FIRST PART: QUESTION 2 ARTICLE 3

Whether God Is?

Because the chief aim of sacred doctrine is to hand on the knowledge of God, not only as he is in himself, but also as he is the beginning and end of things, especially of the rational creature, we, intending to present this doctrine, shall treat first of God [first part], second of the rational creature's advance toward God [second part], and third of Christ, who as a human being, is our way to God [third part].

The consideration of God will be threefold. First, we shall consider what pertains to the divine essence [qq. 1-26]; second, what pertains to the distinction of persons [qq. 27-43]; and third, what pertains to the procession of creatures from God [qq. 44-119].

Concerning the divine essence, to be considered first is whether God is [q. 2], second, in what way he is, or better, in what way he is not [qq. 3-13], and third, what pertains to his operation, namely, his knowledge, will, and power [qq. 14-26].

Concerning the first, three questions are asked: first, whether it is self-evident that God is [q. 2, art. 1], second, whether it is demonstrable [q. 2, art. 2], and third, whether God is [q. 2, art. 3].

Whether God Is?

It seems that God is not:

1. If one of two contraries were infinite, the other would be totally destroyed. But it is understood by the word "God" that he is a kind of infinite good. If, therefore, God is, no evil would be found; but evil is found in the world. Therefore, God is not.

2. What can be accounted for by a few principles has not been produced by many. But it seems that everything in the world can be accounted for by other principles, supposing that God is not. For natural things are traced back to one principle, which is nature; and intended things are traced back to one principle, which is human reason, or will: Therefore, there is no necessity to posit that God is.

But against this is what is said in the person of God in Exodus [3:14]: "I am Who am."

Response: That God is can be proven in five ways.

The first and more manifest way is taken from motion. It is certain and clear from our sense that some things in the world are moved. Now whatever is moved is moved by another; for nothing is moved except in as much as it is in potency to that toward which it is moved, whereas a thing moves inasmuch as it is in act. To move is nothing else than to bring something from potency to act. But nothing can be brought from potency to act, except by something in act, as what is actually hot (e.g., 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 act and in potency in the same respect, but only in different respects; for what 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 or that it should move itself. Therefore, whatever is moved must be moved by another. If, therefore, that by which it is moved is itself moved, then this also must be moved by another, and that by another again. But this cannot go to infinity, because then there would be no first mover, and, consequently, no other mover, because subsequent movers move only inasmuch as they are moved by a first mover, as the staff moves only because it is moved by the hand. Therefore, it is necessary to arrive at some first mover that is moved by no other; and this everyone understands to be God.

The second way is from the nature of efficient cause, for we find in sensible things an order of efficient causes. That something is the efficient cause of itself has neither been discovered nor is it possible, because it would then be prior to itself, which is impossible. Now in efficient causes it
is not possible to go to infinity, because in all efficient causes following in order, the first is the cause of the intermediate cause, and the intermediate is the cause of the ultimate cause, whether the intermediate cause be several or only one. 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 effect, nor any intermediate cause. But if in efficient causes one were to go to infinity, there would be no first efficient cause, and thus neither would there be an ultimate effect, nor any intermediate efficient causes; all of which is plainly false. Therefore, it is necessary to posit some first efficient cause; to which everyone gives the name of God.

The third way is taken from the possible and the necessary. We find in things some that are possible to be and not to be, since they are found to be generated and to corrupt; consequently, they are possible to be and not to be. Now it is impossible for all such things always to be, for that which is possible not to be is not at some time. Therefore, if everything is possible not to be, then at some time there was nothing in existence. But if this is true, even now there would be nothing because what is not cannot begin to be except through something that is. Therefore, if there was nothing, it was impossible for something to begin to be; and thus even now there would be nothing, which is clearly false. Therefore, not all beings are merely possible, but there must be something that is necessary. But every necessary thing either has its necessity caused by another, or not. Now it is impossible to go to infinity in necessary things that have their necessity caused by another, as has been already proven in regard to efficient causes. Therefore, it is necessary to posit something that is of itself necessary and is not caused by another, but rather is the cause in others of their necessity; which all men call God.

The fourth way is taken from the gradations to be found among things. For among things, some are more and some less good, true, noble, and the like. But 'more' and 'less' are said of different things, as they approach in their different ways something that is that to the highest degree; as something is hotter as it approaches what is hottest. There is, therefore, something that is truest, best, noblest and, consequently, being in the highest degree; for those things that are true in the highest degree are beings in the highest degree, as is said in 2 Metaphysics. Now what is in the highest degree in any genus is the cause of all in that genus; as fire, which is heat in the highest degree, is the cause of all hot things (as is said in the same book of Metaphysics). Therefore, there must be something that is for all beings the cause of their existence, goodness, and every other perfection; and this we call God.

The fifth way is taken from the governance of things. We see that things which lack knowledge, namely, natural bodies, act for an end; this is evident from their acting always, or nearly always, in the same way, so as to obtain the best result. Hence it is plain that not by chance, but by intention, do they achieve their end. Now whatever lacks knowledge does not move toward an end, unless directed by some being endowed with knowledge and intelligence; as the arrow is shot to its mark by the archer. Therefore, there is some intelligent being by whom all natural things are directed to their end; and this being we call God.

To the first argument: As Augustine says in his *Enchiridion*: "Since God is the highest good, he would not allow any evil among his works, unless he were so omnipotent and good that he could draw good even out of evil." This is part of the infinite goodness of God, that he should permit evils and from them draw good.

To the second argument: Since nature works for a determined end under the direction of a higher agent, whatever arises from nature must be traced back to God as to its first cause. Likewise, whatever is done intentionally must be traced back to some higher cause, which is not human reason or will, since these can change or fall; for all things that are changeable and capable of failure must be traced back to an immovable and self-necessary first principle, as was shown.

Reading Guide Questions for Summa I.2.3
1. *Summa I.2.3* is constructed in the form of a disputed question. Locate the *QUESTION* and write it down. Second, locate Thomas' *RESPONSE* to the question. How does Thomas answer the question? Yes? No? Both?

2. Summarize in your own words the five points Thomas makes in *EXPLAINING* his response to the question. Whether or not these five ways actually prove the existence of God, they tell us about Thomas' understanding of the nature of God. Explain.

3. Next, find the *sed contra* or the part that begins "But against this . . " This is an argument based on the authority of scripture or tradition that supports Thomas' position on the question. What point is Thomas making here?

4. Now, find the first *OBJECTION* to Thomas' position and his *ANSWER* to this objection. Write in your own words a summary of each. Does Thomas agree or disagree with the objection?

5. Finally, find the second *OBJECTION* to Thomas' position and his *ANSWER* to this objection. Write in your own words a summary of each. Does Thomas agree or disagree with the objection?