

St. Thomas Aquinas

FAITH, REASON AND THEOLOGY

Questions I-IV of his Commentary  
on the *De Trinitate* of Boethius  
translated with Introduction  
and Notes

by

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### Canadian Cataloguing in Publication Data

Thomas, Aquinas, Saint, 1225?-1274

Faith, reason and theology

(Mediaeval sources in translation; 32)

Translated from: *Expositio super librum Boethii De trinitate*.

Bibliography: p.

Includes index.

ISBN 0-88844-282-3

I. Boethius, d. 524. *De Trinitate*. 2. Trinity — Early works to 1800. I. Maurer, Armand A. (Armand Augustine), 1915- . II. Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies. III. Title. IV. Series.

BT110.T4613 1987

231'.044

C87-094669-2

© 1987 by

Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies

59 Queen's Park Crescent East

Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5S 2C4

Printed by Les Éditions Marquis Ltée, Montmagny, Canada

Distributed outside North America by

E. J. Brill, Leiden, The Netherlands

(Brill ISBN 90 04 08615 3)

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We might also reply with the commonly held opinion that they knew two persons with their appropriated attributes of power and wisdom, but not with their proper attributes.<sup>16</sup> Now goodness, which is appropriated to the Holy Spirit, especially concerns effects of which they were ignorant.

*Reply to 9.* Aristotle did not mean that God was to be praised as three and one, but that, because of the perfection of the number three the ancients honored him with a threefold sacrifice and prayer.

*Reply to 10.* Everything that is in God is his one simple essence; but the perfections that are one in him are many in our intellect, and so our intellect can know one of them without the other. Consequently in our present state we cannot know about any one of them what it is (*quid est*), but only that it is (*an est*), and we can know the existence of one of them without knowing the existence of another; for example, if one knew that wisdom exists in God, but not that omnipotence exists in him. Similarly it can be known by natural reason that God exists, but not that he is threefold and one.

## QUESTION TWO

### ON MAKING THE DIVINE KNOWLEDGE KNOWN<sup>1</sup>

There are four questions concerning this topic:

1. Is it permissible to make divine realities an object of investigation?
2. Can there be a science of divine realities?
3. Is it permissible to use philosophical arguments and authorities in the science of faith whose object is God?
4. Should divine realities be veiled by obscure and novel words?

#### ARTICLE ONE

##### *Is It Permissible to Make Divine Realities an Object of Investigation?*

*We proceed to the first article as follows:*

It does not seem right to inquire by reasoning into things divine.

1. For it is said in Ecclesiasticus 3:22: "Seek not what is too high for you, and search not into what is above your ability." But divine things especially are too high for us, and more particularly those held on faith. Therefore it is not permissible to investigate these matters.

2. Punishment is only inflicted for some fault. But, as is said in Proverbs 25:27: "He who is a searcher of majesty shall be overwhelmed by glory." Therefore it is not permitted to investigate thoroughly what belongs to the majesty of God.

3. Ambrose says<sup>1</sup>: "Away with arguments if you are looking for faith." But faith is necessary in divine things, especially concerning

<sup>16</sup> See Peter Lombard, *Glossa in Rom.*, *ibid.*, PL 191: 1329A.

<sup>1</sup> See St. Thomas, *Contra gentiles* 1.3.8.

<sup>1</sup> St. Ambrose, *De fide* 1.13.84, PL 16:570.

the Trinity. Therefore in this subject it is not permitted to investigate the truth by reasoning.

4. Speaking of generation in God, Ambrose says<sup>2</sup>: "It is not right to inquire into these high mysteries. One may know that the Son is begotten; it is not right to discuss how he is begotten." For the same reason, then, it is not permitted to inquire by means of arguments into anything connected with the Trinity.

5. As Gregory says<sup>3</sup>, "Faith has no merit where human reason supplies proof." But it is wrong to do away with the merit of faith. Therefore it is not right to investigate matters of faith by reason.

6. All honor ought to be given to God. But secrets are to be respected by keeping silence about them. Thus Dionysius<sup>4</sup> speaks of "honoring by silence the hidden truth which is above us." This agrees with the words of Psalm 64:2, according to Jerome's text<sup>5</sup>: "Praise is silent before you, O God"; that is, silence itself is your praise. Therefore we ought to refrain in silence from inquiring into divine realities.

7. As the Philosopher says<sup>6</sup>, no one can travel to infinity, because the purpose of every movement is to reach an end, which is not present in infinity. But God is infinitely remote from us. Now investigation is a kind of progression of reason toward the object under inquiry. So it seems that we ought not to inquire into divine realities.

*On the contrary*, we have the words of 1 Peter 3:15: "Always be prepared to make a defence to any one who calls you to account for the faith<sup>7</sup> that is in you." But this is impossible unless we inquire rationally into what we hold on faith. Therefore a rational investigation into matters of faith is necessary.

2. As Titus 1:9 says, it is the duty of a bishop "to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to confute those who contradict it." But

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 1.10.65, PL 16: 566A.

<sup>3</sup> St. Gregory, *Hom.* 26.1, PL 76:1197C.

<sup>4</sup> Pseudo-Dionysius, *De caelesti hierarchia* 15.19, PG 3:340B.

<sup>5</sup> St. Jerome, *Liber psalmorum*, ps. 65, PL 28:1236C.

<sup>6</sup> Aristotle, *De caelo* 1.7 (274b11-13).

<sup>7</sup> The Greek text of the Bible reads "hope." St. Thomas follows a variant reading of the Vulgate. See L. Elders, *Faith and Science*, p. 42.

only by arguments can we refute those contradicting the faith. Therefore it is necessary to use reasoning in matters of faith.

3. Augustine says<sup>8</sup> that "with the help of the Lord our God we shall endeavor to give a reason for that very thing which they demand, namely that the Trinity is one God." Therefore we can use reasoning in inquiring into the Trinity.

4. Augustine says in his treatise against Felician<sup>9</sup>: "[Although in matters of faith it is easier to believe qualified testimony than to investigate by reasoning, nevertheless] because you not altogether unfittingly acknowledge both of these—since you do not omit to acknowledge testimony as well as the aforesaid reasoning—I am ready to proceed with you in this controversy on lines you have approved," that is, I shall use both reasoning and authority. Therefore the same conclusion follows.

*Reply*: Because our perfection consists in our union with God, we must have access to the divine to the fullest extent possible, using everything in our power, that our mind might be occupied with contemplation and our reason with the investigation of divine realities. As Psalm 72:28 says: "It is good for me to adhere to my God." So Aristotle<sup>10</sup> rejects the opinion of those who held that we should not meddle with what is divine, but only with what is human. "But we must not follow those," he says, "who advise us, being human, to think of human things, and, being mortal, of mortal things, but must, so far as we can, make ourselves immortal, and strain every nerve to live in accord with what is best in us."

In this regard, however, it is possible to go wrong in three ways. First, by presumption, delving into the divine in such a way that one tries to grasp it fully. This presumption is denounced in Job 11:7: "Can you search out the footprints of God and perfectly discover the Almighty?" Hilary also states:<sup>11</sup> "Do not plunge yourself into that mystery and secret of unimaginable birth. Do not immerse yourself in it, presuming to comprehend the heights of intelligence; rather, understand that they are incomprehensible."

<sup>8</sup> St. Augustine, *De Trinitate* 1.2.4, CCL 50:31.

<sup>9</sup> The treatise is in fact by Vigilius Thapsensis, *De unitate Trinitatis* 2, PL 42:1158.

<sup>10</sup> Aristotle, *Nic. Ethics* 10.7 (1177b31-34).

<sup>11</sup> St. Hilary, *De Trinitate* 2.10 and 11, CCL 62:48.11-13 and 49.14-16.

Second, one may err because in matters of faith he makes reason precede faith, instead of faith precede reason, as when someone is willing to believe only what he can discover by reason. It should in fact be just the opposite. Thus Hilary says<sup>12</sup>: "Begin by believing, inquire, press forward, persevere."

Third, by pursuing his speculation into the divine beyond the measure of his ability. Romans 12:3 says: "I bid every one of you not to be more wise than is necessary to be wise, but to be wise with sobriety, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned him." For everyone has not been endowed in equal measure, so that what is beyond the ability of one is not beyond the ability of another.

*Replies to Opposing Arguments.*

*Reply to 1.* Those matters are said to be too high for us that go beyond our capacity, not those that are by nature of greater worth. For the more a person occupies himself with what is of greater value, provided that he keeps within the limits of his ability, the greater perfection he will reach. But should he exceed the measure of his ability even in the slightest matters, he easily falls into error. Thus the Gloss on Romans 12:3 says<sup>13</sup>: "Heretics are made in two ways: they fall into error and depart from the truth because they go beyond their limits when they concern themselves with the creator or with creatures."

*Reply to 2.* To investigate thoroughly is, as it were, to conduct an inquiry to the very end. But it is unlawful and presumptuous for anyone to inquire into the divine as though he will reach the end of comprehending it.

*Reply to 3.* Where faith is at stake there is no room for arguments opposed to faith or for those that attempt to precede it, but there is a place for those that in a due manner follow upon it.

*Reply to 4.* It is not permitted to investigate the heavenly mysteries with the intention of fully comprehending them. This is clear from the words that follow: "One may know that the Son is begotten; it is not right to discuss how he is begotten." He who discusses the manner of that birth tries to know what that birth is, though we can know *that* divine realities are but not *what* they are.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 2. 10, ccl. 62:48.13.

<sup>13</sup> *Glossa ordinaria* 3. col. 1994D.

*Reply to 5.* There are two kinds of human reasoning. One is demonstrative, compelling the mind's assent. There can be no place in matters of faith for this kind of reasoning, but there can be in disproving claims that faith is impossible. For although matters of faith cannot be demonstratively proved, neither can they be demonstratively disproved. If this sort of reasoning were brought forward to prove what is held on faith, the merit of faith would be destroyed, because the assent to it would not be voluntary but necessary. But persuasive reasoning, drawn from analogies to the truths of faith, does not take away the nature of faith because it does not render them evident, for there is no reduction to first principles intuited by the mind. Neither does it deprive faith of its merit, because it does not compel the mind's assent but leaves the assent voluntary.

*Reply to 6.* God is indeed respected by silence, but this does not mean that we may say nothing whatever about him, nor inquire into him, but that we should understand that however much we may say or inquire about him, we realize that we fall short of fully understanding him. Thus it is said in Ecclesiasticus 43:32: "When you praise the Lord, exalt him as much as you can; for he will surpass even that."

*Reply to 7.* Since God is infinitely distant from creatures, no creature progresses toward God so as to equal him, either in what it receives from him or in knowing him. So the goal of the creature's progress is not something infinitely remote from the creature; but every creature is drawn to be more and more like God, as far as it is able.<sup>14</sup> So also the human mind should always be aroused to know more and more about God in the manner proper to it. Thus Hilary says:<sup>15</sup> "The person who with piety pursues the infinite may sometimes find it beyond his reach, but by advancing he makes progress."

ARTICLE TWO

*Can There Be a Science of Divine Realities?*<sup>1</sup>

*We proceed to the second article as follows:*

It seems that there cannot be a science of the divine realities that are matters of faith.

<sup>14</sup> See St. Thomas, *Contra gentiles* 3.19.

<sup>15</sup> St. Hilary, *De Trinitate* 2.10, ccl. 62:48.14-16.

<sup>1</sup> See St. Thomas, *Sent.* 1. prol. q. un. a. 3. q. 2; *Summa theol.* 1.1.2.

1. For wisdom is different from science, and wisdom treats of the divine.<sup>2</sup> Therefore science does not.

2. As is said in the *Posterior Analytics*,<sup>3</sup> every science must presuppose knowledge of what its subject is. But, as Damascene says,<sup>4</sup> we can in no way know what God is. Therefore there can be no science of God.

3. It belongs to every science to study the parts and attributes of its subject.<sup>5</sup> But God, being a simple form, neither has parts into which he may be analyzed, nor can he be the subject of attributes.<sup>6</sup> Therefore there can be no science about God.

4. In every science reasoning comes before assent, for in the sciences demonstration is the cause of the assent to the objects of knowledge. But in objects of belief the opposite must be the case: as we have said,<sup>7</sup> the assent of faith precedes reasoning. Therefore there can be no science of divine realities, especially those accepted on faith.

5. Every science proceeds from self-evident principles which everyone accepts on hearing, or from principles that are trustworthy because of them. But the articles of faith, which are the first principles in matters of faith, are not of this sort. As has been said,<sup>8</sup> they are neither self-evident nor can they be resolved by demonstration to self-evident principles. Consequently there can be no science about the divine realities held on faith.

6. Faith is concerned with realities that are not evident,<sup>9</sup> whereas science is concerned with those that are evident, because science brings to light the objects with which it deals. Therefore there can be no science of the divine realities held on faith.

<sup>2</sup> See St. Augustine, *De Trinitate* 12.15.25, CCL 50:379.

<sup>3</sup> Aristotle, *Post. Anal.* 1.1 (71a11-13).

<sup>4</sup> St. John Damascene, *De fide orthodoxa* 1.2 and 4, ed. Buytaert, pp. 15.40-45 and 19.3-5, 20.33.

<sup>5</sup> See Aristotle, *Post. Anal.* 1.1.7, 10 (71a12, 75a39-b2, 76b11-16); St. Thomas, *In Peri herm.* 1, lect. 1, n. 3, ed. Leonine 1:8; *In Post. Anal.* 1, lect. 2, n. 2, ed. Leonine 1:142.

<sup>6</sup> See Boethius, *De Trinitate* 2, p. 10.29-30, 42-43 and p. 12.48-49.

<sup>7</sup> See above, a. 1, Reply, p. 38.

<sup>8</sup> See above, a. 1, Reply to 5, p. 39.

<sup>9</sup> See Hebrews 11:1.

7. Every science begins with understanding, because it is from the intellectual perception of principles that we arrive at the scientific knowledge of conclusions. But in matters of faith understanding does not come at the beginning but at the end, as is said in Isaiah 7:9<sup>10</sup>: "Unless you shall have believed, you will not understand." Hence there can be no science of the divine realities held by faith.

*On the contrary*, we have the words of Augustine<sup>11</sup>: "To this science I attribute only that whereby the most wholesome faith, which leads to true blessedness, is begotten, protected and strengthened." Therefore there is a science concerning matters of faith.

2. The same point is clear from the words of Wisdom 10:10: "Wisdom...gave him the science of the saints." This can only be understood to refer to that which distinguishes holy people from the wicked, namely the science of faith.

3. The Apostle, speaking of the knowledge possessed by the faithful in 1 Corinthians 8:7, says: "However, not all possess this science." From this the same conclusion follows.

*Reply*: The nature of science consists in this, that from things already known conclusions about other matters follow of necessity. Seeing that this is possible in the case of divine realities, clearly there can be a science about them. Now the knowledge of divine things can be interpreted in two ways. First, from our standpoint, and then they are knowable to us only through creatures, the knowledge of which we derive from the senses. Second, from the nature of divine realities themselves. In this way they are eminently knowable of themselves, and although we do not know them in their own way, this is how they are known by God and the blessed.

Accordingly there are two kinds of science concerning the divine. One follows our way of knowing, which uses the principles of sensible things in order to make the Godhead known. This is the way the philosophers handed down a science of the divine, calling the primary science "divine science." The other follows the mode of divine

<sup>10</sup> This is the reading of the Septuagint. The Vulgate reads: "If you will not believe, you shall not continue" (*Si non credideritis, non permanebitis*). See St. Jerome, *Commentaria in Esaiam prophetam* 3, pl. 24:107A, CCL 73:99.84-88.

<sup>11</sup> St. Augustine, *De Trinitate* 14.1.3, CCL 50:424. The text of Aquinas mistakenly refers to book 12.

realities themselves, so that they are apprehended in themselves. We cannot perfectly possess this way of knowing in the present life, but there arises here and now in us a certain sharing in, and a likeness to, the divine knowledge, to the extent that through the faith implanted in us we firmly grasp the primary Truth itself for its own sake. And as God, by the very fact that he knows himself, knows all other things as well in his way, namely, by simple intuition without any reasoning process, so may we, from the things we accept by faith in our firm grasping of the primary Truth, come to know other things in our way, namely by drawing conclusions from principles.<sup>12</sup> Thus the truths we hold on faith are, as it were, our principles in this science, and the others become, as it were, conclusions.<sup>13</sup> From this it is evident that this science is nobler than the divine science taught by the philosophers, proceeding as it does from more sublime principles.

#### *Replies to Opposing Arguments:*

*Reply to 1.* Wisdom is not contrasted with science as though they were opposed to each other, but because wisdom adds an additional note to science. Wisdom, as the Philosopher says,<sup>14</sup> is the chief of all the sciences, because, being concerned with the highest principles, it directs all the other sciences. That is also why it is called the goddess of sciences in the beginning of the *Metaphysics*.<sup>15</sup> And this is even truer of the science that not only treats of the highest causes, but comes from them.<sup>16</sup> Now, since it belongs to the wise to direct others, so this most lofty science, which directs and puts order in the other sciences, is called wisdom,<sup>17</sup> just as in the "mechanical" arts they are called wise who draw up the plans for others, for example, architects.<sup>18</sup> The name "science" is left for the other less

<sup>12</sup> See St. Thomas, *Contra gentiles* 2.1.5.

<sup>13</sup> See St. Thomas, *Summa theol.* 1.1.7.

<sup>14</sup> Aristotle, *Nic. Ethics* 6.7 (1141a18-20).

<sup>15</sup> Aristotle, *Metaph.* 1.2 (983a6).

<sup>16</sup> See St. Thomas, *Summa theol.* 1.1.6.

<sup>17</sup> See St. Thomas, *Contra gentiles* 1.1.1.

<sup>18</sup> See Aristotle, *Metaph.* 1.1 (981a30-b3).

noble disciplines. In line with this, science is contrasted with wisdom as a property with a definition.<sup>19</sup>

*Reply to 2.* As was said above,<sup>20</sup> when causes are known through their effects knowledge of the effect takes the place of knowledge of the essence of the cause, and this is necessary in sciences that treat of realities knowable through themselves. Consequently, in order that we have a science of God, we need not first know what he is. Or we may reply that in divine science knowledge of what God is not takes the place of knowledge of what he is, for just as one thing is distinguished from others by what it is, so also by the knowledge of what it is not.

*Reply to 3.* By the parts of the subject in a science are to be understood not only subjective or integral parts,<sup>21</sup> but anything whatsoever, a knowledge of which is required for a knowledge of the subject, because a science is concerned with all matters of this sort only insofar as they are related to its subject. By attributes are meant whatever can be proved of anything, whether they are negative attributes or relations to other things. Many attributes of this sort can be proved of God, both from naturally known principles and from the principles of faith.

*Reply to 4.* In every science there are some items that function as principles and others that function as conclusions. The reasoning introduced in sciences precedes assent to the conclusions, but it follows assent to the principles because it flows from them. Now in divine science the articles of faith are like principles and not like conclusions. They are also defended against those who attack them, as the Philosopher<sup>22</sup> argues against those who deny principles.<sup>23</sup> Moreover they are clarified by certain analogies, just as principles

<sup>19</sup> The meaning of this enigmatic statement seems to be that wisdom is distinguished from science by something outside the definition of science, namely wisdom's office of directing the other sciences, as a property is distinguished from a definition as something outside the definition, for example, the capability of laughter is outside the definition "rational animal." See J. Owens, "A Note on Aquinas, *In Boeth. de Trin.*, 2.2, ad 1<sup>m</sup>," *The New Scholasticism* 59 (1985), 102-108.

<sup>20</sup> See above, p. 24.

<sup>21</sup> For the meaning of these kinds of parts, see St. Thomas, *Summa theol.* 2-2.48, a. un.

<sup>22</sup> Aristotle, *Metaph.* 4.4-6 (1005b35-1011b22).

<sup>23</sup> See St. Thomas, *Summa theol.* 1.1.8.

that are naturally known are made evident by induction but not proved by demonstrative reasoning.

*Reply to 5.* Even some of the sciences taught on the purely human level use principles that are not known to everyone, but they must be presupposed as established by higher sciences. Thus subalternate sciences employ principles that are presupposed and believed on the authority of higher sciences, and these principles are self-evident only to the higher sciences. It is in this way that the articles of faith, which are the principles of this science, are related to God's knowledge, because what is self-evident in the knowledge God has of himself is presupposed in our science,<sup>24</sup> and they are believed on the word of him who reveals them to us through his witnesses, in much the same way as a physician accepts the testimony of a scientist when he says that there are four elements.

*Reply to 6.* The evidence of a science is the result of the evidence of its principles, for a science does not make its principles evident, but because the principles are evident it renders its conclusions evident. In this way the science we are speaking about does not make matters of faith apparent, but by them it brings to light other things in the way we can be certain about the primary beings.<sup>25</sup>

*Reply to 7.* Understanding is always the primary source of every science, but it is not always its proximate source. Sometimes the proximate starting point of a science is belief, as is clear in the subalternated sciences. The proximate source of their conclusions is belief in truths presupposed as established by a higher science. Their primary source, however, is the knowledge of the higher scientist who, through his understanding, is certain about these matters of belief. Similarly the proximate starting point of this [divine] science is faith, but its primary source is the divine understanding, in which we put our faith. The purpose of our believing, however, is to arrive at an understanding of what we believe.<sup>26</sup> It is as if a scientist on a lower level acquired the science of a scientist on a higher level; he would then come to know and to understand what he formerly only believed.

<sup>24</sup> See *ibid.*, I.1.6, ad 1<sup>m</sup>.

<sup>25</sup> See St. Thomas, *De veritate* 14.9, ad 3<sup>m</sup>.

<sup>26</sup> See St. Thomas, *Sent.* 1, prol. q. un. a. 3, q. 3; *Quodlibet* 4, q. 9, a. 3.

## ARTICLE THREE

*Is It Permissible to Use Philosophical Reasoning and Authorities in the Science of Faith, Whose Object is God?*

*We proceed to the third article as follows:*

It seems that in matters of faith it is not permissible to use philosophical reasoning.

1. According to 1 Corinthians 1:17, "Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with eloquent wisdom," that is, "in the teaching of the philosophers," as the Gloss says.<sup>1</sup> And on the verse 1:20: "Where is the debater of this age?" the Gloss comments: "The debater is he who unravels the secrets of nature: such as these God does not accept as preachers."<sup>2</sup> Again, commenting on 2:4: "And my speech and my preaching was not in the persuasive words of human wisdom," the Gloss says: "Although my words were persuasive, they were not so because of human wisdom, like the words of pseudo-apostles."<sup>3</sup> From all this it seems that it is not permissible to use philosophical reasoning in matters of faith.

2. Commenting on Isaiah 15:1: "Ar is laid waste in a night," the Gloss says,<sup>4</sup> "Ar means the adversary, namely worldly knowledge, which is an enemy of God." Therefore we ought not to use worldly knowledge in matters that concern God.

3. Ambrose states<sup>5</sup>: "The mystery of faith is free from philosophical reasoning." Therefore, where it is a question of faith, it is not lawful to use the arguments and sayings of the philosophers.

4. Jerome<sup>6</sup> tells how in a vision he was scourged by divine judgment because he had read books of Cicero, how the bystanders prayed that he might be pardoned because of his youth, and then

<sup>1</sup> *Glossa ordinaria* 5, col. 201A. See Peter Lombard, *Glossa*, PL 191:1541B.

<sup>2</sup> *Glossa ordinaria* 6, col. 202D. See Peter Lombard, *ibid.*, PL 191:1542D.

<sup>3</sup> Peter Lombard, *ibid.*, PL 191:1548B. See *Glossa interlinearis* 6, col. 209-210.

<sup>4</sup> *Glossa ordinaria* 4, fol. 35rA.

<sup>5</sup> This statement is not from St. Ambrose but from Peter Lombard, *Sent.* 3, d. 22, c. 1, ed. Grottaferrata 2:136.8-9. See St. Ambrose, *De fide* 1.13.84, PL 16:570D.

<sup>6</sup> See St. Jerome, *Ep.* 22.30, CSEL 54:190.7-191.7.



how he would insist on being tortured if he ever again read books of the pagans. Calling to witness the name of God, he cried: "O Lord, if I ever possess and read secular books, I have denied you." Therefore if it is wrong to study and read them, much less is it permissible to use them in treatises about God.

5. Secular wisdom is often represented in Scripture by water, divine wisdom by wine. But in Isaiah 1:22, innkeepers are blamed for mixing water with wine. Consequently those teachers should be condemned who mingle philosophical doctrines with sacred teaching.

6. As Jerome says:<sup>7</sup> "We ought not to use the same language as heretics. But heretics use the teachings of philosophy in order to distort the faith, as is said in the Gloss on Proverbs 7:16 and Isaiah 15:5.<sup>8</sup> Therefore Catholics ought not to use them in their treatises.

7. Just as every science has its own principles,<sup>9</sup> so also does sacred doctrine, namely the articles of faith. But the other sciences proceed incorrectly if one science takes the principles of another; rather, each ought to proceed from its own principles, as the Philosopher teaches.<sup>10</sup> Therefore neither does sacred doctrine proceed correctly if anyone uses the teachings of philosophy.

8. If someone's teaching is rejected in a certain matter, his authority is weakened as a support for another. Thus Augustine says<sup>11</sup> that if we should grant any mistake in sacred Scripture, its authority as a support of faith will be destroyed. But sacred doctrine repudiates the teaching of the philosophers on many points because they are found to have made many mistakes. Therefore their authority is incapable of supporting anything.

*On the contrary*, the Apostle in Titus 1:12 uses a line of the poet Epimenides: "The Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons"; in 1 Corinthians 15:33 he refers to the words of Menander: "Bad

<sup>7</sup> This statement has not been found in Jerome's gloss on Hosea. See *Glossa ordinaria* on Hosea 2:16; 4, fol. 336rA.

<sup>8</sup> See *Glossa ordinaria* on Proverbs 7:16; 3, col. 1634DE; and on Isaiah, 15:5; 4, fol. 35C.

<sup>9</sup> See Q. 6, a. 1, ed. Decker, p. 205.13-15, trans. Maurer, pp. 63-64; *In Post. Anal.* 1, lect. 41 and 43, ed. Leonine 1:306-307, n. 9-12 and 317, n. 13.

<sup>10</sup> Aristotle, *Post. Anal.* 1.7 (75a38-b20).

<sup>11</sup> St. Augustine, *Ep. 28 ad Hieronymum* 3.5 and 3.3, CSEL 34 (pt. 1), 111.8-13 and 108.5-10.

company ruins good morals"; and in Acts 17:28 to the Athenians he quotes the words of Aratus: "For we are indeed his (that is, God's) offspring."<sup>12</sup> Consequently it is also permissible for other teachers of sacred Scripture to make use of philosophical arguments.

2. Jerome,<sup>13</sup> after mentioning several teachers of sacred Scripture like Basil, Gregory and certain others, adds, "All these so filled their books with the teachings and opinions of the philosophers that one does not know what to admire more in them, their secular learning or their knowledge of the Scriptures." They would not have acted like this had it been unlawful or useless.

3. Jerome wrote<sup>14</sup>: "If you love a captive woman, that is, worldly wisdom, and you are enthralled by her beauty, make her bald; do away with her alluring hair and verbal graces, along with her hard nails.<sup>15</sup> Wash her with the lye of which the prophet speaks,<sup>16</sup> and then reclining with her say<sup>17</sup>: 'Her left hand is under my head, and her right hand will embrace me.' Then will the captive woman bear you many children, and from a Moabitess she will become an Israelite woman to you."<sup>18</sup> Therefore it is fruitful for one to use worldly wisdom.

4. Augustine states<sup>19</sup>: "I shall not be sluggish in seeking after the substance of God, whether through his Scripture or through his creature." Now the knowledge about creatures is set forth in philosophy. Therefore it is not unfitting for someone to use philosophical reasoning in sacred doctrine.

<sup>12</sup> Taken from St. Jerome, *Ep. 70 ad Magnum*, CSEL 54:701.9-11, 15-702.1. For Epimenides, see *The Pre-Socratic Philosophers*, ed. K. Freeman, p. 31. For Menander, see *Thais*, fragm. 197, ed. A. Koerte, *Menandri quae supersunt*, p. 2. For Aratus, see *Phaenomena*, v. 5, ed. E. Maass.

<sup>13</sup> St. Jerome, *ibid.*, CSEL 54:706.14-707.3

<sup>14</sup> St. Jerome, *Ep. 56 ad Pammachium*, n. 8, CSEL 54:658.3-10. See also *Ep. 21 ad Damasum*, n. 13, CSEL 54:122.13-123.3 and 124.3-7; *Ep. 70 ad Magnum*, n. 2, CSEL 54:702.6-14.

<sup>15</sup> See Jeremiah 2:22.

<sup>16</sup> See Deut. 21:13.

<sup>17</sup> Cant. of Canticles 2:6.

<sup>18</sup> See Ruth 4:5, 10.

<sup>19</sup> St. Augustine, *De Trinitate* 2, proem. 1, CCL 50:80.15-16.

5. Augustine writes<sup>20</sup>: "If those who are called philosophers have said things by chance that are true and in agreement with our faith, we must not only have no fear of them but appropriate them for our own use from those who are their unlawful possessors." And so the same conclusion follows.

6. Commenting on Daniel 1:8: "But Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the king's rich food," the Gloss says<sup>21</sup>: "If anyone who is ignorant of mathematics should write against the mathematicians, or knowing nothing of philosophy should attack the philosophers, who, even though himself a laughingstock, would not laugh?" But seeing that a teacher of sacred Scripture must at times oppose the philosophers, it is necessary for him to make use of philosophy.

*Reply*<sup>22</sup>: The gifts of grace are added to nature in such a way that they do not destroy it, but rather perfect it. So too the light of faith, which is imparted to us as a gift, does not do away with the light of natural reason given to us by God. And even though the natural light of the human mind is inadequate to make known what is revealed by faith, nevertheless what is divinely taught to us by faith cannot be contrary to what we are endowed with by nature. One or the other would have to be false, and since we have both of them from God, he would be the cause of our error, which is impossible. Rather, since what is imperfect bears a resemblance to what is perfect, what we know by natural reason has some likeness to what is taught to us by faith.

Now just as sacred doctrine is based on the light of faith, so philosophy is based on the natural light of reason. So it is impossible that the contents of philosophy should be contrary to the contents of faith, but they fall short of them. The former, however, bear certain likenesses to the latter and also contain certain preambles to them, just as nature itself is a preamble to grace. If anything, however, is found in the sayings of the philosophers contrary to faith, this is not

<sup>20</sup> St. Augustine, *De doctrina christiana* 2.40.60, CCL 32:73.1-4.

<sup>21</sup> *Glossa ordinaria*, 4, fol. 295rA. See St. Jerome, PL 25:497A.

<sup>22</sup> See St. Thomas, *Summa theol.* 1.1.8 and 2-2.1.5, ad 2 and 3; *Contra gentiles* 1.2 and 9; *Sent.*, 1, prol. a. 5; *Quodlibet* 4, q. 9, a. 3. *De rationibus fidei*, 2, ed. Leonine 40:B58.

philosophy but rather an abuse of philosophy arising from faulty reasoning. Therefore it is possible to refute an error of this sort by philosophical principles, either by showing that it is entirely impossible or that it is not necessary. For, as matters of faith cannot be demonstratively proved, so some assertions contrary to them cannot be demonstratively shown to be false; it can, however, be shown that they lack necessity.

Accordingly we can use philosophy in sacred doctrine in three ways.

First, in order to demonstrate the preambles of faith, which we must necessarily know in [the act of] faith. Such are the truths about God that are proved by natural reason, for example, that God exists, that he is one, and other truths of this sort about God or creatures proved in philosophy and presupposed by faith.

Second, by throwing light on the contents of faith by analogies, as Augustine<sup>23</sup> uses many analogies drawn from philosophical doctrines in order to elucidate the Trinity.

Third, in order to refute assertions contrary to the faith, either by showing them to be false or lacking in necessity.

Those, however, who use philosophy in sacred doctrine can err in two ways. In one way by making use of teachings that are contrary to the faith, which consequently do not belong to philosophy but are a corruption and abuse of it. Origen<sup>24</sup> was guilty of this. In another way by including the contents of faith within the bounds of philosophy, as would happen should somebody decide to believe nothing but what could be established by philosophy. On the contrary, philosophy should be brought within the bounds of faith, as the Apostle says in 2 Corinthians 10:5: "We...take every thought captive to obey Christ."

#### *Replies to Opposing Arguments:*

*Reply to 1.* All these statements show that the teaching of the philosophers is not to be used as though it held first place, in such a way that the truth of faith should be believed because of it. But this does not prevent teachers of sacred doctrine from being able to use it in a secondary role. Thus, commenting on the Apostle's words in the same letter (1:19): "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,"

<sup>23</sup> St. Augustine, *De Trinitate* 9-12 and 14-15, CCL 50:292-380 and 421-533.

<sup>24</sup> Origen, see below, Q. 3, a. 4, p. 81.

the Gloss states<sup>25</sup>: "He says this, not because God can condemn the understanding of truth, but because he rejects the wisdom of those who rely on their own erudition." In order that all that belongs to faith should not be attributed to human power or wisdom, but to God alone, it was the will of God that the primitive apostolic preaching should have been marked by weakness and simplicity.<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless the power and secular wisdom that have come afterward show, by the triumph of the faith, that both as to power and wisdom the world is subject to God.

*Reply to 2.* Secular wisdom is said to be opposed to God in regard to its abuse, as when heretics misuse it, but not in regard to its truth.

*Reply to 3.* The mystery of faith is said to be free from philosophical reasoning because, as has been said, it is not confined within the bounds of philosophy.

*Reply to 4.* Jerome was so attached to pagan literature that in a way he held sacred Scripture in contempt, as he himself says:<sup>27</sup> "If when I came to myself I began to read the prophets, I was disgusted by their unpolished style." Nobody doubts that this deserves criticism.

*Reply to 5.* As the Master [Peter Lombard] says,<sup>28</sup> reasoning should not be based on figurative language. Dionysius also states that symbolic theology does not offer proofs, especially when it is interpreted by a writer who lacks authority. It can, however, be said that a mixture is not thought to have occurred when one of two items comes into the possession of the other, but when both of them are changed in their nature.<sup>29</sup> So those who use the works of the philosophers in sacred doctrine, by bringing them into the service of faith, do not mix water with wine, but rather change water into wine.

*Reply to 6.* Jerome speaks of the language created by heretics in accord with their errors. The philosophical disciplines are different;

<sup>25</sup> Peter Lombard, *Glossa*, PL 191:1543A.

<sup>26</sup> See St. Thomas, *De rationibus fidei* 7, ed. Leonine 40:B67.

<sup>27</sup> St. Jerome, *Ep.* 22, n. 30, CSEL 54:189.17.

<sup>28</sup> Peter Lombard, *Sent.* 3, d. 11, c. 2, n. 4, ed. Grottaferrata 2:80.3-4. See St. Thomas, *Sent.*, prol. q. un. a. 5c.

<sup>29</sup> For St. Thomas' doctrine of mixed bodies, see *De mixtione elementorum*, ed. Perrier, pp. 19-22; *Summa theol.* 1.76.4, ad 4; *Contra gentiles* 2.56.

only their misuse leads to error, and so they should not be avoided on this account.

*Reply to 7.* Interrelated sciences are such that one can use the principles of another. Sciences that come later employ the principles of prior sciences, whether the later be higher or lower in dignity. Thus metaphysics, which is the highest of the sciences, makes use of the conclusions established in the lower sciences. Similarly theology, to which all the other sciences are so to speak ancillary and propaedeutic in its coming into being, though they are of lesser dignity, can use the principles of all the other sciences.<sup>30</sup>

*Reply to 8.* Insofar as sacred doctrine uses philosophical teachings in its own interest, it does not welcome them because of the authority of their authors but on account of the reasonableness of what they say. What is well said it takes; the rest it rejects. But when it uses them to refute other writers, it does so because they are accepted as authorities by those who are refuted, for the witness of opponents carries greater weight.

#### ARTICLE FOUR

*Should Divine Realities be Veiled by Obscure and Novel Words?*<sup>1</sup>

*We proceed to the fourth article as follows:*

It seems that in the science of faith divine realities should not be veiled with obscure words.

1. For, as Proverbs 14:6 says, "Knowledge is easy for a man of understanding." Therefore it ought not to be presented in cryptic language.

<sup>30</sup> See St. Thomas, *Sent.*, prol. q. un. a. 1c, ed. Mandonnet 1:8; *Summa theol.* 1.1.5, sed contra and ad 2. The notion of philosophy as the handmaid of theology is found in Philo. See H. A. Wolfson, *Philo* 1:149-151.

<sup>1</sup> See St. Thomas, *Sent.* 1, d. 34, q. 3, a. 1, 2; *Summa theol.* 1.1.9, ad 2. The background of this question is the rule of secrecy practiced by the early Church, later called the "discipline of the secret" (*disciplina arcani*). See *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed. F. L. Cross; 2nd ed. rev. F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone, p. 409. St. Thomas takes the occasion of Boethius' appeal to the discipline to insist that a teacher should adapt his words to the capacity of his hearers.

2. Ecclesiasticus 4:28 says: "Hide not your wisdom in her beauty," and Proverbs 11:26: "The people curse him who holds back grain." The Gloss understands by *grain* "preaching".<sup>2</sup> Therefore the words of sacred doctrine ought not to be hidden.

3. It is said in Matthew 10:27: "What I tell you in the dark, utter in the light." The Gloss interprets *in the dark* to mean "in mystery," and *utter in the light* to mean "openly."<sup>3</sup> So the mysteries of faith ought rather to be disclosed than hidden by difficult language.

4. Teachers of the faith have obligations to the learned and to the unlearned, as is clear from Romans 1:14. Therefore they ought to talk in such a way that they can be understood by both the great and the simple, that is, without obscure language.

5. Wisdom 7:13 says: "I learned without guile and impart without grudging." But the one who hides wisdom does not impart it. Therefore he seems to be guilty of jealousy.

6. Augustine states<sup>4</sup>: "The interpreters of sacred Scripture should not speak as though they were proposing themselves for interpretation, but in all their words their first and greatest endeavor should be to make themselves understood as much as possible by such clearness of style that the person who does not understand is very stupid."

*On the contrary*, Matthew 7:6 says: "Do not give dogs what is holy; and do not throw your pearls before swine." The Gloss comments on this: "What is hidden is more eagerly sought after; what is concealed appears more worthy of reverence; what is searched for longer is more dearly prized."<sup>5</sup> Therefore, since the sacred teachings should be regarded with the utmost reverence, it seems that they ought not to be made accessible to the public, but taught in obscure language.

2. Dionysius says: "You should not commit to everyone all the holy doctrines of the sublime episcopal order, but only to the godlike teachers of sacred things of the same rank as yourself." In other words, teach the divine praises, which include all the sacred writings, only to your peers. But if they were written in clear language, they

<sup>2</sup> *Glossa ordinaria* 3, col. 1651-1652; *Glossa interlinearis*, lin. 10(a).

<sup>3</sup> *Glossa ordinaria* 5, fol. 37v, *Glossa interlinearis*, lin. o.

<sup>4</sup> St. Augustine, *De doctrina christiana* 4.8.22, CCL 32:131.11-132.15.

<sup>5</sup> *Glossa ordinaria* 5, fol. 28rB.

would be obvious to all. So the mysteries of faith should be concealed in obscure language.

3. Luke 8:10 is to the point. He says: "To you," that is, to the perfect, "it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God," that is, an understanding of the Scriptures, as is clear from the Gloss, "but for others they are in parables"<sup>6</sup>. So there are some things that should be hidden by obscure language.

*Reply*: A teacher should so measure his words that they help rather than hinder his hearer. Now there are some things which can harm nobody when they are heard, for example, the truths everyone is bound to know. These should not be concealed but taught openly to everyone. There are other matters, however, that would be harmful to those hearing them if they were openly presented. This can happen in two ways. First, if the secrets of faith were revealed to unbelievers who detest the faith, for they would receive them with ridicule. Hence the Lord says in Matthew 7:6: "Do not give dogs what is holy," and Dionysius states<sup>7</sup>: "Concealing the holy truths, guard them from the profane crowd as something unchanging." Second, when abstruse doctrines are taught to the uneducated they take an occasion of error from what they do not fully understand. Thus the Apostle says in 1 Corinthians 3:1-2: "But I, brethren, could not address you as spiritual men, but as babes in Christ. I fed you with milk, not solid food." Commenting on Exodus 21:33: "When someone leaves a pit open," etc., Gregory says<sup>8</sup>: "Anyone who now perceives the depths in the sacred words, should hide in silence their sublime meaning when in the presence of those who do not understand them, so that he will not hurt by interior scandal an immature believer or an unbeliever who might become a believer." These matters, therefore, ought to be concealed from those to whom they might do harm.

In speaking, however, it is possible to discriminate. Certain things can be explained to the wise in private which we should keep silent about in public. Thus Augustine says<sup>9</sup>: "There are some passages

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 146v; *Glossa interlinearis*, lin. a.

<sup>7</sup> Pseudo-Dionysius, *De caelesti hierarchia* 2.5, PG 3:145C.

<sup>8</sup> St. Gregory, *Moralia* 17.26.38, CCL 143A:872. See *Glossa ordinaria* 1, col. 697B.

<sup>9</sup> St. Augustine, *De doctrina christiana* 9.23, CCL 32:132.1-5.

which are not understood in their proper force or are understood with difficulty, no matter how great, how comprehensive, or how clear the eloquence with which they are handled by the speaker. These should be spoken to a public audience only rarely, if there is some urgent reason, or never at all.<sup>10</sup> In writing, however, this distinction does not hold because a written book can fall into the hands of anybody. Therefore these matters should be concealed with obscure language, so that they will benefit the wise who understand them and be hidden from the uneducated who are unable to grasp them. This puts a burden on no one, for those who understand will go on reading them and those who do not are not obliged to read them at all. So Augustine continues:<sup>10</sup> "In books that are written in such a style that, when understood, they themselves so to speak grip the reader's attention, but, when not understood, give no trouble to those who do not care to read them, we must not neglect the duty of bringing truths, though very hard to understand, to the knowledge of others."

*Replies to Opposing Arguments:*

*Reply to 1.* This text is not to the point. It does not mean that the teaching of the wise is easy in the active sense, that is, that they teach easily, but rather in the passive sense, that they are easily taught. This is clear from the Gloss.<sup>11</sup>

*Reply to 2.* These texts refer to one who conceals what he ought to reveal. Thus Ecclesiasticus 4:28 says immediately before: "Do not refrain from speaking in the time of salvation." The fact is not denied that what should be hidden ought to be concealed in obscure language.

*Reply to 3.* The teaching of Christ should be publicly and openly preached, so that it is clear to everyone what is good for him to know, but not that what is not good for him to know be made public.

*Reply to 4.* The obligation of the teachers of sacred Scripture to the wise and the unwise does not extend to their proposing the same things to both, but to telling each what is appropriate to them.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> *Glossa ordinaria* 3, col. 1662D.

*Reply to 5.* It is not from jealousy that difficult truths are hidden from the masses, but rather, as has been said,<sup>12</sup> from due discretion.

*Reply to 6.* Augustine is referring to interpreters who speak to the people, not to those who teach something in writing. This is clear from his next words.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> See above, Reply, pp. 53-54.

<sup>13</sup> The words that follow are: "...or the reason why what we say is not understood, or is understood rather slowly, lies not in our manner of speaking, but in the difficulty and subtlety of the matters which we are trying to explain and make clear."