

Thomas Aquinas

*Summa  
Theologiae*

Volume 1  
The Existence of God  
Part One:  
Questions 1-13

TEXT COMPLETE AND UNABRIDGED

A DOUBLEDAY IMAGE BOOK



Foreign invasions had destroyed the old world. Radical new ideas, seemingly at open conflict with the traditional frame of reference and with each other, were flooding the universities. Scholars and students were in ferment; old questions were being answered with new solutions. A confused world was trying to rebuild on the foundations of the old, and the result was chaos.

This is a description not of the tumultuous twentieth century, but of the thirteenth century, the time when the Dominican scholar Thomas Aquinas was writing his masterpiece, *SUMMA THEOLOGIAE*—an intellectual synthesis of two divergent philosophical schools hitherto considered incompatible. With this intellectual marriage of faith and reason, Aquinas gave to his own era a foundation upon which to advance and gave to all men of every era a model of intellectual insight and method undisputed in its precision, clarity, and totality.

Today *our* universities are in ferment, *our* traditional ways of thinking are crumbling before the onslaught of new philosophical approaches, *our* attempts at rebuilding on the foundations of the old are doomed to failure. Now is the time to look back to the great classic which, by bridging the old and the new, occasioned an advancement in Western civilization unrivaled in its impact. As a historical work, the *SUMMA* is unsurpassed; as a method of thought, it is worthy of study; as an example of synthesis, it is a source of hope.

This Image edition of *SUMMA THEOLOGIAE* comes at a time when Aquinas' position as a master of philosophical insight is recognized anew. Using the translation of the definitive Blackfriars edition (widely acclaimed for its accuracy, faithfulness to the original, and pure scholarship), it is a work to be welcomed by all interested in the work of the man whom the *New York Times* called "the greatest philosopher and theologian of his age."



*Thomas Aquinas*  
SUMMA THEOLOGIAE

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*The Existence of God*

PART ONE: QUESTIONS 1-13

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## INTRODUCTION

ST THOMAS AQUINAS stands for a body of thought which for seven centuries has moved at the centre of Western Catholicism. Yet having said that, some reservations should at once be drawn, lest what follows be set down to the partisanship of a Dominican or as a crass identification of the faith with an intellectual system.

First, seven centuries are not such a long stretch in the life of the Church, which was already effectively bearing witness to the truths of Revelation before they were set in the framework of one single and extensive philosophy. Second, even during that period its central position has been lost to view, or not seen to count, as the Church's engagement with human thoughts and affections has swirled elsewhere. Third, and most important, we refer to philosophical theology, not directly to Christian belief, from which indeed it may flow, yet not in such a way that acceptance of the principles of faith commits a person to this or that rational development. Fourth, and connected, a religious philosophy which proves well adapted to bring out the meanings, relations, and consequences of the truths of faith not unnaturally will receive official endorsement and perhaps inevitably incur the danger of becoming a party-line for administrators of the establishment more accustomed to disciplinary and legal than to more contemplative forms of thought. And fifth, if we speak of St Thomas occupying a position, this should be regarded, not as dug in and defensive, but rather as a commanding height from which to range with confidence and ease.

Whether the force of manoeuvre has always been maintained is another matter: there have been times when his followers have been like poor Bazaine who immobilized his field-army behind the fortifications of Metz. For here is a body of thought which is more versatile, and therefore more authentically itself, when working as a minority and not a majority movement, or when not being paraded under anti-

Modernist drill-sergeants with their manuals of standardized mechanization.

Only with such provisos can we assess the true importance of the *Summa Theologiae* in the history of human thought, sacred and profane. It represents the first completed attempt to establish Christian theology as a scientific discipline, and students who start from inside the Christian tradition recognize that it is among the few masterpieces of its kind, though not all would agree that it is the kind of thing that should be done. Nevertheless St Thomas's appeal to those who look at Christianity from outside, who have come to respect his influence in psychological, metaphysical, and social philosophy, and who may rank him among Plato, Aristotle, Spinoza, Kant, and Marx, appears even more significant, and paradoxically for theological reasons, which will become clearer as God's saving truths are more openly acknowledged to transcend 'confessional' formulation, and the consequent ecumenism is extended beyond the frontiers set by terms historically and technically Christian.

Let me elaborate, though I fear that I shall have to be so compressed that nothing will escape save a few hints. Singleness in variety strikes the keynote of his thought, the unity of human and religious experience and the continuity between all the parts of creation. Indeed all comes back to his doctrine of creation, perhaps his chief title to fame as an original thinker, where, going far beyond Aristotle, he takes his criticism of monism from the order of being itself and establishes the metaphysical status of creatures, or many beings.<sup>1</sup> This pluralism reinforces his conviction that all truth, by whomsoever it is uttered, is from the Holy Spirit: it runs throughout his discourse. And so he cherishes creatures at once for themselves and because of the transcendent goodness of God, and affirms the value of nature because of grace, of reason because of faith, of flesh because of spirit. Values are seen in subordination, yet not thereby in subjection. For as things are in

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<sup>1</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, 1a. 44-49. Vol. 8. Creation, Distinction, Variety. ed. T. Gilby. London, New York, 1969.



themselves so they act and attract in themselves; they may be secondary yet still be principal and not just instrumental, penultimate ends and not just means to an end. Consequently each value can be respected in itself and discussed in the purity of its own proper medium; philosophy can flourish because of theology, yet not be used to grind a theological axe. Indeed it may be recalled that St Thomas's philosophy has sometimes been excised from his theology, to stand no more incomplete than other purely rational systems of humanism or theism. His theology, however, cannot be excised from his philosophy—any more than God's grace from our nature.

He is not sectarian, then, nor are his preoccupations ecclesiastical in the 'churchy' sense of the term. In fact during his lifetime he was more warmly regarded by the lay philosophers and *artistae* than by the divines, certainly by those who secured his condemnation three years after his death. Although this was quashed afterwards and his followers gained for him a position of theological privilege, the suspicions of some religious thinkers were not allayed, and if anything have been heightened in recent years: that he was a saint in his life is not denied, but they look askance at the naturalism, rationalism, or this-worldliness of much of his writings.

The times in which he lived made both for his weakness and his strength. The decline of calligraphy ran parallel to that in the style of theological writing compared with the century before; technical terms and phrases may have sharpened analysis, but did not contribute to the warmth and grace of communication. His expository writings seem to us crabbed and repetitious, and particularly uncongenial in a literal translation. As you follow his argument you have the impression of watching with a workman chiselling away flakes of stone; the strokes are exact enough, but the effect is not of something elegant and finely chiselled: we shall have more to say on this point later on.

His strength is that he took the foremost part in what was no provincial episode in the history of thought. Philosophy entered the world in the fourth century B.C.; it entered the Christian world in the thirteenth century; the results were



no less far-reaching and dramatic. The wisdom of the children of God and the wisdom of the children of this world, and both at full strength (so far as this could be when each was apart), were coming together on collision courses. One seemed to carry the whole weight of a sacred tradition, the other that of a secular experience which was to be increasingly accepted in the West.

Humanly speaking it was St Thomas and his group who averted the crash, though it was not in their mind that each should go on its own separate way henceforth. Such was his decisive intervention in the history of religious thought, marked by his opposition to the 'double-truth' theory, that what was true to faith could be false to reason, and what was false to faith could be true to reason. This has long survived its medieval setting, and it is a certain perennial quality in the questions St Thomas met and the answers he gave that give him contemporary relevance nowadays. His school has outlasted the flowering and decay of the high Middle Ages, the triumphs and crumbling plaster of the Baroque, and though curiously lethargic under the Enlightenment was as curiously reinvigorated by the rationalism and materialism of the nineteenth century.

What was he like, this man for many seasons? Tall, large, and fair, normally rather tranquil, with an abstracted air, yet courteous in his manner, patient and rather patrician in debate. He was born in 1225, at the Castle of Rocca Secca above Aquino, in the country fought over by the Allies in their advance from Naples to Rome. He was of mixed Lombard, Norman, and possibly Swabian stock; his family was related by kinship and service to the Emperor Frederick II, and was to suffer tragically when the Hohenstaufens were supplanted by the Angevins. Soldiers, courtiers, poets, they belonged to the glittering culture of Sicily, the first medieval kingdom to become a State as a formal and legal polity. A child oblate at the neighbouring Abbey of Monte Cassino, he left there to enter the University of Naples; founded by the Emperor, it was the first of what would now be called the State Universities. There, to the energetic displeasure of his family, he joined the Dominicans, a licenced but unbeneficed

bod teachers, and scholars, with little standing in the world of feudal securities. Both moves are significant, the first when he left the patriarchal community of monasticism, the second when he left the official establishment for a more open society.

Sent to Paris and Cologne for his studies, mainly under the celebrated Master Albert—called ‘the Great’, and already legendary for his researches and experiments in the field of natural science, yet also an advanced philosopher open to the speculations of Avicenna, and one of the most considerable theologians of the century—his own teaching and writing career falls into four periods. First, as lecturer and afterwards professor at the University of Paris; second, as theologian to the Papal Court; third, of his recall to Paris; and fourth, the final years when he returned to his native land, charged to organize Dominican studies in Naples. Called to the General Council of Lyons, he died on his way there in 1274 at the Abbey of Fossanova, not far away from his birthplace. The second and third periods are those of his maturity, when he was freeing himself from some of the strains of Augustinianism and Platonism, and recovering with the aid of his friends an Aristotle more Hellenic than was presented by the Arabs.\* It was then that he wrote his greatest work, the *Summa Theologiae*, to which we now turn.

### Structure

1. BEFORE ANATOMIZING the *Summa* be advised that it composes a living whole pressing forward in a continuous movement which, except for purposes of schematization, should

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\* For a study of St Thomas's thought see E. Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*, London-New York, 1957. For its setting in history, E. Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, London-New York, 1955. For compendiums, T. Gilby, *St Thomas Aquinas, Philosophical Texts*, Oxford-New York, 1951, and Galaxy paperback; *Theological Texts*, Oxford-New York, 1955. For a massive introduction, A. C. Pegis, *Basic Writings of St. Thomas Aquinas*, New York, 1945.

not be arrested in sets of scholastic 'stills'. Charts have been traced to show its divisions and subdivisions ramifying with all the complication and more of the logic of a genealogical tree: such fixed and flat reproductions are convenient for reference, though they fail to convey the motion and fuller dimensions in which human ideas and lives are begotten.

Moreover its arguments are less like a progressive series of theorems than like waves merged in the ebb and flow of the tide, the grand Platonic sweep of the whole work which follows the *exitus* and *reditus* of Creation—the going forth of things from God and their coming back to him, the setting out and returning home, the first birth in which we are possessed by God and the second birth from which he is possessed by us. For the *Summa* is more than a great monument to theism: it is the orchestration of the Christian mysteries in perennial reason, in which the God of the philosophers is not pitted against the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, or against the Father revealed in Christ.

On the surface it may seem a mixture, of passages, sometimes long sustained, of pure rationalism and of Scriptural exegesis, of severe demonstration from the necessity in things and of recommendation from a vivid sense, quaint sometimes to modern tastes, of the analogies running through the whole universe and kingdom of God;<sup>2</sup> topics of no direct religious interest appear to engross large sections. Penetrate more deeply, however, and all parts are seen to be combined and charged with one common purpose, namely to show God's own truth, not in its proper terms, for that is not possible even were it called for,<sup>3</sup> not even in poetic terms to evoke its secret glance, but more plainly in the terms of sacred history and of a universal and communicable human philosophy.<sup>4</sup> Autobiographical touches are notably absent, and the work is

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<sup>2</sup> An argument from strict necessity, often beginning *necesse est*, is clearly distinguished from an argument from probability, *oportet* or *conveniens est*. See 1a. 32, 1; 3a. 1, 1–2. Also Blackfriars *Summa*, Vol. 1, Appendix 6, *Theology as Science*.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid*, Appendix 7, *Revelation 6*

<sup>4</sup> *ibid*, Appendix 9, *Doctrinal Development*