

"St. Thomas and Aristotle
on the
Nature and Existence of God"

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INTRODUCTION

Only the fool has said in his heart, "There is no God," only the fool and the twentieth century so-called intellectuals; The very earliest native tribes certainly believed in God, even though they considered Him to be so far above the world that it is useless, or inadvisable, to try to have anything direct to do with Him, and thus they prefer to associate with all kinds of spirits that are nearer to humanity. Even more sophisticated people like the Greeks and Romans felt themselves much more at home with subsidiary powers, like heroes, nymphs, fauns, but this did not at all prevent their believing in true gods and goddesses and indeed a mysterious power behind all of them alike. It is still very difficult to find a man that declares dogmatically that there is no God, and offers reasons for there being none.⁽¹⁾ But of course there are many here who admit God's existence, but, as Deists, admit of no personal God. Modern scientists, materialists, evolutionists have often tried to dispense with, as it was put, "the Hypothesis of God", but sooner or later have found that it must be so. There must be some Supreme Source and Mover. If one asked the courageous evolutionist or scientist how the original "thing" got there; why it changed; why it developed in any definite direction, and so on, one would be answered that it was not the affair of the man of science, whose sole business is to tell you "that" and never "why". Once given the living changing thing, the scientist finds no need to speculate about or consider God. For indeed we have heard, "Chemistry can do without the hypothesis of God." Indeed it can until you ask, "How did the chemicals get there? Where did they come from?"

The Evolutionistic theory is not altogether unfeasible until we ask, "Who put the slime there, from which we developed?" The question is easy but not unfair. "Evidence shows us that even among the earliest tribes we find groups of men who began to perform certain rituals, or even to entertain certain ideas about God, or the Supernatural, or about the Ultimate upon which they felt themselves in dependence,"⁽²⁾ and so it is with all men. There must be a God. Deny that fundamental premise, and all else must be false.

Part One
NATURE OF GOD

Chapter One

Early Greek Notion of the Nature of God

It seems that Aristotle has drawn from Plato, and he in turn from others, his teaching considering the origin of our philosophical notion of God. It would do us well, then, to first take up a brief consideration of the early Greek notion of God, erroneous as it was in many cases. It is evident why we should go back to the Greeks for our notion of logic, science, art, politics and many other sciences, however, it is not so evident why we should go back to them for our notion of God until we come to Aristotle, from whose works we derive most of our information of Greek philosophy, and then we see the reason. Anton C. Pegis in his work "St. Thomas and the Greeks" further substantiates this contention.

"Those who study the history of medieval thought find it natural and convenient to look upon Greek Philosophy as the predecessor of medieval Philosophy. No one can deny that Christian thinkers are indebted to Greek and Arabian Philosophers for many of their ideas." (3)

Aristotle speaking of Thales says that, according to this Philosopher, the first principle, element, or substance from which all things come and to which they are to return, is, simply, water. (4)

And yet in another text Aristotle quotes the same Thales as saying all things "are full of gods." (5) These two statements, if accepted on face value, are philosophically irreconcilable. However, they may be reconciled by identifying the two, by affirming that water is the god and even the supreme god of Thales and controvertibly, that the god of Thales is water. In other words, where Thales uses the word

"god" he simply means some physically and purely natural power; as water in this case, which is the first principle of all things. This we must bear in mind in our consideration of the Greeks who followed Thales. Thus when Anaximander sets up "the Indeterminate as his first principle and when Anaximenes teaches that infinite air is the cause of all things, they do not think of god as an object of worship." (6) John Burnet speaking of early Greek Philosophy states: "This non-religious use of the word "god" is characteristic of the whole period of early Greek Philosophy." (7)

To the question; "What was the exact meaning of the word 'god' in a Greek mind five centuries before Christ?" - it would be hard to find an answer. The word is used and described at some length in many of the early writings. To consider them all individually would be superfluous, but to better elucidate that which follows we might give at least one consideration. It is evident from the beginning that from the early Greek meaning of the word 'god' its origin is not a philosophical one. In Homer's Illiad alone the word 'god' is applied to an incredible variety of objects, at times entirely different. A Greek god might be what we would call a person as was the case of Zeus, Hera, Apollo, and the other Olympian gods and goddesses; and their god could just as well be some physical and natural phenomena, the Ocean, Wind, Earth, or Sky. Even Death, Terror, War, Fear and the like are also the gods of Homer. (8) It would seem to one that all of these are separated in every possible way and degree; it would seem that there is no common element to be found in all. However, perhaps there is at least one, if we remember that the Greeks "endowed all of these powers with life operating in human lives and swaying human destinies from above." (9) The first characteristic of the Greek gods is life, for, whatever a

⌋ Greek god may happen to be, he is never an inanimate thing; he is always a living being just as amn. However, though human life is bound to come to an end sometime, the Greek gods never die, and for that reason they are called the 'Immortals.' The second characteristic is that all of these gods are much more related to man than to the world at large. The dreadful divinities threaten men with evil; the benevolent ones promise good -- in whole, all of these immortal living powers rule the lives of mortal men. (10) Indeed these characteristics of the early Greek gods in a very striking way resemble the attributes of our Almighty God. The connection between Greek mythology and philosophy might be explained thus. The Greek gods are only indicative of the conviction of the early Greeks, that, since man is somebody and not simply something, the ultimate principle of that somebody must rest with some other Body and not merely something.

Man can know only "that which is," and that which is intelligible, necessary, immutable, and immaterial. Plato calls "Idea" the eternal and intelligible. Ideas are reality itself. We might ask then what can deserve the title of divine in such a philosophy?

"If that which is more real is also the more divine, the eternal ideas should eminently deserve to be called divine. Now, among the ideas there is one which dominates all the others, because they all share in its intelligibility. It is the idea of Good." (11)

Why then should we hesitate to conclude that in Plato's philosophy the Idea of Good is God? Arthur O. Lovejoy speaking on this topic says, (12)
"Considered as a perfect being, the Idea of Good was the god of Plato."
This god of Plato is self-sufficient and absolutely indifferent as to what goes on in the world.

Chapter Two

Aristotle and the Nature of God

According to Aristotle man has derived his notion of God from two sources; his own soul and the motion of the stars.

"In dreams and divinations, the soul seems to behave as if it were a god; as to the stars, their orderly motion suggests that there are courses of their motions and their order. Each one of these courses is a god." (13)

Aristotle's Metaphysics is an important step in the history of Natural Theology in so far that the first philosophical principle has been joined with the notion of God. For the prime mover of the Aristotelian universe is at the same time its principle god. (14) The world of Aristotle is an eternally necessary and necessarily eternal world. In other words we need not worry about how it came into being, but only what happens in it. At the summit of the universe of Aristotle is not an idea, as we found in Plato, but a self subsisting and eternal act of thinking. It has been defined as a divine self subsisting ~~than~~ thought. But to understand his position more fully we must recall that two of the most fundamental categories of Aristotelianism are the potential and the actual, and Aristotle does not hesitate to push them to the extremes, thereby formulating two fundamental principles: matter that is nothing but matter and hence pure potentiality and form that is nothing but form, which is pure actuality. (15) Every existent thing aspires to actuality, and in proportion to how much a thing is potential and how much it is actual we ascend the scale of being at the top of which must be pure actuality, devoid of all potentiality, and this we call God. This pure actuality is defined by Aristotle as thought of thought, (*νοήσις νοήσεως*). "Therefore it must be of itself that the

divine thought thinks, (since it is the most excellent of things)
(16)
and its thinking is a thinking on thinking."

In other words God is both the subject and the object of thought and therefore thinks only of Himself. "Since, then, thought and object of thought are not different in the case of things that have not matter, the divine thought and its object will be the same, i.e. the thinking will be one with the object of its thought." (17) This eternal thinking of Himself is the only activity possible to the god of Aristotle, and in this ceaseless self-contemplation lies the divine pleasure which Aristotle calls "a single and simple pleasure." (18) (19)

In conclusion let us use Aristotle's own words describing his god:

"If, then, God is always in that state in which we sometimes are, this compels our wonder; and if in a better, this compels it yet more. And God is in a better state. And life also belongs to God; for the actuality of thought is life, and God is that actuality, and God's self dependent actuality is life most good and eternal. We say, therefore, that God is a living being, eternal, most good; so that life and duration continuous and eternal belong to God, for this is God." (20)

Chapter Three

St. Thomas and the Nature of God

It is but natural to expect an immense difference between the God of Aristotle and that of St. Thomas; natural for the simple reason that Aristotle's god developed from the pagan pantheism of ancient Greece, while in St. Thomas we find the Christian conception of God thoroughly explained and developed. The God of St. Thomas is unchangeable, eternal and one. He is a spiritual God, distinct from the world, but at the same time a personal God, one who has created the world, conserves and provides for it, and is intimately concerned with each and every part of His creation. Let us briefly take up the nature of the God of St. Thomas summarized in His perfections and attributes. For the time being we assume the existence of God, the proof of which we shall examine later.

God is most simple; for that is simple which has no parts, and in God there is no composition of elements or parts, whether they be physical, metaphysical or logical. There can be no composition in a self-subsisting Being since He is not corporeal. "For it is absolutely true that God is not a body."⁽²¹⁾ He is not composed of matter and form for these are imperfect and limited modes of being. He is not composed of essence and existence for He is existence itself. He is not composed of genus and differentia, since He is a self-subsisting Being which⁽²²⁾ transcends the limits of all genera. And in the same way St. Thomas states the simplicity of God.

"Therefore, it is clear that God is nowise composite, but is altogether simple." (23) "Before every multitude it is necessary to find unity. Now in every composite there is multitude, therefore that which is before all things, namely God,

must be devoid of all composition." (24)

God is one. - By the unity of God we indicate the one simple essence of God.

"The being proper to each thing is but one. Now God is Himself His very Being. Therefore there can be but one God." (25) "It is impossible that there be several sovereign goods, for that which is ascribed to a thing by way of superabundance is to be found in one alone. Now God is the sovereign good. Therefore God is One." (26)

"It is manifest that the reason why any singular thing is this particular thing is because it cannot be communicated to many. Now this belongs to God alone, for God Himself is His own Nature. Therefore in the very same way God is God, and He is this God. Impossible it is therefore that many Gods should exist." (27)

Since God is one in a 'supereminent' way, He may be called "Super-Unity", and thus no created unities can come near in comparison. It is from this very idea of "Super-Unity" that St. Thomas states that God is not only "unum" but "maxime-unum." (P. 1a., q. 11, art. 4) For St. Thomas says that that one possesses unity in the fullest degree whose being is wholly undetermined. This, of course, can apply only to God. (28)

God is infinite -- boundless -- unlimited -- such is the God of St. Thomas.

"For whatever is finite by its very nature is confined to some generic notion. Now God is in no genus, and His perfection (29) contains the perfection of all genera. Therefore He is infinite."

"An act is the most perfect according as it is less mingled with potentiality. Wherefore every act that has an admixture of potentiality has a limit to its perfection; while the act which has no admixture of potentiality has no limit to its perfection. Now God is pure act without any potentiality. Therefore He is infinite." (30)

"We must consider therefore that a thing is called infinite because it is not finite. Now matter is in a way made finite by and the form by matter. Matter is indeed made finite by form, inasmuch as matter, before it receives its form, is in potentiality to many forms, but on receiving a form, it is terminated by that one. The same is true of form, which is common to many until it is received into matter; it is then terminated by this particular one, but since the Divine Being is not a Being re-

ceived in anything, but He is His own subsistent being, it is clear that God Himself is infinite and perfect." (31)

God is immutable, unchangeable. Though this is a negative term denying change, movement or alteration in God, it also implies or indicates at least a positive perfection, for its denial is directed against imperfection or potentiality and hence amounts to an affirmation of perfection or actuality. St. Thomas bases the immutability of God on three reasons. Since God is the first Being and consequently pure act, without the slightest mixture of potentiality, He cannot change, for to be changeable a thing must in some way be in potentiality -- which is evidently impossible in God.

"Secondly - because everything which is moved, remains as it was in part, and passes away in part; ----thus in everything that is moved, there is some kind of composition to be found. But it has been shown above that in God there is no composition for He is altogether simple; therefore He is also immutable." (32)

Thirdly, whatever is moved acquires something by its movement which it did not have before, but, since God is infinite, containing in Himself all perfections of being, it is clearly evident that He cannot acquire anything new. "Hence movement in no way belongs to God." (33)

The Christian God is also an eternal one. Eternity means not only endlessness, but it also means an absence of beginning and succession of duration. He only is eternal whose existence is not a matter of days and years but is all present at once. Such is summarized in the definition of eternity drawn up by Boetius some fifteen hundred years ago. "Interminabilis vitae tota simul et perfecta possessio." "Eternity is the possession, at once, complete and perfect, of boundless life." (34) St. Thomas in the Summa Theologica (P. Ia, q. 10, art. 1) upholds this definition of eternity.

"Whatever begins or ceases to be, suffers this through movement or change. Now it has been shown that God is altogether unchangeable. Therefore He is eternal, having neither beginning or end." (35)

"only things which are moved are measured by time, because time is the measure of movement as stated by the Philosopher (4 Physics, Xi, 5). Now God is absolutely without movement. Therefore we cannot mark 'before and after' in Him ----- therefore He is without beginning and end, and has all His being simultaneously; and in this consists the notion of eternity." (36)

"The idea of eternity follows immutability, as the idea of time follows movement. Hence, as God is supremely immutable, it supremely belongs to Him to be eternal. Nor is He eternal only, but He is His own eternity; whereas no other being is its own duration, as no other is its own being. Now God is His own uniform being; and hence, as He is His own essence, so so He is His own existence and eternity." (37)

Every being, in so far as it is a being, can be the object of desire; it is, then, true that every being is good; since the terms being and good are synonyms, they are controvertible. And from that it follows that the infinite Being is the infinite Good.

"The good is that which all things desire. Now all things desire to be in act according to their mode, which is evident from the fact that everything, by its nature, shrinks from corruption. Wherefore the essential notion of the good is to be in act, and consequently, evil, which is opposed to good, results from the privation of act by potentiality. Therefore He is truly Good." (38)

"To be good belongs preeminently to God. For a thing is good according to its desireableness. Now everything seeks after its own perfection; and the perfection and form of an effect consists in a certain likeness to the agent, since every agent makes its like; and hence the agent itself is desireable and has the nature of good. ----- Therefore since God is the first effective cause of all things, it is manifest that the aspect of desireableness and of good belong to Him." (39)

Thus we find the God of St. Thomas to be most simple, one and infinite; He is unchangeable and eternal, and in Him we find the highest good.

Part Two

EXISTENCE OF GOD

INTRODUCTION

Having thus established and distinguished the nature of the god of Aristotle and the God of St. Thomas, let us take up the arguments for God's existence as proposed by both Aristotle and St. Thomas. The first question that comes to our mind is, "Does God exist, and if so can He be known?" There are many theories on this question. We shall not stop to explain the various theories nor shall we answer those that are false and are to be refuted. Let us merely establish a notion of what they propose.

1. Theism is a general name for any belief in God.
2. Atheism is the opposite of Theism and declares simply that God does not exist; however, the atheist usually finds himself compelled to substitute for the God that he has denied some other notion, as force, energy, etc.
3. Agnosticism is a theory that God cannot be known and that creatures must be content to remain in ignorance about God. It is not a denial of God's existence, but only of His knowability.
4. Pantheism identifies God, in some way or another, with the universe. One such form makes the world a part of the substance of God; another form teaches that God has poured Himself out and therefore all things are parts or emanations of God, hence the name, emanationism. Thirdly, the idealistic pantheism found in the doctrine of Kant makes the world and all in it manifestations, not physical parts of God.
5. Monotheism is the doctrine which holds that there is but one God.
6. Polytheism, on the other hand, teaches a plurality of gods.
7. Deism, which must be carefully distinguished from Theism, admits the existence of God and even His knowability, but denies His Providence and governance of creatures. God has indeed created the world, but has since ceased to care for it.

8. Ontologism proposes that the first actuality is also the first thing known by the mind. The first knowledge is a vague intuition through which all other things are mediately known.
9. We might also add Traditionalism which holds that the human mind is not capable of demonstrating God's existence, but that man has received his knowledge of God by way of faith in a primitive revelation. (40)

There have been proposed countless theories concerning the fact and the knowability of God's existence. However, according to St. Thomas, that God exists is a self-evident proposition in itself, but it is not self-evident to us. In other words, though the proposition "God is" is self-evident, we never know its self-evidence. We know the truthfulness of the proposition only through demonstration, not a priori (through the cause) but a posteriori (through the effects).

"Therefore I say that this proposition 'God exists' is self-evident, for the predicate is the same as the subject, for God is His own existence. Now, because we do not know the essence of God, the proposition is not self-evident to us, but needs to be demonstrated by things that are more known to us though less known in their nature -- namely by effects." (41)

That the fact of God's existence can be demonstrated is asserted by St. Thomas; after having established the distinction between a priori and a posteriori demonstration, he states:

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"When an effect is better known to us than its cause, we proceed to a knowledge of its cause. And from every effect the existence of its proper cause can be demonstrated, so long as its effects are better known to us; because, since every effect depends on its cause, if the effect exists the cause must pre-exist. Hence the existence of God, in so far as it is not self evident to us, can be demonstrated from those of His effect which are better known to us." (42)

NATURE OF PROOFS IN GENERAL

Having established the possibility of demonstrating God's existence, we proceed to a consideration of the nature of the proofs. To begin with, we must bear in mind the nature of the god of Aristotle; consequently we cannot expect to find in Aristotle explicitly stated proofs for the existence of God, the Christian notion of Whom we have derived from St. Thomas. However, the proofs are, at least, implicitly found in those passages where Aristotle speaks of the principles of motion, cause, order, etc. in general.

The Thomistic proofs are formulated both in the Summa Theologica and in the Contra Gentiles. In both works the proofs are substantially the same; they differ only in their manner of exposition. Generally the proofs as found in the Summa Theologica are presented in a more simplified form since it is addressed to beginners, as we read in the prologue - -

"Because the Doctor of Catholic truth ought not only to teach the proficient but also to instruct the beginners, we propose in this book to treat of whatever belongs to the Christian religion, in such a way that may tend to instruction of beginners." (43)

In the Summa Contra Gentiles the demonstrations are more philosophical and minute since it was written by St. Thomas to refute the errors of the schismatics and the unbelief of the pagans. (44)

God's existence is proven by St. Thomas in five ways. There must exist a first mover who Himself is unmoved; there is a first efficient cause, Himself uncaused. There must exist a being, the existence of which is absolutely necessary. There exists a being which is the highest of all beings and the cause of all; there exists a supreme and wise governor

of the universe as is evident from the order in creation --.

These five arguments are universal in range; all others can be reduced to them. According to St. Thomas all of the five proofs are conclusive; however, they do not all possess the same evidential character. From this point of view the proof based on the consideration of movement is superior to the other four. ⁽⁴⁵⁾ ⁽⁴⁶⁾ It is for this reason that St. Thomas goes at length to elucidate it with all completeness and to prove it in all its details.

Here we shall follow the order of St. Thomas in his *Summa Theologica*. We shall first give the proof as found in Aristotle's works and then that as proposed by St. Thomas. Having stated both we shall attempt to summarize and compare them and to conclude to what extent St. Thomas has improved them.

Having determined the nature of God according to Aristotle and St. Thomas, the demonstrability of God's existence and the nature of the proofs, let us proceed to the demonstration itself.

Chapter One

PROOF FROM MOTION

Since St. Thomas himself has stated (P. Ia, q.2, art. 3, ad resp.) that the argument for God's existence from motion possesses more evidence and is therefore superior to the other four, and further, since Aristotle's theory of the 'Unmoved Mover' is developed at length in his writings, it follows that more consideration should be devoted in this paper to this first proof than to any of the remaining four.

Argument of Aristotle

The first beginnings of the proof are to be found in Aristotle. Even Plato demanded that there should be something permanent and enduring in the flux of becoming. In general Aristotle's principle of an unmoved mover was fundamentally based on his teaching that a special mover was assigned to each of the spheres that produce the apparent progressions, retrogressions and stationary points of the heavenly bodies. Now, the unmoved mover hovers above all other gods, immaterial and separated from the world as a pure form. The stars alone were excluded from this governance, since they have souls within themselves and follow their own laws. However, as a development of Plato's theory that the soul is the source of all movement, there arose the new theory that the bodiless soul is a transcendental form moving the stars. This is the Unmoved Mover. Werner Jaeger says that,

"It is impossible for us to determine whether it was Aristotle himself, or some other Academic who first conceived the theory of the unmoved mover and applied it to the problem of stellar motion. The spirit of the idea is Platonic. Aris-

totle used it only for the highest principle, which is distinct from the world and has absolutely no motion." (47)

The direct proof, propounded by Aristotle and given by St, Thomas in his Summa Contra Gentiles (Chapter XIII), can be summarized as follows: Whatever is in motion is moved by another, and it is but a matter of experience that there is motion, for instance the movement of the sun. (48) Consequently the sun is in motion because something has moved it. But that which moves it is either moved or not. If it is moved it must be moved by another; if it is not moved we have proven our point, (49) namely that we must postulate an unmoved mover.

This unmoved mover of Aristotle we call God. However, if that which moves is itself moved, there must be another mover that imparts movement to it. Here we are faced with two possibilities, either we must proceed to infinity, or we must set up an immobile mover, but it is impossible to proceed to infinity, consequently we must assume a first unmoved mover. (50) (51) In this proof two propositions need to be established, first that everything in motion receives movement by some other thing, and secondly that we cannot progress or regress to infinity in a series of things moved and moving. Aristotle proves the first of these propositions by three arguments. The first presupposes three hypotheses. First, for a thing to be in motion of itself it must contain in itself the principle of its motion.

"And whenever the source of the motion of a thing is in the thing itself we say that the motion of that thing is natural." (52)

Secondly, the thing must be moved in 'toto'. It must be in motion in respect of its whole and not in respect of one of its parts; as an animal cannot be said to be in motion of itself, for, in that case, a part of the animal, the foot, moves another part. "But as a matter of fact that which primarily moves itself cannot contain a single part that moves

itself or a number of parts each of which moves itself." (53) Third-
ly, anything that is in motion must be divisible and have parts, since,
according to Aristotle, everything that is in motion is divisible. (54)(55)

With these three assumptions the proof of Aristotle in general is somewhat according to these lines. We have assumed that a self-moving body is moved entirely, hence if one part would cease to move the whole would be at rest. But, if one part remained at rest while another was in motion it would no longer be the whole which is set in motion but a part. And nothing moves of itself if it depends upon another even for its being at rest. Likewise, if the repose of one thing depends on the repose of another, so also the movement of one thing depends on the movement of another, and, consequently, it does not set itself in motion. ----- And since the thing which we assumed to be in motion does not set itself in motion, it follows necessarily that everything in motion depends on the movement of another. (56) "Then all things that are in motion must be moved by something." (57)

The second and third Aristotelian arguments of less import are very briefly: Everything that is in motion is set in motion either by itself or by accident; if moved by accident it does not set itself in motion; if it sets itself in motion, it is moved either by violence or by nature; if it is moved by nature it is moved either by its own nature, like the animal, or by another, like the stars and planets. Thus all that is in motion is moved by something else. (58) The third proof is the following. -- Nothing is at the same time, in reference to the same thing, both in act and in potency. But everything is in potency in as far as it is set in motion, for movement is the actualizing of that which is in potency. Now all things which impart movement are in act, since nothing acts unless it is already in act. Consequently, nothing is at the same time both mover in act and moved in potency.

(59)

Therefore nothing moves itself.

To prove the second assumption that it is impossible to progress or regress to infinity we shall consider only the second of the three arguments proposed by Aristotle, since it seems to be most to the point and most conclusive; it is as follows: if a series of things moved and moving are arranged in order, i.e. if they form a series in which each thing gives movement to the next, it is inevitable that, if the first mover disappears or ceases to move, none of the following things will be either moved or moving. It is in fact the first mover that imparts the power of movement to all the others. Now if we deal with an infinite series of things moved and moving, there will be no first mover, and all things, then, will function as intermediate movers. Consequently in the absence of a first mover nothing will be moved and there will be no movement in the world. (60) Experience testifies to its existence, and therefore there must be a first mover, and if that be so then we cannot establish an infinite series of things moving one another.

These, then, are the proofs of the two propositions which form the foundation of the proof by which Aristotle establishes the existence of a first immobile mover.

Argument of St. Thomas

It is very easy to see that to St. Thomas Aristotle's conception of a first mover coincides with the Christian conception of God. For in his Contra Gentiles the greater part of the proof for God's existence is the proof from motion and this in turn is the argument as proposed by Aristotle. "In the first place we shall give the arguments by which Aristotle sets out to prove God's existence."⁽⁶¹⁾ In the Summa Theologica however, without any reference to Aristotle, the Angelic Doctor proposes the following proof; it is not difficult to note how closely it adheres to the argumentation of the Philosopher.

While speaking of motion in his proof for the existence of an unmoved mover Aristotle referred primarily to loco-motion; St. Thomas considers it in the sense of passing from potentiality into act. A thing is in motion only in so far as it is in potentiality to that towards which it is in motion; a thing moves inasmuch as it is in act.

"But nothing can be reduced from potentiality to actuality, except by something in a state of actuality. Thus that which is actually hot, as fire, makes wood which is potentially hot, to be actually hot, and thereby moves and changes it. Now it is not possible that the same thing should be at once in actuality and potentiality in the same respect, but only in different respects. For that which is actually hot cannot simultaneously be potentially hot, but it is simultaneously potentially cold. It is therefore impossible that in the same respect and in the same way a thing should be both mover and moved, i.e. that it should move itself. Therefore whatever is in motion must be put in motion by another. If that by which it is put in motion be itself put in motion, then this also must needs be put in motion by another, and that by another again. But this cannot go on to infinity, because then there would be no first mover and consequently no other mover, seeing that subsequent movers move only inasmuch as they are put in motion by the first mover; as the staff moves only because it is put in motion by the hand. Therefore it is necessary to arrive at a first mover, put in motion by no other; and this everyone understands to be God."⁽⁶²⁾

Summary of the Proof from Motion

Though it is evident from St. Thomas' proof in the Contra Gentiles (Chapter XIII) that he follows very closely the reasoning of Aristotle we must nevertheless bear in mind the infinite distinction and difference between the immobile of Aristotle and the God of St. Thomas. In the Summa Theologica St. Thomas states the opinion that "It is necessary to arrive at a first mover, put in motion by no other, and this everyone understands to be God."⁽⁶³⁾ St. Thomas hardly expects us to accept as the whole essence of the Christian God that which Aristotle has proven to be his first mover. For, we can attain the whole proof only when we have developed all of the Divine attributes and perfections which human reason can attain. In his Compendium Theologiae St. Thomas proves all the attributes and perfections of God from this single principle of motion.⁽⁶⁴⁾ One will have noticed in the preceeding demonstration the absence of all reference to any beginning of movement in time and the narrowness of the conclusion. The argument adheres strictly to its premises; it is bound by its limits and in no way steps beyond them. It comes inevitably to the conclusion of a first mover unmoved - - and there it stops. For the simple reason that nothing more can be concluded with the idea of motion with which the argument started. So firmly built is this argument there is no possibility of its ever being disproved, mainly because there is no question here of movement beginning in time. It is not the question of a present reality demanding a cause in the past. It is merely a question of the present universe, a question of movement or change as we experience it here and now, and the logically drawn conclusion that such movement or change simply does not follow without there being a first movement giving movement to all

things. The question of time makes no difference, for even if, sometime in the future, it is proven, even beyond all doubt that the world is eternal, this proof will remain just as valid and conclusive as it is today, simply because, eternity of the world or not, the fact of movement and change is here, as experience proves. The effect is still with us, and consequently its cause cannot be denied. (65) (66)

Chapter Two

PROOF FROM CAUSALITY

Argument of Aristotle

Aristotle does not explicitly present an argument from efficient causality, but the principles, at least, are found in his *Metaphysics* where he shows that in no case can causes progress or regress 'ad infinitum', but at the same time in every case there must be a first cause. The Philosopher proposes the following line of reasoning: there is evidently a first principle, and the cause of things can neither be an infinite series nor infinitely various in kind. That one thing cannot proceed from another ad infinitum we have already proven in the argument from motion, and consequently we need not repeat it here. And for the same reason neither can the sources of movement form an endless series nor can final causes proceed 'ad infinitum'.

"For in the case of intermediates, which have a last term and a term prior to them, the prior must be the cause of the later terms. For if we had to say which of the three is the cause, we should say the first, surely not the last, for the final term is the cause of none; nor should we say the intermediate for it is

the cause only of one (it makes no difference whether there is one intermediate or more, nor whether they are infinite or finite in number). But of series which are infinite in this way and of the infinite in general, all of the parts down to that now present are alike intermediates; so that if there is no first, there is no cause at all." (67)

Having established a necessary first cause, Aristotle demands that, since the first cause is eternal, it is impossible that it be destroyed. For, since progress of causes in the upward direction is not infinite and since that which is infinite cannot be destroyed, our first eternal cause must itself be indestructible. (68)

Because of the fact that an infinite regression is repugnant, we set up a first cause, itself uncaused, and for the simple reason that infinite progression is repugnant likewise we must inevitably come to a final cause which is the end towards which all things else tend. If there is a last term the process will not be infinite; if there is no such term there will be no final cause, and we will "eliminate the good without knowing it." (69)

Argument of St. Thomas

Again it is interesting to note that in the Summa Contra Gentiles St. Thomas again takes his proof from Aristotle, concluding of course, that the 'first efficient cause' of Aristotle, we call God. (70) However, in the Summa Theologica St. Thomas proposes a proof, though fundamentally identical with that of the Philosopher, yet differs in its mode of presentation. An efficient cause is one which by its own action produces an effect; this effect may, then, be the efficient cause of another, and this of another, so that the progress may be repeated time and time again. As a thing moved cannot be moved of itself, but must have its motion from without, the same is true of a thing caused.

"There is no case known (neither is it indeed possible) in which a thing is found to be the efficient cause of itself; for so it would be prior to itself, which is impossible." (71)
"Now in efficient causes it is not possible to go on to infinity because in all efficient causes following in order, the first is the cause of the intermediates, and the intermediate is the cause of the ultimate cause, whether the intermediate cause be several or one only. Now, to take away the cause is to take away the effect. Therefore, if there be no first cause among efficient causes, there will be no ultimate or intermediate causes." (72)

To briefly summarize, we cannot have an infinite chain of causes, for then there would be no first cause and consequently no intermediate causes nor last cause. It is then of necessity that we must come to a first cause to account for the rest of the causes and effects, the existence of which our own experience gives abundant evidence. Since it is the first cause it must be uncaused, since there is no cause prior to it, producing it. This uncaused first cause is God.

Summary of the Proof from Causality

Having given both Aristotle's and St. Thomas' arguments for the existence of God as an uncaused first cause, we shall consider the two in the light of St. Thomas' commentary on the works of Aristotle. After repeating briefly and paraphrasing the argument as proposed in the XII book of the Metaphysics, St. Thomas continues in this vein: as long as a cause has the notion of an intermediate cause it cannot be the first moving cause. Just as a first moving cause is required for a second cause, so likewise before every mediate cause there must be a first cause, which in no way is an intermediate cause in the sense that it has another cause before it. But if one should set up a progression of moving causes ad infinitum, it would follow that every cause is an intermediate one. For if one of the many were not an intermediate cause,

it would either be the first or the last, but if it is neither one the series cannot be infinite and we must consequently set up a first cause from which all come and a final cause towards which all go. (73)

We might then ask, how valid is this proof? Basically its principle is as absolutely certain as that for the proof from motion. Just as there is a first and consequent mover and motion, so also there is a permanent and dependent existence. With this established fact the two arguments by which we prove the existence of a first cause are nearly the same as those we used to postulate a prime mover. The first is, that whatever is caused is caused by another; nothing can be its own cause for it would necessitate that it exist prior to itself which is evidently repugnant and impossible. The second is that there can be no progress or regress to infinity in a chain of subordinated causes; the proof here, like the preceeding one for motion, abstracts from the question whether the world is eternal or had a beginning in time.

We are thus led to the source of being, to a supreme efficient cause which is not caused; we can, then, identify it with the prime mover, which we have already proven to be the source of all motion and becoming. As a corollary we might conclude, a fortiori, it must be self-operative and exist per se. (74)

Chapter Three

PROOF BASED ON CONTINGENCY

Argument of Aristotle

The argument for the existence of God from possibility and necessity or contingency is found in the principles of Aristotle as he speaks of the various kinds of substances. There are, he says, three substances, two of them physical and one unmovable, and that it is absolutely necessary that there should be an eternal unmovable substance, for substances are the first of existing things and if substances are all destructible, then must all other things be too. It would then follow that no thing is eternal, in other words at one time absolutely nothing existed, and if this were true then even yet there would be nothing in existence, for then there would be no first cause. But this is repugnant (75) for all about us we see things existing. In yet another place Aristotle proposes this argument which is clearly based on the already proven unmoved mover.

"If something is moved it is capable of being otherwise than it is But since there is something which moves while itself unmoved, existing actually, this can in no other way be otherwise than as it is. the first mover then exists of necessity; and in so far as it exists by necessity, its mode of being is good, and it is in this sense a first principle. it is that which cannot be otherwise but can exist only in a single way." (76)

Argument of St. Thomas

Here again we find that St. Thomas' proof is a development of the fundamental notions and reasoning of Aristotle's Metaphysics. From an

examination of phenomena, from a study of their essential character and characteristics, we come to know that they are contingent and then we conclude to the existence of a necessary being; according to the thought of St. Thomas we follow this line of argumentation. In the world about us we find things that are possible to be and not to be, since at one time they are generated and at another they corrupt. But it is impossible for these things always to be, for that which is possible not to be at sometime is not. But if everything were possible not to be, then it is evidently possible that at one time there would have been nothing in existence. But if this were true then we are confronted with an impossible possibility, namely, if at one time nothing existed then even now nothing would exist, since, "that which does not exist only begins to exist by something already existing." (77) Therefore we must logically conclude that not all things are merely possible, and of necessity we must postulate the existence of a being the existence of which is necessary. St. Thomas continues that this being must have its necessity from itself. In the first place every necessary being either has its necessity caused by another or not. We have already proven, in the case of efficient causes, that it is impossible to go on to infinity in those things which are necessarily caused by another. Therefore, we must set up "the existence of some being having of itself its own necessity and not receiving it from another, but rather causing in others their necessity. This all men speak of as God." (78)

Summary of the Proof based on Contingency

Aristotle, after having shown that there are principle substances, begins to determine a necessarily eternal and immovable substance. He then presents the possibility that perhaps there is no necessarily existing being, but, if that is true, then all things are destructible.

And even now there would be nothing existing, but this is evidently repugnant; it is necessary then that there be some eternal substance (79) the existence of which is not contingent. Aristotle then takes up once more the question of motion and in particular the final cause towards which all things move. The final cause he says, produces motion by being loved, but all other things move by being moved. And once more from the principle of motion Aristotle goes on to prove the need of a necessary being. That which is movable is capable of being other than it is. But the first mover is immovable; it cannot, then, be otherwise than it is. And on this St. Thomas commentates:

"Whatever is moved as to position can be other than it is as to place, which is extrinsic, but it cannot be otherwise as regards its substance or as to the intrinsic disposition of its substance. Since, therefore, the first mover can be other than it is as to place but not as regards his essence, it is proper that the first mover, which is immovable and always in act, in no way can be contingent, since it cannot be moved. For the first mover is not moved by that motion by which it moves (others), and consequently it can in no way be moved, and thus it cannot be other than it is, whence it follows that the first mover exists of necessity. Therefore it is absolutely necessary, because it cannot not be." (80)

From this proof we can readily effect a transition from the necessary to the perfect being by the following 'a priori' method:

- 1) That being which actually and necessarily exists must have its existence as an essential attribute; in other words it must not only have existence, but it must be its own existence, since its essence and existence must be identified. (81)
- 2) A being which is its own existence cannot belong to any genus. "Since the existence of God is His essence, if He were in any genus, He would be in the genus 'being' because, since 'being' is predicated as an essential, it refers to the essence of a thing. But the Philosopher has shown that 'being' cannot be a genus, for every genus has differences distinct from its generic essence. Now no difference can exist distinct from being; for non-being cannot be a difference. It follows then that God is not in a genus." (82)
- 3) This being is preeminently perfect simply because any being which is its own existence must contain within itself every perfection of being. "All created perfections are in God. Hence He is spoken of as universally perfect, because He lacks not any excellence." (83) "Since, therefore, God is subsisting being itself nothing of the perfections of being can be wanting to Him." (84)

Chapter Four

PROOF BASED ON THE GRADES OF BEING

This proof for God's existence is developed from the fact that there are existent things which are more or less perfect than other things, in the process of which they form a ladder or series of beings from the less to the most perfect. Since, as we have several times already proven that it is impossible to proceed to infinity in any series of progression, we must come to the top of the series, to a being which is most perfect. But, as Glenn mentions in his "Theodicy", there is much useless argument and quibbling about the advisability of using the term 'perfect' in speaking of the different grades or degrees of perfection, on the grounds that perfection is an absolute term, not admitting comparison; it is then a positive without comparative or superlative. In other words a thing is either perfect or not perfect and that nothing more can be said about it. It would perhaps be best, to avoid this quibbling, to use such terms as good and true, which indeed we find in Aristotle and St. Thomas. (85)

It follows then that things which have degrees of good and better, more true and less true, demand the existence of that which is, without comparison, the best and truest as the ultimate criterion of their goodness and truth.

Argument of Aristotle

The principles of this proof are found in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, where, in the investigation of the different grades of things found in the world, he takes up the question of truth. The argument as there outlined is:

"We do not know a truth without its cause, and a thing has a quality in a higher degree than other things if in virtue of it the similar quality belongs to the other things as well; so that that which causes derivative truths to be true is most true. Hence the principle of eternal things must be always most true (for they are not merely sometimes true, nor is there any cause of their being, but they themselves are the cause of the being of other things) so that as each thing is in respect of being, so it is in respect of truth." (86)

In the same place Aristotle offers this example which clearly illustrates the point. Of all things which are more or less hot, fire is the hottest, because it is the cause and principle of heat as found in all other things; and for the same reason, of all things which are more or less good, more or less true, there must be one which is the best and the truest which is the cause and principle of goodness and truth as found in all the others. -- In yet another passage Aristotle produces a proof somewhat differing from the one above. We find a more or less in the nature of things about us; we do not say that two and three are equally even, nor do we say that he who thinks four things are five is just as wrong as he who says that they are a thousand.

"If then they are not equally wrong, obviously one is less wrong and therefore more right. If then, that which has more of any quality, is nearer the norm, there must be some truth to which the more true is nearer. And even if there is not, still there is already something better founded and liker the truth." (87)

In the first quotation Aristotle shows that that which is the highest in the respect of truth is likewise the highest being. Commenting on this St. Thomas asserts "He shows that those things which excell as true excell as being." (88) From the two quotations we can then draw the conclusion that, as there is something which is the most true and good, there is something which is supreme being, and with St. Thomas we say, "This we call God."

Argument of St. Thomas

St. Thomas' proof in the Contra Gentiles is merely a comment on the above arguments as taken from Aristotle. As to the first argument St. Thomas makes the assertion which we have quoted directly above. The second argument of the Philosopher St. Thomas paraphrases along this line:

"There is something supremely true from the fact that we see that of two false things one is falser than the other, wherefore it follows that one also is truer than the other. Now this is by reason of approximation to that which is supremely and simply true. Wherefore we may conclude that there is something which is supremely being. And this we call God." (89)

The proof as given in the Summa Theologica is indeed practically identical with the first. Among beings we find some which are more good, true and noble, and some which are less. Now, 'more' and 'less' are predicated of different beings only in so far as they resemble, each in its own way, that which is the maximum. Using the example as found in the Metaphysics of Aristotle, "A thing is said to be hotter in so far as it more nearly resembles that which is most hot," St. Thomas rightfully concludes, that there is something which is truest, something best, something noblest, and consequently something that is uttermost being. From this proof St. Thomas logically draws the following argument:

"The maximum in any genus is the cause of all in that genus; as fire which is the maximum of heat is the cause of all hot things. Therefore there must be something which is to all beings the cause of their being, goodness and every other perfection, and this we call God." (90)

We might ask why this addition in which St. Thomas identifies the Supreme Being with the Universal Cause. If we take the term 'supreme being' in the absolute sense, it evidently follows that this supreme being is identified with God. However, its inclusion is more easily understood if it is taken in a more relative sense. For in such a case it is not im-

mediately evident that this supreme being is God; for it may be a very high degree of being, yet finite. By identifying it with the supreme universal cause, St. Thomas more conclusively establishes the identification of the supreme being and God. (91)

Summary of the Proof based on the Grades of Being

In his commentary on the second book of the Metaphysics St. Thomas, after commenting on the division and respective objects of theoretical and practical knowledge, takes up the question of truth, "Primo ostendit quod ad philosophiam primam pertineat cognitio veritatis." One has knowledge of the truth only through its cause, from which it is apparent that of all true things about which we have knowledge, there are causes which themselves have truth. St. Thomas then asserts that the true cannot be known through the false but only through that which is true, and that he joins to the universal proposition which states: that which causes something in others is said to be the greatest among them. There is again offered the example of fire being the cause of all heat, and consequently the greatest in that genus. From which St. Thomas once more concludes:

"The name of truth is not proper to any species but it is held in common by all beings. Whence, because that which is the cause of truth, is a cause sharing with the effect its name and common notion it follows that that, which is the cause of things which themselves are true, be itself most true." (92)

"From which Aristotle further concludes, that the principle of those things which are eternal, namely the heavenly bodies, must of necessity be most true. This proof is really one 'a posteriori' (from intelligible effects), and not 'a priori' (by which it differs from the proof of St. Anselm). It does not start from the notion of God but from the multiplicity of rational proofs arranged in ascending order, until it fi-

nally reaches the source of all truth.

"From the fact that truths known by the intellect are eternal with regard to what is thus known, one cannot conclude that the soul is eternal, but that the truths known have their foundation in something eternal. They have their foundation in that first Truth, which, as the universal cause, contains within itself all truth." (93)

Chapter Five

PROOF FROM THE ORDER IN THE UNIVERSE

The fifth proof presented by St. Thomas is that based on the order in the world, and to the ordinary person unlearned in things philosophical, this argument bears more force than the four preceeding. The previous proof which concluded from the multiplicity of things to a higher unity has prepared the way in so far as the present proof argues from the orderly arrangement in this multiplicity to the existence of a single intelligent designer. This argument is often called teleological, derived from the Greek, *Τέλος*, which means 'end', or in this sense, 'purpose', 'goal' and 'aim'. It is also called the argument from design, since things in the world are manifestly made and designed to do a certain thing, namely to achieve a certain end.

Argument of Aristotle

Of all the proofs this is evidently the least developed in the works of Aristotle. It is also of interest to note that in St. Thomas it is the only proof of the five in which he does not make some reference to Aristotle.

"We must consider in which of two ways the nature of the universe contains the good and the highest good, whether as something separate and by itself, or as the order of the parts. Probably in both ways, as an army does; for its good is found both in its order and in its leader, and more in the latter; for he does not depend on the order, but it depends on him. -- and all things are (94) ordered together somehow -- for all are ordered together to one end."

From this Aristotle proceeds to show how freemen, slaves and animals in respective lesser degrees each contributes a share for the good of the whole. Though the principles as here laid down are basically those of St. Thomas, it is clear that this argument is the least conclusive of the five as proposed by Aristotle. However, there is at least implicit worth, in so far as it concludes that all things are ordained to an end, and that end is the highest good.

From separated quotations of Aristotle's Physics however, we can develop a proof which follows very closely that of St. Thomas in his Summa Theologica. Namely, that we see natural bodies, lacking intelligence, acting always or nearly always in the same way towards a definite end.

"We do not ascribe to chance or mere coincidence heat in the summer but only in the winter; we see that it ordinarily snows in the winter and rains in the summer. If, then, it is agreed that things are either the result of coincidence or for an end, and that these cannot be the result of coincidence or spontaneity, it follows that they must be for an end." (95)

"This is the most obvious in the animals other than man; they make things neither by art nor after inquiry or deliberation. Wherefore people discuss whether it is by intelligence or by some other faculties that these creatures work." (96)

"Again in plants too we find the relation of means to an end, though the degree of organization is less." (97)

It is evident then that even among non-intellectual creation we find the ordering of means toward an end in almost always the same way. But, as Aristotle continues, "This end and means toward it may come about by chance. But when an event takes place always, or for the most part, it is not incidental or by chance." (98) And for that reason it follows that these non-intellectual agents are directed in their action by some intelligent being, who is the governor of all creation.

Argument of St. Thomas

Since St. Thomas does not find the origin of this proof in Aristotle, we might ask from whence it came. Etienne Gilson asserts that there is no need to determine the philosophical origin of this proof, since the idea of God as the ruler of the universe was the common teaching of Christian Theology, and there are numerous texts in Holy Scripture upon which it is based. The same author declares that St. John Damascene supplied the model for his argument. (99) And this St. Thomas asserts in his Summa Contra Gentiles where he offers the following proof.

"It is impossible for contrary and discordant things to accord in one order always or frequently except by someone's governance, whereby each and all are made to tend to a definite end. Now we see that in the world things of different natures accord in one order, not seldom and fortuitously, but always or for the most part. Therefore it follows that there is someone by whose providence the world is guided. This we call God." (100)

The proof as proposed in the Summa Theologica follows this line:
We see that things which lack intelligence such as animals, plants, and natural bodies, act for an end; and this is clearly evidence from experience, for we have observed that they act always or nearly always in the same way so that they might attain the best end. It is further evident that that which lacks intelligence cannot act toward an end, unless it be guided and directed by some being which is endowed with knowledge and intelligence. The conclusion follows that there must exist some intelligent being who directs all natural things toward their end. And this we call God. (101)

Thus finality, or relation to an end, is clearly evidenced; St. Thomas is here speaking of internal finality not external; of the finality which is observable in things destitute of intelligence taken separately. But even this internal finality has often been denied especially by those

who uphold the theory of mechanistic evolution in its entirety. We might then ask does this relation of means to an end, this orderly arrangement of things, demand an intelligent cause. The answer is that the finality which we observe in nature is the direction of operations to ends, precisely as ends, i.e., in full view of the end to be attained. In other words the means are related to the end precisely in so far that it is in the ends that they have their reason of being; their whole constitution is directed towards the attainment of these ends. It is then evident that such a relation can be known and established only by a being who knows the reasons of being of things, namely by an intelligent being.
(102)

Chapter Six

SUMMARY OF ALL THE PROOFS - UNITY

The different ways followed by St. Thomas to attain to the existence of God are evidently distinct when considered each by itself, yet when considered all together and in relation to one another, there is no less evidently a marked affinity. The result of each of these demonstrations is to move us to admit the existence of a divine attribute which can be predicated only of the Self-Subsisting Being, as St. Thomas explicitly proves in the Summa Theologica.
(103)

These five attributes proper to God are: 'primum movens', 'primum efficiens', 'primum necessarium', 'primum et maxime ens', 'primum gubernans intelligendo'. The derivation of these attributes is clearly developed by Cajetan in his commentary on the Summa Theologica.
(104)

These attributes can only belong to a being whose essence and existence are identical.

1. The first Mover, since it is not moved, does not pass from potency into act, for it is always in act and consequently contains no potentiality. Since the mode of action of a thing is a consequence of its mode of being it follows that, if the first Mover is pure act in the order of operation, it must also be so in the order of being. But if such be true it cannot belong to the nature of such a being to be merely capable of existing. It will therefore be of the essential nature of the first Mover to exist essentially; its essence then will be identified with its existence.
2. Since this first Being is uncaused it must contain in itself the cause of its existence. But it cannot cause itself, because, as has been shown, it would suppose a contradictory, but being uncaused it cannot receive it from another, and so does not receive it at all; but its existence is its essence.
3. If a being is a necessary one, i.e. absolutely incapable of not existing, it must have its existence as an essential predicate. It does not receive existence. It is existence.
4. The Supreme Being cannot be composite and therefore its existence cannot be a part of its essence; it must be its essence, and its essence will be its existence.
5. If the fifth, or teleological argument, is considered apart from the others it does not establish anything more than the existence of a most powerful intelligence, but if we associate it with the other arguments, as we rightfully should, it follows that this Supreme Intelligence must be the absolutely perfect being upon which all nature depends, and the same identification of essence and existence holds here as it did for the fourth way. (105)

We see therefore that all of the five ways lead to the same end, namely to a being who exists of his very nature since its essence and existence are identified. This is especially clear in the third way which shows the existence of a necessary being, and it is here that we find the essential distinction between God and the world, in as much as in God alone are essence and existence identical. All five proofs conclusively establish the existence of a transcendent God, distinct from the world, absolutely unchangeable, wholly perfect, subsisting being, Truth and Goodness, and the supreme Intelligence which is the source of all

the order in the world. ----- Therefore we have evidently arrived at the existence of God as He is conceived of by the Theists.

Chapter Seven

RELATION BETWEEN ARISTOTLE AND ST. THOMAS

In conclusion, then, let us consider the relation between St. Thomas and Aristotle to see in what ways Aristotle influenced St. Thomas, and on the other hand how St. Thomas improved Aristotle.

Altogether St. Thomas wrote thirteen works in commentary of Aristotle, but, unlike his master, Albert the Great, St. Thomas adheres closely to the text. Then too, St. Albert kept his commentary on Aristotle quite distinct from his theology, while the supreme achievement of St. Thomas was the blending of philosophy and theology into a harmonious whole. For in the third chapter of the first book of the Summa Contra Gentiles he defines the boundaries of reason and revelation, and, oddly enough, he bases his decision on a principle of Aristotle which he quotes from Boethius.

"Not every truth is made known in the same way, 'as it is the part of an educated man to seek for conviction in each subject, only so far as the nature of the subject allows', as the Philosopher rightfully observes as quoted from Boethius." (I Ethics, iii, 4) (106)

In other words there are certain things that are true about God which wholly surpass the capability of human reason. But at the same time there can be no conflict between the teaching of reason and revelation since they both ultimately proceed from God who is Supreme Truth. St. Thomas' precise distinction between the boundaries of reason and reve-

lation might be criticized on the ground that it would lead to Deism. But this criticism is unfounded if we remember that St. Thomas was anxious to show that the Christian God is not, like an Olympian deity, content to sit aloft and watch the world go around, but a God that has made the great and small alike and has equal care for all.

The problem before St. Thomas was to reconcile Aristotle's whole idea of nature with Christian revelation. Hans Meyer has caught this thought in the words:

"Sometimes St. Thomas is content with a slight correction while at other times he makes a substantial change by filling an Aristotelian concept with a Christian content. In general St. Thomas remains conscious of the great abyss separating Christian thought from that of Aristotle, but his interpretation is predominantly favorable." (107)

St. Thomas himself hints at this attitude in the Summa Theologica, (IIa, IIae, q 161, a. 1, ad 5). And it is here that we find the clue to the few vital points on which St. Thomas definitely broke with Aristotle. They naturally pertain to Theodicy; the nature of God, creation 'ex nihilo', personal immortality, etc. Here, however, we are concerned only with the first. We have already learned that the god of Aristotle is pure actuality, which he calls 'thought of thought' (*νοήσις νοήσεως*). This pure thought then thinks only of himself and thus the cares and affairs of creation are beyond the concern of the God of Aristotle. This complete isolation of the Deity is combated by St. Thomas; for the Christian God, as the Aristotelian God, is form without matter, pure actuality and absolute perfection, but, and herein lies the difference, the God of St. Thomas is not only the remote cause toward which all things move, but He is the efficient cause of all things.

"And since God is the cause of all things by His knowledge, His knowledge is extended as far as His causality extends. As the active power of God extends itself not only to forms, which are the forms of universality, but also to matter The knowledge

of God must extend itself to singular things, which are individualized by matter." (108)

After treating the Divine Will St. Thomas proceeds to consider the Providence of God, which has a special care and concern for every part of creation, even to the very lowest forms, thereby altogether surpassing the Aristotelian notion of Divinity thinking only of and on itself.

"For the God who is wrapped in self-contemplation St. Thomas substitutes the personal God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God who is nigh to all of them who call upon Him in truth." (109)

Aristotle is indeed an incipient Thomist, and the philosopher who is also a disciple of St. Thomas might well say with Jacques Maritain:

"The doctrine of Aristotle did not bear its purest fruit except in the mind of St. Thomas. Not only did St. Thomas correct and develop Aristotle, he also transfigured him in placing him in the higher light of faith and theology. But since he has always remained faithful to all the principles of Aristotle one may say that he is much more purely Aristotelian than Aristotle." (110)

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