**CHAPTER FIVE**

**THE NATURE OF GOD**

Having seen that the existence of God can be demonstrated, we are now ready to investigate a new and a different problem, for a philosopher is not only interested in the existence of things, but also in investigating their nature or essence. Hence, it is quite natural and in accordance with reason that having established the existence of the first cause of being as being, we should now want to understand the nature or essence of this first cause.

The essence of a thing is that by which a thing is what it is. Can the human mind, or intellect, know what this first cause of being is? Is it possible for the intellect to arrive by its own natural sources at a true knowledge of God's essence? To these and other questions, St. Thomas in his *Summa theologica* 1, 3 gives a clear and decisive answer. "We cannot know what God is but only what He is not." This knowledge, however, although, negative, is not futile, for it enables us to distinguish God from other beings; although imperfect, this knowledge is true and precious, for it enables us do away with many false notions about God.

**Man's Knowledge of God**

We have no intuitive knowledge of God, because we cannot perceive Him directly. The proper object of man's intellect is the "sensible”, namely, material beings. Material beings stimulate man's senses in various ways and give rise to sense images, which represent material beings in concrete manner. From these images, man's intellect forms (not by means of a conversion of any sort, but through a process of abstraction) its ideas of the material things. Once such ideas are formed, the intellect proceeds to build up a system of knowledge simply by analysis and partly by discursive reasoning. Ultimately, existence, what it is, refers to its essence or nature. Since nature of the effect reveals something about the nature of the cause. It follows that God, being the cause of the universe, the nature of that universe must declare to some extent, the nature of God,

**Ways** **of Knowing God**

The "Sensible" is the proper object of man's knowledge. As a consequence, the sensible' alone can be known by man directly, indirectly and discursively. Gods is an immaterial being. It follows that man cannot attain to a knowledge of God except by leaning upon knowledge of material reality.

In order to understand the solution of this arduous question, can we know the Essence of God? We should explain that in finite beings, there are two distinct types of knowledge, depending on the mode of existence of the object. If the mode of existence of the object is proportioned to that of the knowing subject, that is, if they are either of the same species or of the same proximate genus (e.g., corporeal substances), then the knowledge is natural (*connaturalis*) and proper; that is, the object can be known as it is in itself. If; on the other hand, the mode of existence of the object is superior to the existential perfection of the subject, then the knowledge is not connatural (natural) but non- proper that is, it is obtained indirectly from the knowledge of beings whose mode of existence is proportioned and connatural to the knower. Accordingly, we do not understand the object as it is itself. This knowledge is indirect, imperfect and it is called non-proper knowledge,

By Connatural knowledge of man we mean the knowledge of the proper object of the intellect of man, namely knowledge of material essences. By non-proper knowledge of man we mean the imperfect and in direct knowledge of an object not proportioned to the intellect of man, e.g. knowledge of an immaterial essence.

We can arrive at a true but imperfect, knowledge of the divine essence by way of causality, negation, and eminence.

Considering the way of causality, we can come to know God analogously through the way we know material substances through its accidents. Accidents form a composition with their substance. Substance is related to its accidents as potency to act. But there is neither accident nor composition nor potency in God. Since substance causes its accidents, there exists between a substance and its accident a proportion of cause to effect. Also, a substance is more perfect and of a higher order of being than the accidents it causes. Thus, while God has no accidents, we can say that there are certain things that manifest God, and these are his effects in the place of accidents. We have these sensible effects produced by God, which tell us something about him by way of causality (for these effects are related to the divine substance as effects of God to what must necessarily belong to Him as the First Cause of all things Caused by Him as cause of all things, exceeding all things caused by Him” (S.T., 1, 12, 12, C,).

The way of negation consists in denying of God every sort of imperfection and in attributing to Him the corresponding perfections in such a mariner that they apply to Him alone. Even pure perfections are found in creatures, but they are always limited. (Pure perfections are such perfections that contain no imperfection in their concept and, reality; for example, being 'good’, 'life’ 'personal' 'Substance’ intelligence) This imitation must be removed when such a perfection is affirmed of 'God; otherwise there would be no essential difference between God and creatures. Thus, all creatural being, whether material or spiritual substances, are by their very nature ‘limited’, in perfection; they are substance of limited perfection. There can be, however, no limitation in the perfection of God’s substance and so we must remove (negate) this limitation of perfection by saying that God is a substance of unlimited (or infinite) perfection.'

Strictly speaking, the “way of negation” (way of removal or remotion) is not rather than what He is. We observe the way of negation in many expressions used to designate the perfections peculiar to God alone; for instance, in expressions like 'unchangeable', ‘uncaused, 'infinite’, ‘immense’, 'unlimited’, ‘ineffable.’ Perfections expressed in this negative manner plainly show their creatural origin. Obviously a limited perfection when viewed from the standpoint of God is a relative ‘imperfection.’ The ‘imperfection’, must be removed when applied to God and this is done by the way of negation.

The third is the way of eminence. Just as all imperfections must be denied of God; so also, all pure perfections must be ascribed to God in a superlative degree without any kind of limitation. In other words; all pure perfections in God, are without limit, infinite. This is usually done by ascribing to God a pure perfection and then raising the perfection to a highest degree conceivable by ‘way of eminence.’ It is thus that we speak of God as being ‘infinitely good’ ‘Infinitely wise’, ‘omniscient’, ‘omnipresent’, and so forth. God is really good in Himself, but so are creatures; in order, then, to distinguish the goodness of God from the order of creatures, we say that God is infinitely good, good without limit’, because that is what God’s goodness is and that applies to God, and similarly, knowledge is found both in God and in creatures; but knowledge in creatures is essentially limited, while in God it is essentially unlimited, and so, we say that God is omniscient and thereby distinguish His positive perfection of knowledge from the positive perfection of the knowledge present in creatures.

**Analogical Knowledge of God**

Many perfections are, in a sense, common to God and to creatures for instance, the perfections of ''substantiality” and “intelligence” are present in God and man. Evidently, however, such perfections differ in manner, and in degree when attributed to God and Man (and to creatures in general).

A term may be applied to a number of things either in a univocal, equivocal, or analogical sense. It will be applied univocally, when the sense of the term is identical in all the realities to which it is applied: the term ‘man’, since the meaning is identical in all human beings, is used univocally of all men. An equivocal term is applied, to a number of realities in entirely different meanings; such is the use of the term ‘coach’ as applied to a vehicle and to an athletic director. An analogous term applies to unlike, but related, things, so that it is used in a meaning that is partly the same and partly different. There is always some relation between such things, entitling the mind to designate them by the same term; hence, the term is not equivocal. Due to the partial unlikeness in the things, however, the term is not used in a strictly univocal sense; hence, the term is not univocal either. An analogous term designates related things in such a manner that it applies primarily to one thing and secondarily to other things.

In what sense do we use the terms signifying perfections common to God and creatures, when they are applied to God and creatures? In a univocal sense? Equivocal sense? Analogical sense? Practically, all Christian philosophers claim that such terms are used in an analogical sense.

For one thing, pure perfections common to God and Creatures are not ascribed to them in an equivocal sense. For example, the term ‘existing being’ is applied to God and to every being in the universe each one is said to be an ‘existing being.’ Is this term (existing being) applied to God and to the creatures in the universe entirely different meanings, as the term is used of a vehicle and of an athletic director? Evidently not. What is meant by an ‘existing being’?  
Anything which is not ‘nothing not a ‘non-being.’ God is assuredly not 'nothing’ and He is assuredly not a 'non-being.’ God actually exists, and the creatures in the universe actually exist. God and creatures in the universe must therefore be ‘existing’ beings' in the true sense of the word.

Consequently, the term existing being does not apply to God and the creatures in the universe in an equivocal sense, as if the term had entirely different meanings in its application to them. Nevertheless, terms which apply to creatures are not applied to God in an absolutely univocal sense as if there were no real difference in their meanings. In God, all perfections are underived, uncaused, and unlimited; while in creatures all perfections are derived, caused and limited. God is the source and origin of all perfections found in creatures; creatures, however, are in no sense the source and origin of God’s perfections. God ‘gives’ perfections to creatures as their ‘cause’, creatures ‘receive’ these perfection from God, and their whole being is an ‘effect’ produced by God, God’s perfections are identical with His essence and are therefore essentially infinite; the perfections of creatures are not identical with their essence and are essentially finite. As a consequence, the terms designating the perfections of God and the creatures are not absolutely identical in meaning and are not, therefore, absolutely ‘univocal.’ When we, for instance, say that ‘God is wise’ and ‘man is wise’ the term ‘wisdom’ though not equivocal in its use, is not absolutely univocal, God’s wisdom is essentially infinite and eternal while man’s wisdom is essentially finite and temporal.

The conclusion is evident. Since the terms referring to the perfections common to God and creatures are neither absolutely equivocal in meaning, but are used in a sense which is partly the same and partly different, they are rightly said to be analogical terms. The use of these terms is not purely ‘metaphorical! The analogy underlying the application of the same terms to God and creatures is an analogy of intrinsic attribution based on the fact of causality (or, as many prefer to call it, an analogy of proper proportionality’). As such, therefore, all pure perfections are present in God ‘primarily’, because. He is the essential source of these perfections in Himself and in creatures: they are present in creatures’ second because ultimately, they Hence, pure perfections sources in God who gave them to the creatures. Hence, pure perfections are attributed to God in a ‘primarily! Perfection true in a secondary meaning’ because all creatural perfections are utterly dependent in their being and existence on the causality of God. It is thus seen that the terms used to designate pure perfections common to God and creatures have a meaning which is partly the same and partly different’ That is to say, they are analogous term – not univocal and not equivocal.

**Notion of Essence**

Essence in general is defined as that through which a being is just what it is (id quo res est id quod esr). What for instance, is the essence of man? That which makes him to be simply and positively a ‘man’ and not a brute or a plant or an inanimate object or anything else ‘Animality’ are found in every individual ‘man’ and distinguish him from every other being. ‘Rational animal’ therefore, is the essence of man.

Every being present in the natural order of the universe consists of essentials and non essential; although, the concrete realities existing in a being form a complex whole. And for all this complex whole of reality or entity there must be a common source and foundation head of being and operation. This source ultimate principle in the thing, from which it derives whatever it possesses in the line of ‘being’ in any form, is appropriately designated the things essence (lat, esse, to be; essentaia, being). The essence of a thing is sometimes called nature. Out of the essence as out of a matrix all being of a thing is, so to say, born lat; nasci, to be born; natus, born natura, nature, that which is given by birth,) the elements of a thing, which constitute, its being, have existence only I so far as they flow (are born) from the essence. Specifically, ‘nature’ is an essence considered as the ultimate principle of operation in a being.

‘Essence’ is more static, and ‘nature’ more dynamic, in its meaning, in reality, of course, both mean fundamentally the same thing. Viewed from different stand-points, a distinction is made between physical essence and ‘metaphysical’ essence.

A physical essence is an essence in so far as it is, or can be, something in the order of reality, independent of the consideration of the mind contemplating it. The term “physical” as used here, must not be interpreted in the sense of “material” although that is the sense in which the term is frequently used. “Physical” here means the same as “natural” “pertaining to the nature, of not thing” (Gr., Quoikos, natural; from nature, constitution of a thing); as such, therefore, a physical essence’ may be either material or spiritual. Thus when ‘man’ is defined as ‘an organism composed of a (material) body and a of man, because that is what makes man to be man in the order, which exist as such in man independent of the mind that thinks of man. The “physical” essence of an angel is its simple substantial entity, excluding all accidental reality modifying the substance. As it will be noted, the “physical” essence of a thing is understood to be the complex of all the fundamental elements without which this thing cannot exist.

A metaphysical essence is an essence consisting of all those elements which are necessary for the concept of the ‘metaphysical essence’ of a being consists of two elements, distinct in concept (meaning), one of which is conceived as being “common” and the other as “differentiative.” Because of the “common element”, the thing in question agrees with two or more other beings; and because of the differentiative (differentiating) element, it differs from all beings, which are not itself. The definition of “man” as a rational animal ‘expresses his metaphysical essence: “animal” expresses the constitutive element, which man has in common with other sentient organisms (for instance, with dogs, cats, horses, and so on), while “rational” expresses the constitutive element which distinguishes man from every other type of animal (for he alone possesses “rationality”). Hence, a “metaphysical essence” is the sum of the various grades of being which constitute a thing in the concept of the mind: We do not consider an object as it exists concretely in the world of reality, but according to the manner in which it is conceived by the mind in its thinking. While, therefore, the “physical essence” of a thing is the complex of all the fundamental elements without which this thing cannot exist, its “metaphysical essence” is the sum of the various grades of being without which it cannot be thought.

**God’s Metaphysical Essence**

By the metaphysical essence of God we understand God’s essence, not as it ‘exists’ objectively in itself, but as man’s mind can signify it by a definition or quasi- definition to it and to all other beings and the element differentiating it from all other being. A strict definition, of course, would be by proximate genus and specific difference; God, however does not properly belong to any genus, and therefore, strict definition of God is impossible. A quasi-definition, however, is possible for a description, containing a common and a differentiating element, can be made.

It is not a question here of giving a quasi-definition of the essence of God as it exists objectively in itself; that would be a definition of the “physical-essence” of God rather than of his 'metaphysical essence.' It is a question of what man in his way of thinking most fundamental element in God’s being, the one from which all other elements and attributes are ultimately derived. It is, therefore, that reality in God’s being which for man's thought, must he considered to be the root-principle of all the realities which can be predicated of God; in other words, the primary and foremost characteristic, by which man recognises God as God. Some one perfection of God's being must, to man's mind and his way of thinking, be regarded as primary among His perfections, so that, it is the root that gives rise to all His other perfections and distinguishes Him from any and every type of being, which is not God. Because of the imperfection of his intellect and because his concepts of God are acquired through various considerations of creatural things, man has many different concepts pertaining to God; among these concepts, some refer to perfections which are derivative. That perfection, which is conceived by man, is meant by the ‘metaphysical essence’ of God. Even if man disavows any division in God; he cannot avoid making mental distinction in the concepts about God. Hence, the need of discovering which of these concepts about represents God's “metaphysical 'essence.”

All authors agree that in God’s element or item, which is common to Him and creature is ‘being’; and by the term ‘being’ is here meant “existing being”, not a being which is merely possible. There is, however, considerable dispute about an item, which differentiates God from every other being.

A number of theories have been advanced regarding this differentiating element in God’s metaphysical essence.

Duns Scotus and many primary maintain that the differentiating is infinity. Infinity may be either extensive or intensive. ‘Extensive’ infinity, mean the possession of all possible viewed from a quantitative standpoint. ‘Intensive’ infinity means the possession of divine perfections in an infinite degree. Some Scotists; and also Palmieri and others, claim that “radical infinity” constitutes' God’s metaphysical essence, and by 'radical infinity’ they understand the exigency of God's being for both extensive and intensive infinity.

Ockham and the nominalists, and also Descartes and Leibnitz, claimed that the divine essence is but “the sum of all His perfections”, hence, no single fundamental perfection can be mentioned which would logically explain the rest.

Another theory has been advocated by some Thomists among whom are John of St. Thomas, Gonet, and Billuart, According to their view, the primary difference, which distinguishes God from all other being lies in the intelligence or in the subsistent act of divine intellection. These authors feel that the metaphysical essence of God must be sought and found in His highest attribute; but this was the divine intellection, not radical but actual, viewed from the standpoint of supreme actuality, which is for self- subsistent. Some, however, defend the 'exigency' for knowledge, rather than actual intelligence, as the fundamental differentiating note of the divine essence.

Relatively few authors have favoured the view that there is divine love and life: God is love, and God is life.

Some modern vo1untarists, such as Secretan, Leafier, Boutoux, look upon “God’s absolute liberty” as the most characteristic item, which differentiates God from all other beings. God, being a pure spirit of the highest order, consists only in what He does and for that, absolute liberty is necessary. Many modern scholastics defend the thesis that the primary differentiating element in the metaphysical essence of God is His aseity (*aseitas*), namely, that God is *a se*, the being who exists of and by Himself, the self-existent being. This is the thesis of J. Hontheim, B. Boedder, J. Donat, and others F. Suares and most modern scholastic philosophers place the primary characteristic of God's metaphysical essence in His self-subsistence. Among prominent thomists who hold, this view are Capreplous, Banez,. Gotti, Conrenson, ledesnia, Del Prado, and Darrigou-Lagrange nonthomists, besides Suares, authors like Molina, Torres, G.H.Jone, J. Hellin deserve mention God is and by that term is understood ‘being subsisting independently of 'any potentiality, absolute reality, reality excluding all non-actuality. A being is said to be 'subsistent' when it is an existing substance, complete and autonomous; it is said to be ‘self-subsistent' when it owes its subsistence to its own self and its own constitution, and not to any kind of supporting cause. Creatural substances possess subsistence, but their subsistence is derived ultimately from the causality of God. God's subsistence is underived, unconditional, absolute, necessary, uncaused, and for this reason God is self-subsistent being, while all other beings can only be said to have subsistence. Self-subsistent being, these thinkers contend, constitutes God's metaphysical essence.

**Evaluation of Theories**

The first theory to be examined is the scotistic theory of infinity. If the term 'infinity' is taken primarily in its literal meaning of 'without limits,' then the term has a negative connotation. The negative, however, always, presupposes something positive. God's being is absolute and supreme actuality, Hence, negative infinity, in God presupposes positive infinity and so negative infinity cannot be the primary and constitutive element which differentiates God’s essence from all other beings: this differentiating element must be something positive. If the term 'infinity’ is taken in a positive sense, it can mean either the aggregate of all perfections (intensive infinity) or the supreme degree of God's perfections (‘intensive’ infin­ity) or the exigency of God's being for both extensive and intensive infinity (radical infinity) or the supreme degree of God’s perfections (intensive infinity) or the e none of God’s being for both extensive and intensive infinity (radical infinity). Now, none of three possibilities is satisfactory as the primary differentiating element.

The nominalist theory must be rejected. The metaphysical essence of God must be expressed in a manner that gives the differentiating element which distinguishes God from all other beings and at the same time gives the root of all the perfections existing in God. The nominalist theory fails to do this. The sum-total of God's perfections is "merely a confused expression of all the reality which exists in God, but it does not express the root of all perfections existing in God, ‘Omni-perfection’ expresses God's being as it exists objectively in the order of things and thus the nominalist conception expresses God's physical essence, not His metaphysical essence.

The theory which places God's metaphysical essence in intellectuality or actual intellection must also be adjudged, if this term is used in the sense of ‘actual’ comprehension and understanding, it should be obvious that is not the metaphysical essence of God. ‘Actual intellection’ is conceived as an ‘operation,’ and operation; hence, actual intellection' flows from the essence, but only as something secondary to it, just as the exercise of a power is secondary to the power itself. If this term is used in the sense of 'radical' comprehension and understanding, it .signifies the intellect of God but the intellect itself is conceived as a vital power resulting from the spirituality of the essence, and as such is not primary but secondary. In no case can intelligence be considered to be the root and foundation of all the perfections existing in God: what is itself conceived as derived from something else cannot be conceived to be the root-perfection from which all other divine perfections are ultimately derived.

For a similar reason, the theory must be rejected that life or love is the metaphysical essence from which all other perfections in God are deducible. True, God is life, and God is love, But life and ‘love’ are not ultimate perfections of God's nature, conceived as an act of the divine will dependent on the intellect for the object which it loves: hence, 'love1 is not conceived as the primary source of divine perfections and as the distinguishing characteristic of the divine essence. Even 'life' is not conceived as primary. In the case of God's 'life,' it is a manifestation of God's spiritual substance; hence, spirituality and substantiality would be more ultimate, from the stand-point of man's than 'life.' We must therefore conclude that ‘life’ are not the metaphysical essence of God.

Neither is liberty the characteristics feature which is the distinguishing mark of the divine essence. ‘Liberty’ is a mode of the will’s action and presupposes the will itself; it also presupposes spirituality and substantiality in God's nature. How, then, can it be conceived by man as being the source, the root-perfection, from which all divine perfections are logically deduced? In the logical order of thought, the intellect is prior to liberty, because cannot think of liberty except as following the judgment of the intellect; liberty without consciousness is inconceivable, and consciousness in God is conceived by man as being a function of the divine intellect. Consequently, the theory of the voluntarists that God's metaphysical essence consists in God's will and its absolute liberty is its absolute liberty is totally inadequate.

The view that ‘aseity’ constitutes the metaphysical essence of God is held by many prominent philosophers. According to this theory, the fact that God is ens a se, self-existent being is the fundamental perfection of God’s essence from which all other perfections are deduced and the ultimate characteristic differentiating His essence from all beings which are not God. Because of the prominence of the philosophers who support this theory, their view deserves careful consideration.

The term ‘aseity’ may be taken negatively or positively. If taken negatively or positively. If taken negatively, the term implies that God does not owe His existence to another as the contingent creatural beings do; and this negative sense of *ens a se*, or self-existent being, we can hardly accept as an expression of the metaphysical essence of God. A negative element is always grounded in some positive element and so we would be forced to seek this positive reality in God by asking the further question: What is the reality in the divine essence which precludes the possibility of God being from another and necessarily being an *ens a se*?’

As George Hayward Joyce rightly observed: “The objection to regarding this attribute as God's metaphysical essence is that it does not really express what we conceive as an internal constitutive principle of the Divine nature. The real significance of the notion *Ens a se* is to deny that God is, like creatures, caused by another. He is conceived as self-existence in the sense of ‘unoriginated, undoubtedly this is the first aspect under which we conceive God, as we reason from the existence of contingent things to that of a necessary Being. But it still remains, for us to ask what is the internal constitutive, in virtue of which He is unoriginated and needs no cause. And to reply to this question we must fall back on our concept of Him as subsistent existence as the Being whose existence is His nature.

If the term ‘aseity’ is taken in its positive meaning, the meaning seems to be identical with self-subsistence. The words are different but the meaning is the same. This being the case (as a close examination of the arguments' advanced by these authors reveals), we feel that the metaphysical essence of God lies in self-subsistence. '

**God, the Self-Subsistent Being**

The metaphysical essence of God must be expressed in a definition or quasi-definition which contains the element common to other beings and also the primary differentiating clement which distinguishes Him from all other beings. This what is understood, by 'metaphysical essence,’ in so far as man's knowledge of God is concerned. Now, the expression ‘self-subsistent being’ contains both 'this common' element and this primary differentiating element; as ouch, therefore the expression ‘self-subsistent being’ is rather a quasi definition, of God’s metaphysical essence.

That the expression contains the element which is common to God and all other creatures, is clear from the fact that both God and creatures are ‘beings’ the term to all possible, and actually existing things, applies to God. That God is conceived-as the self-subsistent’ being, certainly differentiates Him from all other beings, whether they be possible or actually existing. And this differentiating element is undoubtedly ‘primary.’ This alter point will now have to be proved.

In order that the ‘differentiating’ element in a metaphy­sical essence be truly primary the following conditions, must be fulfilled: the primary differentiating element must be something real and positive; it must be characteristics’ it must be a reality which is not derived from a prior intrinsic perfection; and it must be a reality from which all other necessary attributes (realities, perfections) -'are' deducible-and receive their logical explanation". Each of the conditions will have to be shown to be required, in order that the differentiating element can be said to be ‘primary.’

The primary differentiating element of a ‘metaphysical’ essence must be real; when it is a question of realities, as is the case her, only something that is ‘real’ about a 'real’ differentiation. It must be something positive; if it were 'negative’, and then this positive be grounded in something-reality would have to be conceived as prior to this positive differentiating element. It must the be something be grounded in something ‘positive’, and then this positive reality would have to be conceived as prior to this differentiating element. It must be something intrinsic; otherwise it would not characterize the essence itself, but something else. It must be necessary; God is a necessary being, and anything belonging to His essence must also be necessary. It must be characteristic; if it were not something exclusive and ‘proper.’ It would not distinguish God’s essence from that of every other being and would thus fail in its ‘differentiating’ function. It must be a reality which is not derived from a prior intrinsic perfection; if it were so derived, it would be secondary, not primary, and this other prior intrinsic perfection would be the primary differentiating element. It must be a reality from which all other attributes (realities, perfections) are deducible and receive their logical explanation on it would not be the characteristic mark of the divine essence, distinguishing God from all other beings, if it were not the 'primary' attribute 'from which all other attributes are deducible and thus were not the principle explaining the presence in God of His perfections.

The term ‘self-subsistent being’ fulfils these conditions adequately, so far as man can know God’s essence at all. A ‘self-subsistent being,' as was stated before, means a being which exists as a complete, autonomous substance and owes its existence to no other reality but to its own essence; to be 'self-subsistent, therefore, is equivalent it in meaning to exist in virtue of the being's own essence, so that essence and existence are identical.

That the conditions required for the 'primary differen­tiating element’ are verified in the 'self-subsistent being can be shown as follows:

The self-subsistent being is evidently something real, something positive, and something positive, and something intrinsic to the nature of God. It is furthermore, a reality which is a necessary constituent of God’s essence, because it is God’s essence of nature itself; if God were, not a reality 'self-subsistent in virtue of His essence, 'He would have received His existence from some other being and would not be an ens a se self-subsistence’ is also a characteristic, or exclusive and proper mark, of God; no other being can be said to possess the perfection of 'self-subsistence,' because all other beings are contingent and as such have received existence from God.

The 'self-subsistence' of God's essence is not derived from any other prior intrinsic perfections, because no such perfection can be found; the only other perfections, which ‘aseity' or 'infinity’, foundation in the could come into consideration, would be and. these perfections really have their self-substance of God since the only intrinsic reason why God can be said to be 'Himself’ and 'infinite' is the fact that He subsists in virtue of His essence. That the other divine perfections have their ultimate foundation the self-subsistence of the divine essence will become increasingly clear as we proceed in the discussion of the attributes of God; lot it suffice to repeat the remark of St. Thomas: "Although existence does not include life and wisdom, because that which participates in existence need not participate in every mode of existence nevertheless God's existence includes in itself life and wisdom, because nothing being itself. (Summa*-Theologica*, Ia. qn. 4, qrt 2).

It is for these reasons that very many scholastic philosophers prefer the view that the 'primary differentiating element in God’s metaphysical essence is His self-subsistence in this they follow in the footsteps of the greatest of all Christian philosopher St. Thomas, who says; “The fact that the being of God is self-subsisting, not received' in any other and is thus called infinite, shows Him to be distinguished from all other beings, and all others to be apart from Him. "In the Book of Exodus (3:13-14) it is related that,' when the lord told Moses to lead the Israelite out of Egypt, Moses asked Him, "If they should say to me, what is this name?' What shall I say to them?" And the lord answered him: “thus shalt thou say to them, He who is hath sent me to you.” St. Thomas gives three reasons why he considered ‘He who Is’ as most properly applied to Gods:

"First, signify form existence of because of its signification. For it does not but simply existence itself. Hence since the God is His essence itself, which 'can be said of no other (qu.3,art.4), it is clear that among other names this one specially denominates by its essence, God, for everything is denominated God, for everything is denominated by its essence.

"Secondly, on account of it names are either less universal, add something above it at least in way they inform' and determine it, know the essence of God itself in this life, as it is in self, but whatever mode it applies in determining what it understands about God, it falls short of the mode of what God is in Himself. Therefore the less determinate the names are more universal and absolute they are, the more properly are they applied to God…. Now by any other name some mode of substance is determined, but is it determinates the infinite ocean of substance.

“Thirdly, from its consignification, for it signifies present existence; and this above all properly applies to God, whose existence knows not past or future,” The name “He who Is’ can hardly mean anything else but the self-subsistent- being, and St. Thomas considers it to be the one name most properly applicable to God.

All things considered, therefore, we think we are justified in favouring the theory that ‘self-subsistent being' is the quasi definition which best expresses the metaphysical;essence of God as conceived by man. Our next choice would be ens a se or radical infinity. However, if these terms are interpreted in a positive manner, they signify practically the same thing as what is expressed by the term 'self-subsistent being.’ Hence, the latter term seems preferable, because it cont accidents and properties. Composition, however, is impossible in the being which is pure actuality (as was shown in the proofs for God's existence), because composition would presuppose a being prior in existence to God so as to bring together the composing realities; but there can be no being prior in existence to God who is the first Being. Hence, since there are no accidents and properties in God's essence, the absolute omniperfection of God is His total reality. Consequently, God’s absolute omniperfection is His physical Essence.

**CHAPTER FIVE**

**THE DIVINE ATTRIBUTES**

An attribute is defined as that which follows by natural necessity upon a fully constituted essence. Given the essence, the attribute practically synonymous with it, is property. As the word indicates (Lat, *proprium*, one’s own), a ‘property’ belongs to an essence in of speech’ is an attribute or property of man as a rational animal, only an ‘animal’ can have organs capable of emitting articulated to others by means of speech.

Attributes reveal the underlying essence. Since the attributes flow necessarily from the fully constituted essence, there exists an intrinsic connection ‘between the attributes and the essence, and so the mind of man naturally goes from a knowledge of the attributes to a knowledge of the essence itself.

When speaking of God, we understand by the divine attributes all those perfections which flow necessarily from the divine essence and which are found in no other being but God.

Some attributes of God pertain to His being or essence, and some pertain to His operations. These attributes are absolute, in the sense that they are present in God irrespective of any creatural beings. Other attributes are relative, in the sense that they have reference to the existence of beings other than God Himself.

First, then we must treat of the absolute or essential attributes of God. And among the various essential attributes, the ones first to receive attention are simplicity, Infinitely, and unicity.

**Notion of Simplicity**

A thing is said to be ‘simple’ when it is not a ‘compound’, that is to say, when it is devoid of composition. A ‘compound’ is a unit made up of a number of parts; in other words, a ‘compound’ is one and undivided in such a manner that it can be resolved into a number of components called parts. Hence, a ‘compound’ is actually undivided (and therefore a unit) but divisible, on the other hand, a thing is said to be ‘simple’ when it is neither divided nor divisible.

Simplicity is thus the opposite of ‘composition’, and it is defined as the absence of composition in the reality of a being. This definition is negative in form but position in content. The reason for this negative form of the definition lies in the derivation of concept of ‘simplicity’. All the things man perceives in this world are affected ‘simplicity’ by denying composition in some way. Hence, man arrives at the notion of which is said to be devoid of composition. Since, however, it is some ‘reality’ which is said to be devoid of composition, the definition is positive in content. Simplicity being the absence of composition, the denial of composition in a being implies the affirmation of simplicity in that being. Since a simple being is undivided in itself and indivisible (in the order in which it is said to be ‘simple’) the two main kinds of ‘simplicity’ are ‘absolute’ and ‘relative’.

Simplicity is absolute, when the being excludes all parts of whatever nature, be they real or conceptual. An absolutely simple being, therefore, is not only actually undivided but also potentially indivisible. A ‘composite being’ is actually undivided, because it is a unit, a whole, a totality, but it is potentially divisible, because it consists of (real or conceptual) parts which make it to be a compound and with which it can be divided. An ‘absolutely, simple being, ‘because it is devoid of all parts, is incapable of being divided.

Simplicity is relative, when the being excludes parts of one kind but has parts of--another, kind. Hence, the relatively simple is indivisible in one respect but divisible in another.

The fewer parts such a being has, the more simplicity it possesses. Man, for instance, has a composite nature, consisting of body (matter) and soul (form). Man's body is a compound, because the substance of the- body as made up of a number of different integral parts (head, trunk, arms, legs, etc); man's soul, however, is simple because it does not consist of substantially different parts. However, a composition exists between man's substantially simple soul and many types of accidents (acts of thinking and willing). Similarly, besides this ‘Physical1’ composition, there, also exists a metaphysical composition in man between his essence and existence, his genus (animality) and specific difference (rationality), his nature and individuality, and his nature and personality, Man thus possesses relative simplicity in the simple substance of his Spiritual soul; but in many other respects he is ‘composite being’ in no case, however, can he or any other creatural being be said to be ‘absolutely simple’.

**God is Absolutely Simple"**

Every composite being consists of distinct parts. The Union of these parts into a whole forms the undividedness of a composite being. Hence, the parts are Potential to the whole; the composite being becomes actualized into the whole or unit only through the unification of the parts, so that the existence of the Composite being is contingent upon this, unification. And for the composite being to pass from the state of Potentiality to the state of actuality it must be under the influence of another being already in act. In other words, parts, in themselves distinct and different, cannot of their own accord unite to form a composite being; they necessarily demand a pre-existence cause to bring them together and make then unite a whole.

Now, God exists and He is first, necessary, and uncaused. It is contradictory to suppose that something should exist Prior to the first being. It is contradictory to suppose that the nece­ssary being should be contingent upon the action of a prior being bringing the component parts of his being .together. It is contradictory to suppose that the uncaused being should require a Cause. But all this would be necessary under supposition that God is a composite being consisting of parts. Hence, God is not, and cannot be, a composite being consisting of parts. Consequently, there are no parts of any kind in God, since the argument applies to any and all parts.

A being, however, which is devoid of any and all parts is absolutely simple. God therefore, is absolutely simple.

Over and above, this proof we must also add that in denying that the divine being is composed, we attribute a positive perfection that Being; Here then we shall prove that God cannot be composed in any order of being.

1. God is not a body: - And so possesses no quantitative parts. Everybody is potentially divisible and moves only insofar as it is moved by another, as for example, our human body is moved by our soul. But as we have seen in the five ways, God is pure act and g the first unmoved mover. And so he cannot be a body,

2. God is a spiritual substance, a spirit: - His essence contains no matter of any kind, and so, he possesses no essential parts. Since God is a Spirit, He is therefore neither a purely material being, such as an inanimate metal, nor a being which is partly spirit and partly matter, such as man. As a further result, since matter is no part of His nature, He cannot be dependent on matter in His existence and operations.

But a substance which is neither composed of matter nor dependent in its existence and operations on matter is a ‘pure spirit’.

Consequently, God is a pure spirit. Moreover, matter is pure potency, while God is pure act.

In God, essence and the act of existing are the same: - And so God is not composed in the order of being. If in God these were different, two contradictions would follow. Since essence would have to be ordered to the act of existing as potency to act (for from two acts in the order of being, two beings would result), it would follow that there is potency in God, which is impossible. Secondary, these two principles of bring, if different, would need an extrinsic agent to bring them together in composition. But God is completely uncased. Therefore in God essence and the act of existing are absolutely the same.

Everything that exists must be either something which exists in itself and does not exist in another as in a subject of inhesion or something which does not exist in itself but exists in another as in a subject of inhesion: - In the first case it is called a ‘Substance’ , and in the second case an ‘accident’. Everything must be either the one or the other, because there is no middle ground between contradictory ideas. Therefore, everything will be either a substance or an accident.

God exists in and for Himself, because He is the first and there are no accident uncaused being. Therefore, God does not exist in another as in subject in which He must inhere. God, therefore, is a Substance. However, in God there are no accidents, and so he is mot composed of substance and accidents, that is, he is not composed order of activity. Substance is in potency to its accidents, for it receives them and is perfected by them. But in God there is no potency; thus there can be no accidents.

Finally, the perfection of God’s essence cannot be classified according to genus and specific difference: - as can, for example, the essence of man, which is rational animality. For the essence of God is one with his act of existing – his essence is identified with his being. And being, as we know, transcends all species and genera. Thus the divine essence has no logical parts.

In conclusion of God’s simplicity, we should add that God cannot enter into composition with any other being. He is also simple in the sense that he cannot enter into composition with another as a part. Since God is the first, uncaused, and necessary being, no other being can be conceived as being prior to Him. Hence in God there can be no metaphysical composition, because he cannot depend on anything or anybody, God is therefore, absolutely simple.

**Notion of Infinite Perfection**

Before discussing whether or not ‘infinite perfection’ should be predicated of God, we will have to know the meaning of ‘perfect’ and ‘infinite’.

In general, perfection means reality or actuality. A thing possesses perfection in so far as it possesses reality or actuality. In particular, a being is said to be ‘perfect’ when it possesses the kind of thing it should be. A being would be ‘imperfect’ if, and in so far as, it lacks something required by its respective type of being. As such, ‘perfection’ is independent of the place a thing occupies in the general scale of being, so that a rose can be as perfect in its own line of being as a horse is in its line of being.

However, because of the types of being in the general scale of being among themselves, the amount of reality present in these various types forms a graduated series, so that one type of being possesses more reality (perfection) than another. Thus, a rose is more perfect than gold, a horse more perfect than a rose or gold, and man more perfect than-a horse or a rose or gold. Perfection, therefore, differs.

Perfection is either 'relative' or 'absolute. Perfection is said to be relative when it pertains to a certain type of being. The perfection pertaining to gold or a rose or a horse or a man; or any particular type of being is thus seen to be 'relative,' namely, relative to the type or nature of the being in question. Perfection is absolute when it pertains, not to a certain type of being, but to every line of being without restriction. ‘Relat­ive’ perfection, since its concept is restricted to a particular type of being, is always ‘limited’ in its meaning and application.

Does ‘absolute’ perfection, then, involve the further concept of ‘infinite’? Just what is the meaning of ‘infinite' and ‘Infinity’?

Infinite, as the word indicates (Lat., in, not, non-; finis, end, limit, boundary), is that which is without limits or bounds. The form of the term is negative, ‘but the content is positive; it means a reality or actuality which is limitless or boundless.

Originally, the term had a quantitative signification, inasmuch as is was applied to extension or magnitude. Gradually, however, the tem was also applied to qualities and perfection (reality) in general. Finiteness means being with limitation.

Infinitely is either ‘potential’ or ‘actual’. ‘A’ being is said to be potentially infinite or to possess potential infinitely, if its reality can be increased without limit. Such as being, therefore, is always actually finite and always in potency to a further increase of reality, without ever reaching the ultimate limit of an increase it is reality. It would be more accurate to call such a being ‘indefinite’ rather than ‘infinite’. A being is actually infinite, or possesses actual infinitely, if its reality exists without limitation. Actual infinity will be either 'relative’ or 'absolute’, A thing possesses relative actual infinity if it is actually infinity in a certain line of being only;- for instance, in the line of substance or quality or duality or some other reality, but not in when all. It possesses absolute actual infinity if it is actually unlimited (infinite) in every line. A being therefore, which possesses absolute actual infinity is so unlimited in its being or reality that a greater or better being cannot exist nor be conceived in thought; it is an existing being possessing an absolute plenitude of reality.

When the concepts of ‘perfection’ and ‘Infinity’ are combined, infinity of perfection is perfection which is actually and absolutely without limit. Infinity of perfection is either ‘exten­sive’ or ‘intensive1’ or ‘radical.’ It is extensive when an essence possesses al perfections possible. It is intensive when an essence has the supreme degree of all perfection possible. It is radical when an essence is intrinsically determined in such a manner that the essence demands both extensive and intensive infinitely of perfection.

**The Problem of God's Infinity**

‘Absolutely perfection’ in an existing being means the same thing as ‘actual infinitely of perfection. ‘An absolutely or infinitely perfect being is a being that possesses a limitless plenitude of reality in every conceivable manner, and that without imper­fection of any kind.

It is clear that the ‘infinite’ cannot be the result of a summation of finite realities. Finite reality, by the very fact that it is ‘finite,’ implies limitation, and a mere summation does not remove this limitation in the single realities. No matter how large the number may be, each and every one of these realities is and remains United; and since the total sum consists of the single units which comprise the sum, the total sum must always be and remain limited in its perfections. Such a sum would always be merely ‘potentially’ by its very nature, because another unit could always be added to tit. The ‘potentially infinite,’ however, since it is ‘actually finite,’ can never equate the essence cannot be a summative totality of finite perfections.

In making the claim that God is infinitely perfect, we must prove that He contains within His essence the plenitude of reality without limitation. It must, therefore, be inexhaustible. If His perfections could be exhausted by continued subtraction, it would evidently be limited and finite. It would not be actually infinite extensively and intensively.

Opponents are the pantheists, who believe that the-world is an evolution of God (such as B, Spinoza, G. Hegel, J. Fichte F. Schelling, and their followers the materialists, who deny the existence of anything spiritual (such as I. Honnes, J. Moleschott, L. Buchner, E. Haeckel, and others); the positivists, who claim that man’s knowledge cannot reach beyond the phenomenal (such as J. Stuart Mill, H. Spencer, and a host of scientists); the finitists, as F.C.S. Schiller, W. James, H.G. Wells, H.A. Overstreet, A.C, McGaffert, M. Calkins, and many moderns).

**Proof of God's Infinity**

We claim that God is infinitely perfect and that this truth be known and demonstrated to the satisfaction of an unprejudiced and truth-see king

The first argument is indirect.

No finite being can be an ens a se, so that it is a self-subsistent being. An ens a se has its existence in virtue of its essence since it has no ‘cause; for its existence. Hence, if a finite being could be an ens a se a self-subsistent being, it would also have its existence in virtue of its essence. But then all the possible beings of the same class would also have to have their existence in virtue of their essence and consequently also actually exists: a like essence would then entail a like existence. But of this is evidently not a fact, since there are many more beings of a particular class which are merely possible than those which actually ‘do’ exist; and this is true of all classes of a beings. Consequently, no finite being can be an ens a se, a self-subsistent being. God, however, as was shown in the arguments for His existence, is truly an *ens a se*, a for His existence, is truly an ens a se, a self0subsistent being. Therefore, no finite being can be God, and God cannot be a finite being.

An actually existing being that is not a 'finite’ being is of necessity an 'infinite' 'being: 'finite’ and ‘infinite’ are contradictory concepts, with no middle ground between them, and every being must be one or the other. Hence, since God is not finite, His is the infinite, Being and as such must possess all reality and perfection (for ‘reality’ and ‘perfection’ are identical) infinitely.

**The second argument is direct**

‘Being is everything that is not nothing; it therefore includes all reality and perfection without restriction, limitation, curtailment. Nothing can be thought of that would, be a perfection and would not be contained in ‘being’: there? can be no more reality, and no reality could be added. Absolutely everything without exception is included, in the concept of ‘being’ as such. Essence, existence, beauty, power, goodness, mercy, justice, wisdom, individuality, personality, substance, and so forth, are simply so many forms of 'being,' because they are forms of ‘being’ perfection. Not only this or that reality, or this reality, belongs to ‘being’; absolutely every conceivable degree of reality are included in the concept of ‘being’ and that both extensively and intensively.

Since, therefore, the concept of ‘being’ includes every conceivable kind and degree of reality (perfection) both extensively and intensively, ‘infinite perfection’ is intrinsically possible of realization, so long as the perfection itself is not limited for some reason.

**A limitation of perfection exists**

(1) Either because the reality itself as such is a limited perfection (e.g. 'whiteness, 'materiality'); or

(2) Because the subject of the reality has only a limited passive capacity for receiving it (e.g. man's capacity for receiving knowledge is limited, since the intellect, itself is limited); or

(3) Because the one giving the reality cannot, or does not want to give more than a limited amount (e.g. everything man does and gives is limited in perfection).

So far as the first source of limitation is concerned, it would not apply to God's essence and perfection; in. His case it is only a question of pure perfections, not ‘mixed’ perfections, because He is, as was shown, absolutely simple.

The second and third source of limitation can be taken together, because in both sources a limited amount of perfection is received. In this case God either limited Himself or another being limited Him in the reception of reality. Neither alternative is possible. God cannot have received a limited (finite) amount of reality from another. Under that supposition He would "have '' received essence and existence from a being other than Himself; God, however, since He is ens a se and consequently self-subsistent, did not receive His reality from another being. Neither could the limitation come from Himself. If God imposed a limitation of perfection upon Himself, this would mean that He either had infinite perfection first and limited it later, or that He was at first in potency toward, an infinite and finite amount and then (voluntarily or involuntarily) gave Himself only a finite amount. The first of these two alternatives is impossible; because, if He had infinite perfection first, He had to have the perfection of ‘necessity’ in His being and so could not discard any amount of reality (perfection). The second of these alternatives is also impossible; because potency is excluded in the 'absolutely simple being’ and, if He were first in .potency toward a finite or infinite amount, He could never have passed from potency to actuality except through the agency of another being (and that cannot occur in the being who is first, uncaused, and necessary). It follows then, that a limitation of perfection is excluded in God's essence and existence.

Consequently, since the concept of ‘being’ as such includes in finite perfection in God, the Supreme Being, and since no cause can be assigned for any limitation of being (perfection, reality) in God, God must be infinitely perfect, T Hence, God is infinitely perfect.

**The Unicity of God**

Unicity is singleness or uniqueness, the absence of plurality

When we talk of the unicity of God we mean that is one in Himself, and one in His kind, that is, that God is one and that God is the that God is the Only God – only one God.

By the unity of God we indicate the one Single Essence of God. God is one Essence, one Nature, substance. The term unity also involves in itself (in the present instance) the perfection called unicity or uniqueness, that is, the perfection whereby the one God is the only God.

It is a basic truth of metaphysics, that every being is one; inasmuch as a thing is a thing it is that one thing. But 3F^ limited things can have others of their Kind. No being can be s plurality of itself; but it can admit an equality of other things with itself. This one man is this one man, he has unity.

But he has not unicity, for there are many other, men, many other beings of the same essential kind as himself. With the first and Necessary Being this is not so. Not only is this Being one in itself with) perfect unity but it is the only thing of its Kind. It has unity and unicity. It is not only one; it is -also unique.

Unicity' may be ‘imperfect’ and ‘perfect.’ Unicity is imperfect when no one other being of the same kind actually exist, but another being of the same kind is possible. Thus, time possessed ‘'unicity’ because he was the only human being in actual existence this unicity, however, was 'imperfect,’ since other human beings, were possible. Unicity is perfect when no other being of the same kind actually exists, and another being of the same kinds is impossible; such a being is truly ‘unique’

Of God we assert that He possesses perfect unicity, so that no other God is even possible. There is and can be, but one God.

Opponents to the doctrine of the unicity of God are the polytheists, who admit a. plurality of gods, and the manichaeans, who assumed the existence of two supreme principles, one good evil.

That there is only one God follows naturally and necessarily from the infinity of God's essence.

If a plurality of Divine Beings existed (or, for that matter, could exist), they would either be alike or not alike. If they are not alike, they are different; if different, then one must have some perfection which the other does not possess. In that case, however, the latter lacks some perfection and by that very fact would hot be infinitely perfect; the former alone would have supreme perfection and be God. If they are alike, there can be no difference between them. In order to simplify the argument, let us assume that there are two infinite beings in existence. Both are infinitely perfect, according to the supposition, however, the one's infinite perfection is exclusively His own, because He is a self-subsistent being, an ens a se; as a result, His perfections are not present in the second infinite being, and the second lacks the perfection of the first and is not infinitely perfect at all. But the same situation applies, to the second infinitely perfect being. The second's infinite perfections are also exclusively His own and are not present in the first; therefore, the first lacks the perfections of the second and is not infinitely perfect, either. Hence, if both are alike, they would be infinitely and not infinitely perfection the same time under the same respect. That, however, would be impossible because contradictory. Consequently, a plurality (or even duality) of infinitely perfect Supreme Beings is impossible.

Again. If two infinitely perfect Beings could exist at the same time, either they would be mutually dependent upon each other; or one would be dependent, while the other is independent or bath would be independent of each other. They cannot be mutually dependent upon each other; because under that supposition neither would be infinitely perfect, since both would lack the perfection .of- being ‘independent’ the other. One cannot be dependent on the other, while the other is independent; because under that supposition the ‘dependent’ being would not be infinitely perfect, since such a being is obviously less perfect than an ‘independent’ being. They cannot be mutually independent of each other; because under that supposition neither would be infinitely perfect, since each would lack the perfection of haying the other dependent on himself. These two supposedly infinite beings must exist, if they exist all, in one of these three ways. But all three ways destiny the infinity of perfection either in both or in one of the two. The only way in which the infinitely perfect Being can exist is to be independent of every other being  
and have every other dependent; in that case, however, the independent Being alone is infinitely perfect Hence, no two infinitely perfect beings can exist at the same time. But God exists and is infinitely perfect. Therefore, there can be no other infinitely perfect being besides God; He alone  
is and can be God. Consequently, a duality or plurality of deities is impossible. Unicity, therefore, is an attribute of God.

**Notion of Immutability**

As the word indicates, ‘immutability’ is the negation of ‘mutability’. In order, then to understand the meaning of mutability means capability of change (mutation). A thing is said to ‘change’ when it passes from one state into another or loses something, and a reality which is acquired or lost by the subject.

Change is ‘extrinsic’ or ‘intrinsic’ Change is extrinsic when it is the result of an extrinsic denomination. An illustration will clarify this rather abstruse definition I see for example, a tree, and then I walk away and no longer see the tree; the tree has changed from a 'seen' tree to a tree no longer seen' The tree has obviously not undergone a real change, in its own. Being by passing from the state of an ‘unseen’ tree to the state of a 'seen’ tree and then from the state of a 'seen’ tree to that of a tree 'no longer seen. Whatever real change occurred took place in me and not in the tree, because the fact of sight affected my being but riot the tree; I acquired and. lost some reality (the act of sight’), but nothing happened to the being of the tree thereby. Since no reality was acquired or lost by the being of the tree in its change of status ('seen and 'no longer 'seen’ such a change is termed ‘extrinsic’; the knowledge relation affects the knower in a real fashion, but not the object known.

Change is intrinsic when some reality is either acquired or lost in the passage of the subject from one state to another. Intrinsic change is either a change ‘properly so called’ or ‘improperly so called. When the change is of a nature that the entire being of the subject either passes from non-existence to existence (creation) or from existence to non-existence (annihilation), the change is improperly so called, because the subject undergoing this change does not remain throughout the change. In ‘creation’ the subject was not in existence before it was created and in ‘annihilation’ the subject ceases to exist after it is annihilated. When, however, an existing subject undergoes change, so that it acquires or losses some reality while remaining in existence, the change, is an intrinsic change proper­ly so called. Thus, when a piece of iron changes from hot to cold or from old to hot, such change is ‘intrinsic’ and it is ‘properly so called’ because the piece of iron has actually acquired or lost the quality of heat. A change ‘properly so called’ is also styled an intrinsic change in the ‘strict sense’ of the term, while a change, ‘improperly so called’ is styled an intrinsic change in a ‘wider sense.’

An intrinsic change in the strict sense of the terra (or an change properly so celled1) may be either ‘physical’ or ‘moral’ or ‘intellectual’ in nature, A physical intrinsic charge in the strict sense consists in the acquisition or loss of a substantial or accidental reality. When, for example, non-living matter is converted into living matter by a plant, animal, or man, its substance is changed, and such a change is a substantial physical change; but when a piece of iron is heated, it undergoes an accidental physical change, because the substance A change is moral, when there is a passage from one resolution, of the to another. It is intellectual when there is a change from one judgment to another.

When these notions are applied to God, it is obvious that an ‘extrinsic’ change occurs in relation to Him: He is known and not known, loved and hated, and so forth; but in all such cases, the change really occurs in the creatures, not in God Himself. Intrinsic change in the ‘wider sense’ of creation or annihilation, and as the ‘necessary being’ He cannot be annihilated. The question here is that of intrinsic change in the strict, namely of a ‘physical’ or ‘moral’ or ‘intellectual’ change in the true meaning of the terms.

**Proof of God's Immutability**

The opponents of the immutability of God are the Polytheists and the pantheists.

As theists we maintain that God is no was changeable. God is immutable. Not only does He not change as a matter of fact, but He is incapable of intrinsic change,

First, a general proof of God's immutability.

An intrinsic change is the passage, of a subject from one state to another state, the subject thereby acquiring or losing some reality. If a reality is ‘acquired’, of the subject does not already possess it; if the subject possessed it already, it could not ‘acquire’ it by means of the passage from one state to another. It follows, therefore, that the changing subject does not possess it already and ‘acquires’ the absent and missing reality by means of the change. Hence, if God could ‘acquire’ some reality, He would, of necessity, have to receive it, either from Himself, or from some other being. Now, He could not receive it from Himself, because in that case He would already possess it, since no one can give what he does not have; but if He already possesses the reality in question, He cannot ‘acquire’ it, not even from Himself. Neither can He receive it from some other being. This follows from the fact that God is the first being, as was shown in the proof of His existence, and the first being is the necessary being, because He exists in virtue of His essence. Hence, what­ever God is, He is necessarily whatever He is. If, then, God would not have a certain reality, He would ‘necessarily’ lack this reality and would never ‘acquire’ it from another being. God, therefore, cannot ‘acquire’ any reality through passing from one state into another state.

Nor can God ‘lose1’ reality. When reality is lost, the subject possesses it already and then loses it in the change. Now, if God could lose reality, this loss of reality would have to be due either to His own action or to the action of some other, being. Neither case is admissible. God is the necessary being; He is necessarily whatever He is. But if He could lose some reality He possesses, whether through His own action or the action of some other being, He would not be ‘necessarily’ what He is God therefore, cannot lose reality by passing from one state to another state.

The same consequence follows from the infinite perfection of God of God. if He could ‘acquire’ reality by means of change, He would not be infinitely perfect before the change; He would certainly be more prefect if He did not acquire it but posses already. And for the same reason He cannot ‘lose’ reality in any manner. All reality being a form of perfection, God would be less perfect after giving up some reality than He was when He possessed it. Besides, to be capable of acquiring or losing reality involves passivity and potentiality; a being, however, with passivity and potentiality is not infinitely perfect.

Again, the absolute simplicity of God’s essence makes it impos­sible for Him to ‘acquire’ or ‘lose’ reality through change. Because of this absolute simplicity, everything in God’s essence is one single reality; composition of any land every kind is excluded.

However, if any reality could be acquired by God through change, there would be an addition to His being, and that would entail a composition between is absolutely simple being and the new reality; but composition is excluded in en absolutely simple being.

Similarly, God cannot lose any reality through change. Since His being is an absolutely simple essence, the loss of any reality at all would mean the loss of His entire essence, and that would be equivalent to annihilation; God, however, cannot lose His essence and cease to exist, because the necessary being cannot cease to exist.

It is evident, therefore, that change is impossible in God, and He must, consequently, be immutable.

Second, a specific proof of God's immutability, In so far as the single types of intrinsic change are impossible.

God 'is physically unchangeable. Whatever is capable of change cannot be infinite in perfection, because it can be augmented in its being by the acquisition of some new reality or be decreased in its being by the loss of some reality it possesses. God, however, is absolutely, infinite in His being. Therefore, He car net change by passing from one state to another through fee acquisition or loss of physical reality. Besides, every changeable being has potentiality, since it is capable of receiving what it does not possess and of losing what it possesses. God, however, is pure actuality and, therefore, without potentiality.

God is morally unchangeable. If God ever changed morally, so that He would begin to will something He did' not will before, we would have to conclude that He either made no decision before regarding this matter and then began to exercise His will regarding it or that He changed the decision, made before. Neither alternative, however, is possible. In either case God would acquire the reality of a decision, and this reality would be something new in God's being, since it was not there before. God, however, since He is infinitely perfect, cannot acquire such a reality, because every is a perfection for the one possessing it.

God is intellectually unchangeable. God could undergo intellectual change in one of two ways, either by acquiring knowledge of something He did not know before, or by losing knowledge already possessed. In the first case He would pass from a state of ignorance into a state of knowledge, and in the second case from a state of knowledge into a state of ignorance. Ignorance, however, is an imperfection, and God would be more 'perfect if He had this knowledge and retained it always. Now God is infinitely perfect. Hence, ignorance, whether antecedent or subsequent, must be excluded from Him, God, therefore, can neither acquire nor lose knowledge, and intellectual change is thus impossible in God,

It follows that God is immutable in every respect.

Not only I God immutable; He alone is immutable. Every creatural being is subject to change. All creatures, as a matter of observable fact, undergo change in one form or an or another. All are contingent and potential. All are composites of substance and accidental determinations, and they realize their being successively through passage from potentiality to actuality. The entire world is in a continuous process of ‘becoming,’ so that some form of reality is always being acquired and lost through change; this is true of all inanimate and animate beings of all material and spiritual beings. Consequently, since all beings outside of God undergo change or are at least capable of undergoing change, God alone is immutable.

Extrinsic change does not involve mutability in God Himself, in the sense that there is real change in Him. He is more the ‘object’ of the change, rather than the ‘subject’ which undergoes real change, Creatures like men, for instance, at first do not know God and then know Him. God, of course, can be said to change from ‘not being known’ to ‘being known.’ The subject undergoing the ‘real’ change in this process of acquiring knowledge is, obviously, the creature; the creature really acquires the act of knowledge and thus passes, from the state of ignorance to a state of knowledge. In the creature, therefore, a ‘real’ change takes place because he actually receives e new reality when he knows God. God, however, since He is merely the ‘object’ of this knowledge and not the ‘subject’ does not undergo reel change known’ to ‘being known’; He is the merely ‘term of extrinsic denomination, ‘as philosophers call it, because the real change, while ‘intrinsic’ in the knowing subject, is altogether ‘extrinsic’ in the object known. God's being is not affected in any v/ay by the real change which takes, place in the creatural mind. While then, the word ‘extrinsic change’ is applied to God in such a case, it must be understood to mean that God does not undergo a real change in His being. Hence, notwithstanding this ‘extrinsic change,’ God remains absolutely what He was before. It is clear, therefore, that ‘extrinsic change’ does, not imply  
mutability in God’s being.