

*CHRISTIAN CLASSICS ETHEREAL LIBRARY*

**The Trinity is  
One God Not Three  
Gods**

**Boethius**





---

## The Trinity is One God Not Three Gods

---

**Author(s):** Boethius

**Publisher:** Christian Classics Ethereal Library, Grand Rapids, MI

**Description:** Boethius' life and works form the bridge between classical philosophy and medieval theology. In this treatise, Boethius sets out to articulate the orthodox teaching of the Trinity philosophically, simultaneously defending it against possible heresies. Arianism, one of the most well-known, widespread, and controversial heresies, receives particular attention. His views on the Trinity reflect his background in Platonic and Aristotelian thought, a background which subsequent Christian philosophers and theologians, such as Thomas Aquinas, would inherit. This particular treatise is often read as a supplement to Boethius' still popular and influential work *The Consolation of Philosophy*.

Kathleen O'Bannon  
CCEL Staff

**Subjects:** Doctrinal theology  
God  
Doctrine of the Trinity

# Contents

Title Page	1
Note on the Text	2
Introduction	3
Treatise	7
I.	8
II.	9
III.	11
IV.	13
V.	16
VI.	18
Indexes	19
Latin Words and Phrases	20



This PDF file is from the Christian Classics Ethereal Library, [www.ccel.org](http://www.ccel.org). The mission of the CCEL is to make classic Christian books available to the world.

- This book is available in PDF, HTML, and other formats. See <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/boethius/trinity.html>.
- Discuss this book online at <http://www.ccel.org/node/2794>.

The CCEL makes CDs of classic Christian literature available around the world through the Web and through CDs. We have distributed thousands of such CDs free in developing countries. If you are in a developing country and would like to receive a free CD, please send a request by email to [cd-request@ccel.org](mailto:cd-request@ccel.org).

The Christian Classics Ethereal Library is a self supporting non-profit organization at Calvin College. If you wish to give of your time or money to support the CCEL, please visit <http://www.ccel.org/give>.

This PDF file is copyrighted by the Christian Classics Ethereal Library. It may be freely copied for non-commercial purposes as long as it is not modified. All other rights are reserved. Written permission is required for commercial use.



**THE TRINITY IS ONE GOD**

**NOT THREE GODS**

**A TREATISE BY**

ANICIUS MANLIUS SEVERINUS BOETHIUS MOST HONOURABLE, OF THE ILLUSTRIOUS ORDER OF EX-CONSULS, PATRICIAN TO HIS FATHER-IN-LAW, QUINTUS AURELIUS MEMMIUS SYMMACHUS MOST HONOURABLE, OF THE ILLUSTRIOUS ORDER OF EX-CONSULS, PATRICIAN

## NOTE ON THE TEXT

IN preparing the text of the *Consolatio* I have used the apparatus in Peiper's edition (Teubner, 1871), since his reports, as I know in the case of the Tegernseensis, are generally accurate and complete; I have depended also on my own collations or excerpts from various of the important manuscripts, nearly all of which I have at least examined, and I have also followed, not always but usually, the opinions of Engelbrecht in his admirable article, *Die Consolatio Philosophiae des Boethius* in the *Sitzungsberichte* of the Vienna Academy, cxliv. (1902) 1–60. The present text, then, has been constructed from only part of the material with which an editor should reckon, though the reader may at least assume that every reading in the text has, unless otherwise stated, the authority of some manuscript of the ninth or tenth century; in certain orthographical details, evidence from the text of the *Opuscula Sacra* has been used without special mention of this fact. We look to August Engelbrecht for the first critical edition of the *Consolatio* at, we hope, no distant date.

The text of the *Opuscula Sacra* is based on my own collations of all the important manuscripts of these works. An edition with complete *apparatus criticis* will be ready before long for the Vienna *corpis Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*. The history of the text of the *Opuscula Sacra*, as I shall attempt to show elsewhere, is intimately connected with that of the *Consolatio*.

E. K. R.

## INTRODUCTION

ANICIUS MANLIUS SEVERINUS BOETHIUS, of the famous Praenestine family of the Anicii, was born about 480 A.D. in Rome. His father was an ex-consul; he himself was consul under Theodoric the Ostrogoth in 510, and his two sons, children of a great granddaughter of the renowned Q. Aurelius Symmachus, were joint consuls in 522. His public career was splendid and honourable, as befitted a man of his race, attainments, and character. But he fell under the displeasure of Theodoric, and was charged with conspiring to deliver Rome from his rule, and with corresponding treasonably to this end with Justin, Emperor of the East. He was thrown into prison at Pavia, where he wrote the *Consolation of Philosophy*, and he was as brutally put to death in 524. His brief and busy life was marked by great literary achievement. His learning was vast, his industry untiring, his object unattainable—nothing less than the transmission to his countrymen of all the works of Plato and Aristotle, and the reconciliation of their apparently divergent views. To form the idea was a silent judgment on the learning of his day; to realize it was more than one man could accomplish; but Boethius accomplished much. He translated the *E* of Porphyry, and the whole of Aristotle's *Organon*. He wrote a double commentary on the *E*, and commentaries on the *Categories* and the *De Interpretatione* of Aristotle, and on the *Topica* of Cicero. He also composed original treatises on the categorical and hypothetical syllogism, on Division and on Topical Differences. He adapted the arithmetic of Nicomachus, and his textbook on music, founded on various Greek authorities, was in use at Oxford and Cambridge until modern times. His five theological *Tractates* are here, together with the *Consolation of Philosophy* to speak for themselves.

Boethius was the last of the Roman philosophers and the first of the scholastic theologians. The present volume serves to prove the truth of both these assertions.

The *Consolation of Philosophy* is indeed, as Gibbon called it, "a golden volume, not unworthy of the leisure of Plato or of Tully." To belittle its originality and sincerity, as is sometimes done, with view to saving the Christianity of the writer, is to misunderstand his mind and his method. The *Consolatio* is not, as has been maintained, a mere patchwork of translations from Aristotle and the Neoplatonists. Rather it is the supreme essay of one who throughout his life had found his highest solace in the dry light of reason. His chief source of refreshment, in the dungeon to which his beloved library had not accompanied him, was a memory well stocked with the poetry and thought of former days. The development of the argument is anything but Neoplatonic; it is all his own.

And if the *Consolation of Philosophy* admits Boethius to the company of Cicero or even of Plato, the theological *Tractates* mark him as the forerunner of St. Thomas. It was the habit of a former generation to regard Boethius as an eclectic, the transmitter of a distorted Aristotelianism, a pagan, or at best a luke-warm Christian, who at the end cast off the faith

which he had worn in times of peace, and wrapped himself in the philosophic cloak which properly belonged to him. The authenticity of the *Tractates* was freely denied. We know better now. The discovery by Alfred Holder, and the illuminating discussion by Hermann Usener,<sup>1</sup> of a fragment of Cassiodorus are sufficient confirmation of the manuscript tradition, apart from the work of scholars who have sought to justify that tradition from internal evidence. In that fragment Cassiodorus definitely ascribes to his friend Boethius "a book on the Trinity, some dogmatic chapters, and a book against Nestorius."<sup>2</sup> Boethius was without doubt a Christian, a Doctor and perhaps a martyr. Nor is it necessary to think that, when in prison, he put away his faith. If it is asked why the *Consolation of Philosophy* contains no conscious or direct reference to the doctrines which are traced in the *Tractates* with so sure a hand, and is, at most, not out of harmony with Christianity, the answer is simple. In the *Consolation* he is writing philosophy; in the *Tractates* he is writing theology. He observes what Pascal calls the orders of things. Philosophy belongs to one order, theology to another. They have different objects. The object of philosophy is to understand and explain the nature of the world around us; the object of theology is to understand and explain doctrines delivered by divine revelation. The scholastics recognized the distinction,<sup>3</sup> and the corresponding difference in the function of Faith and Reason. Their final aim was to co-ordinate the two but this was not possible before the thirteenth century. Meanwhile Boethius helps to prepare the way. In the *Consolation* he gives Reason her range and suffers her, unaided, to vindicate the ways of Providence. In the *Tractates* Reason is called in to give to the claims of Faith the support which it does not really lack.<sup>4</sup> Reason, however, has still a right to be heard. The distinction between *fides* and *ratio* is proclaimed in the first two *Tractates*. In the second especially it is drawn with a clearness worthy of St. Thomas himself; and there is, of course the implication that the higher authority resides with *fides*. But the treatment is philosophical and extremely bold. Boethius comes back to the question of the substantiality of the divine Persons which he has discussed in Tr. I. from a fresh point of view. Once more he decides that the Persons are predicated relatively; even Trinity, he concludes, is not predicated substantially of deity. Does this square with catholic doctrine? It is possible to hear a note of challenge in his words to John the Deacon, *fidem si poterit rationemque coniunge*. Philosophy states the problem in unequivocal terms. Theology is required to say whether they commend themselves.

---

1 Anecdoton Holderi, Leipzig, 1877.

2 Scripsit librum de sancta trinitate et capita quaedam dogmatica et librum contra Nestorium. On the question of the genuineness of Tr. IV. De fide catholica see note ad loc.

3 Cp. H. de Wulf, Histoire de la Philosophie medievale (Louvain and Paris 1915), p. 332.

4 See below, De Trin. vi. ad fin.



One object of the scholastics, anterior to the final con-ordination of the two sciences, was to harmonize and codify all the answers to all the questions that philosophy raises. The ambition of Boethius was not so soaring, but it was sufficiently bold. He set out, first to translate, and then to reconcile, Plato and Aristotle; to go behind all the other systems, even the latest and the most in vogue, back to the two great masters, and to show that they have the truth, and are in substantial accord. So St. Thomas himself, if he cannot reconcile the teaching of Plato and Aristotle, at least desires to correct the one by the other, to discover what truth is common to both, and to show its correspondence with Christian doctrine. It is reasonable to conjecture that Boethius, if he had lived, might have attempted something of the kind. Were he alive today, he might feel more in tune with the best of the pagans than with most contemporary philosophic thought.

In yet one more respect Boethius belongs to the company of the schoolmen. He not only put into circulation many precious philosophical notions, served as channel through which various works of Aristotle passed into the schools, and handed down to them a definite Aristotelian method for approaching the problem of faith; he also supplied material for that classification of the various sciences which is an essential accompaniment of every philosophical movement, and of which the Middle Ages felt the value.<sup>5</sup> The uniform distribution into natural sciences, mathematics and theology which he recommends may be traced in the work of various teachers up to the thirteenth century, when it is finally accepted and defended by St. Thomas in his commentary on the *De Trinitate*.

A seventeenth-century translation of the *consolatio Philosophiae* is here presented with such alterations as are demanded by a better text, and the requirements of modern scholarship. There was, indeed not much to do, for the rendering is most exact. This in a translation of that date is not a little remarkable. We look for fine English and poetry in an Elizabethan; but we do not often get from him such loyalty to the original as is here displayed. Of the author "I. T." nothing is known. He may have been John Thorie, a Fleming born in London in 1568, and a B.A. of Christ Church, 1586. Thorie "was a person well skilled in certain tongues, and a noted poet of his times" (Wood, *Athenae Oxon* ed. Bliss, i. 624), but his known translations are apparently all from the Spanish.

Our translator dedicates his "Five books on Philosophical Comfort" to the Dowager Countess of Dorset, widow of Thomas Sackville, who was part author of *A Mirror for Magistrates* and *Gorboduc* and who, we learn from I. T.'s preface, meditated similar work. I. T. does not unduly flatter his patroness, and he tells her plainly that she will not understand the philosophy of the book, though the theological and practical parts may be within her scope.

The *Opuscula Sacra* have never before, to our knowledge, been translated. In reading and rendering them we have been greatly helped by two mediaeval commentaries: one by

---

5 Cp. L. Baur, Gundissalinus: de divisione, Munster, 1905.

John the Scot (edited by E. K. Rand in Traube's *Quellen und Untersuchungen*, vol. i. Pt. 2, Munich, 1906); the other by Gilbert de la Porree (printed in Migne, *P.L.* lxiv. We also desire to record our indebtedness in many points of scholarship and philosophy to Mr. E. Thomas of Emmanuel College.

H.F.V.

E.K.R.

---

I HAVE long pondered this problem with such mind as I have and all the light that God has lent me. Now, having set it forth in logical order and cast it into literary form, I venture to submit it to your judgment, for which I care as much as for the results of my own research. You will readily understand what I feel whenever I try to write down what I think if you consider the difficulty of the topic and the fact that I discuss it only with the few—I may say with no one but yourself. It is indeed no desire for fame or empty popular applause that prompts my pen; if there be any external reward, we may not look for more warmth in the Verdict than the subject itself arouses. For, a part from yourself, wherever I turn my eyes, they fall on either the apathy of the dullard or the jealousy of the shrewd, and a man who casts his thoughts before the common herd—I will not say to consider but to trample under foot, would seem to bring discredit on the study of divinity. So I purposely use brevity and wrap up the ideas I draw from the deep questionings of philosophy in new and unaccustomed words which speak only to you and to myself, that is, if you deign to look at them. The rest of the world I simply disregard: they cannot understand, and therefore do not deserve to read. We should not of course press our inquiry further than man's wit and reason are allowed to climb the height of heavenly knowledge.<sup>6</sup> In all the liberal arts some limit is set beyond which reason may not reach. Medicine, for instance, does not always bring health to the sick, though the doctor will not be to blame if he has left nothing undone which he ought to do. So with the other arts. In the present case the very difficulty of the quest claims a lenient judgment. You must however examine whether the seeds sown in my mind by St. Augustine's writings<sup>7</sup> have borne fruit. And now let us begin our inquiry.

---

6 Cf. The discussion of human ratio and divine intellegitia in Cons. v. pr. 4 and 5.

7 e.g. Aug. De Trin.

## I.

There are many who claim as theirs the dignity of the Christian religion; but that form of faith is valid and only valid which, both on account of the universal character of the rules and doctrines affirming its authority, and because the worship in which they are expressed has spread throughout the world, is called catholic or universal. The belief of this religion concerning the Unity of the Trinity is as follows: the Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God. Therefore Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one God, not three Gods. The cause of this union is absence of difference:<sup>8</sup> difference cannot be avoided by those who add to or take from the Unity, as for instance the Arians, who, by graduating the Trinity according to merit, break it up and convert it to Plurality. For the essence of plurality is otherness; apart from otherness plurality is unintelligible. In fact, the difference between three or more things lies in genus or species or number. Difference is the necessary correlative of sameness. Sameness is predicated in three ways: By genus; *e.g.* a man and a horse, because of their common genus, animal. By species; *e.g.* Cato and Cicero, because of their common species, man. By number; *e.g.* Tully and Cicero, because they are one and the same man. Similarly, difference is expressed by genus, species, and number. Now numerical difference is caused by variety of accidents; three men differ neither by genus nor species but by their accidents, for if we mentally remove from them all other accidents,<sup>9</sup> still each one occupies a different place which cannot possibly be regarded as the same for each, since two bodies cannot occupy the same place, and place is an accident. Wherefore it is because men are plural by their accidents that they are plural in number.

---

---

8 The terms *differentia*, *numerus*, *species*, are used expertly, as would be expected of the author of the *In Isag. Porph. Commenta*. See S. Brandt's edition of that work (in the *Vienna Corpus*, 1906), s.v. *differencia*, etc.

9 This method of mental abstraction is employed more elaborately in *Tr. iii.* (*vide infra*, p. 44) and in *Cons. v. pr. 4*, where the notion of divine foreknowledge is abstracted in imagination.

## II.

We will now begin a careful consideration of each several point, as far as they can be grasped and understood; for it has been wisely said,<sup>10</sup> in my opinion, that it is a scholar's duty to study the real nature of anything before he formulates his belief about it.

Speculative Science may be divided into three kinds:<sup>11</sup> Physics, Mathematics, and Theology. Physics deals with motion and is not abstract or separable (*i.e.*); for it is concerned with the forms of bodies together with their constituent matter, which forms cannot be separated in reality from their bodies.<sup>12</sup> As the bodies are in motion—the earth, for instance, tending downwards, and fire tending upwards, form takes on the movement of the particular thing to which it is annexed.

Mathematics does not deal with motion and is not abstract, for it investigates forms of bodies apart from matter, and therefore apart from movement, which forms, however, being connected with matter cannot be really separated from bodies.

Theology does not deal with motion and is abstract and separable, for time Divine Substance is without either matter or motion. In Physics, then, we are bound to use scientific, in Mathematics, systematical, in Theology, intellectual concepts; and in Theology we will not let ourselves be diverted to play with imaginations, but will simply apprehend that Form which is pure form and no image, which is very Being and the source of Being For everything owes its being to Form. Thus a statue is not a statue on account of the brass which is its matter, but on account of the form whereby the likeness of a living thing is impressed upon it: the brass itself is not brass because of the earth which is its matter, but because of its form. Likewise earth is not earth by reason of unqualified matter,<sup>13</sup> but by reason of dryness and weight, which are forms. So nothing is said to be because it has matter, but because it has a distinctive form. But the Divine Substance is Form without matter, and is therefore One, and is its own essence. But other things are not simply their own essences, for each thing has its being from the things of which it is composed, that is, from its parts. It is This *and* That, *i.e.* it is the totality of its parts in conjunction; it is not This or That taken apart. Earthly man, for instance, since he consists of soul and body, is soul *and* body, not soul or body, separately; therefore he is not his own essence. That on the other hand which does not consist of This and That, but only of This, is really its own essence, and is altogether beautiful and stable because it is not grounded in any alien element. Wherefore that is truly One in which is no number, in which nothing is present except its own essence. Nor can it become

---

10 By Cicero (Tusc. v. 7. 19).

11 Cf. the similar division of philosophy in Isag. Porph. ed. Brandt, pp 7 ff.

12 Sb. Though they may be separated in thought.

13 of Aristotle. Cf. (Alexander Aphrod. De Anima, 17. 17); (id. De anima libri mantissa, 124. 77).

the substrate of anything, for it is pure Form, and pure Forms cannot be substrates.<sup>14</sup> For if humanity, like other forms, is a substrate for accidents, it does not receive accidents through the fact that it exists, but through the fact that matter is subjected to it. Humanity appears indeed to appropriate the accident which in reality belongs to the matter underlying the conception Humanity. But Form which, is without matter cannot be a substrate, and cannot have its essence in matter, else it would not be form but a reflexion. For from those forms which are outside matter come the forms which are in matter and produce bodies. We misname the entities that reside in bodies when we call them forms; they are mere images; they only resemble those forms which are not incorporate in matter. In Him, then, is no difference, no plurality arising out of difference, no multiplicity arising out of accidents, and accordingly no number.

---

---

14 This is Realism. Cf. "Sed si rerum ueritatem atque integritatem perpendas, non est dubium quin uere sint. Nam cum res omnes quae uere sunt sine his quinque (*i.e.* genus species differentia propria accidentia) esse non possint, has ipsas quinque res uere intellectas esse non dubites". Isag. In Porph. ed. pr. i. (M. P.L. lxiv. Col. 19, Brandt, pp. 26 ff.). The two passages show that Boethius is definitely committed to the Realistic position, although in his Comment. In Porphyr. A se translatum he holds the scales between Plato and Aristotle, "quorum diiudicare sententias aptum esse non duxi" (cp. Haureau, Hist. De la philosophie scolastique, i. 120). As a fact in the Comment. in Porph. he merely postpones the question, which in the De Trin. he settles, Boethius was ridiculed in the Middle Ages for his caution.

## III.

Now God differs from God in no respect for there cannot lie divine essences distinguished either by accidents or by substantial differences belonging to a substrate. But where there is no difference, there is no sort of plurality and accordingly no number; here, therefore, is unity alone. For whereas we say God thrice when we name the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, these three unities do not produce a plurality of number in their own essences, if we think of what we count instead of what we count with. For in the case of abstract number a repetition of single items does produce plurality; but in the case of concrete number the repetition and plural use of single items does not by any means produce numerical difference in the objects counted. There are as a fact two kinds of number. There is the number with which we count (abstract) and the number inherent in the things counted (concrete). "One" is a thing—the thing counted. Unity is that by which oneness is denoted. Again "two" belongs to the class of things as men or stones; but not so duality; duality is merely that whereby two men or two stones are denoted; and so on. Therefore a repetition of unities<sup>15</sup> produces plurality when it is a question of abstract, but not when it is a question of concrete things, as, for example, if I say of one and the same thing, "one sword, one brand, one blade."<sup>16</sup> It is easy to see that each of these names denotes a sword; I am not numbering unities but simply repeating one thing, and in saying "sword, brand, blade," I reiterate the one thing and do not enumerate several different things any more than I produce three suns instead of merely mentioning one thing thrice when I say "Sun, Sun, Sun."

So then if God be predicated thrice of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the threefold predication does not result in plural number. The risk of that, as has been said, attends only on those who distinguish Them according to merit. But Catholic Christians, allowing no difference of merit in God, assuming Him to be Pure Form and believing Him to be nothing else than His own essence, rightly regard the statement "the Father is God, the Son is God the Holy Spirit is God, and this Trinity is one God," not as an enumeration of different things but as a reiteration of one and the same thing, like the statement, "blade and brand are one sword" or "sun, sun, and sun are one sun."

Let this be enough for the present to establish my meaning and to show that not every repetition of units produces number and plurality. Still in saying "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit," we are not using Synonymous terms. "Brand and blade" are the same and identical, but

"Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" though the same, are not identical. This point deserves a moment's consideration. When they ask, "Is the Father the same as the Son?" Catholics

15 e.g. if I say "one, one, one," I enounce three unities.

16 The same words are used to illustrate the same matter in the Comment. in Arist. 2nd ed. (Meiser) 56. 12.

answer "No." "Is the One the same as the Other?" The answer is in the negative. There is not, therefore, complete indifference between Them; and so number does come in—number which we explained was the result of diversity of substrates. We will briefly debate this point when, we have done examining how particular predicates can be applied to God.



## IV.

There are in all ten categories which can be universally predicated of things, namely, Substance, Quality, Quantity, Relation, Place, Time, Condition, Situation, Activity, Passivity. Their meaning is determined by the contingent subject; for some of them denote real substantive attributes of created things, others belong to the class of accidental attributes. But when these categories are applied to God they change their meaning entirely. Relation, for instance, cannot be predicated at all of God; for substance in Him is not really substantial but super-substantial. So with quality and the other possible attributes, of which we must add examples for the sake of clearness.

When we say God, we seem to denote a substance; but it is a substance that is supersubstantial. When we say of Him, "He is just," we mention a quality, not an accidental quality—rather a substantial and, in fact, a supersubstantial quality.<sup>17</sup> For God is not one thing because He is, and another thing because He is just; with Him to be just and to be God are one and the same. So when we say, "He is great or the greatest, we seem to predicate quantity, but it is a quantity similar to this substance which we have declared to be super-substantial; for with Him to be great and to be God are all one. Again, concerning His Form, we have already shown that He is Form, and truly One without Plurality. The categories we have mentioned are such that they give to the thing to which they are applied the character which they express; in created things they express divided being, in God, conjoined and united being—in the following manner. When we name a substance, as man or God, it seems as though that of which the predication is made were itself substance, as man or God is substance. But there is a difference: since man is not simply and entirely man, and therefore is not substance after all. For what man is he owes to other things which are not man. But God is simply and entirely God, for He is nothing else than what He is, and therefore is, through simple existence, God. Again we apply just, a quality, as though it were that of which it is predicated; that is, if we say "a just man or just God," we assert that man or God is just. But there is a difference, for man is one thing, and a just man is another thing. But God is justice itself. So a man or God is said to be great, and it would appear that man is substantially great or that God is substantially great. But man is merely great; God is greatness.

The remaining categories are not predicable of God nor yet of created things.<sup>18</sup> For place is predicated of man or of God—a man is in the market-place; God is everywhere—but

---

17 Gilbert de la Porree in his commentary on the De Trin. Makes Boethius's meaning clear. "Quod igitur in illo substantiam nominamus, non est subiectionis ratione quod dicitur, sed ultra omnem quae accidentibus est subiecta substantiam est essentia, absque omnibus quae possunt accidere solitaria omnino" (Migne, P.L. lxiv. 1283). Cf. Aug. De Trin. vii. 10.

18 i.e. according to their substance.

in neither case is the predicate identical with the object of predication. To say "A man is in the market" is quite a different thing from saying "he is white or long," or, so to speak, encompassed and determined by some property which enables him to be described in terms of his substance; this predicate of place simply declares how far his substance is given a particular setting amid other things.

It is otherwise, of course, with God. "He is everywhere" does not mean that He is in every place, for He cannot be in any place at all—but that every place is present to Him for Him to occupy, although He Himself can be received by no place, and therefore He cannot anywhere be in a place, since He is everywhere but in no place. It is the same with the category of time, as, "A man came yesterday; God is ever." Here again the predicate of "coming yesterday" denotes not something substantial, but something happening in terms of time. But the expression "God is ever" denotes a single Present, summing up His continual presence in all the past, in all the present—however that term be used—and in all the future. Philosophers say that "ever" may be applied to the life of the heavens and other immortal bodies. But as applied to God it has a different meaning. He is ever, because "ever" is with Him a term of present time, and there is this great difference between "now," which is our present, and the divine present. Our present connotes changing time and sempiternity; God's present, unmoved, and immoveable, connotes eternity. Add *semper* to *eternity* and you get the constant, incessant and thereby perpetual course of our present time, that is to say, sempiternity.<sup>19</sup>

It is just the same with the categories of condition and activity. For example, we say "A man runs, clothed," "God rules, possessing all things." Here again nothing substantial is asserted of either subject; in fact all the categories we have hitherto named arise from what lies outside substance, and all of them, so to speak, refer to something other than substance. The difference between the categories is easily seen by an example. Thus, the terms "man" and "God" refer to the substance in virtue of which the subject is—man or God. The term "just" refers to the quality in virtue of which the subject is something, viz. just; the term "great" to the quantity in virtue of which He is something, viz. great. No other category save substance, quality, and quantity refer to the substance of the subject. If I say of one "he is in the market" or "everywhere," I am applying the category of place, which is not a category of the substance, like "just" in virtue of justice. So if I say, "he runs, He rules, he is now, He is

---

19 The doctrine is Augustine's, cf. *De Ciu. Dei*, xi. 6, xii. 16; but Boethius's use of *sempiternitas*, as well as his word-building, seem to be peculiar to himself. Claudianus Mamertus, speaking of applying the categories to God, uses *sempiternitas* as Boethius uses *aeternitas*. Cf. *De Statu Animae* i. 19. Apuleius seems to use both terms interchangeably, e.g. *Asclep.* 29–31. On Boethius's distinction between time and eternity see *Cons. v. pr.* 6, and Rand, *Der dem B. zugeschr. Trakt. De fide*, pp. 425 ff, and Brandt in *Theol. Littzg.*, 1902, p. 147.

ever," I make reference to activity or time—if indeed God's "ever" can be described as time—but not to a category of substance, like "great" in virtue of greatness.

Finally, we must not look for the categories of situation and passivity in God, for they simply are not to be found in Him.

Have I now made clear the difference between the categories? Some denote the reality of a thing; others its accidental circumstances; the former declare that a thing is something; the latter say nothing about its being anything, but simply attach to it, so to speak, something external. Those categories which describe a thing in terms of its substance may be called substantial categories; when they apply to things as subjects they are called accidents. In reference to God, who is not a subject at all, it is only possible to employ the category of substance.

---

## V.

Let us now consider the category of relation, to which all the foregoing remarks have been preliminary; for qualities which obviously arise from the association of another term do not appear to predicate anything concerning the substance of a subject. For instance, master and slave<sup>20</sup> are relative terms; let us see whether either of them are predicates of substance. If you suppress the term slave,<sup>21</sup> you simultaneously suppress the term master. On the other hand, though you suppress the term whiteness, you do not suppress some white thing,<sup>22</sup> though, of course, if the particular whiteness inhere as an accident in the thing, the thing disappears as soon as you suppress the accidental quality whiteness. But in the case of master, if you suppress the term slave, the term master disappears. But slave is not an accidental quality of master, as whiteness is of a white thing; it denotes the power which the master has over the slave. Now since the power goes when the slave is removed, it is plain that power is no accident to the substance of master, but is an adventitious augmentation arising from the possession of slaves.

It cannot therefore be affirmed that a category of relation increases, decreases, or alters in any way the substance of the thing to which it is applied. The category of relation, then, has nothing to do with the substance of the subject; it simply denotes a condition of relativity, and that not necessarily to something else, but sometimes to the subject itself. For suppose a man standing. If I go up to him on my right and stand beside him, he will be left, in relation to me, not because he is left in himself, but because I have come up to him on my right. Again, if I come up to him on my left, he becomes right in relation to me, not because he is right in himself, as he may be white or long, but because he is right in virtue of my approach. What he is depends entirely on me, and not in the least on the essence of his being.

Accordingly those predicates which do not denote the essential property of a thing cannot alter, change or disturb its nature in any way. Wherefore if Father and Son are predicates of relation, and, as we have said, have no other difference but that of relation, and if relation is not asserted of its subject as though it were time subject itself and its substantial quality, it will effect no real difference in its subject, but, in a phrase which aims at interpreting what we can hardly understand, a difference of persons. For it is a canon of absolute truth that distinctions in incorporeal things are established by differences and not by spatial separation. It cannot be said that God became Father by the addition to His substance of some accident; for he never began to be Father, since the begetting of the Son belongs to His very substance; however, time predicate father, as such, is relative. And if we bear in mind all the

---

20 *Dominus* and *seruus* are similarly used as illustration, In Cat. (Migne, P.L. lxiv. 217).

21 i.e. which is external to the master.

22 i.e. which is external to the whitened thing.

propositions made God in the previous discussion, we shall admit that God the Son proceeded from God the Father, and the Holy Ghost from both, and that They cannot possibly be spatially different, since They are incorporeal. But since the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, and since there are in God no points of difference distinguishing Him from God, He differs from none of the Others. But where there are no differences there is no plurality; where is no plurality there is Unity. Again, nothing but God can be begotten of God, and lastly, in concrete enumerations the repetition of units does not produce plurality. Thus the Unity of the Three is suitably established.

## VI.

But since no relation can be affirmed of one subject alone, inasmuch as a predicate wanting relation is a predicate of substance, the manifoldness of the category of relation, Trinity is secured through the category of relation, and the Unity is maintained through the fact that there is no difference of substance, or operation, or generally of any substantial predicate. So then, the divine substance preserves the Unity, the divine relations bring about the Trinity. Hence only terms belonging to relation may be applied singly to Each. For the Father is not the same as the Son, nor is either of Them the same as the Holy Spirit. Yet Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are each the same God, the same in justice, in goodness, in greatness, and in everything that can be predicated of substance. One must not forget that predicates of relativity do not always involve relation to something other than the subject, as slave involves master, where the two terms are different. For equals are equal, like are like, identicals are identical, each with other, and the relation of Father to Son, and of both to Holy Spirit is a relation of identicals. A relation of this kind is not to be found in created things, but that is because of the difference which we know attaches to transient objects. We must not in speaking of God let imagination lead us astray; we must let the Faculty of pure Knowledge lift us up and teach us to know all things as far as they may be known.<sup>23</sup>

I have now finished the investigation which I proposed. The exactness of my reasoning awaits the standard of your judgment; your authority will pronounce whether I have seen a straight path to the goal. If, God helping me, I have furnished some support in argument to an article which stands by itself on the firm foundation of Faith, I shall render joyous praise for the finished work to Him from whom the invitation comes. But if human nature has failed to reach beyond its limits, whatever is lost through my infirmity must be made good by my intention.

---

---

23 Cf. Cons. v. pr. 4 and 5, especially in pr. 5 the passage "quare in illius summae intellegentiae acumen si possumus erigamur."

# **Indexes**

## **Index of Latin Words and Phrases**

Dominus: 16

Quad igitur in illo substantiam nominamus, non est subiectionis ratione quod dicitur, sed ultra omnem quae accidentibus est subiecta substantiam est essentia, absque omnibus quae possunt accidere solitaria omnino: 13

Sed si rerum ueritatem atque integritatem perpendas, non est dubium quin uere sint. Nam cum res omnes quae uere sunt sine his quinque (i.e.: 10

aeternitas: 14

differentia: 8

differentia, numerus, species: 8

fidem si poterit rationemque coniunge. : 4

quorum diiudicare sententias aptum esse non duxi: 10

sempiternitas: 14 14

seruus: 16