see me and live.... Lo, here is a place by me, and you shall stand on the rock."

Next comes Dionysius' commentary on all this. "I think that this" (what has just been described) "signifies that the most divine objects of sight or intellect," whatever we see concerning God, that is, by the most noble revelations or whatever we come to understand by the highest contemplation in this life, are not God, but "certain principles" (appearances) "of things which are subordinate" to God "who transcends everything," and these "principles" are "subordinate," that is, they are lower than God, though they are relevant inasmuch as God is in his noblest creatures and effects; through them his (God's) most divine "presence, which is above all thinking, is shown," for he is present in all his effects and in a special way he is present in the effects of grace or glory. "His presence is shown riding above the intellectual heights of his holiest places," God's holiest places, that is, and these "places" mean the angels who receive in their highest powers the presence of God coming upon them through its effects of glory, and it is in their light that our soul sees the things of God, in that it is enlightened by them about the things of God. "And then," when Moses sees these most divine things, "he breaks loose from all that is seen" (the visible beams), because they are not the object of his contemplation, and from the others who see (the priests mentioned above); this is why the others are told, "You shall worship from afar, and Moses alone will go up to the Lord" (Exod. 24:1-2). And being thus separated from all "he enters the darkness of unknowing," in which God is said to have been, because he is unknown to us; and this "darkness is truly mystical" (hidden, that is) "in which he shuts off all his cognitive impressions," that is, all the natural powers of the soul which know things by receiving impressions and which, if they are separated from everything else, are filled solely with the divine darkness. And thus, by the adherence of his intellect, "he comes to be in that which is entirely impalpable and invisible," because what he finds in this way cannot be perceived by the senses or comprehended
by the intellect, "belonging totally to him who is above all" (God), by being completely turned toward him, "belonging to no one" (no one other than God), "neither himself nor anyone else," because he is turned to nothing except God, but being "united for the best" (in the best possible way

Principles" translates rationes (λόγους); "appearances" translates species. The link between them is the notion of "form"—the ratio of something (the principle of its intelligibility) is its "form" (species). But here species seems also to carry its more basic meaning, "appearance."

of being united) "with him who is utterly unknown" (God) "by the cessation of all" natural "knowledge," because he does not turn to other things which are naturally known, but only to God, who is known by no natural knowledge, "by knowing nothing" with any natural knowledge, "knowing beyond mind," beyond the nature of his own mind; this is made possible by the divine light infused from above, by which the mind is raised above itself. To clarify all this, we need to discuss three questions:

i. Is all such contemplation of God rapture?
ii. Is it "for the best" that our mind should be united to the utterly unknown?
iii. Did Moses see God himself?

(I) (1) It appears that this kind of contemplation always involves rapture. Whenever we are abstracted from our lower powers and only the higher power remains active, that is rapture. But this is what happens in this kind of contemplation, because the contemplator is united with the unknown God for the best by the cessation of all knowing. Therefore the contemplation of God appears always to involve rapture.

(2) When our lower nature follows the impetus of our higher nature, it is caught up, rapt, into it. And this happens when we are contemplating God, because the contemplator, as our text says here, becomes totally his who is above everything. So rapture appears to be always involved in the contemplation of God.

(3) The darkness of unbounded light appears not to shut off all our cognitive impressions. The senses are a capacity for knowledge which functions by receiving impressions of forms, as the philosopher says, but they are not capable of receiving the divine light nor can they reach out toward it, because it is immaterial. So they are not shut off by its darkness. If they are shut off by going idle themselves, that is surely always a case of rapture.

(4) If the contemplator is in no way his own, as Dionysius says, then he is abstracted from all that is his. And this includes his nat-
According to Albert's commentary on Ep. 9 (Col. XXXVII p.537:25-26) the "higher part" of the soul is the intellect.

Aristotle, De Anima 2.12 (424a17-9).

The soul of anyone contemplating in this life is in some way in the body. But the primary powers of the soul are those which work in our natural functions, and so if we are abstracted from these, the soul will not remain in the body at all, and this is not the case.

(6) What is the difference between the knowledge obtained by this kind of contemplation in this life and the comprehension of truth in heaven? Since in both cases there is an absorption in the divine light, there appears to be no difference at all.

In response we must say that rapture is not involved in all contemplation of God, and what is said here of contemplation applies to all contemplation, not just to rapture, which is the best part of contemplation.

The answers to the points raised are as follows:

(1) In rapture there is an abstraction from the use of our lower powers, because no use at all is being made of them. But in the contemplation of God in general there is no such abstraction from their use, because some use of them remains; but there is an abstraction in the sense of a relaxation of their intensity, because the soul pays no attention to their workings and their action is weakened, because when one of our powers is working with particular intensity, another power is weakened in its operation, as the philosopher says.

(2) In the contemplation of God our lower nature follows the impetus of our higher nature in the sense that our higher nature becomes its object, and it directs itself exclusively toward it as such, but not in the sense that it is totally fixed in attendance upon our higher nature and separated from its own functioning, which is what happens in rapture.

(3) The unbounded light shuts off some of our cognitive powers.
can be illustrated from Albert’s sermons: people can be so engrossed in their studies that they do not know whether or not they have eaten and that they look for things that they are actually holding in their hands; hours can go by without their noticing (AFP 34 [1964] pp.55-6).

directly, namely, the powers of our understanding, which are capable of reaching out to it. Our other cognitive powers, those of the senses, it shuts off by an indirect influence, inasmuch as the higher powers move the lower powers and a kind of token of higher things results in the lower powers.

(4) The contemplator is separated even from his natural powers, not in the sense that they stop functioning, but in the sense that he is not doing anything with them, both because the soul pays no attention to what they are doing and because they do not act with any intensity and so little energy is taken up by them, so that they are capable of enduring a long fast just as, at the other end of the scale, as the philosopher says, our digestion does its work better when we are asleep, when our animal powers are idle, than when we are awake, with our senses free. 

(5) This shows what the answer is to the fifth point: the soul is in the body with reference to the functioning of the natural powers.

(6) The two kinds of knowledge are different, because in heaven God is seen directly, whereas in this life he is contemplated in the effects of grace and light which flow from him into the soul. Also in heaven the vision of God will free us perfectly from all wretchedness, and this does not happen here. Finally in heaven we shall know God by being in a state of glory, whereas here we know him by being in a state of grace.

II

(1) On the face of it, it is not "for the best" that the intellect is united with the utterly unknown. Any power is destroyed by being joined to something which exceeds its capacity, and it is not "for the best" to be united with anything if the result is going to be destruction. So since the "unknown" in question is unknown because of the excess of its light, our mind is surely not united with it for the best.

(2) Our understanding is better united with something known than with something unknown, because knowledge is the way in which it comes to be united with things. So it is apparently not for the best that it is united with the unknown.

(3) If we know of something "that" it is, it is not utterly unknown, and we do know of God "that" he is, so he is not utterly unknown.

Aristotle, *De Somno* 1 (454b32-455a2).

(4) Nothing enjoys being absorbed. And the best kind of union is one which results in enjoyment. So if the contemplative intellect is
absorbed in the divine light, its union with it appears not to be for the best.

In response we must say that the best kind of union for anything is when it is united with its own ultimate perfection and when it is united with what is best. But God is what is best and he is the ultimate perfection of our intellects, so for our intellect being united with him is for the very best.

The answers to the points raised are as follows:

1. This claim is true with regard to the powers of the senses; because they are material and attached to material organs, they are destroyed by any object which is too much for them because it ruins the sense organ. But, as the philosopher himself says, the case is different with regard to the intellect; when the intellect takes to itself the most intelligible objects, its ability to grasp lesser objects is enhanced, not reduced.  

2. The intellect is not profitably united with something which is intrinsically unknown, but it is excellent for it to be united with what is unknown to us, but in itself supremely knowable, because by being united with it it acquires more and more knowledge of it; and God is this kind of unknown, as the philosopher says.

3. Inasmuch as knowing "that" is a particular mode of natural knowledge identified by the philosophers, we do not know God in this way. The philosopher identifies knowledge "that" as deriving either from a remote cause, or from an effect which is convertible with and proportionate to its cause. And we cannot know anything of God in either of these ways, and so there is no kind of natural knowledge by which he is known, neither knowledge "that" or knowledge "why," nor is he known by the senses or by the reason or by

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68. The reference is presumably to Aristotle, *Metaph. α* 1 (993b7-11), which Albert uses in a similar context in the commentary on *DN* 7.25 (Col. XXXVII p.356:32-40).

69. In Aristotelian philosophy, full-fledged knowledge means knowing "why," that is to say, being able to give an explanation of why something is the case, such that the thing being explained can be shown to follow necessarily from the alleged cause. If we can do no more than demonstrate "that" something is the case, the result is a second-class kind of knowledge, knowledge "that."
the understanding. Instead we have a supernatural knowledge of him in an indistinct kind of way.

(4) Anything which is absorbed in such a way as to lose its own nature is rendered insensible and does not rejoice in it, but whatever is absorbed by its own perfection becomes perfect by being absorbed and its enjoyment is brought to the full.

(III) (1) Moses appears to have seen God himself. It is God himself

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70 Aristotle, Post Anal. 1.13 (78a22-38). The first way of arriving at knowledge "that" is illustrated by Albert with the question why a wall does not breathe. To answer, "Because it is not an animal," is insufficient, since it does not isolate the crucial factor. It is true that only animals breathe, so if a wall is not an animal, it follows that it does not breathe; but not all animals breathe, so even if a wall were an animal it would not follow that it does breathe. For a real explanation of why a wall does not breathe we need to identify the physiological conditions which produce breathing, whose presence genuinely explains the presence of breathing and whose absence therefore genuinely explains the absence of breathing (I Post Anal. 3.6, B 2 p.84). It should be noticed that "knowledge" in this context means more than sheer knowledge of a brute fact, it means being able to give an account of something (cf. Aristotle, Post. Anal. 2.19, 100b10), so J. Barnes is justified in translating ἐπιστήμη "understanding" (Complete Works of Aristotle [Princeton, 1984], I p. 127). The second way of arriving at knowledge "that" is illustrated by Aristotle himself: a "convertible" effect is one which is so linked to its cause that the presence of the one will always mean the presence of the other, but the cause will explain the presence of the effect, thus giving us knowledge "why," whereas the presence of the effect does not explain the presence of the cause, it merely allows us to infer it. So, according to Aristotle, the reason why planets do not twinkle is that they are too close to the earth; thus we can demonstrate why they do not twinkle from their closeness to the earth, but from the fact of their not twinkling we can only demonstrate that, not why, they are close to the earth.

71 Albert is here talking about knowledge "that" as a precise, if inadequate, brand of philosophical knowledge, and in the case of God all that we have is a confused and indeterminate knowledge "that" he is, which is innate in us, but falls short even of Aristotle's definition of knowledge "that" (cf. DN 7.25, Col. XXXVII pp.356-7). Albert's "proofs" of the existence of God are far less rigorous and ambitious than those of Thomas (cf. Craemer-Ruegenberg pp. 52-5) and rely essentially on reductio ad absurdum of the claim that God does not exist (cf. Summa Theol. 3.17, Col. XXXI V i pp.84-5). The fact of God is essentially a mystery of intelligibility that we have to take for granted and can explore but not comprehend (cf. ibid.
As F. J. Catania remarks, "Albert could have espoused a fideism. And, in fact, there are aspects of his position that could support such a judgment in the end. But if Albert's position is fideistic after all, it is a fideism which is held off as long as possible as he returns again and again to those aspects of our ordinary processes of knowing that seem to be open to the sorts of extension that are necessary with the unique object, God" ("'Knowable' and 'Namable' " in Kovach and Shahan, p.102).

who is seen in face-to-face vision, because this is what is promised us in heaven by the apostle (1 Cor. 13:12). But this is how Moses saw God, because it says of him in Exodus 33:11, "The Lord spoke to Moses face to face." Otherwise his prayer would have been in vain, "Show me your face" (Exod. 33:13). So he appears to have seen God himself.

(2) How is it possible that one could be contemplating God in the noblest kind of contemplation and yet not see God himself, as Moses did? And since many things come together in our natural intellectual processes—the abstraction of forms from images, their union with the possible intellect and the illumination by the agent intellect—to which of these is the knowledge involved in such exalted contemplation to be assimilated?

In response we must say that Moses did not see God himself in himself, he saw him in his most noble effects, effects of grace and of theophanies, the latter being manifested images of the divine goodness.

So we may answer the points raised as follows:

(1) "Seeing the face" can mean two different things. If it is taken to mean seeing God's face in itself, without any veil, then this is how it will be seen in heaven, but it is not how Moses saw it; Moses saw God's face in certain signs of God's effects, which Dionysius here calls "subordinate principles," and in the passage of scripture referred to they are called God's "back" (Exod. 33:23). So the Lord said to him, "You will see my back, but my face you will not be able to see."

(2) There is a link-up of lights in sense-perception, and there is a similar link-up of intellectual lights. Now the things of God cannot be learned from any kind of probable or necessary inferences from first principles, and the light of the agent intellect has no other tools which it can wield as its own except first principles; so if it is

our minds receive light from on high enables him to answer the objection raised above: such illumination does not have to be identified with any of the "lights" listed in the objection, and it is possible for the mind to be raised to considerable heights without actually attaining to the direct vision of God.

To know the things of God it needs the light of the angels' intellect to come to it, which effects a variety of appearances in our souls in which the things of God are seen, reflecting the more unified way in which these appearances exist in the angels themselves, as was explained in the Celestial Hierarchy. The philosopher too says in his Divination in Dreams that because they cannot be arrived at by way of any systematic speculation on the basis of first principles; the intellect receives them by being united to some higher moving powers. It is much more the case that the soul is fortified to see the things of God by having the divine light coming down into it. Maybe both procedures are combined. And this light is called the "mirror of eternity," in which the prophets saw their visions. But it is not God, it merely comes from God, and it is the equivalent of the light of the agent intellect in the case of natural knowledge. These are the "declarations" of which Dionysius speaks here, which he also calls "divine objects of sight." This makes it clear how it is not God himself who is seen even in the most noble forms of contemplation, and this answers our question.

CHAPTER Two

How we must be united and offer hymns to the cause of all, who is above all.

To this more than radiant darkness we pray to be brought, by not seeing and not knowing, to see and know him who is above seeing and knowing, in this very not-seeing and not-knowing. For this is truly to see and know him who is above substance and to praise him supersubstantially by separating from him all beings, as if we were making an

73 Cf. Dionysius, CH 15.3 (p. 175), and Albert's comment, 15.6 (B 14 p.424).
74 This has only a tenuous connection with Aristotle, but De Homine q. 50 a.1 and a. 3, q. 51 (B 35 pp.436-7, 440, 441) show how Albert developed his own theory on the basis of Aristotle, De Div. Somn. 1-2 (462b25-6, 463a31-b3, 463b14).
75 I.e., both angelic illumination and direct divine illumination (as suggested in I Sent. d.2 a.5, B 25 p.60a).

-167-
image of his very nature, removing the obstacles which get in the
way of a pure vision of what is hidden and revealing the hidden beauty
for what it is simply by this removal. But, as I think, we must celebrate
the removals in a way opposite to the affirmations. When we were
making affirmations, we began with the first and moved down through
the intermediate ones to the most remote, but here we ascend from
the most remote toward those that are more primary and then again
through the intermediate ones to the topmost ones, removing them all
so that we may have an unveiled knowledge of that unknowing which
is veiled all round by all that is knowable in all beings, and see that
supersubstantial darkness which is hidden by all the light in beings.
*

In the previous chapter Dionysius laid down the proper attitude of
someone practicing this science, whether as a teacher or as a student,
with regard to the reception of this teaching. Now, because the
reception of this teaching leads to that union in which we are made
one with the things of God, in this chapter he specifies the position
with regard to union itself, telling us how we have to be united with
God in our understanding and praise him with our voices. This is
apparent from the title of the chapter, "How we must be united and
offer hymns to the cause of all, who is above all."
The chapter falls into two parts: in the first Dionysius lays down the
manner in which we are united with God, namely, by way of negations;
in the second part he indicates the difference between theological
negations and theological affirmations.

In the previous chapter, in which he specified the proper way of
receiving this teaching, he began with a prayer because of the exalted
nature of the teaching, and here he does the same: "We pray to be
brought" (by God) "to this darkness," in which God is, a darkness which
is obscure to us but is "more than radiant" in itself; and we pray that
"in this very not-seeing and not-knowing," that is, precisely in the
cessation of all our natural forms of knowledge, "by not seeing and not
knowing" (these being a kind of route by which we

pursue our course) we may "see and know him who is above all
seeing and knowing," namely, God. "Seeing" should be taken as
referring to the way in which our understanding simply "sees" first
principles; "knowing" refers to the way in which we know conclusions
which follow from first principles. Thus God will be known as a
principle, when we receive him as the light of our intellect, and by
means of this divine light we are led to the attributes of God as to a
kind of conclusion, knowing him to be wise, good and so on. And we
pray "to praise him" (God) "who is above substance
supersubstantially," that is, in a way which transcends all beings, "by
separating from him all beings, as if we were making an image,"
shaping a representation, "of his very nature, removing" (by removing,
that is) from our mind's eye "the obstacles which get in the way of" (interfere with, damage) "the pure vision of" the God who is "hidden," the sort of vision by which we want to see God without any reference to any of his effects, thereby "revealing the hidden beauty" (of God) for what it is; as if to say that precisely by having everything denied of it, the transcendence of the beauty of God is represented as by a formed image. Alternatively, as the commentator suggests [1], it is like stone-cutting: when you cut a piece of stone and take it away, the surface that was previously hidden by the piece you have removed can now be seen to bear certain images of things, something that looks like an ear or a lamb or a dog, though of course these are only images, not the real things. Similarly when we separate things from God we discover something like the divine nature, though it is not the divine nature in itself, only something which reveals the divine nature. For instance, by separating from him all the non-living, what we are left with is that he is alive, even though life, as we use the word, means the coming forth of life and this is not the divine nature, though it is a likeness of it which reveals it.

Next Dionysius indicates the difference between theological negations and theological affirmations and says that in affirmative theology "we begin with the first" and nobler affirmations "and

1 This interpretation comes from the Latin scholia of Anastasius, derived from the Greek (cf. PG 4:421-4), and it is clear that it is what Dionysius had in mind: an αὐτοψύχη ἁγάλμα is an image found naturally in a piece of stone or wood (such as Albert himself witnessed in Venice as a young man: Mineralia II 3.1, B 5 pp. 48-9, AT 82); Sarracenus' rendering, ipsius naturae insigne is thoroughly misleading.

move down through the intermediate ones" as far as "the most remote." Accordingly he first, in the Outlines [2], spoke about the properties of God in himself, then in the Divine Names he dealt with the spiritual qualities that flow from God and belong properly to him, beginning there too with the most noble, such as "good" and "being"; finally he discussed the symbols taken from the realm of the senses, in the Symbolic Theology. But in negative theology it is the other way round: in denying things of God, we have to begin with "the most remote," the lowest things, that is, and, proceeding via "those that are more primary," which are "intermediate," "ascend to the topmost." For instance, we could begin by saying that God is not a stone and that he is not a lion and so on, with reference to other things belonging to the realm of the senses, then we could go on to say that he is neither living nor life and so on, so that, proceeding in this way, we might "have knowledge of that unknowing," of that divine transcendence which is unknown to us, "unveiled knowledge," without any veil of
creatures, knowledge of that "unknowing which is veiled all round by all that is knowable in all beings." In all the things that are known by their forms the forms themselves are images of God's own beauty, and by denying them we arrive at that hidden reality which was expressed in them in a veiled way. Dionysius returns to the same point in what follows: "And see that supersubstantial darkness" of the divine transcendence, "which is hidden by all the light" that is "in beings," just as the reality of something is hidden in an image which represents it in an alien nature. To clarify what is said in this chapter we need to raise three questions:

i. Can we know and see God by not-seeing and not-knowing?

ii. What about the manner in which he says we are united with God?

iii. What about his statement that the order of negations is the opposite of the order of negations?

2 Cf. chapter 1 note 9. It seems that Albert actually took the title, Theologicae Hypotyposes to mean "theological hypostases" (cf. DN 1.6, Col. XXX VII p. 3:63-4).

3 To know an object is to know what it means for it to be what it is (cf. Aristotle, Metaph. Z 6, 1031b6-7), i.e., to know its "form."

-170-

(I) On the face of it, God cannot be known by not-seeing. Everything which serves as a means by which something else is known must have something about it permitting what is to be known to be inferred from it, as in the case of a syllogism, or at least it must provide some sort of access to what is to be known, as the infused light of faith gives us access to the articles of the faith. But there is nothing of the kind in not-seeing and not-knowing, so they cannot be a way of coming to know God.

(2) Privation is not a way of coming to have something; it is rather the other way about. And not-seeing and not-knowing means being deprived of seeing and knowing. So they are not a possible way of attaining to the knowledge and vision of God.

(3) Either the not-seeing by which God is seen posits something or it does not posit anything. If it does not posit anything, then no kind of knowledge will result from it, because nothing can be inferred from pure negatives, since there is no syllogism made up entirely of negatives. If it does posit something and denies something else, it must be a starting point for or a way to the knowledge of God either by virtue of what it denies or by virtue of what it posits. The first is impossible for the reasons given. But in the second case, it should be identified as leading to the knowledge of God by the affirmation of vision, not its denial.

(4) The noblest way of seeing things is at the furthest remove from all denial of vision, just as the most completely white object is at the
furthest remove from black. But, according to Augustine, the noblest kind of vision is when we see what is essentially present in

\[\textit{4} \quad \text{Albert seems to be rather unnecessarily complicating a commonsense observation with a logical point. The commonsense observation is clear: lacking something is not a means whereby we acquire something. The logical point is that the idea of "privation" presupposes the idea of possession, not vice versa, a point made by Albert in DN 4.169 (Col. XXXVII p. 255:17-9) in connection with Aristotle's definition of privation in Metaph. r 2 (1004a 15-6); you do not have to be stupid in order to be intelligent, but you do have to be intelligent in order to be stupid—something entirely devoid of intelligence, such as a stewed prune, is not property called "stupid."}

\[\textit{5} \quad \text{It is a commonplace of scholastic logic that no syllogism can be formed on the basis of two negative propositions (cf. Albert, I Prior. Anal. 2.7, B 1 p. 498; Petrus Hispanus, Tractatus (Summulae Logicales) 4.4, ed. L. M. de Rijk [Assen, 1972]; T. Gilby, Barbara Celarent [London, 1949], pp. 211-2). There is no reason why a useful syllogism should not be formed out of one positive and one negative proposition, but Albert is within his rights in claiming that the capacity of such a combination to yield information depends on the positive proposition.}

\[\text{-171-}

our own soul, and this includes God. \[\textit{6} \quad \text{So the way in which we see God is at the furthest remove from any non-seeing.}

In response we must say that in the case of God all our natural ways of knowing, which are the basis of systematic understanding, lapse. He is not known per se, as first principles are, nor do we know "why" he is, because he has no cause, nor do we know "that" he is, because he produces no effect which is proportionate to himself. Instead our minds receive a certain divine light, which is above their own nature and raises them above all their natural ways of seeing things, and this is how our minds come to see God, though only in a blurred and undefined knowledge "that" he is. This is why it is said that God is seen by not-seeing: he is seen by the absence of natural seeing.

The answers to the points raised, then, are as follows:

(1) A kind of light is received in the soul which causes an absence of seeing in all our natural ways of seeing, and this light does provide a way to a blurred knowledge of God, and in this sense not-seeing does provide a way.

(2) This is not simply a case of privation, there is a reception of a kind of habitual light, which leads to the actuality of some vision of God.

(3) This indicates the answer to the third point too, because we are not dealing with pure negation; what is being denied is our natural way of seeing, and what is left is a receiving of a supernatural light which is, all the same, best indicated by negations, because we find nothing
which is known to us which we can properly predicate of God because
of his transcendent simplicity; genuine predication is always based on
some kind of complexity. As Gregory says, we "echo the high
mysteries of God" by "stammering." 

(4) There are two senses in which we can talk about the "noblest
way" of seeing things. We may be thinking of the noblest medium in
which to see something, like knowledge "why," and this kind of

6 Augustine, De Gen. ad Lit. XII especially 10.21 and 31.59. That this
is the passage Albert had in mind is suggested by Kilwardby's
identical interpretation of it, De Ortu Scientiarum, ed. cit. para.222;
cf. also St. Thomas, Summa Theol. I-II q. 112 a.5.

7 Predication always involves making a connection between two
distinct notions; such complexity is foreign to the nature of God.

8 Gregory, Moralia 5.36.66 (PL 75:715C), as reworded by Lombard, I
Sent. d.9 c.4.2.

-172-

seeing is at the furthest remove from not-seeing. And in the case of
God, this "noblest way" of seeing does not exist. Or we may be
thinking of the object of vision, so that the noblest kind of vision will be
the vision of the noblest object. In this sense there is such a thing as
the noblest kind of vision in connection with God. But because of the
transcendence of its object it carries with it the highest degree of non-
vision, as the philosopher says.

It should also be appreciated that what Augustine is saying is open to
objection, because more is required for the knowledge of something
than that it should be in our possible intellect: the possible intellect has
to be shaped by its form and so become actual, just as matter actually
becomes something through the form, not the essence, of the thing
that acts upon it, even if it is something present in it. This is why the
philosopher says that the intellect understands itself in the same way
as it understands other things.

(II) (1) Creatures do not obviously interfere with our seeing of God.
Nothing is at the same time both a support and an obstacle, and
creatures, carrying in themselves as they do the trace and image of
God, help us toward the knowledge of God. Therefore they are not an
obstacle.

(2) Building up a complex understanding of something and analyzing
something into its elements both proceed in the same way, because
the process from first to last passes by the same intermediate

10 Since this passage is remarkably obscure and I am not entirely
confident that I have understood it correctly, I give the Latin text:
nobilissimus modus videndi est dupliciter: vel ex parte medi, sicut
in scientia propter quid, et iste modus maxime remotus est a
<NON> i obiect< partie ex vel visionis; divinae nobilissimus modus
est non sic et visione,>, ut dicatur nobilissimus modus visionis, per quam nobilissimum objectum videmus, et sic est nobilissimus modus divinae visionis. Knowledge "why" is the "noblest" form of vision, in the first sense indicated here; in Aristotle's view it is the only full-fledged form of knowledge (Post. Anal. 1.2, 71b9-16).

The reference is presumably to Aristotle, Metaph. α 1 (993b9-11).

Cf. DN 7.24 (Col. XXXVII p. 355:59-75). Matter is not acted upon simply by the presence of something—the presence of my rubber duck in the bath water has no effect on the water, whereas the elaborate hot water system does have an effect on the water, even though it may not actually be in the water; in Aristotelian terms the heating system communicates a form of heat to the water, and this is because it itself possesses such a form.

Aristotle, De Anima 3.4 (429b5-9), naturally without Bywater's emendation in b9 of δὲ αὕτων to δι'αὕτων; cf. Albert, De Anima 3.2.15 (Col. VII i p. 199).

The manuscript text appears to be corrupt here. I read non-visione for visione; the Borgnet edition reads visione Dei.

(3) Nothing can be concluded from negations, except in the context of some general affirmation. For instance we can say, "It is an animal, and it is not rational, therefore it is irrational," and so on. But God does not share a common category with anything else. Therefore nothing can be deduced about him by way of negations.

In response we must say:

(1) There are two different ways of considering a creature. If we take it precisely under the rubric of "trace of God," leading us to God, then it helps us to know God qua cause; but if we take creatures precisely as what comes forth from God with all the variety that means in terms of essence, species, genus and principle—like being, which is common to substance and to accidents—then in this way they do interfere with our knowledge of God in his own nature, and it is that kind of knowledge which Dionysius calls "pure vision," because it is without reference to the effects caused by God.

(2) When we are building up a complex understanding out of the essential elements of something, then both the synthesis and the analysis proceed affirmatively; for instance, this is how we build up our picture by predicating "substance" and then moving on to "body" and "animal" and so on until we reach individuals, and we move back
through the same predicates when we are working our way up to more and more general ways of describing things. This is because there is no difference of essential being involved. But when we build up our complex picture by moving from some cause which is separate in its essential being to the effects produced by that cause, this is indeed also done affirmatively, because this is how the cause is revealed qua cause, and as such it can be designated by its effects, but in the reverse movement from the effects to the cause what we are seeking is the very essence of the cause and, since this is separate from all the caused effects, we have to proceed by way of negations.

(3) There is nothing in common between God and creatures, they share no common species or genus, no common factor to justify strict analogy; all there is is the kind of sharing involved in imitation: the effects imitate their cause as far as they can. And this does not really mean that there is anything genuinely in common between them. And so we have no real way of saying anything about God, but we talk about him as best we can.

(III) (1) It is not clear that we must necessarily start with the lowest things in our negations. The intermediates and the highest things are separated from what God is in himself just as much as the lowest things, so it makes no difference where we start.

(2) Whatever has everything separated from it is not anything at all. So if everything is denied of God, which is what Dionysius is saying here, then he is nothing at all, and in that case he will not exist. And that is what "the fool has said in his heart." 14.

(3) When we deny something of anything, it is because of some contrariety or dissimilarity, and these presuppose that there is some common ground. 15. But there is no common ground between God and creatures; if there were, he would be analyzable into a genus and his distinguishing specific characteristics, and so would not be simple. It seems to follow from this that nothing can be denied of him, whether it be elevated or lowly.

The answer to these points is as follows:

(1) When we deny something of anything, it is because there is a certain gap between them, and so it is natural to begin by denying of God the lowest kinds of thing, which are the furthest removed from him; theological affirmations on the other hand are based on the outflow from the cause into what it causes, and since it is the primary effects which influence lower things and not the other way round, it is natural to move in this case from higher things to lower.

(2) What follows from the separation of all things from God is that he is not one thing among others, as if he were on the same level as other things; but this is not to deny that he is above everything and that everything imitates him.
Psalm 13:1.

15 We can deny that "white" is "black" because both white and black are colors, but they are opposite colors ("contrariety"). We can deny that Jones is energetic, because he resembles other human beings enough in other ways to make it reasonable to suppose that he might have been energetic ("dissimilarity"). Where there is no common ground at all, denial is meaningless; we are not often tempted to deny that the color pink is smelly.

-175-

(3) The answer to the third point is already clear from what has been said; although there is no common ground between God and other things, such as there is between other things, nevertheless there is some common ground in the sense that things imitate him.

CHAPTER THREE
Cataphatic and apophatic theologies.

In the Theological Outlines, then, we celebrate particularly the items belonging to affirmative theology, how the divine and good nature is called "single" and how it is called "threefold," what the Fatherhood is taken in itself and what the Sonship, and what the theology of the Spirit intends to show; how from the immaterial and simple good there sprouted lights of goodness which remain in the heart, and how they have remained inseparable from their stability in it and in themselves and in each other in their coeternal burgeoning; how the supersubstantial Jesus was made substance with the true properties of human nature, and all the other things revealed in the Oracles which are celebrated in the Theological Outlines. In the Divine Names we celebrate how he is called "good," "being," "life" and "wisdom" and "power" and all the other things which form part of intellectual God-naming. In the Symbolic Theology we celebrate the designations of God taken over from the things of the senses and applied to the things of God, what God's "forms" are, and his "shapes" and "parts" and "instruments," his "places" and "ornaments," his "anger," "sadness" and "madness," his "drunkenness" and "carousing," his "oaths" and "curses," his "sleep" and his "waking up," and all the other holy compounded images which are part of symbolic God-shaping.

* In this chapter Dionysius proposes to establish the proper way of treating our subject, as we have already seen from our analysis of the book as a whole. And since the subject is treated by way of negations, his principal objective is to establish the procedure involved in negative theology. And since the procedure of negative theology is learned from that of affirmative theology, he begins with an account of affirmative theology. This is clear from the title, "Cataphatic and apophatic theologies."
This chapter accordingly falls into two parts, the first dealing with the procedure of affirmative theology, the second with that of negative theology.

The first part falls into two sections. In the first, Dionysius lays down the procedure of affirmative theology; in the second he encourages Timothy to ponder this procedure.

The first section has three subdivisions, in line with the author’s three books on theological affirmations; he first mentions those dealt with in the *Theological Outlines*, then those dealt with in the *Divine Names*, and finally those dealt with in the *Symbolic Theology*.

Before we actually look at the text, there is a question about whether these three books cover the ground sufficiently.

(1) The task of theology with regard to affirmations about God does not appear to be sufficiently communicated in these three books. In addition to the proper attributes of the Persons, there are certain attributes which are appropriated to them, and no teaching about this is contained in the three books, so it looks as if they are insufficient.

(2) In none of these books does the author deal with God’s will, foreknowledge or predestination, yet all of these belong to the theologian’s task and demand particular treatment, as the Master says in the Sentences. So these three books, it seems, are inadequate on their own.

(3) In addition to the eternal processions of the Persons, there are certain temporal processions, and there is nothing about these in any of the three books; so they are, on the face of it, incomplete.

(4) Dionysius wrote other books too, such as the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, in which he teaches us how to approach the things of God by way of symbols, and similarly his book on *Things Visible and In-

1. Peter Lombard, I Sent. d.35 c.1.

-177-

visible*, and these are not listed here. So his account seems to be incomplete.

In response we must say that the task of theology being described here is not that of manifesting God in any of his effects or gifts, but that of manifesting him in himself, and the affirmative aspect of this task is sufficiently contained in the three books listed, because there are only three ways of talking about God: metaphorically, and this is what the *Symbolic Theology* is about; or literally (a) with reference to the properties which belong to the Persons, and this is what the *Theological Outlines* is about; or (b) with reference to the properties of the divine nature, and this is what the *Divine Names* is about. This analysis of the different ways of designating God comes from Ambrose.

2.

So we can answer the points raised as follows:
Terms which are appropriated to the Persons are in themselves common and belong to the divine nature; they are terms like "goodness," "wisdom" and "power," and they are discussed in the *Divine Names*.

Predestination and foreknowledge differ from knowledge and wisdom only in being antecedent, which is what the prefix signifies. For this reason they are included in the discussion of God's wisdom in the *Divine Names*. The specific nuance which they add calls for some special conclusions, but these belong more to the discussion of creatures than to the treatment of God in himself. Similarly what needs to be said about God's will is indicated by the discussion of his goodness, which is the disposition of his will. \(^3\) As it says at the end of the *Divine Names*, other words which are used to the same effect must be taken in accordance with the same rules of interpretation. \(^4\)

The temporal processions are a manifestation of the eternal processions, and so both are explained together; the temporal processions are contained in the interpretation of the divine names,

\(^2\) Ambrose, *De Fide* II Prol. 2 (PL 16 [1845]: 559D-560C), taken up by Lombard, I Sent. d.22 c.1, on which see Albert's comment, B 25 pp. 566-7.

\(^3\) Albert's contention is that predestination is part of divine foreknowledge (cf. I Sent. d.40 a. 1, B 26 pp. 304-5), and that foreknowledge is not, in this context, significantly different from knowledge, which Dionysius discusses in *DN* 7.2. The specific nuance added by "fore-" is relevant to a quite different area of theology. Similarly God's will is taken to be sufficiently discussed in Dionysius' treatment of goodness in *DN* 4.


\(^4\) In these other books God is not revealed in himself, but in some of his effects, such as sacramental grace (in the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*) or visible creatures (in the other book).

So Dionysius begins by saying, "In the *Theological Outlines*, then," (the book he wrote about the divine Persons) "we celebrate particularly," or according to the other translation, "we celebrated particularly," "the items belonging to affirmative theology," that is, the affirmations about God which belong properly to the Persons, namely, "how the divine and good nature is called 'single.' "

There are several objections to this:

(1) Hilary says that in God there is neither singleness nor aloneness. \(^6\)
(2) Single individuals are distinguished from others by their accidents, but in God there are no accidents, therefore he is not single.

(3) Single individuals are individuated by matter, but God is utterly immaterial, therefore he is not single.

(4) Single individuals presuppose some common nature which is individuated in them, but God is not an individual member of

5 Cf. Dionysius, *DN* 2.11, with Albert's commentary (Col. XXXVII pp. 96-100).


7 The doctrine that individuals are distinguished only by their accidents goes back to Boethius, *De Trinitate* 1 (ed. H. F. Stewart and E. K. Rand, Loeb classics [1918], p.6:24-6), who probably got it from Porphyry, *Isagoge*, ed. Busse 7.22-5 (text in *Aristoteles Latinus* 16-7 [Bruges and Paris, 1966], pp. 13-14). In the later Middle Ages it was defended by William of Champeaux (cf. Abelard, *Hist. Cal.* 2, PL 178:119AB), but it was attacked by Abelard, *Glossae super Porphyrium*, ed. B. Geyer, Beiträge XXI/1 [Münster, 1919], p. 13; later on it was attacked by William of Auvergne, *De Universo* I. II ch.11, ed. cit. 1 p.819aD, and by Thomas, in *Metaph. Comm.* 1626 (Marietti ed.). Elsewhere Albert seems to concede only that accidents are one way in which individuals differ from one another (*Metaph.* 10.2.9, Col. XVI p.455:78-9). I am indebted to Osmund Lewry, O. P., for the reference to Porphyry.

8 This is the standard medieval Aristotelian doctrine, that matter is the principle of individuation (cf. Averroes, *De Somno et Vigilia*, ed. cit. p.103; Thomas, in *Metaph. Comm.* 1496); whether or not the principle is genuinely Aristotelian is disputed: cf. J. Owens p.244.

9 To say that something is "an individual" normally implies that it is "an individual X" (an individual cat, teacup or whatever), which means that there is more to X than is contained in the individual. My favorite beer mug, however splendid, does not exhaust the whole notion of beer mugs. If God were an individual in this sense, he would be only a partial instantiation of what it means to be God.

10 This makes it clear what the answer is to all the points raised.

any class, because otherwise there would be something more primary and more simple than God. Therefore God is not single.

In response we must say that what Hilary was denying in God is that there is only one divine Person, but Dionysius is talking about the singleness of the divine essence; and even that is not strictly "single" in the same way that single individuals are found in lower beings. It is called "single" in the sense that it is not in fact nor could it in principle be multiplied, as individuals generally can be.

This makes it clear what the answer is to all the points raised.
So, to return to the text, Dionysius is talking about "how the divine nature is called 'single' " (unique, not multiplied, in the three Persons), "and how it is called 'threefold' " (in the Trinity of Persons), "what the Fatherhood is, taken in itself, and what the Sonship" and how it is revealed in the temporal procession, and "what the theology of the Spirit intends to show", that is, what is meant by talking about "Holy Spirit" in God, and "how lights of goodness" (the Son and the Holy Spirit) "sprouted from the simple and immaterial good" while nevertheless "remaining in the heart," which is clearly contrary to the way lower beings work, because when something sprouts, it does not remain in the source from which it has sprouted.

There are several difficulties about this:

1. "Good" is a name belonging to the divine essence, and the essence neither generates nor is generated, so it does not look as if there is anything "sprouting" from the good.

2. What does "heart" mean?

3. The image of light is inappropriate, because light is not a substance, whereas the Persons are substances existing in their own right, so they are not well signified by "lights."

In response:

Normally even unique individuals are not necessarily unique, but God is necessarily unique, the word "God" properly has no plural (I Sent. d.2 a.22, B 25 pp.83-4). For a modern discussion of problems about calling God an "individual," see B. Davies, *Thinking about God* (London, 1985), pp. 118-28. Albert's argument here becomes much clearer if we emend the text by deleting sed at p.469:45; this would yield: "Even that is not strictly 'single' in the same way that single individuals are found in lower beings, because it is not in fact nor could it in principle be multiplied, as individuals can be." The last clause would thus become the explanation of why God is not an individual, rather than of why he is so called in spite of the difficulties. One great advantage of this emendation is that it gives us a text which really does answer points (2)-(4).

(1) "Good" is being used here for the divine nature as it is in the Father, in whom it is the principle of generation, because the Father begets in virtue of the divine nature, even though taken in itself the divine nature is not relative and is not confined to any one of the Persons; but taken with reference to the act of begetting, it is peculiar to the Father and has to be called "relative," just as the power of begetting does. 11 So to the objection that "good" is a name belonging to the divine essence, we may say that this is true, but because it signifies the essence concretely in the divine Person, it can be taken over because of this connection to stand for the Person, as the word "God" is in "God from God." 12
(2) The coming forth of feelings and thoughts from the heart is an immaterial procession, and so, to symbolize the immateriality of the divine begetting, the divine nature is compared to a heart, inasmuch as it is in the Father as the principle from which the Son and the Holy Spirit proceed. And because they proceed from the Father as Persons, yet remain in his essence, they are said to "remain in the heart."

(3) The word "lights" is not being used to display the perfection of the divine Persons, but to show that their procession is a procession of form: just as light comes from light, so God comes from God. Dionysius goes on, "and how they have remained inseparable from their stability in it" (the heart), in that they remain in one essence, "and in themselves," in that each Person remains in himself, "and in each other," in that the Son is in the Father and the Father is in the Son, even though one Person proceeds from another "in a

11 The essential point is that, though all three divine Persons are God (and so the divine nature is common to them all), nevertheless it is qua God that the Father begets the Son, so in a sense we have to say that the divine nature is the principle of divine generation (cf. I Sent. d.5, B 25 pp.173-91).

12 The phrase from the Nicene Creed justifies the claim that we can say that "God begets God," not just that "the Father begets the Son." The divine essence does not subsist on its own, somehow, independently of the divine Persons, and the Father is not some kind of compound of divine essence and Fatherhood. In him the divine nature is the Father and he is the nature.

13 The procession of the Son and the Holy Spirit from the Father is a "formal procession," because it involves the transmission of "form": what comes from God in this way is God. There are obviously other ways in which one thing can come from another, which do not involve any such passing on of form: if I write a book, the book is not human, even if I am.

-181-

coeternal burgeoning," because the generation of the Son does not precede the Son, nor does the breathing-out precede the Spirit, because there is no question here of any movement from potency to act, and also "how the supersubstantial Jesus" (supersubstantial with reference to his Godhead) "was made substance," dwelling in "the true properties of human nature," that is, a genuine body and a genuine soul, "and all the other things revealed in the Oracles" (the canonical scriptures) "which are celebrated" by us "in the Theological Outlines."

But surely it is not part of the business of that book to explain about the Incarnation of the Word. Conclusions and explanations which rest on different principles belong to different areas of instruction. Even if one and the same conclusion is demonstrated on the basis of different principles, that conclusion belongs to different sciences; thus for
instance the sphericity of the earth is demonstrated on different grounds by physicists and by astronomers. But the Incarnation of the Word involves different principles from the distinctions between the Persons; the latter is explained in terms of their eternal relationships, but the Incarnation involves certain temporal deeds performed by God. So they do not belong to the same area of doctrine.

In response we may say that since the Incarnation of the Word belongs exclusively to the Son, it is appropriate to deal with it at the same time as the other features which are proper to the different Persons. The theological explanation of it relies on the same general principles, namely, the eternal relationships which distinguish between the Persons, because it is by one and the same Sonship that the Son is eternally the Son of the Father and that, from a certain point in time, he is the Son of his mother, and it is as the same Person that he is identified both in his Godhead and in his humanity. 15.

14 This is Albert's comment on "coeternal": the generation of the Son and the spiration of the Spirit are not processes, which could be measured in time; it makes no sense to think of a time when the Son was being generated but was not yet actually generated (and so was only potentially the Son, the Son "in the making").

15 The Son of Mary and the Son of God are one and the same person and one and the same Son. When we read in our papers that Mabel and Ebenezer Twiggins have had a son, we do not infer that there must be two sons, one son of Mabel and one son of Ebenezer; no more are there two sons in Jesus, one son of God and one son of Mary. If there were two distinct filiations involved, there would be two distinct persons in Jesus (which is the Nestorian heresy). Cf. III Sent. d.4 a.5 (B 28 p.86).

Even if certain further special principles are brought in to explain the Incarnation, this does not matter, since the same science can perfectly well contain conclusions which have different specific principles.

Dionysius goes on to say that "in the Divine Names" he has explained how God is called "good" and "all the other things which form part of intellectual God-naming," that is, names whose meaning does not express anything to do with the senses.

Then he says that "in the Symbolic Theology" he has explained the designations of God which are "taken over from the things of the senses and applied" to God, such as "God's 'forms' and 'shapes';" "form" and "shape" refer to the same thing, but from a different point of view, referring respectively inward and outward—form is not here being used in the sense of "substantial form." 16. And so on in the same vein with regard to everything else which is said symbolically about God.

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And I think you have recognized how this last is more verbose than the previous two. The *Theological Outlines* and the exposition of the *Divine Names* ought to be less wordy than the *Symbolic Theology*, because the higher we turn our regard, the more our talking about intelligibles contracts in our sight, just as now, as we enter the darkness which

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16 Albert's rather cryptic comment on the distinction between "form" and "shape" is elaborated in the commentary on *DN* 1.43 (Col. XXXVII p.25:24-9) and much more fully in *De Praedicamentis* 5.8 (B 1 p.259). "Substantial form" determines what something is. "Form" as a kind of quality, which is what Albert supposes Dionysius to be referring to here, is closely connected with substantial form (hence its "inward" orientation): it is shape considered precisely as the shape of a particular kind of thing. Substantial form means that something is a tiger. This other sort of form means that it *has the shape of* a tiger, it defines the outer limits of this particular lump of flesh as having the contours proper to a tiger. "Shape" (figura) refers to the same phenomenon, but with an "outward" reference: the tiger is shaped in such a way that it is well-adapted to make certain kinds of movements, its claws are not merely the right shape for a tiger's claws, they are also excellent for clawing with. Another way of looking at it is to say that you might be interested in a nose precisely as a human nose, part of a human body (this would be an interest in "form"), or you might be interested in it as a curious geometrical shape (this would be an interest in "shape").

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17 is above mind, we shall find not brevity of speech but complete irrationality and foolishness.

* Dionysius next bids Timothy consider how the more lowly names are "more verbose" than the previously mentioned names, because in the *Theological Outlines* and the *Divine Names* he was "less wordy" than in the *Symbolic Theology*. The reason for this is that the higher we extend our reach, "the more our talking about intelligibles contracts" and shortens "in our sight." And so in this teaching, in which we reach out, as far as we can, to the very transcendence of the divine nature, we do not even find few words to affirm about it, but we find there nothing but "complete irrationality and foolishness" because our intellect, seeing nothing identifiable in God's nature, cannot express it in any affirmations, but only in negations, and therefore this science comes to its fulfilment solely with negations.

* There our speech, descending from the heights to the lowest limits, expanded into multiplicity in proportion to its descent, but now that it is going upward from lower things to the heights, it contracts in
proportion to its ascent and, after the end of the whole ascent, it will be totally voiceless and totally united with the ineffable. But why, you ask, when we begin positing our divine affirmations altogether with the most primary, do we start our separation of things from God with the last and lowest? Because when we were

Albert has been misled by Sarracenus' translation: he takes *sermones conspectibus intelligibilium contrabuntur* to mean "our talking about intelligibles contracts in our sight," but the Greek shows that it must be intended to mean "our talking contracts because of the synoptic view (we have) of intelligibles" (at a higher level of abstraction more significance is packed into fewer words). Also "irrationality and foolishness" (*irrationabilitatem et imprudentiam*) is infelicitous for ἀλογίαν καὶ ἀνοησίαν ("absence of words, absence of understanding").

affirming what is above all affirmation we had to posit one presiding affirmation, on the basis of what is most kin to it, but now that we are negating what is beyond all negation we must begin with things that are most distant from it. Is God not more truly life and goodness than he is air or stone? Is it not more the case that he is not carousing or madness than that he is neither spoken nor understood?

Next Dionysius lays down the procedure for negative theology as opposed to affirmative theology. And first he says what the procedure is, then he raises and answers a question.

So first he says that in his treatment of affirmations he began with "the heights" and the more he descended, the more he "expanded his speech," following "the proportions" of reality: the further things are from what is primary, the more numerous they are and their properties are better known to us than those of the first things. But in negative theology, which is our present concern, we go "upward from lower things to the heights," separating everything from God. And so, as we ascend, our "speech contracts" (becomes shorter) because there is little there that we comprehend. And at the end, when we have separated everything from God, our whole speech will be "voiceless" because it will be "united" with him who is "ineffable," namely God. And that is why this science more than any other is called "mystical," because it ends in a darkness, about which, since everything has been taken away, we cannot properly affirm anything.

Then he asks why we have to begin affirmative theology with higher things and do negative theology the other way round. And

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17 Albert has been misled by Sarracenus' translation: he takes *sermones conspectibus intelligibilium contrabuntur* to mean "our talking about intelligibles contracts in our sight," but the Greek shows that it must be intended to mean "our talking contracts because of the synoptic view (we have) of intelligibles" (at a higher level of abstraction more significance is packed into fewer words). Also "irrationality and foolishness" (*irrationabilitatem et imprudentiam*) is infelicitous for ἀλογίαν καὶ ἀνοησίαν ("absence of words, absence of understanding").

18 I presume that this is what Sarracenus meant by *superpositivam affirmationem*; if so, it is not a bad rendering of τὴν ὑποθέτουκήν κατάφασιν. But cf. below, note 20.
This echoes Neoplatonist ontology: from the inconceivable simplicity of the One we descend into ever greater multiplicity the further we go. The compact richness of higher levels of reality can be imaged at lower levels only by the provision of a far greater number of beings carrying various more or less fragmentary and pale representations of the glory that is on high.

He gives the answer as follows. Affirmation rests on appropriateness, so when we want to state something about God, who is "above all affirmation," when we want to "posit one presiding affirmation," since we cannot affirm anything of him as he is in himself, but can only name him with some name taken from what he causes, as the philosopher says, and this will be something subordinate to him, we have to begin with those things which are closest to him. But negation rests on separation or unlikeness, and therefore it is "things that are most distant from" him that should first be separated from him. God is "more truly life and goodness than he is air or stone," so it is the former names that should be given to him first. But "it is more the case that he is not carousing and madness than that he is neither spoken nor understood," that is, drunkenness and madness are further removed from him than utterability or intelligibility, which are closer to him; so it is things like drunkenness and madness which are the first to be denied of him.

CHAPTER FOUR

He who is the pre-eminent cause of all that the senses perceive is not anything perceptible by the senses.

So we say that the cause of all which is above all is not without substance or life or reason or mind. Neither is it a body nor is it a shape or form, nor does it possess any quality or size or weight. Neither is it in any place, nor is it seen, nor can it be touched by the senses. It is not per-

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20 The reference is probably to the pseudo-Aristotelian Liber de Causis, proposition 5(6) (ed. A. Pattin, Tijdschrift voor Philosophie 28 [1966] p.147), which Albert cites in I Sent. d.2 a. 16 (B 25 p.72). It is possible that Albert intends his comment that names are taken from some effect which is "subordinate" (supponitur) to God to explain why Dionysius (Sarracenus) talks of an affirmatio superpositiva; if so, this latter phrase could be translated "super-affirmative" : God is beyond affirmations, any affirmations we make are based on effects which are "placed (posited) beneath" him, so making them of God we have to make them in a special way, affirming (positing) them "above" that to which they ordinarily refer. But I think it is more likely that the juxtaposition of superpositiva and supponitur is accidental. Supponitur must in any case be taken to mean "placed
beneath"; when this verb is used to mean "stand in for," it requires more than a simple dative to accompany it, so we should expect pro se supponitur, not sibi supponitur, if that were what Albert meant.

-186-

celved or perceivable by the senses, nor does it admit of any disarray or disturbance from being troubled by any of the things which affect matter. Neither is it powerless, nor is it subject to the chances which go with the things of the senses, nor is it in need of light. Neither does it admit of change or corruption or division or deprivation, it has no passibility or flux, it neither possesses nor is anything else that belongs to the realm of the senses.

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Here Dionysius actually begins his treatment of the subject, in which he intends to separate everything from God. It falls into two parts: first he separates the things of the senses from him, then (in chapter five) the things of the mind. This is the analysis suggested by the titles of the chapters.

Another, more technical, analysis is also possible: Dionysius first lays down what God is not without, and then shows what God is not (beginning with "Neither is it a body").

So first of all he says that, since it is in this way that we have to go into the divine darkness, "we say"—or, according to the other translation, "let us say" ¹—because he is here beginning his treatment of the subject—that God, who is "the cause of all" and "above all, is not without substance or life or reason or mind," although none of these things can be affirmed of him. He is not without them, since they proceed formally from him. ²

Alternatively, if we prefer the first analysis of the text, he is here separating from God various conditions which characterize things of the senses: it is characteristic of accidents to be without substance, and of inanimate beings to be without life, and similar comments can obviously be made about the other items listed.

Next, if we follow the second analysis of the text, Dionysius separates from God all that God is not, beginning with the things of the senses, because they are the furthest from God, and then the

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¹ The "other translation" is, as usual, that of Eriugena.

² In the case of "formal procession" (cf. chapter 3, note 13) the source of the form in the recipient has to be (in some sense) the same form in the source. Therefore anything that proceeds "formally" from God must (in some sense) be in God.

-187-

things of the mind and spiritual things; this is in accordance with the techniques Dionysius has been teaching us.
So he says first that God is "not a body" nor is he "shape or form." "Form" can be taken here in two senses. It could mean the kind of form that matter has, 3 in which case it refers to something different from "shape," and it is found only in the things of the senses. Or it could mean the kind of "form" which belongs to the fourth kind of quality, 4 in which case "form" and "shape" refer to the same thing, though from different points of view, because "shape" refers outward, since it indicates the outline limiting something's size, whereas "form" refers inward, since it makes the thing it inheres in into a particular kind of being. 5 Artificial forms are "shapes."

"Neither is he in any place" as if he were contained in a place in the same way that material objects are contained in a place; he is everywhere as the one who contains all place. "Nor is he seen" by any bodily sight "nor can he be touched by the senses," because he has no tactile quality. Dionysius means us to understand by these two senses all the other sensual means of perception; one of the two he mentions is the most spiritual of all the senses, the other is the most material. "He is not perceived" (in fact) "or perceivable" (potentially) "by the senses, nor does he admit of any disarray," as imperfect beings do, such as deformed creatures, nor does he, the cause of all, admit of any "disturbance from being troubled by any of the things which affect matter," as if he could be weakened in his activities by having anything happen to him. "Neither is he powerless, subject to the chances which go with the things of the senses," in the way that matter is rendered powerless when it is separated from its form by the action of bodily things. 6

Or we could say that Dionysius began by separating from

3 The "form of matter" means the kind of form which yields some specific kind of matter (e.g., putty or wood), and this is quite independent of any shape that may be imposed on such matter.

4 Cf. Aristotle, Categ. 8 (10a11-2).

5 Cf. chapter 3 note 16.

6 Albert's comment shows that he takes casibus sensibilibus to mean "chances brought about by sensibilia," but the phrase should probably be taken to mean "the chances that affect sensibilia."

God all bodily things and their various conditions, then he separated from him all the things of the senses. Now he is going to separate from him the defects to which beings of sense are prone, beginning with defects in their emotions, whether caused by innate passions (so "disarray" must go 7) or by things inflicted from outside (so "disturbance" is taken away); and since it is impossible that anything should be inflicted on him, Dionysius goes on that he is "not subject to
chances" nor is he "powerless." "Chance" applies to beings devoid of intelligence, whereas "fortune" applies only to rational beings. After this Dionysius separates from God all bodily defects in general: "neither does he admit of change" (such as occurs in the accidents of things) "or corruption" (in his substance) "or division" (which would break him up into pieces) "or deprivation" (either in the sense of matter losing its form or in the sense of losing his natural state); "he has no passibility" in face of anything external, which would leave him open to being affected by any outside force, "or flux," either in the sense of any contrary components of his interacting on each other or in the sense of any kind of movement or change from one situation to another.

Finally Dionysius sums it all up: "He neither possesses nor is anything that belongs to the realm of the senses." He has none of the conditions or defects which go with the senses, nor is he any of the things which the senses perceive.

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7 I have been unable to think of a single English word to cover inordinatio in both of Albert's comments. In his first interpretation it means bodily disorder (misplaced or misshapen limbs and so on); here it means disorder in one's appetites and emotions.

8 This distinction comes from Aristotle, *Physics* 2.6 (197a36-b22); cf. Albert's comment, II Phys. 2.17 (Col. IV pp. 123-5). "Fortune" is taken to indicate something that contributes to the kind of weal or woe which only intelligent beings can appreciate; it is therefore a much narrower term than "chance." The birth of a freak is "chance," and no doubt has some physical explanation, even though it is contrary to the normal workings of nature. But if I courteously help an old lady across the street and she "happens" to be a millionairess looking for someone to leave her oil wells to, that is my good "fortune" and strictly speaking has no natural cause whatsoever. Granted this distinction, then clearly it is "chance," not "fortune," which belongs in this present elimination of sensibilia from God, since "fortune" is a kind of country cousin of intelligibilia.

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CHAPTER FIVE

He who is the pre-eminent cause of all that the mind understands is not any of the objects of our understanding.

Ascending further, we say that he is neither soul nor mind, nor does he possess fantasy or opinion or reason or intellect, neither is he reason or intellect. Neither is he spoken of or understood. He is neither number nor order, greatness or smallness or equality, likeness or
unlikeness. He neither stands still nor moves, nor is he silent. Neither does he have power, nor is he power or light. Neither does he live, nor is he life or substance or eternity or time. He cannot be touched by our understanding, nor is there knowledge of him or truth. He is neither kingdom nor wisdom, nor is he one or unity, Godhead or goodness. Nor is he Spirit in such a way that we could see him, \(^1\) nor is he Sonship or Fatherhood. Nor is he any of the things which are known to us or to any other being, nor is he anything non-existent or existent. Neither do beings know the Cause as it really is, nor does it know beings qua beings. It has no explanation or name or knowledge or darkness or light or error or truth. Neither is there any affirmation or negation of it whatsoever, but when we make affirmations or negations of things which come after it we neither affirm nor deny it in itself, since the perfect and unitive cause of all is above all affirmation, and the transcendence of what is simply free of all things and above them all is beyond all negation. \(^2\).

\(^1\) Why Sarracenus translates \(\varepsilon\iota\delta\varepsilon\nu\alpha\) as \(\textit{videamus}\) is far from clear. Since Albert does not comment on this phrase, we do not know what he made of it. The Greek means "he is not spirit in any sense that we could understand."

\(^2\) There is some ambiguity about how Dionysius' string of nouns should be interpreted syntactically, and since Albert's commentary is far from exhaustive it is not always clear how he construed some parts of this chapter.

In this chapter Dionysius means to separate from God all that the understanding apprehends, such as life, substance and so on. But surely these things should not be separated from him:

(1) As Anselm says, God is designated with the names of everything of which it is true, simply speaking, to say that it is better that it should exist than that it should not. \(^3\) But life, wisdom and so on are of that kind. So they should be used to name God, in which case they ought not to be denied of him.

(2) An attribute which properly belongs to something names that thing and is predicated of that thing more truly than it is of anything else to which it does not properly belong. And, as Jerome says, being belongs properly only to God. \(^4\) Therefore talk of "essence" or saying that "he is" applies more truly to God than to creatures; so since we do not deny these things of creatures, they should be even less denied of the creator.

(3) A property that belongs to something in its own right belongs to that thing more truly than to other things with only a derivative claim to it. But all these things belong to creatures only derivatively, because it is from God that they have life, substance, and so on. But they
belong to God in his own right. So they are more truly ascribed to God than to creatures, so the same conclusion follows.

(4) Anything that has being has it either necessarily or possibly, and whatever has it necessarily has a better claim to it than anything which has it possibly. Now Avicenna demonstrates that God alone is necessary being, while everything else possesses only possible being. Therefore being is more truly ascribed to God than to any-

3 Albert discusses Anselm's "rule for naming God" in I Sent. d.2 a.17 (B 25 pp. 72- 4) and CH 2.7 (B 14 p. 43), and it is clear that the passage he has in mind is Anselm, Proslogion 5, 11-12 (PL 158:229C, 234A).

4 Cf. Lombard, I Sent. d.8 c.1, citing Jerome, Ep. 15.4.

5 The distinction between "necessary" and "possible" beings is an Aristotelian commonplace, which is often misunderstood. "Necessary beings" are those that have no principle of decay within themselves, so they cannot cease to exist or undergo any major alteration because of any natural cause; "possible beings" are produced by and so can be ruined or destroyed by natural causes. Cf. Patterson Brown, "St. Thomas' doctrine of necessary being," in A. Kenny, ed., Aquinas (London, 1970), pp. 157-74.

6 Avicenna, De Philosophia Prima 1.6-7. On Avicenna's rather un-

Aristotelian notion

-191-

thing else, and the same principle applies to all these names. So once again the same conclusion follows.

(5) It might be argued that the reality to which these names refer exists more truly in God, but our use of the names depends on the way in which such things come to our knowledge, so that in this sense the names apply more truly to creatures, of which we do have some understanding, and are more truly separated from God, the knowledge of whom defeats our comprehension. But the fact that from our point of view something does or does not apply does not justify the conclusion that it absolutely does or does not apply because, as the philosopher says, the things that are naturally the most manifest of all are, from our point of view, unknown. So it does not follow from the fact that these names, as we use them, belong more truly to creatures that they ought absolutely to be denied of God.

(6) It is fallacious to argue, "The heavens do not have the same consistency as the elements, therefore they have no consistency," or "Human beings are not animals in the same way as asses, therefore they are not animals." So there appears to be a similar fallacy in saying that God is not wisdom in the same sense in which there is wisdom among us, therefore he is not wisdom in any sense.

In response we must say with Anselm that the realities sig
of possible and necessary beings, see G. Verbeke's introduction to S. van Riet's edition of this work (Louvain/Leiden, 1977) I pp. 42*-62*.

10 I cannot find any place where Anselm actually says this; Albert appears to have in mind his own discussion of Anselm's "rule" in I Sent. d.2 a.17 (B 25 p. 73), and cf. CH 2.7 (B 14 p. 43). His interpretation of Anselm finds some justification in texts like Proslogion 17 and 24 (PL 158:236B, 239CD).

7. Aristotle, Metaph. α 1 (993b9-11).

8. The argument is this: we cannot infer anything at all about what things are in themselves from the way they appear to us; therefore we have no right to say that terms derived from our own lowly experience do not apply perfectly well to some higher reality.

9. The fallaciousness of the argument is obvious, but some comment is perhaps needed on what the argument is about. In DN 13.15 (Col. XXXVII p. 441) Albert gives an argument against the continuitas (which I have somewhat uneasily translated "consistency") of the heavens: if the heavens "held together" there could not be the uncoordinated movement which we perceive in the heavenly bodies. By contrast the elements do "hold together" (not, obviously, in the sense that the whole stock of fire, air, earth and water is all in one place, but in the sense that any given dollop of any of the elements is continuous). Albert rejects the suggestion that even fire is "discontinuous," though it certainly looks as if it might be no more than an aggregate of separate bits (De Causis Propr. Elem. 1.2.11, Col. V ii pp. 80-81). Nevertheless the sky does form a continuous body, according to Albert (ibid. p. 81:7-8); at least each heavenly sphere is an undivided whole (De Caelo 2.3.8, Col. V i p. 158:15-7). It would be odd to say that the sky is "bitty."

-192-

nified by names like this are not foreign to God, they are more truly present in him than they are in the creatures into which they descend from him. In creatures they are a kind of image of the primary life and wisdom and so on. But the way in which we use these words to mean something is more truly applicable to creatures, and it is in this sense that they are foreign to God, because we attach names to things in accordance with the conception we have of things in our mind. As Damascene says, words announce our understanding. 11. But our knowledge derives from things and so the meaning of our words follows the nature of the things from which our knowledge is taken, with all the complexity and temporality and other limiting factors which that involves. And so in this way they do not apply to God at all. This is why he says 12. that although all fatherhood derives from the Father in heaven, 13. nevertheless the word "father" is more familiar to us as meaning our kind of fatherhood.
Or we can say that even the reality these names refer to does not justify their application to God. In any predication you have to have a subject and something of which it is the subject, something, that is, that is in it and can be taken with it in some sense, and also there has to be the sort of relationship between them that makes one of them a proper subject and the other a proper predicate; you cannot predicate absolutely anything of absolutely anything. But God is utterly simple, and so in him it is not true that one thing is in another or that one thing is the subject of another, therefore the actual reality of God transcends any possibility of there being subjects and predicates. This means that no proposition can truly and properly be formed about God, as the commentator shows on *Metaphysics* XI; when we talk about God we use borrowed words and both subject and predicate refer to the same reality and the distinction between them is not a real one, but only one which we make in our understanding on the basis of God’s relationship to things outside himself.

This makes it clear, then, that both from the point of view of the way in which we name things and from the point of view of the

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11 *De Fide Orthodoxa* (Burgundio's version), ed. cit. p. 131.

12 "He" is apparently Anselm, but Albert is thinking of his own reflections on Anselm; cf. I *Sent.* d.2 a.17 (B 25 p. 73).

13 Eph. 3:15.


15 reality of God nothing can properly be predicated of him, and for this reason it is more true to separate everything from him. This is why it says in the *Celestial Hierarchy* that in theology negations are true, while affirmations are ill-adapted.

The answer to the first four points raised above should now be clear.

(5) Sometimes things as we know them are contrasted with things as they are in their own nature, when what does not really come first comes first for us and from our point of view. In such a case what we know of something is only what it is relative to something else, and we cannot deduce what it is in itself. But if we take "knowledge" in its general sense, as including all that we know, both a priori and a posteriori, then unconditional inferences can be made from the way things are as known by us. If something is not known to us and cannot be known by us in any way at all, then there is no way in which we can give it a significant name.

(6) The heavens do possess some kind of consistency and human beings do have some kind of animal nature, but it cannot properly be said of God that he has anything or that he is anything or that anything
is in him, because all such phrases signify some sort of differentiation and complexity \(^{17}\) and this is quite foreign to God. So the case is not the same.

\(^{15}\) Dionysius, CH 2.3 (p. 79). Alan of Lille (SQH 9, ed. cit. p. 140) takes *incompactae* to mean that there is no real *compositio*, which fits Albert's own doctrine, but Albert actually interprets Dionysius' phrase as meaning only that affirmations "are not straightforwardly true" (B 14 p. 46, and cf. DN 7.30, Col. XXXVII p. 359:46-9).

\(^{16}\) In response to the skeptical attack on negative theology (cf. note 8 above) Albert makes a distinction: if all we have is knowledge a posteriori (based on arguing from effects to causes), then indeed we cannot claim to know anything about the causes in question as they are in themselves. If I see a beam of light, I can infer that there is some sort of light-producer around, but without a different kind of evidence I cannot know whether there is a lighthouse there or a castle or a police search-party or what. But in theology we are not confined to a posteriori inferences; there is an interplay between inferences from creatures to the creator and inferences from what the creator must be, if he is to count as the creator (cf. the moves made by Albert in I Sent. d.3 a.3, B 25 pp. 94-5). It is, in fact, only in the context of this kind of interplay between different kinds of theological argument that negative theology can function. An excessively skeptical or radical negative theology defeats itself as well as knocking out affirmative theology.

\(^{17}\) We can only say things like "My cat has whiskers" or "My tortoise is green" or "There are signs of native wit in that fellow" because in each case we can both distinguish between the two (or more) elements involved and make some connection between them, and this is not possible with God, in whom there is no such complexity. God simply is whatever

-194-

So Dionysius begins by saying, "Ascending further" from the things of the senses to the things of the mind "we say that he" (God) "is neither soul nor mind," referring respectively to the lower part of the soul, viewed as that which makes a body alive, and to the higher part which is the eye of the soul, taking *mens* (mind) as coming from *metiri* (measure). \(^{18}\) Or "soul" can be referred to human beings and "mind" to the angels. \(^{19}\) "Nor does he possess phantasy." The commentator here distinguishes between two kinds of phantasy, "of which neither can be ascribed to God. One is the sort which comes first, arising in our sensory apparatus from something naturally perceptible by the senses, and this is properly called an image expressed in the senses. The other is the sort which follows from this image and is shaped by it, and this is the phantasy proper which is commonly given the precise name of interior sense. The first is always attached to the body, the second to
the soul. And although the first is in the senses it does not perceive itself, but the second both perceives itself and is the receiver of the first."  

This appears to mean that the first sort of phantasy is the common sense and the second is what we usually call imagination, which the philosopher defines

may property be said about him, so that there is no room for any real distinction between subject and predicate. Therefore any argument (such as that proposed in point 6) based on the way we may or may not attach predicates to other subjects is ineluctably irrelevant.

Various etymologies of mens were current (cf. DN 1.31, Col. XXXVII p. 16: 62- 5; St. Thomas, I Sent. d.3 q.5). The alleged connection with metiri is derived from Burgundio's version of Damascene, De Fide Orthodoxa 36.6, which Albert cites in De Homine q.73 a.2 (B 35 p. 609a).

The angels are called "minds" in Dionysius, DN 4.1 (PG 3:693C), on which see Albert's commentary (Col. XXXVII p. 125:69-70).

This is quoted more or less verbatim from the interpolated Gloss (on which see Dondaine, Le Corpus Dionysien pp. 84-9); it comes in fact from Eriugena, Periphyseon II, ed. cit. p. 108.

In the absence of convenient modern equivalents I have simply anglicized the medieval jargon here. In the older terminology phantasia (originally "appearance") was used to mean "sense" (capacity for sense-perception); cf. Bernardus Silvestris, Cosmographia, Micr. 13.13, ed. P. Dronke (Leiden, 1978), p. 149. Eriugena distinguishes between the physical reception of an image and the conscious registering of it, the latter being the "phantasy" proper, which Eriugena says is rightly and properly called the "external sense" (but in the Gloss, at least as found in Vat. lat. 176 f.251r and in Albert, this has turned into "interior sense"!). Albert's account of sense-perception (on which see N. H. Steneck, "Albert on the psychology of sense perception" in Weisheipl, Albert pp. 263-90) depends on Aristotle, for whom "phantasy" was a power of the soul; the conventional translation was "imagination." First the sense-organ receives the "perceptible species" from the perceived object; the various sense-impressions received by the different organs are put together into a composite sense-

as "a movement taking place because of actual sense-perception." The commentator himself implies this definition. And it is true that neither can be ascribed to God, but it is not true that the common sense is unaware of itself, because its proper function is to see itself see and to put together and distinguish between sense-objects. If we wish to save what the commentator says, we must say that phantasy is named after seeing, as the philosopher says, and so the first kind of
phantasy must refer to external vision and the second to the inner powers of sense, such as the common sense and imagination; then there will be no problem in what he says.

"Nor does he have opinion," opinion being a matter of accepting something merely on the basis of symptoms, with the fear therefore that the opposite might be true. 25."Nor does he have reason," which tracks external symptoms down to essential inner principles, "or intellect," which gets no further than the limits of rational thought, namely, understanding what something is and grasping first principles. 26.He neither has nor is any of these things. Neither can he be "spoken of or understood": we have no well-defined understanding "what" he is or "that" he is, only a blurred knowledge

impression by the "common sense," which then passes it on to "imagination," where it becomes a mental image that can be stored away.

22 Aristotle, De Anima 3.3 (429a1-2).

23 In Eriugena's terminology the first kind of "phantasy" is simply the physical reception of an image by the sense-organ, so of course it is not self-conscious. Albert's difficulty arises from his interpretation of it to mean the "common sense." When I see a bedbug, I know that I am seeing a bedbug, but this knowledge is not the result of any kind of inference; it is actually part of my seeing the bedbug that I should be conscious of seeing a bedbug. But clearly it is not with my eyes that I see myself seeing a bedbug, so it must be thanks to the "common sense" that sense-perception is aware of itself (cf. Albert, De Homine q. 36 a. 1, B 35 pp. 319-20). It is also the job of the "common sense" to make distinctions and connections between sense-impressions, judging that my perception of whiteness and my perception of sweetness are both due to one and the same object (a sugar cube, maybe), but that nevertheless whiteness and sweetness are not the same thing (ibid. q.35 a. 1, pp. 306-10).

24 Cf. Aristotle, De Anima 3.3 (429a1-4) (παντασία comes from φαος, light, which is the sine qua non for seeing); cf. Albert, De Anima 3.1.9 (Col. VII i p. 176:31-6).

25 Arguing from symptoms or clues rather than from causes leads only to probable, not certain, conclusions (cf. Albert, Topica 1.1.2, B 2 pp. 241-2). The definition of opinion seems to come from Avicenna, De Anima 5.1, ed. van Riet (Louvain/Leiden 1968) II p. 79; cf. also Gundissalinus, De Anima 10, ed. cit. p. 85.

26 The proper objects of understanding (intellect) are (a) fundamental principles (which cannot be argued for, they have to be presupposed in all arguments) and (b) the actual "whatness" of things. These are the "limits" of rational thought (or its "terms"), because reasoning has to begin from (a) and, with any luck, it leads
"that" he is. "He is neither number nor order": order follows from number, because until there is number there cannot be any before and after. Nor is he "greatness," spiritual greatness, that is, and all the other terms which follow have to be understood in the same way in line with the explanation given in the Divine Names. 27 "Nor is he silence" (this refers to his name of "peace") "or light" (intellectual light), nor can he be "touched by our understanding," by an understanding, that is, that would enfold the outer limits of something. As Augustine says, to touch God with one's mind is great bliss, 28 but there "touching" means merely reaching the edge of him. "Nor is there knowledge of him" (enabling us to form conclusions about him) "or truth," in the sense in which "truth" is contrasted with falsehood with reference to the facts, truth being an "equivalence between reality and our understanding." 29 And so on. The meaning is clear.

"Or to any other being": the angels, that is.
"Nor is he anything non-existent": anything merely potential.
"As it really is": that is to say, with a clearly defined knowledge "that" or with knowledge "what" it is.
"Nor does it know beings qua beings": in such a way that God's knowledge, like ours, would be caused by beings. 30
"It has no explanation": which would make it possible for us to reason about it.
"Or darkness": darkness on God's side, that is.
"Or error": that is, going astray in knowledge because of a wrong application of basic principles.
"Or truth": as opposed to appearance, so it does not mean the same as "truth" a few lines back.

27 Dionysius, DN 9 deals with greatness, smallness, equality, likeness, unlikeness, standing and moving.
28 Augustine, Serm. 117.3.5 (PL 38:663).
29 This famous definition of truth was ascribed to all kinds of people in the Middle Ages (cf. note to St. Thomas, De Veritate q.1 a. 1, Leoline XXII i p. 6:186); it seems to derive from the Arab philosophers: cf. Averroes, Destructio destructionum, trans. S. van den Bergh (London, 1954), p. 60, where it is cited as a commonplace. This work of Averroes' cannot be Albert's actual source, since it was not translated into Latin until the following century. Cf. L. Baur. Die Philosophie des Robert Grosseteste, Bischofs von Lincoln (†1253), Beiträge XVIII/4-6 (Münster, 1917), p. 203 note 3.
30 God's knowledge, unlike ours, is creative knowledge: things are what they are because he knows them, whereas we know things...
because they are what they are. Cf. I Sent. d.36 a.7 (B 26 pp. 217-8), d.38 a.3 (pp.286-7).

-197-

"Or negation": no strictly accurate negation, because any negation rests on some affirmation, so where there is no true affirmation there will not be any true negation either, although when we are dealing with God negation is truer than affirmation. But in negative and affirmative theology "we neither affirm nor deny" God himself, but only "things which come after" him, for instance, when we say that God is wisdom or that he is not wisdom; the word "wisdom" designates our kind of wisdom, and that is not God's wisdom. So it is clear that the perfection and unity of the first cause is "above all affirmation," because all excellences are in him, but in him they are really identical, while any affirmation implies that there is some linking up of separate things. And the "transcendence" of him who is above all transcends all negation. The names which are denied of him are denied because of his transcendence, not because he lacks anything, which is why we deny things of creatures. And so his transcendence defeats all negation. And so neither negations nor affirmations arrive at any sufficient praise of him, to whom belong power and infinite splendor and eternity, forever and ever. Amen.

-198-