

that they may be identified. Yet let no one suppose that absence of definition is absence of knowledge. The peasant may be wholly unable to define a plough, but it does not follow that either he or any fellow-labourer to whom he speaks does not know a plough. There are objects of knowledge quite as familiar to all men as is the plough to the peasant, but which do not admit of definition at all. Every one will acknowledge that it is not definition to describe the meaning of a term in language less comprehensible than the term itself. Thus, for example, have we for that which is represented by space, time, matter, motion, force, self, any simpler or more intelligible terms than these? If not, then it would be contrary to reason to ask for a definition; or to pretend that, because we cannot define, we do not know self, force, motion, matter, time or space. May it not be said that the perceived impossibility of definition is, in these cases, a proof not of the littleness but of the greatness of our knowledge? For is it not because we know so much that we are prepared to say that that which we know cannot, from the nature of the case, be compressed within the limits of our defining phrases?

We have here the true answer to the atheist's demand in reference to God, and to the underlying assumption that if we cannot define we do not know. Indeed, it is because we know Him as manifested everywhere, yet as everywhere more than His manifestation, that we feel so strongly all attempts at definition must for ever fall immeasurably short of expressing even what we perceive of His perfections, how much more the perfections themselves. Definition is the expression of limits, and therefore there can be no definition where no limits are perceived. Still that is no reason for denying the reality of our knowledge. It would be manifestly false to say we do not see the ocean, simply because we cannot see its shores. It would be no less false to say we cannot know God, simply because we can perceive in Him no limits. St. Paul's philosophy was as true as his devotion was deep, when he taught the Church to say, we know Him who passes knowledge. Certainly this is the largest and highest