

CREATION ACCORDING TO THE TEACHING OF ST. THOMAS

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the College  
Department of St. Meinrad in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for a Degree of Bachelor of Arts.

John F. Schwenk  
May 10, 1955  
St. Meinrad Seminary  
St. Meinrad, Indiana



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
I Introduction-----	1
II Signification and reality of creation-----	1
A) Creation logically considered-----	3
B) Creation metaphysically considered.-----	5
1) Creation as the production of things under the aspect of being-----	6
2) No material cause in creation-----	8
III The act of creation proper to God alone.-----	9
A) The uniqueness of pure act-----	9
B) The power to create not communicable to creatures.-----	10
IV No necessity either for a world co-existential with God or a world having a beginning.-----	12
A) The opinion of the Augustinian School which maintain the necessity of a world with a beginning.-----	12
B) The followers of Averroes who maintain the necessity of an eternal world.-----	15
V The mode of action proper to God.-----	17
VI The role of the intellect and will of God in creation.-----	20
A) The two-fold pre-existence of creatures in the intellect of God.-----	20
B) No repugnance to the simplicity of God's intellect.-----	22
C) The simplicity of the will of God and the diversity creatures willed.-----	23
VII Conclusion.-----	26
VIII Footnotes and Bibliography.-----	28, 29, 30, 31

## INTRODUCTION

Having advanced in our study of metaphysics to the absolute certainty of a being who is Pure Act and to the knowledge of what can be said of Him by way of remotion and by positive affirmation, we come to the consideration of God as Creator. Creator is a predicate which can be said of Him alone. However, it is not a property of God in the sense that creation necessarily flows from His essence. For God does not create out of necessity of His nature but by the freedom of His will. Neither does it imply a real relation of God to His creatures when we say God is the Creator,<sup>1)</sup> for God remains completely unchanged when He creates and is not perfected in any way by it. Although there is a real transcendental relation of creature to God, a relation of dependence in being upon the First Cause.<sup>2)</sup> Furthermore, we cannot assign a reason why God created except that He created out of the abundance of His goodness.<sup>3)</sup>

In this work on the teaching of creation according to St. Thomas we are mainly interested in the clarification of the notion of creation, its unique character as effectible by God alone, the problem of the eternity of the world, and the role of God's intellect and will in the action of creation.

## THE SIGNIFICATION AND THE REALITY OF CREATION

Now let us see what the name, creation, signifies. Creation does not name the production of a particular being from a particular agent, but rather the production of all things which have being in any way from the

universal cause, who is God. 4) In the production of a particular being from a particular agent, matter or a subject to be actualized is presupposed for the action of the agent. But if the production of whatever has being, either actually or potentially, from the First Principle is considered, then it is impossible that there would be some being presupposed, as matter to be determined. And so we can define creation as the production of all being from nothing. 5)

But to say that there is a change from nothing to something seems-----contradictory. However this contradiction is resolved when it is shown that creation is not a movement, 6) but only is known after the manner of a movement or change. St. Thomas expresses this when he is discussing the meaning of the word, creation; 7)

Creation is not a change, except according to a mode of understanding. For a change means that the same something should be different now from what it was previously... But in creation, by which the whole substance of a thing is produced, the same thing can be taken as different now and previously according to intellect only, so that a thing is understood as first not existing at all, and afterwards as existing.

But if creation is not a mutation, what is it? Creation can be called the act of God whereby creatures begin to exist or as St. Thomas says; 8)

Now creation, as stated above (A.2), cannot be taken for a movement of the creature previous to its reaching the term of movement, but denotes the accomplished fact. Wherefore creation does not denote an approach to being, nor a change effected by the Creator, but merely a beginning of existence, and a relation to the Creator from whom the creature receives its being.

Consequently this preposition, from, in the definition of creation, the production of all being from nothing, does not indicate a relationship

of a material cause but an order only, 9) in that after nothing, things were produced. However this order is not something in reality but in our understanding only, since two real terms are needed for an order. For non-ens or nothing is not a reality and consequently there can be no real reference of non-ens or nothing to being. Non-ens denotes the negation or the complete absence of any being whatever. But because we understand creation as if before something was not and then afterwards something was, we understand non-ens as the absence of that which was before and being or ens as that which was afterwards. And so the relation we understand between nothing and being in the notion of creation is only a rational relation. But why do we understand creation in this way? 10)

#### CREATION LOGICALLY CONSIDERED

The connatural object of our intellect is the essence of sensible things. And we do not know directly and immediately immaterial things, for whatever we know comes to us through our senses. We, therefore, according to our mode of understanding must understand immaterial things according to our knowledge of sensible realities. As a result we signify these immaterial realities as we understand them. So the signification of creation depends and follows upon our understanding of actions which flow from natural or sensible agents. For these actions of sensible agents have some similarity with the act of creation in that both are actions of efficient causes producing some effect. Because of this that the actions of sensible agents have an analogical sameness with the act of creation, our understanding and signification of creation follows our understanding of the actions of

sensible agents. For we are able to understand immaterial realities to the extent that the sensible objects of our intellect have something in common with the immaterial realities.

Now every action that goes out from an agent, which we know directly and immediately or which is a connatural object of our intellect, is that action which reduces something from potency to act, and in regard to which there is always the same subject which now lacks some determination and afterwards obtains that determination. But the action of God in creation does not go forth to transform any pre-existing subject. Or in other words God does not rely upon a material cause when He acts in creation, as natural agents do, but the efficiency of God is the only causality present in the production of things, as will be seen later. So whatever action of an agent that we connaturally know is that action which produces some form of a mutation, that is that action as a result of the causality of which, a subject, either actually or potentially existent, receives a new form or determination.

And in keeping with the way we know immaterial realities it follows that we would understand creation after the manner of a mutation. But there is no material cause in creation. Consequently, when we form the notion of creation, we must exclude the imperfection which is involved in the notion of actions of natural agents, as actions going forth to produce a change in some pre-existing subject. And this is why we define creation as the production of things from nothing. The, from nothing, implies a negation of any material cause. But in forming the notion of creation the intellect retains the idea of a before and after involved in

sensible changes, <sup>11)</sup> and so relates non-ens or nothing to being as if non-ens, or nothing was the before and being or the production of things as the after of creation. So our definition of creation can be aptly applied to signify that act of God whereby things begin to exist. St. Thomas in speaking of the reality and the notion of creation has this to say: <sup>12)</sup>

Now in creation there is nothing common in the ways above mentioned; for there is no common subject actually or potentially existent. Again there is no continuous time, if we refer to the creation of the universe, since there was no time when there was no world. And yet we may find a common subject, but a purely imaginary subject, in so far as we imagine one common time when there was no world and afterwards when the world had been brought into existence. For even as outside the universe there is no real magnitude, we can nevertheless picture one to ourselves; so before the beginning of the world there was no time and yet we can imagine one. Accordingly, creation is not in truth a change, but only in imagination, and not properly speaking, but metaphorically.

Since creation is an action which is not sensible to us in any way we find it hard to grasp. Gilson voices the difficulty of understanding creation when he says, "We have no name for it because it lies so entirely outside the range of human experience". <sup>13)</sup> Also St. Thomas speaks of actions which are without movement in the same light, "Which indeed is difficult to understand for those who are not able to abstract their consideration from those actions which are with movement". <sup>14)</sup>

#### CREATION METAPHYSICALLY CONSIDERED

The preceding discussion about the ratio of creation will become clearer when it is shown that creation is not a mutation. So let us now examine the nature and the different modes of action of finite agents and

of God. First of all every agent acts according as it is in act. Or the action of an agent is proportionate to the degree and perfection of its being.<sup>15)</sup> Now corporeal agents by reason of their composition of matter and form and their limited existence are thereby determined to a given mode of acting. Since their substance is not completely act, but partly potential on account of the principle of matter, these agents act according to their given form which is in act. And so in no natural agent is there found all the perfection possible, but each being is limited to a certain species by its intrinsic form. Furthermore, since every agent produces an effect which is similar to itself, these finite agents do not produce being as such but this or that being. Or rather they reduce some being which is in potency to this or that determined being.<sup>16)</sup> Now they do not cause the matter and form or the existence of the things they produce. If they were able to cause the matter and form in others, then they could also cause it in themselves which is impossible. For then they would cause themselves before they existed which is absurd. But rather they induce the form from the potentiality of the matter and cause the form to be in this or that particular matter. Neither are they the cause of the existence of things they produce, but only of their becoming, for as St. Thomas says,

For if an agent is not the cause of a form as such, neither will it be directly the cause of the being which results from that form; but it will be the cause of the effect only in its becoming.<sup>17)</sup>

CREATION THE PRODUCTION OF THINGS UNDER THE ASPECT OF BEING.



But God is subsisting being and is in no way potential. Or in other words God is the fulness of being and possesses the totality of all perfections and is not limited to any genus. On the other hand we know that things other than God possess being participatively. But whatever is found in various things by participation is necessarily caused by that to which it essentially agrees.<sup>18)</sup> For wherever there are found various degrees of a perfection so that it can be found more in one thing and less in another, there must be one being in which this perfection is found most perfectly. For if this perfection essentially belongs to each thing in which it is found, there could be found no reason why one thing would have more of this perfection than another. Now being or actuality in various degrees in different kinds of beings. Consequently there must be some being which has being most perfectly or there must be a being to which being essentially belongs. So, since there are beings which have being participatively or which have being in addition to and not flowing from their essence, then there must be some being which has being most perfectly, more perfectly than is had in participation; that is, this being must have being essentially. And this being is that whose essence is to be. And this being we call God. Therefore God is the cause of whatever has being either actually or potentially and does not act upon any presupposed matter which would be transmuted by His efficiency. For if God would in creation act upon some pre-existing subject, then that subject would be a being other than God which is not caused, which is impossible. The subject would have to be a being either actual or potential and would be a contingent being which is uncaused.

## NO MATERIAL CAUSE IN CREATION.

St. Thomas in his treatment of creation in De Potentia after showing that from the supreme efficiency of Gods' power that in the production of beings no material substrate is present, moves to the consideration of mutation as such and shows that no mutation from non-being to being is possible. He defines mutation as a transitus in which the same subject has itself now differently than before. <sup>19)</sup> But this same subject which admits of various forms is either a being in act or a being in potency. There is no other possibility. So inductively he shows that for motion strictly taken, alteration, augmentation and diminution, and local motion, some actually existing subject is the medium between the two terms of the movement. Also, for all other types of mutation including generation and corruption some subject is called for as a medium between the two terms. In the case of generation and corruption it would be prime matter which is pure potency. From this it can be seen that if the production of beings from nothing involved a mutation, then there must be a medium common to both terms, non-ens and ens, and it must be different both from non-ens and ens, if it is to be a common substrate for the change from non-being to being. However, aside from the fact that non-ens or nothing is not a real term and consequently any mutation is out of the question, there can be no middle substrate for a change from non-being to being. For either something is or it isn't. And if it is, it is either an actual or potential being. And it must be remembered that creation embraces the production of both actual and potential being. So, if creation were a mutation, then

there would have to be a substrate which would be neither being nor non-being. But there is no middle entity between non-being and being. A denial of this would involve a denial of the principle of contradiction. It is evident then that creation is not a mutation or movement.

#### THE ACT OF CREATION PROPER TO GOD ALONE.

Now let us move on to show that God is the only Creator and cannot delegate His power to create to creatures. To demonstrate this it will be necessary to show that there can be only one being which is pure act and that creatures can create neither by themselves nor instrumentally. Both that there be more than one supreme being and that creatures in any way create involve a metaphysical impossibility.

#### THE UNIQUENESS OF PURE ACT.

God is Subsisting Being. And there can be only one being whose essence is its act of existing. For there to be two or more beings which are pure act there must be some basis in them for their distinction. And the distinction or differentiation of any two beings must come from an addition of some difference as the generic nature is divided into species or through the multiplication of a specific nature in individuals of diverse signate matter. 20) But if God had some addition of signate matter, His being would not be subsistent as was proven above, but would be material or potential because of its further reference to its accidental determination and consequently His being would then be the actuality of some limited substance. Neither does God allow of any addition of difference since He

would no longer be subsisting being, but the act of existing plus the given form. And this would imply that one supreme being would be at the same time both pure act and deficient of that which some other supreme being would have, which is absurd. Therefore, there - - - - - is only one Creator and every being other than the Subsisting Being is caused.

#### THE POWER TO CREATE NOT COMMUNICABLE TO CREATURES

Now let us investigate why a caused being cannot create either by itself or instrumentally. First of all a creature of its own power cannot create. And to show this we propose the following reasoning. Every agent acts according as it is in act, for the mode of operation follows upon the mode of existence. The actions then of any finite being are determined to a particular species. Furthermore, the power of these finite agents is determined to produce effects similar to the agent, from this that every agent produces an effect similar to itself. And so a finite agent is able through its own action to be the cause of another only to this extent that it be of like species, not however of its substance as such. For this is impossible. If an agent does not produce the substance as such of another, then surely it does not produce the being of the thing which follows upon the form of the thing. Consequently created beings cannot create by their own power.

Secondly, neither can a creature act instrumentally to create another being. For all inferior agents or causes can be reduced to superior causes as instrumental to primary causes. And it is of the nature of an instrument that it be used according to its nature, since all superior

causes employ determined instruments to produce their effects. Now an instrument is never used, unless to cause something by way of movement. But creation is in no way a mutation or change. Therefore no being except God can create. 21)

In the Summa Theologiae, St. Thomas gives another proof for this. He states that when an instrument is used by a principal agent, besides sharing the efficacy of the principal cause, the instrument disposed by an efficacy proper to itself lends its own causality in the production of the effect of the principal agent; 22)

But such a thing cannot be, because the secondary instrumental cause does not participate in the action of the superior cause, except inasmuch as by something proper to itself it acts dispositively to the effect of the principal agent. If therefore it effects nothing according to what is proper to itself, it is used to no purpose; nor would there be any need of certain instruments for certain actions.

This is exemplified in a carpenter who uses a saw to cut a board. The saw by the sharpness of its edge lends causality of its own with the motion given it by the carpenter to produce the cut board. Now we have said that creation is the production of all being precisely as being. And a being must first exist before it can be used instrumentally. But just as soon as the supposed instrument of creation exists, then the effect of the principal agent or God has already been accomplished, the production of being as being, thereby including also the very being of the instrument. As a result the instrumental cause would not be exercising any causality at all in creation. And so instrumental causality in creation is ruled out, for nothing can act instrumentally or otherwise to cause its own being. 23)

NO NECESSITY EITHER FOR A WORLD CO-EXISTENTIAL  
WITH GOD OR A WORLD WITH A BEGINNING

In discussing creation the question of the eternity of the world arises. St. Thomas in speaking of the eternity of the world upholds the possibility both of an eternal world and a world having a beginning and maintains the non-necessity of each possibility. He shows that it cannot be demonstrated that the world did not always exist and that the world being eternal or co-existential with God is not repugnant to reason.

THE OPINION OF THE FOLLOWERS OF THE AUGUSTINIAN SCHOOL  
WHO MAINTAIN THE NECESSITY OF A WORLD WITH A BEGINNING.

St. Thomas lists a number of arguments held by the Augustinian School, St. Bonaventure,<sup>24</sup>) and others who attempt to prove that the world had to have had a beginning. They are as follows. Everything which is made has a beginning of its duration. But God created the world. Therefore the world had a beginning. And even if the world always existed, it would be equal to God in duration. But this is impossible. Also if the world were eternal then generation would also have been eternal. But the father is said to be the efficient cause of the son. Consequently there would be an infinite series of efficient causes. But this is impossible.

In answer to the first argument it can be said that an efficient cause which acts by moving another necessarily precedes the effect in time. However, this is not the case with efficient causes which act instantaneously. Now God's creative act is not an action involving motion, for in creation the totality of being of things is produced. And since God

does not act by moving, His action is instantaneous and not successive. Consequently it does not necessarily follow that God is prior in duration to creatures. Furthermore, since God's efficiency always remains the same and since He is able to create, then if He so willed, He could have created from eternity. St. Thomas affirms this;

It belongs to the notion of eternity to have no beginning of duration; while it belongs to the notion of a created thing to have a beginning of its origin but not of duration; unless we take creation according to the teaching of faith. <sup>25)</sup>

It can be replied to the second argument that if the world were created from eternity or always existed, then God and creatures would be equal to this extent that both would not have a beginning of duration. But they would be different since the world is not eternal strictly speaking. For the notion of eternity excludes both a beginning of duration and any succession of being. And as such only God can be said to be eternal. For God is in no way changeable either substantially or accidentally. Now every created being has some admixture of potentiality and consequently is subject to some type of succession in being. Whatever is subject to mutability has priority and posteriority either in regards to its substantial or accidental actuality. Corporeal or corruptible beings, since they have matter which is subject to other forms, are transmutable as regards their substance and are always suffering accidental change whether it be alteration, augmentation and diminution, or local motion. On the other hand, immaterial beings such as separated human souls and angels are not transmutable as regards their substance since they lack matter subject to contrariety, but suffer a succession of accidental actuality according to the operations of their intellect and will. <sup>26)</sup>

St. Thomas has summarized all of this in a few lines:

...and so duration which is had wholly all at once is properly of God alone and not of any other creature, because God alone is immutable in regards to His essence and in regards to all those things which can be considered concerning His essence. However, every creature is variable either according to its substance or some disposition or operation; and in view of this St. Augustine says that all creatures, even the angels, are measured by time. 27)

Duration as used in the text above is identified with existence.<sup>28)</sup> For a thing is said to remain as long as it is. St. Thomas in commenting on the work, "De Consolatione Philosophiae" of Boethius gives his definition of eternity as the simultaneously-whole and perfect possession of interminable life. 29)

Therefore, it is clear that a world co-existential with God is not repugnant to the intellect. For co-existence of the effect with its cause does not imply complete equality of the two.

The third objection can be answered by saying that in a series of per accidens related efficient causes there can be a regress into infinity, but not in a series of per se related efficient causes. 30) Now in the series of human generations the line of fathers and sons is a series of per accidens related efficient causes, for the line of causality remains on one and the same level. For a man begets another man not as son of a preceding man, but precisely as man. Therefore it is accidental to the man as efficient cause who begets another man that he himself be begotten by a preceding man. So the line of causes in this case are accidentally dependent upon their previous causes and consequently the argument does not hold.



THE FOLLOWERS OF AVERSOES WHO MAINTAIN  
THE NECESSITY OF AN ETERNAL WORLD.

There are others, in opposition to the Augustinian School who maintain the necessity of a world co-existential with God. 31) The arguments they propose are taken from a consideration of the efficiency of God power and eternity of motion. First of all whatever cause not producing immediately its effect, is not sufficient since it requires the action of some other cause to aid it in producing the effect. Furthermore, an effect proceeds from its cause by reason of the action of the cause. But the action of God is eternal, since His action is His substance. It follows therefore that the world has always existed.

In addition nothing begins to move unless the mover is in a different state from that in which it was before it began to move. Or in other words a new movement cannot be produced without a preceding change in the mover. But to change is nothing more than to be moved. So there is always a movement anterior to the movement preceding and no matter how far we go back, we shall always find movement. Now if motion has always existed, it follows that a thing moved has always existed.

Moreover an incorruptible being is one that cannot be conceived as existing sometimes and sometimes not existing. And whatever begins to exist is a corruptible being. Therefore nothing incorruptible can have a beginning and so exists from eternity.

However the last two arguments fail to take into account the origin of the thing in motion and the incorruptible beings. In spite of the fact that all incorruptible beings may have been created from eternity, God

produces them according to the freedom of His will and not out of necessity of nature as will be shown later. Also the conclusion in the argument from motion should have been that motion existed whenever a thing in motion existed whenever a thing in motion existed. But how is the existence of the thing in motion explained? As it was demonstrated before it must have resulted from creation.

But did God create the world from eternity or did He create the world with a beginning. The first two arguments claiming the eternity of the world assume for their validity that God acts out of necessity of nature and so had to create from eternity. But it will be shown later on that this is not the case, for God acts according to the freedom of His will as far as creation is concerned.

Now it can be known only by faith that the world did not always exist, <sup>32)</sup> for it cannot be shown to be such through a demonstration. Neither is the idea of an eternal world repugnant to the intellect. First of all there is no necessity either on the part of the substance of the world or on part of the efficient causality of God to posit that the world had a beginning. The non-necessity on the part of the world can be seen if we consider that the principle or the medium of a demonstration is the definition of the essence of the subject. <sup>33)</sup> But the essences of things as such are not limited or determined by, and do not have any reference to time. And because of this St. Thomas in commenting on Aristotle states that universals are everywhere and always. <sup>34)</sup>

Neither can it be demonstrated on the part of the causality of God either that the world had a beginning or that the world always was, for it

will be shown later that things proceed from God ultimately through the abundance of His goodness and not out of any necessity, and the will of God cannot be investigated except concerning those things which it is necessary for Him to will. 35)

It now remains to be shown that the notion of an eternal world is not repugnant to the intellect. The word, eternal, is used analogously here signifying co-existence with God. There is no repugnance involved in this statement that the world always existed unless the world proceeded from God through a motion, in as much as the world would then be reduced from potency to act. 36) But this is impossible. Now in considering the effect in relation to its cause, there is no repugnance, that the world be co-existential with God, for an effect need not be posterior to the cause in its actuality in the sense that the cause exists before its effect. 37) For since the effect is the term of an action and if the action is instantaneous, as is the case with God, then it is not necessary that God, exist before the creature. So considering both the creature absolutely and in its relation to its cause, it is not repugnant that a creature other than God to have always existed. 38)

#### THE MODE IN WHICH THINGS PROCEED FROM GOD.

The basic reason why the forementioned errors that the world was necessarily eternal and that God can and does communicate the power of creating to creatures lies in the conviction that God acts by the necessity of His nature. However, St. Thomas lists four reasons showing that God acts according to the freedom of His will and not by the necessity of His

nature. 39)

The first argument proceeds as follows. It is evident that all things about us are directed to some end. And everything which acts has a sufficient reason for its acting, or every agent acts on account of some end. And so the world must have been the end intended by God in His act of creation, otherwise the world would have happened by chance. Now nature and a voluntary being act for their end in diverse ways. Nature, since it does not know the end or the relation of the means to the end, is not able to set up an end for itself or to direct itself to its end. Nature then must be directed to an end already ordained for it by a being higher than itself, or by an intellectual agent. An agent having a will can establish for itself an end and in a certain manner moved towards the end directing all its actions toward it. Nature must be directed and moved to its end by another agent which has an intellect and will, as a man who shoots an arrow is said to direct it to its target. And this directing of nature to its end is proper only to an intellectual being. Now that which is through another presupposes that which is through itself. The imperfect presupposes the perfect. So the voluntary agent is prior to the natural agent in that the voluntary being is directed to its end through or by itself. And being that God is the first agent and prior to all other agents, it follows that He is a voluntary agent and so created the world through His will and as it will be seen later, freely and not out of any necessity.

Secondly, nature is determined to produce one effect. For everything acting by nature is determined to a limited mode of being and consequently

is determined to produce a proportionate and limited effect. Now God is not limited and determined in His being, but He has within Himself all perfection of being and so cannot act by necessity of nature. If He would act by necessity of nature He would produce an infinite being like unto Himself. But this is impossible. Neither can it be said that God is determined to produce one effect since His power is infinite. 40)

The third reason proceeds from the premiss that effects pre-exist in some manner in their causes. And whatever exists in something, exists in it according to the mode of the existence of that in which it exists. And since God is an intellectual being, the effects of creation pre-exist in the intellect of God. But that idea which is in the intellect is not actualized unless the will directs the agent to act. Therefore, creatures proceed from God through His intellect and will.

The fourth reason proceeds by way of induction. Now there are two kinds of actions which constitute a dichotomous division. One is that type of action which remains in and perfects the agent, such as understanding, volition, sensation, and so, on. The second kind of action is the action which goes forth to effect something outside of itself which is receptive of determination, as heating, motion, and so on. However, God's action is not of this second kind since His action is His essence and consequently does not go out of Himself. Neither does God act upon any matter in creating, but produces things from nothing. Therefore, by a process of elimination God's action must be that of the first kind, of intellection and volition. This is not to say, however, that God senses and has other actions remaining in Himself which are common to corporeal beings, such as

pleasure, sorrow and so forth. For an outside efficient cause is necessarily needed for the activating of the sensible potencies. But God is not acted upon. And intellection and volition do not necessarily demand any causality from without to produce the intellection and volition. The unique case of this is God. For God is identified with the object of His intellect and will, which being one with His essence are not reduced from potency to act, but possess the fulness and completion of actuality.

#### THE ROLE OF THE INTELLECT AND WILL OF GOD IN CREATION

Effects pre-exist in their causes according to the mode of the being of the causes. Now God's essence is identified with His intellect; consequently creatures pre-exist in God in an intelligible mode of being. But a difficulty arises here. How can a multitude of creatures result from a being which is of supreme oneness, if diverse creatures are said to pre-exist in the intellect of God which is in no way diversified. The answer to this question can be seen when it is investigated in what way ideas exist in the Divine Intellect.

#### THE TWO-FOLD PRE-EXISTENCE OF CREATURES IN THE INTELLECT OF GOD.

Now creatures are said to pre-exist in the intellect of God in the form of ideas.<sup>41)</sup> The latin word for the greek word, idea, is form. We understand by the word, idea, the forms of things existing apart from the things themselves.<sup>42)</sup> St. Thomas on an occasion elsewhere offers this definition of the idea, "It must be a form which something imitates because of the intention of an agent who antecedently determines the end himself".<sup>43)</sup>

But here he is defining idea according to only one of its two possible meanings. Now this form can refer to two things. First of all, the form separate from the thing itself can be the exemplar of that of which it is said to be the form, or that pattern according to the likeness of which something is made. Or the form can be the principle of knowledge of the thing when the form of the thing is in the knower. And both of these forms are said to be in the Creator.

God is the exemplar of all things existing either actually or potentially in that every effect is like to God in possessing some degree of existence. For God can create only those things which have an analogical likeness to Him; otherwise He would be imparting that which He does not have.

In addition the form of the universe pre-existed in the intellect of God. If God, by an act of His will, acted for the end, the production of the universe, then He must have had some form of the world in His intellect in order to produce it. But this is not to say that there is composition within God's intellect. St. Thomas maintains the simplicity of God's intellect in speaking of how God knows:

The statement that God knows Himself in the same way in which He knows other things is true if we are speaking about the way of knowing with reference to the knower. It is not true, however, if we are speaking about the way of knowing with reference to the thing known, because the creature which is known by God is not the same in the real order as the medium by which God knows. But He Himself is really the same as it. Consequently, it does not follow that there is multiplicity in His essence. <sup>44)</sup>

We may proceed further and say that there exists many ideas in the intellect of God. <sup>45)</sup> For God cannot have a knowledge of the universe as a

whole unless He has the proper knowledge of those diverse creatures of which the whole of creation consists.

#### NO REPUGNANCE TO THE SIMPLICITY OF GOD'S INTELLECT.

But this diversity of ideas is not repugnant to the simplicity of God's intellect, if the forms are taken to be those things which are understood and not species or those forms by which the intellect knows. For then His intellect would thereby be reduced from potency to act.<sup>56)</sup> If ideas in the intellect of God were forms by which He knew, then He would understand each possible creature by a distinct act of understanding, and so would be finite, limited, and not God.

God knows His essence and in that one act of knowing knows also His essence as imitable by creatures. God does understand many things, but understands them through one principle which is Himself.

Whether God actually created things, or not, He would still have had ideas of creatures from all eternity which would be imitable of His essence. For we say that God knows a thing perfectly; knows all that can be said of it and all that agrees with it according to its nature. And it agrees with His nature to be a cause of other things. And if God knows Himself as able to exercise causality, He thereby knows those things which are capable of being caused, which is nothing more than to have various ideas of possible creatures in His intellect.

Now the unity of God's knowledge is preserved since the sufficient reason both for the knowledge of Himself and of others is Himself, the principle whereby He knows all things. In the following statements St.



Thomas affirms the unity of God's knowledge:

An idea does not have the character of that by which a thing is first understood, but rather of that which is understood and is existing in the intellect. Moreover, whether or not there is to be but one form in the understanding is determined by the unity of that by which a thing is first understood, just as the unity of an action is determined by the unity of the form of the agent which is its principle. Hence, although the relations understood by God are many (and it is in these relations that the plurality of ideas consist), nevertheless, because He understands all things by means of His essence, His understanding is not multiple but one. <sup>47)</sup>

#### THE SIMPLICITY OF GOD'S WILL AND THE DIVERSITY OF CREATURES WILLED.

Now we have seen that a multitude of ideas in God does not destroy His simplicity. But is the fact that He wills many things to exist repugnant to the simplicity of His will and substance?

In answer to this it may be said that as God wills Himself or delights in Himself, He also wills other things to be. <sup>48)</sup> For that which wills principally that which is its end, in virtue of willing the end, wills also those things which are directed to that end. But everything which is created, is related to God as to their end. So God in willing Himself wills also the creatures which are directed to Him as to an end.

But does God will creatures and Himself in distinct acts of volition. From what has just been said it can be seen that God wills Himself and others in one act of volition which is eternal. <sup>49)</sup> Now every power by one operation tends to its object and to the formal aspect of the object. <sup>50)</sup> That which is willed only on account of an end is willed solely by reason of its relation to the end. So that which is willed not in itself but only

on account of an end receives the formality of an object of volition from the end. The end is then compared to that willed on account of the end as the formal or determining factor of the object of the power of volition to the material object. When it is said that something is willed only on account of an end, the word, only, is most important for this discussion. For something which is directed to an end can be willed either in itself, as a sweet medicine is willed since it has a good taste, or willed only because of some end, as a bitter medicine is willed solely in view of the health which is hoped to follow. In the latter case the thing ordered to an end received the character of an object of volition not from itself, but from the end. And in the same act of volition in which the end is willed the thing ordered to the end is willed. Again every power by one operation tends to its object and to that which makes the object to be the object of its power. So that which is willed only on account of an end is compared to the end as matter to form. And so the various things willed reach a certain unity as to their formal aspect as objects of the will.

Now God wills Himself and other things. He wills Himself by reason of His own intrinsic goodness and on account of Himself. And He wills other things not in themselves but inasmuch as they are directed to Him and inasmuch as they render Him external glory. It is repugnant that God, being infinite, will a creature as an end in itself and not as directed to Him as to an end. Therefore, it follows that God in one act of volition will both Himself and creatures. Although the objects of God's will are materially diverse, they are formally one in that they are all unified

as to their formal aspect as objects of volition by one and the same source of determination. God wills Himself because of Himself and all other things solely on account of His goodness. God wills other things than Himself only because He wills Himself. And so God attains to all the objects of His will in one operation or act of volition.

That God wills both Himself and creatures in one act of His will is further evident from the fact that there is only one principle of movement of the will of God. In those things which are willed only on account of an end, the entire and only reason of the movement of the will is the end. <sup>51)</sup> And one operation flows from one principle. Therefore, there are not many operations of God's will, but only one. The unity of action is determined by the unity of the form of the agent which is its principle. With this in mind St. Thomas wrote the following concerning the oneness of operation of God's intellect and will.

To will belongs to God according as He has understanding. As then by one act He understands Himself and other beings, inasmuch as His essence is the pattern of them all, so by one act He wills Himself and all other beings, inasmuch as His goodness is the type of all goodness. <sup>52)</sup>

And from this we can say that a multitude of objects willed does not imply any impairment of God's simplicity. For acts are distinguished according to their objects. <sup>53)</sup> Therefore if the many things that God wills would posit a multiplicity in Him, then there would be more than one operation or act of His will which has just been shown not to be the case. Furthermore God's intellect and will are identified with His substance. Consequently the many things God wills does not imply there is limitation or imperfection in Him.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion to this work I would like to clear up some possible misunderstandings and further objections which may have arisen so far.

First of all there wasn't a moment when God began to know His essence as imitable by creatures and, by a new act of His will, will that they exist. This idea is false because it subjects God to time and mutability which is impossible. Now God must have known His essence as imitable by creatures from eternity and willed them to exist with a beginning from eternity. <sup>54)</sup> Otherwise we would have to admit an accidental determination of God.

Neither can it be said that since creation had a beginning, then at one time God did not will to create and at another time He did will to create. For this also would indicate a change in God. Even though God willed from eternity to create a world which would have a beginning, which we must necessarily assent to, this does not impose any necessity upon God's will, that is, any necessity of exercise of willing creatures. For God could have not willed to create at all. But if God willed to create, then by supposition He must necessarily willed to create from eternity, but it is not necessary in the first place that God will to create since He does not need any good to be derived from creatures.

Neither is it repugnant to God's will that after He wills, He can't cease to will what He has begun to will, or begin to will what He has not willed, but on the contrary it is in keeping with God's excellence. God can't will and then cease to will or will something and afterwards will another

thing because He is not subject to mutability of any kind. 55)

Another false opinion is that God was in some way moved to create things, or, by willing Himself as an end, He had to will other things which were ordered to Him as to their end, in the sense that whoever wills the end, wills also the means. When St. Thomas says that as God wills Himself, He wills other things which are ordered to Himself as to an end, he means that it is solely out of the goodness of God that He wills other things than Himself. He does not will creatures to exist in order that He may acquire goodness for Himself. 56) Since God is infinite, nothing can add to the goodness or perfection of God; consequently He does not stand in need of any other so that He may acquire what is lacking to Him. Therefore, we may conclude by saying that it is solely and freely out of the abundance of God's liberality that He diffuses His goodness to creatures.

## FOOTNOTES:

1. De Veritate, q. 23, a. 4, Resp.
2. De Potentia, q. 7, a. 10, Resp.  
De Potentia, q. 3, a. 3, Resp.
3. 1 Sent., dist., 45 q. 1, a. 2, Sol.
4. Summa Theol., I, q. 45, a. 1, Resp.
5. Summa Theol., I, q. 45, a. 1, Resp.
6. Gilson Etienne, The Philosophy of St. Thomas, Chap. 7, p. 134.
7. Summa Theol., I, q. 45, a. 2, ad 2.
8. On the Power of God, translation of De Potentia by the English Dominican Fathers, q. 3, a. 3, Response.
9. Summa Theol., I, q. 45, a. 1, ad 3.  
De Potentia, q. 3, a. 1, ad 7.
10. Summa Theol., I, q. 45, a. 2, ad 2.
11. Sed in creatione, per quam producitur tota substantia rei, non potest accipi aliquid idem aliter se habens nunc et prius, nisi secundum intellectum tantum; sicut si intelligitur aliqua res prius non fuisse totaliter, et postea esse., Summa Theol., I, q. 45, a. 2, ad 2.
12. On the Power of God, translation of De Potentia by the English Dominican Fathers, q. 3, a. 2, Response.
13. Gilson Etienne, The Philosophy of St. Thomas, Chap. 7, p. 133.
14. Quodlibet, q. 4, a. 9, Resp.
15. De Potentia, q. 3, a. 1, Resp.
16. De Potentia, q. 3, a. 1, Resp.
17. Summa Theol., translated by English Dominican Fathers, I, q. 104, a. 1, Response.
18. Summa Theol., I, q. 44, a. 1, Resp.
19. De Potentia, q. 3, a. 2, Resp.

20. On Being and Essence, translation of De Ente et Essentia by Armand Maurer, C.S.B., Chap. 4, p. 46.

21. Summa Contra Gentiles, II, Cap. 20.

22. Summa Theol., translated by English Dominican Fathers, I, q. 45, a. 5, Response.

23. Summa Theol., I, q. 45, a. 5, Resp.

24. Gilson Etienne, The Philosophy of St. Thomas, Chap. 7, p. 148.

25. On the Power of God, translation of De Potentia by the English Dominican Fathers, q. 3, a. 14, ans. to 4th obj.

26. Quodlibet, 2, a. 5, Resp.

27. Quodlibet, 10, a. 4, Response, translated by the author of this present work.

28. Duratio omnis attenditur secundum quod aliquid est in actu; tandiu enim res durare dicitur quamdiu in actu est., 1 Sent., dist. 19, q. 2, a. 1, Respondeo.

29. Est enim eternitas interminabilis vital tota simul et perfecta possessio., Summa Theol., I, q. 10, a. 1.

30. Summa Theol., I, q. 2, a. 3, Resp.

31. Gilson Etienne, The Philosophy of St. Thomas, Chapter 7, p. 144.

32. Summa Theol., I, q. 46, a. 2, Sed Contra.

33. Summa Theol., I, q. 46, a. 2, Resp.

34. In Analyt. Poster., I, 42, n. 5.

35. De Potentia, q. 3, a. 14, ad 6.

36. De Potentia, q. 3, a. 14, Resp.; ad 8.

37. Summa Theol., I, q. 46, a. 2, ad 1.

38. De Potentia, q. 3, a. 14, ad 1, 3, 4, and 8.

39. De Potentia, q. 3, a. 15, Resp.

40. De Potentia, q. 3, a. 15, Resp.

41. Summa Theol., I, q. 15, a. 1, Resp.
42. Summa Theol., I, q. 15, a. 1, Resp.
43. De Veritate, q. 3, a. 1, Resp.
44. Truth, translation of De Veritate by English Dominican Fathers, q. 3, a. 1, ans. to 11th obj.
45. Summa Theol., I, q. 15, a. 2, Resp.
46. Summa Theol., I, q. 15, a. 2, Resp.  
De Veritate, q. 3, a. 2, Resp.
47. Truth, translation of De Veritate by English Dominican Fathers, q. 3, a. 2, ans. to 9th obj.  
De Potentia, q. 3, a. 16, Resp.; ad 14.  
Summa Contra Gentiles I, cap. 46.
48. Summa Theol., I, q. 19, a. 2, Resp.; ad 2.
49. Summa Contra Gentiles, I, cap. 75.
50. Summa Contra Gentiles, I, cap. 76.
51. Summa Theol., I, q. 19, a. 2, ad 2.
52. Of God and His Creatures, translation of Contra Gentiles by Joseph Rickaby, S.J., I, cap. 76.
53. Summa Contra Gentiles, I, cap. 77.
54. 1 Sent., dist. 36, q. 2, a. 2.
55. De Veritate, q. 3, a. 4, Resp.; ad 12.
56. Summa Contra Gentiles, I, cap. 75.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Aquinas, St. Thomas, On the Power of God, translated by the English Dominican Fathers, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1952, 6 vol.
- Aquinas, St. Thomas, Truth, translated from the definitive Leonine text by Robert Mulligan, S.J., Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1952, 3 vols.
- Aquinas, St. Thomas, Summa Theologiae, translated by the English Dominican Fathers, New York: Benziger Brothers, 1923-29, 39 vols.
- Aquinas, St. Thomas, On Being and Essence, translated by Armand Maurer, C.S.B., Toronto: The Garden City Press Co-Operative, 1949.
- Aquinas, St. Thomas, Of God and His Creatures, translated by Joseph Rickaby, S.J., Missouri: B. Herder Book Co., 1905, 1 vol.
- Gilson, Etienne, The Philosophy of St. Thomas translated by Edward Bullough, Missouri: B. Herder Book Co., 1929.
- Aquinas, St. Thomas, Summa Theologiae, Marietti edition (with Leonine text and notes). Rome: Marietti, 1950, 3 vols.
- Aquinas, St. Thomas, Quaestiones Disputatae De Potentia, edited by M. Pession. Rome: Marietti, 1949.
- Aquinas, St. Thomas, Quaestiones Disputatae De Veritate, edited by M. Pession. Rome: Marietti, 1949.
- Aquinas, St. Thomas, Summa Contra Gentiles, Leonine edition, Rome: Forzani, 1888.
- Aquinas, St. Thomas, In Quattuor Libros Sententiarum Petri Lombardi, Opera Omnia, Venetia: Simon Occhi, 1776.

