

CHAPTER III

Concerning the Knowledge of the Divinity which was Given to Me, and of the Decree of God to Create All Things.

26. O King, most high and most wise Lord: How incomprehensible are thy judgments, and inscrutable thy ways (Rom. 11:33)! Invincible God, enduring forever (Ecclus. 18:1), and whose beginning is unknown: Who can understand thy greatness, and who can be worthy of thy most magnificent works, or who can tell Thee why Thou hast created them (Rom. 9:20)? For Thou art exalted above all of them; our vision cannot reach Thee, and our understanding cannot comprehend Thee. Mayest Thou be blest, magnificent King, because Thou hast deigned to show me, thy slave and a vile worm of the earth, great sacraments and most sublime mysteries, exalting my habitation and raising my spirit to a height in which I saw things unspeakable. I saw the Lord and Creator of all things. I saw a Highness in Himself, before He created anything else. I do not know the manner in which He showed Himself to me, but I know what I saw and perceived. His Majesty, comprehending all things, is aware that while I am speaking of his Deity my thoughts stand still, my soul is troubled, my faculties cease their operations, and the superior part of my being deserts the lower and animal parts, despises that which is of the senses, and flies toward its Beloved, leaving lifeless the body which it should keep alive. In these excursions and abandonments of love my eyes flow over in tears and my tongue becomes mute. O my most high and incomprehensible Lord, infinite Object of my understanding! How I am annihilated at the sight of Thee, the Measureless and the Eternal, and how my being grovels in the dust, scarcely knowing what I am! How can my insignificance and misery dare to gaze upon thy magnificence and thy great majesty? Vivify, O Lord, my being; strengthen my vision and give the breath of life to my fear, so I may be able to describe what I saw and thus obey thy command.

27. I saw the Most High, at the same time understanding how His Majesty is in Himself. I received a clear intelligence and a true perception of what God is, infinite in substance and attributes, eternal, the supreme Trinity in three Persons yet only one true God: Three in Person, because of the three activities of knowing, comprehending and loving each other; yet only one in order to secure the good of eternal unity. It is the Trinity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. The Father is not made, nor created, nor begotten, nor can He be generated or have a beginning. I recognized that the Son is brought forth from the Father alone by eternal generation, that They are equal in their duration from eternity, and that He is begotten by the fecundity of the intellect of the Father. The Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son through love. In this indivisible Trinity there is nothing which can be called first or last, greater or smaller; all three Persons in themselves are equally eternal and eternally equal. There is unity of essence in a trinity of Persons, yet one God in the indivisible Trinity, and three Persons in the unity of one substance. Nor are the Persons mingled in order to form one God, nor the divine substance separated or divided in order to form three Persons; being distinct in the Father, in the Son, and in the Holy Ghost, there is one and the same divinity, equal in glory and majesty, power, eternity, immensity, wisdom and sanctity, and all the attributes. And though there are three Persons in whom these infinite perfections subsist, He is the one and true God, the Holy, Just, Powerful, Eternal, and without measure.

28. I also obtained an understanding of the manner in which this divine Trinity comprehends Himself by simple vision, without the necessity of any new or distinct cognition. The Father knows that which is known by the Son, and the Son and the Holy Ghost know that which is

known by the Father. I understood how they love each other reciprocally with one and the same immense and eternal love; how there is a single, indivisible and equal unity of understanding, love and action; how there is one simple, incorporeal and indivisible nature, a divine essence of the true God, in which are joined and united all the perfections in their highest and infinite degree.

29. I learned also to understand the quality of these perfections of the highest Lord: That He is beautiful without blemish, great without quantity, good without need of qualification, eternal without the duration of time, strong without any weakness, living without mortality, true without deceit, present in all places, filling them without occupying them, existing in all things without extension. There is no contradiction in his goodness, nor any defect in his wisdom, in which He is inestimable. He is terrible in his counsels,* just in his judgments, most hidden in his thoughts, in his words most true, in his works holy, in his riches affluent. To Him no space is too wide, and no narrowness causes restraint;† his will does not vary, the sorrowful does not disturb Him, the past has not passed for Him, nor does the future happen in regard to Him; to whom origin gives no beginning, nor shall time give Him an end. O eternal Immensity, what illimitable expansion have I seen in Thee? What vastness do I see in thy infinite Being? The vision of Him has no termination, nor does gazing upon this illimitable Object ever find an end. This is the unchangeable Being, the Being above all other beings, the most perfect sanctity, the most constant truth; this is the infinite, the length, the breadth, the height and the depth, glory and its cause, rest without fatigue, goodness immeasurable. All this I saw together, but I am unable to describe what I saw.

30. I saw the Lord as He was before He had created anything, and with great astonishment I looked to see where the throne of the Most High was, for the empyrean heaven was not, nor the lower ones, nor did the sun exist, nor the moon, nor the stars, nor the elements; only the Creator was, without any of his creatures. All was void, without the beings of angels, men or animals; by this I knew that of necessity it must be admitted that God has his being in Himself, and that He stands in want or need of none of the created things, for He is as infinite in his attributes before creating them as He is after, and He will possess and hold these attributes during the whole of eternity, because they exist in Him as in an independent uncreated subject. No perfection which is in itself purely and essentially such can be lacking to his divinity, for the Godhead is the only thing that is, and contains all the perfection of created beings in an eminent and ineffable manner. All the other beings, insofar as they exist, have their existence solely in that infinite Being, as effects in their cause.

31. I understood the Most High was in the quiescent state of his own being, when the three Persons (according to our way of understanding things) decreed to communicate his perfections as a free gift. For greater clearness I must remark that God comprehends in Himself all things by one indivisible, most simple and instantaneous act. He does not go from the understanding of one thing to the understanding of another like we do, distinguishing and perceiving first one thing by an act of the understanding, and after that proceeding to the knowledge of others by their connection with those already known. God knows them conjointly all at once, without before or after, since all are together and at once contained in the divine and uncreated knowledge and science, just as they are comprehended and enclosed in his infinite Being as in their first beginning.

*cf. Ps. 65:5 [Ed.]

†cf. *Virgo Dei Génitrix*, Gradual, Common Mass of the BVM [Ed.]

32. In this knowledge of God, which is primarily called the knowledge of pure intelligence, we must, according to the natural precedence of the intelligence before the will, not overlook a certain succession, not indeed of time, but of nature. Hence we perceive that the act of intelligence preceded by its nature the act of the will, for in our way of reflecting on things we think of the act of intelligence by itself, abstractedly from the decree of desiring to create anything. In this first stage or instant the three Persons through an act of intelligence confirmed the opportuneness of the work *ad extra*, and of all creatures which have been, are, and are to be.

33. Though I am unworthy to know the order which He followed, or which we as men are enabled to perceive in the decree of creation, His Majesty nevertheless deigned to take notice of a request which I made in this regard. I petitioned Him to make known to me the place which was held by the Mother of God and our Queen in the divine intelligence, and as well as I can I will state what He answered me and manifested to me, and I will also say something, by the help of God, of the order which I perceived in these ideas. I divide them according to moments or instants, for it is impossible to accommodate the knowledge of this divine science to our capacity in any other way. This science is called the science of vision, constituting the divine ideas or images of the creatures which God decreed to call into existence and which are a production of his mind. By them He knows creatures with an infinitely more precise knowledge than we can ever have of them.

34. Although this divine knowledge is one, most simple and indivisible, nevertheless since the things which I see are many, and since there is a certain order by which some are first and some come after, it is necessary to divide this knowledge of God and the knowledge of his will into many instants, or into many different acts, according as they correspond to the diverse orders of created things; for as some of the creatures hold their existence because of others, there is a dependence of one upon the other. Hence we say God intended and decreed this before that, the one because of the other, and that if He had not desired or included in the science of vision the one, He would not have desired the other. But by this we must not understand that God had many acts of understanding or desire; rather, we must intend merely to indicate creatures are dependent upon each other and succeed one another. In order to be able to comprehend the manner of creation more easily we apply the order of things, as we see them objectively, to the acts of the divine intelligence and will in creating them.