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978-0-521-02910-0 - Summa Theologiae: Volume 2 - Existence and Nature of God,  
(1a. 2-11)

Timothy McDermott O.P.

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The *Summa Theologiæ* ranks among the greatest documents of the Christian Church, and is a landmark of medieval western thought. It provides the framework for Catholic studies in systematic theology and for a classical Christian philosophy, and is regularly consulted by scholars of all faiths and none, across a range of academic disciplines. This paperback reissue of the classic Latin/English edition first published by the English Dominicans in the 1960s and 1970s, in the wake of the Second Vatican Council, has been undertaken in response to regular requests from readers and librarians around the world for the entire series of 61 volumes to be made available again. The original text is unchanged, except for the correction of a small number of typographical errors.

The original aim of this edition was not narrowly ecclesiastical. It sought to make this treasure of the Christian intellectual heritage available to theologians and philosophers of all backgrounds, including those who, without claiming to be believers themselves, appreciate a religious integrity which embodies hardbitten rationalism and who recognise in Thomas Aquinas a master of that perennial philosophy which forms the bedrock of European civilisation. Because of this the editors worked under specific instructions to bear in mind not only the professional theologian, but also the general reader with an interest in the 'reason' in Christianity. The parallel English and Latin texts can be used successfully by anybody with a basic knowledge of Latin, while the presence of the Latin text has allowed the translators a degree of freedom in adapting their English version for modern readers. Each volume contains a glossary of technical terms and is designed to be complete in itself to serve for private study or as a course text.

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To my mother

NIHIL OBSTAT

THOMAS GILBY O.P.

LAURENTIUS BRIGHT O.P.

THOMAS A. MOORE O.P.

IMPRIMI POTEST

GERARDUS MEATH O.P.

*Prior Provincialis Angliæ*

Londinii, die 18 Julii 1963

NIHIL OBSTAT

HUBERTUS RICHARDS S.T.L., L.S.S.

*Censor deputatus*

IMPRIMATUR

✠ GEORGIUS L. CRAVEN

*Epus. Sebastopolis, Vic. Cap.*

Westmonasterii, die 21 Junii 1963

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ST THOMAS AQUINAS  
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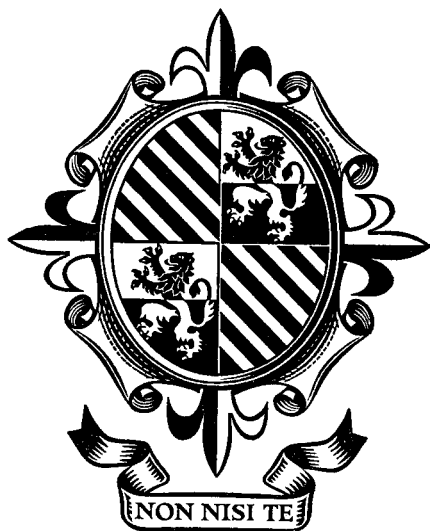
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ST THOMAS AQUINAS  
SUMMA  
THEOLOGIAE

Latin text and English translation,  
Introductions, Notes, Appendices  
and Glossaries



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JOANNIS

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**ALLOCUTIO**

**PAULI**

**PP. VI**

**MCMLXIII**

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## HIS HOLINESS POPE PAUL VI

WAS PLEASED to grant an audience, on 13 December 1963,  
to a group, representing the Dominican Editors and the  
combined Publishers of the new translation of the *Summa  
Theologiæ* of St Thomas, led by His Eminence Michael  
Cardinal Browne, of the Order of Preachers, and the Most  
Reverend Father Aniceto Fernandez, Master General of the  
same Order.

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## AT THIS AUDIENCE

THE HOLY FATHER made a cordial allocution in which he first welcomed the representatives of a project in which he found particular interest. He went on to laud the perennial value of St Thomas's doctrine as embodying universal truths in so cogent a fashion. This doctrine, he said, is a treasure belonging not only to the Dominican Order but to the whole Church, and indeed to the whole world; it is not merely medieval but valid for all times, not least of all for our own.

His Holiness therefore commended the enterprise of Dominicans from English-speaking Provinces of the Order and of their friends; they were undertaking a difficult task, less because the thought of St Thomas is complicated or his language subtle, than because the clarity of his thought and exactness of language is so difficult to translate. Yet the successful outcome of their efforts would undoubtedly contribute to the religious and cultural well-being of the English-speaking world.

What gave him great satisfaction was the notable evidence of interest in the spread of divine truth on the part of the eminent laymen concerned, members of different communions yet united in a common venture.

For these reasons the Holy Father wished it all success, and warmly encouraged and blessed all those engaged. He was happy to receive the first volume presented to him as a gesture of homage, and promised that he would follow with interest the progress of the work and look forward to the regular appearance of all the subsequent volumes.



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## GENERAL PREFACE

BY OFFICIAL APPOINTMENT THE SUMMA PROVIDES THE FRAMEWORK for Catholic studies in systematic theology and for a classical Christian philosophy. Yet the work, which is more than a text-book for professional training, is also the witness of developing tradition and the source of living science about divine things. For faith seeks understanding in the contemplation of God's Logos, his wisdom and saving providence, running through the whole universe.

The purpose, then, of this edition is not narrowly clerical, but to share with all Christians a treasury which is part of their common heritage. Moreover, it consults the interests of many who would not claim to be believers, and yet appreciate the integrity which takes religion into hard thinking.

Accordingly the editors have kept in mind the needs of the general reader who can respond to the reasons in Christianity, as well as of technical theologians and philosophers.

Putting the Latin text alongside the English is part of the purpose. The reader with a smattering of Latin can be reassured when the translator, in order to be clear and readable, renders the thought of St Thomas into the freedom of another idiom without circumlocution or paraphrase.

There are two more reasons for the inclusion of the Latin text. First, to help the editors themselves, for the author's thought is too lissom to be uniformly and flatly transliterated; it rings with analogies, and its precision cannot be reduced to a table of terms. A rigid consistency has not been imposed on the editors of the different volumes among themselves; the original is given, and the student can judge for himself.

Next, to help those whose native tongue is not English or whose duty it is to study theology in Latin, of whom many are called to teach and preach through the medium of the most widespread language of the world, now becoming the second language of the Church.

The Latin is a sound working text, selected, paragraphed, and punctuated by the responsible editor. Important variations, in manuscripts and such major printed editions as the Piana and Leonine, are indicated. The English corresponds paragraph by paragraph and almost always sentence by sentence. Each of the sixty volumes, so far as is possible, will be complete in itself, to serve as a text for a special course or for private study.

THOMAS GILBY, O.P.

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Latin text. English translation, Introduction,  
Notes, Appendices & Glossary

TIMOTHY McDERMOTT O.P.

Additional Appendices by  
THOMAS GILBY O.P.



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[Excepting Latin text of 'AN DEUS SIT ET QUOMODO SIT']

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## EDITORIAL NOTES

### THE LATIN TEXT

There are many manuscripts of the *SUMMA* extant and quite a few editions. The nearest we have yet come to a critical edition of our part of the *SUMMA* is the so-called 'Leonine' edition, commissioned by Pope Leo XIII at the end of the previous century. Unfortunately, in the first part of the *SUMMA*, due to the small number of manuscripts that they consulted, the editors were extremely cautious in accepting readings variant from earlier editions; and this has since turned out to have been excessive caution. The present text has been compiled by reference to the existing editions, including the 'Leonine', and to the variant readings of the manuscripts noted by the Leonine editors in their footnotes. It cannot by any means claim to be itself a critical text, but it is likely that it is more authentic than the usual texts available.

### THE TRANSLATION

It has been the aim of the translator to turn the Latin into a running English sufficiently intelligible to be read without recourse to the original text. However, he has also tried to match the translation to the text, sentence by sentence, sufficiently closely for cross-reference to be easy. Latin technical terms have as far as possible been eschewed, except when their adoption in the translation would definitely help understanding. Then they have been introduced non-technically and gradually been allowed to become technical; or, in a few cases, introduced as technical terms and explained in a footnote. Where the reader experiences difficulty and does not find an explanatory footnote, he is referred to the glossary or to the index.

### FOOTNOTES

These are of three kinds. The first kind, introduced by numbers, are simple references. If such a footnote is introduced by the abbreviation 'cf', then the references are editorial. If the footnote is not introduced by the abbreviation 'cf' the reference is given by St Thomas himself. However, in these latter cases, the reference which St Thomas generally gives briefly in the text itself has been expanded according to modern practice and removed to the footnote.

The second kind of footnote, introduced by letters, is always editorial,

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and consists of some briefly explanatory remarks deemed necessary in order to understand St Thomas's thought at that point. Longer explanations are kept to the appendices as far as possible.

The third kind of footnote, introduced by arbitrary signs such as \*, †, etc., are textual variants (with translation) considered to be of some importance.

#### APPENDICES

The last twelve have been written by the General Editor, who alone is responsible for the views there expressed.

#### REFERENCES

Biblical references are to the Vulgate, bracketed numbers to the Psalms are those of versions based on the Hebrew text. Patristic references are to Migne (PG, Greek Fathers; PL, Latin Fathers). Abbreviations to St Thomas's works are as follows:

*Summa Theologiæ*, without title. Part, question, article, reply; e.g. 1a. 3, 2 ad 3. 1a2æ. 17, 6. 2a2æ. 180, 10. 3a. 35, 8.

*Summa Contra Gentiles*, CG. Book, chapter; e.g. CG. 1, 28.

*Scriptum in IV Libros Sententiarum*, Sent. Book, distinction, question, article, solution or *quæstiuncula*, reply; e.g. III Sent. 25, 2, 3, ii ad 3.

*Compendium Theologiæ*, *Compend. Theol.*

Commentaries of Scripture (*lecturæ, expositiones*): Job, *In Job*; Psalms, *In Psal.*; Isaiah, *In Isa.*; Jeremiah, *In Jerem.*; Lamentations, *In Thren.*; St Matthew, *In Matt.*; St John, *In Joan.*; Epistles of St Paul, e.g. *In ad Rom.* Chapter, verse, *lectio* as required.

Philosophical commentaries: On the *Liber de Causis*, *In De causis*. Aristotle: *Peri Hermeneias*, *In Periherm.*; Posterior Analytics, *In Poster.*; Physics, *In Physic.*; *De Cælo et Mundo*, *In De Cæl.*; *De Generatione et Corruptione*, *In De gen.*; *Meteorologica*, *In Meteor.*; *De Anima*, *In De anima*; *De Sensu et Sensato*, *In De sensu*; *De Memoria et Reminiscentia*, *In De memor.*; Metaphysics, *In Meta.*; Nicomachean Ethics, *In Ethic.*, Politics, *In Pol.* Book, chapter, *lectio* as required, also for Expositions on Boëthius, *Liber de Hebdomadibus* and *Liber de Trinitate*, *In De hebd.* and *In De Trin.*, and on Dionysius *De Divinis Nominibus*, *In De div. nom.* References to Aristotle give the Bekker annotation.

*Quæstiones quodlibetales (de quolibet)*, *Quodl.*

Main titles are given in full for other works, including the 10 series of *Quæstiones Disputatæ*.

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## INTRODUCTION

IF YOU have read St Thomas before you will know what to expect from this volume; if you are coming to him for the first time you may possibly be disappointed and even bewildered, finding his references obscure, his style unfamiliar, the climate of his thought unsympathetic. Those seeking an intellectually reputable and non-dogmatic account of why men believe in God (having heard that Aquinas is the best the Christian tradition can offer) sometimes feel themselves to have found only a medieval, make-believe world, where observation and experiment play second-fiddle to metaphysical presupposition. Those, however, who wish to understand more deeply a religious faith they already hold, often complain of excessive, rather than of meagre rationality in the proceedings. Why this massive weight of syllogism and definition, they ask, and what kinship has such work with the authentic word of God in scripture?

The notes accompanying this translation, and the appendices and glossary which follow it, try to clarify such references and implications as a modern reader may find obscure. The present introduction deals rather with the style and structure of the *SUMMA*, and with the kind of thinking to be found there, showing how it began and how it relates to the way we think today.

Firstly, we must see the work in its historical background. No matter why we read it, we ought to remember why it was written. For some centuries before St Thomas's time commentary on the scriptures had been feeling the influence of a growing secular culture. In the early middle ages, a gradual resurrection, firstly of classical rhetoric, then of classical logic, and finally of ancient physical science, had led the medieval lecturers on the Bible to pose new kinds of question to their text. Such 'questions' would take the form of objections drawn often from these rediscovered sciences and set over against some particular statement of the scriptural text being commented; the master would discuss the proposed solutions of the dilemma, and argue on behalf of the one he preferred. In the course of time such questions became so numerous and complex that they were separated from the running commentary on the scriptures, and became a course on their own. Gradually systematized and collected in anthologies and compendia, they came to constitute in men's eyes a separate science, the science of theology.

Now St Thomas calls the work that we are translating in this series of volumes a *Summa Theologiae*, a comprehensive theology, and its appearance in the 1270's marked the apex of the development we have been

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describing. The reader will notice that the book is in fact set out as an articulated series of questions. A short prologue of sorts introduces each group of questions as they come along, and each large question is broken down into several constituent questions (called ‘points of inquiry’ or ‘articles’ in the translation). Each of these constituent questions opens with objections, drawn often from previous authors or from secular science, and immediately countered with an authoritative text, usually scriptural or ecclesiastical. For example, the famous article on ‘whether God exists’ (question 2, article 3, below) opens with the sentence ‘It seems that there is no God, because . . .’, and proceeds to give two objections against God’s existence; immediately after which comes the authoritative counter-text ‘On the other hand, the book of Exodus . . .’ To grasp what an article is about one should read all the first half of the article as a long statement of a dilemma, to be resolved in the second half. It would be a mistake to turn to the answer before one had fully grasped the dilemma requiring that answer. It would, of course, be equally a mistake to take either the objection or the counter-text as a short statement of St Thomas’s own opinions: the objections are usually contrary to or contradictory of his opinions, whilst the surface meaning of the counter-text is often qualified in some way in the body of the article. After this setting out of the dilemma, St Thomas proceeds to resolve it in the section headed ‘Reply’, and then finally returns to answer the objections (and if need be the counter-text) in the light of that reply. This is the general structure of each constituent question (‘point of inquiry’), and these constituent questions, grouped into larger questions, which are grouped into treatises, which are grouped into volumes, make up St Thomas’s *SUMMA THEOLOGIAE*, his comprehensive theology.

Despite the apparent complexity of this process, St Thomas’s work is a great improvement on those of his predecessors and contemporaries. He tells us himself in his initial prologue (see volume 1 of this series) that the book is designed for teaching purposes, and so tries to avoid repetitiveness and multiplicity of useless questions and arguments (he does, in fact, usually hold the number of objections down to three), and to adopt the order proper for learning the science rather than one determined by the exposition of some text or the prosecution of some controversy. These were all flaws that he had noticed in the theology text-books available in his own time, and which had been present in his own earlier works to some degree. Perhaps, indeed, St Thomas is half-thinking of the editions of his oral disputations when he talks of repetitiveness and multiplicity of argument, or of his commentary on the Book of Sentences of Peter Lombard when he talks of the exposition of a text, or of his *Summa contra Gentes* (‘Against the people outside the Church’) when he talks of

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prosecution of a controversy. The latter work comes nearest in structure to the work we are translating as we shall see, but the difference lies in that little phrase of St Thomas's: 'the order proper to learning a science'. In order to understand the intention and structure of the *SUMMA* well, we should understand this phrase.

Any science, St Thomas would say, begins from certain seminal ideas. It also begins, of course, with data, with observation and experience. But no matter how much data is amassed, the science cannot begin, the understanding of these data cannot begin without certain seminal ideas. The initial step in a modern physical science, for example, is not any particular phenomenon, nor any particular technique of mathematics or logic, but the discovery of a way of conceiving phenomena which allows a particular technique of logic or of mathematics to be applied to them for the first time. Stephen Toulmin, discussing this point very fully in his book on *The Philosophy of Science*, gives as an example the conception of light as travelling in straight lines, a conception which founded the science of geometrical optics. 'The notion of a light-ray', he writes, 'one might describe as our device for reading the straight lines of our optical diagrams into the phenomena.'<sup>1</sup> The notion of a light-ray, in other words, is a seminal idea so representing light that the technique of geometrical diagrams becomes applicable to it for the first time. From such a seminal idea, usually expressed in an image or model, issues that systematization of observed data which alone can be called science. The merely observed data, transformed by such a seminal idea, become significant and relevant data, for it is the seminal idea, one might say, which gives the phenomena their point. The proper order, therefore, in which to learn a science, will be to begin with its seminal idea, and from there to work out by argument the idea's implications and consequences.

At this point one must distinguish the sciences of philosophy and theology as St Thomas knew them from the modern physical sciences, at least in one respect. To adopt the concept of a light-ray is to represent already familiar phenomena, such as illumination, in a new way that opens them up to calculating techniques. But it would clearly be wrong to think that a concept which opens up phenomena to calculating techniques and to the world of modern science, therefore opens them up for the first time to man and to man's world in general. The fact that man now conceives light in such a way that he can talk about it with mathematical precision does not mean that previously he has never been able to talk about it at all. So one must not only investigate how light is conceived in order that it may enter the world of scientific calculation, but also how it is conceived in order that it may enter the world of man at all, what part it is to be

<sup>1</sup> *op cit*, p 29.

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given in the community of the universe within which man lives and moves and has his being. Or as the medieval would put it, how does light enter into being? Corresponding to the models and seminal ideas which show how things behave precisely and regularly, and give clear mathematical point to experimental data, we need images and concepts which display the rôle and relevance of things in the community of the universe, which reveal the universal point of every element in experience. From this kind of concept or seminal idea spring philosophy and theology.

Of course, it is always possible to reply that things have no universal point, and that nothing is meant by them—they just are. Changes, for example, just happen, because other previous changes just happened; they are not really developments, or achievements, or evolutions, or anything having point. This is not the place to argue such a question, but we must realize what St Thomas's view is. For him 'just being' or 'just happening' is in the last analysis unintelligible. Nothing can enter into being simply as a phenomenon. To exist, as St Thomas sees it, is to have significance, to have point, to play out a rôle. Such an idea of being is indeed the seminal idea of his philosophical view of the world: an idea of being, that is, not just as an arbitrary thereness of things for sense-experience, but as a logical and significant thereness in a community of the universe revealed to man by knowledge and love. The model or image that St Thomas uses to express this idea of being is the model of an action: being is playing out a rôle, realizing a significant conception. We shall be looking later (in appendix 2) at some of the consequences and implications of this seminal idea, and we need only say here that, since action is in turn conceived as the expression and execution of some agent's desire (giving point to the action), the being of things is conceived as fulfilling a rôle desired by someone, as the expression of someone's love. So that this seminal idea of being leads almost immediately to the notion of a God whose intentions rule the world, the expression of whose intentions the world indeed is.<sup>2</sup> Since St Thomas's word for the community of the

<sup>2</sup> As an illustration of the different approach of modern science and medieval philosophy, one might compare the two answers to the question 'How does fire heat wood?'. Modern science would make use of the seminal idea of heat as movement or vibration of particles, and explain conduction of heat as a transference of vibrational energy until equilibrium was reached. St Thomas writes as follows: 'If one asks why wood gets hot in the presence of fire, one would answer it is the action natural to fire to heat. And this is because heat belongs to fire as its characteristic property. And this is a consequence of the nature of fire. And so on, until one is driven to God's will' (*CG III*, 97). St Thomas is seeking, so to speak, the *point* of wood getting hot, and he appeals to a series of intellectual concepts designed to reveal the sense or significance of what is happening. It is not just a happening, but an effect of an action consequent upon a property deriving from a nature that is

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universe about which we have been talking is 'nature', we may say that God enters into his philosophy as the one who conceives nature, as the 'author' of nature.

If then St Thomas were setting out upon a comprehensive philosophy, a *Summa Philosophiæ*, he would start out from his seminal idea of being, and in following out the implications of this idea he would come across the author of being, he would come across God. This, philosophically speaking, would be 'the proper order of learning' about God. God would occupy the somewhat blurred and puzzling place in the exposition that he occupies in most thinking before the coming of the Christian revelation: he would be recognized, that is to say, as the origin of being, and yet would figure as a conclusion of human knowledge rather than as a seminal idea in it. St Thomas, however, is living after the revelation of God in Christ, and he is setting out upon a comprehensive theology, a *Summa Theologiæ*, a new science sprung from commentary on the Christian Bible. He is engaging himself on a discipline which starts precisely from the new seminal idea given to man by God in Christ. He believes, with the Christian Church, that God has revealed himself in Christ in a new guise: as the friend of man, with whom man can have immediate communion in knowledge and love. Philosophy is now transcended. The man who accepts the Christian revelation need no longer start with a human conception of being and let that lead him to the existence of a loving author of being; he starts now with the God-given conception of a God who loves him, and lets that reveal new depth and meaning in his previous conception of being. Indeed, he lets that theological conception of God illuminate the whole place of God in philosophy, so that theology does not displace philosophy but rather comprehends it in a new synthesis. The coming of Christ, one might say, had a sort of 'reversal' effect on philosophy, for the concept of the author of being now becomes a bridge from the personally-known God to his creation, rather than as before a bridge from created being to its creator God.

Hence the structure of the *Summa*. It is arranged in what St Thomas considers the proper order of learning theology: that is to say, it begins from the seminal idea of God given in Christian revelation, and then draws from this contemplation of God implications for the world, and especially for man. But within this order we catch glimpses of a philosophical order, but in reverse. For we not only proceed from the God of the New Testament—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—to the world of Christian history—

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intended by a God. He is trying to locate this particular happening in an architecture of the universe built out of causes and effects, doing and being, property and accident, nature and artifice, etc.

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the mysteries of Christ and the sacraments of the Church; we also proceed from the author of being to the philosophically conceived cosmos of animate and inanimate, material and spiritual. The order in both cases is theological, but the theological judgments are sometimes passed on philosophical conceptions.

A previous work of St Thomas's, the *Summa contra Gentes*, has a nearly related structure, but it seems that the demands of controversy influence it slightly. Whilst remaining a theological work in that it begins with God and proceeds to consider the world, it nevertheless deals with philosophical conceptions first before approaching the data of revelation. It begins with God the author of nature and then proceeds to discuss nature itself (subjects which presumably even those outside the Christian revelation would find profitable). It then reverts to discussing God, but this time as the Trinity revealed in Christ, and finally moves to a treatment of Christ and his Church. The *Summa Theologiae* redistributes the four basic elements of this scheme so that the discussion of God is wholly completed before the world and the Church are discussed. But even in the *Summa Theologiae*, interestingly, within the discussion about God, human speculation is touched on first, and only after the notion of God as author of being has been clarified, do we turn to him as the Trinitarian God of the New Testament revelation. It seems to me that historical considerations have played a part here. St Thomas is conscious of revelation as a historical event that supervened on previous human attempts to know God. It is for example noteworthy that the first question asked in his *Summa* is not 'Whether revelation is necessary to man', but 'Whether revelation WAS necessary to man': a question which involves the first, but is framed with a greater awareness of the concrete way in which revelation came. And the stages by which we come to know God in the *Summa* (the earliest of which are translated in this volume) correspond exactly to the successive approximations to the future revelation of God in heaven which St Thomas sets out in the *Contra Gentes*. In that work he moves from what is common knowledge about God in all men (frequently misconstrued as innate knowledge) (III, 38), to what can be learnt by demonstration (III, 39), and then on to what is revealed to those who believe (III, 40). Not till volumes 6 and 7 of this series will we be reaching this third stage as treated in the *Summa Theologiae*; with our present volume 2 we are only beginning the four volumes consecrated to the first two stages.

These two stages are thus set out in the *Contra Gentes*:

'An awareness of God, though not clear nor specific, exists in practically everyone. Some people think this is because it is self-evident that God exists, just as other principles of reasoning are self-evident. Others, with more truth, think that the natural use of reason leads man straight away



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to some sort of knowledge of God. For when men observe the sure and ordered course that things pursue by nature, they see in most cases that somebody must be producing the order they observe, since rule cannot exist without a ruler. Such a consideration, however, is not yet specific enough for one to know immediately who this ruler of nature is, or what kind of being he is, or whether only one such ruler exists. Just so, by observing the movements and actions of a human being, we see that a cause of his behaviour must exist in him such as does not exist in other things, and we call this 'soul', though without yet knowing what the soul is (whether, perhaps, it is bodily) or how it operates. . . .

'Demonstration adds to our knowledge of God, and betters it, by enabling us to come closer to specific knowledge of him. For demonstration shows God to be unchangeable, eternal, not bodily, in no way composite, unique and so on; thus eliminating many attributes from him and so distinguishing him in our minds from other things. For not only affirmations but also denials can lead us to specific knowledge of things: thus it is specific to man not only to be a reasoning animal, but also not to be either irrational or inanimate. There is this difference, however, between the two kinds of specific knowledge thus produced: the one achieved through affirmations is knowledge both of what the thing is and of how it is set apart from other things; the other, achieved through denials, is knowledge that the thing is distinct from others, but what it is remains unknown. Now it is this latter kind of specific knowledge of God that demonstration gives. . . .'

In the section of the *Summa* we are about to read St Thomas follows this summary very exactly. We begin by questioning that knowledge of God which exists in practically everyone. Does it precede demonstrative knowledge of God as knowledge of self-evident principles precedes knowledge of any conclusions drawn from those principles (q 2, art 1), or does it precede demonstrative knowledge as natural use of reason precedes reflective use of reason? St Thomas believes the latter part of this alternative, and he proceeds in the next two articles (q 2, art 2 and 3), to set out a first reflective sketch of the natural argument for the existence of God outlined above. This argument ends up with something called 'God' (as the arguments from the behaviour of human beings end up with something called 'soul'), but is not yet as specific a knowledge of God as demonstration can make it. St Thomas therefore proceeds to the demonstration by elimination described in the above quotation. This he does in five separate stages: first, he denies composition of God (q 3), but to redress the balance he then denies that lack of composition involves lack of perfection (q 4-6). His third and fourth stages explore this denial of imperfection, expressing it first as a denial of imperfection of essence or

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nature (God's limitlessness, q 7-8), and secondly as a denial of imperfection of existence (God's unchangeableness, q 9-10). Finally, he assures himself that only one God exists (q 11).

For whatever reason then we read this volume, we should remember why it was written: as part of a comprehensive theology, as part of a systematic investigation of the implications of the Christian revelation. What we read is set firmly within a revealed conception of God and the world, a vision taken upon faith. But in the section which is our special concern we are locating within that larger vision what a philosopher can say about God. And the whole is done in a medieval style of question, definition and argument in itself unrelievedly rational, but assuming previous wide experience of the world and acquaintance with Scripture.