

above goodness, above every name and word and thought We can only name him in accordance with his works, because he is the cause and principle of everything. Hence, on the one hand he is "without name", on the other hand he "has many names." But those positive names which we ascribe to God because of his works do not disclose his essential being to us, for they pertain to him in an entirely different manner than to creatures. Hence, negative theology is better than positive, for the former teaches us God's transcendence above the creature. Nevertheless, even negative theology fails to give us any knowledge of God's being, for in reality God is exalted above both "negation and affirmation".

Exactly the same trend of thought is met with in Erigena's works. God is exalted above everything that pertains to the creature, even above being and knowledge. We know only that he is, we do not know what he is. Whatever we affirm in regard to him is true of him in a figurative sense only; hence, in reality he is not what we declare him to be. Affirmative theology is figurative, metaphorical. It is excelled by negative theology. "For it is more correct to say that God is not that which is predicated concerning him than to say that he is. He is known better by him who does not know him, whose true ignorance is wisdom." Hence, the best way to supplement his predicates is to prefix "super" or "more than". He "transcends essence, truth, wisdom", etc. Indeed, so highly is he exalted above all creatures that the name "nothing" may justly be ascribed to him.

Although scholasticism expressed itself with greater reservation on several points, and attached greater value to positive theology than was done by Pseudodionysius and by Erigena, nevertheless, it also was in thorough accord with the theory of God's unknowability. Anselm states that the names of God indicate his being "figuratively" only, that the relative attributes of his being cannot be predicated, and the absolute attributes can be predicated only in a quidditative, and not in a qualitative sense.

According to Albertus Magnus God is exalted above all being and thought. He cannot be reached by human thinking, "he can be touched but he cannot be grasped by our comprehension." There is no name which expresses his being. He is incomprehensible and inexpressible.

Thomas Aquinas discerns a three-fold knowledge of God: "immediate vision of God", "knowledge of God by faith", and "knowledge of God by means of natural reason". Man's knowledge by nature falls far short of "the vision of God", which can be obtained only by supernatural grace, and is reserved for heaven though it is very rarely granted on earth. However, even this vision never renders possible a comprehension of God. Here on earth knowledge of God is mediate. We cannot know God as he is in himself. We can only know him as "the first and most eminent cause of all things." We can arrive at the cause from the effects. The same is true with reference to "the knowledge of God by faith", derived from God's special revelation. We thereby know him more fully "according as more and more excellent of his effects are demonstrated to us." But even this knowledge does not give us any "knowledge of God's essence". There is no knowledge of God's being as such. We know only "his disposition of his creatures". There is no name which adequately expresses his being. His essence is highly exalted "above that which we know and say concerning God." Positive names may indicate God's being. They do so in a very imperfect manner, just as the creatures from which these names are