

The Conversion of God in Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae*: Being's Trinitarian and Incarnational Self-disclosure¹

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PREFACE

Forty years of thinking about the trinitarian logic of Aquinas' *de Deo* has forced me to take up what is, simultaneously, the most abstract of all theological-metaphysical structures and at the heart of the most urgent of contemporary conflicts. This is the logic of identity. The Thomistic and Augustinian divine Trinity is self-related; it converts upon itself. In consequence, to effect trinitarian self-return, the identical must also be other to itself. The deepest metaphysical theologians of the Hellenic tradition treated this othering inescapably belonging to identity, some with more or less clarity. Perhaps most clear is Nicholas of Cusa in the *De Li Non-Aliud*. There, when founding identity in the activity which non-other is, he is heir of the tradition from Aristotle & Augustine, Dionysius & Eriugena, Ibn Sina & Aquinas to Eckhart. In the 15th century, the Cardinal Regent of the Roman Church grounded identity in the process of negation, and, through Neoplatonism of this radical kind, also transgressed the religious boundaries for the sake of *The Peace of Faith*. Jean Trouillard in the 20th-century followed him both in finding creation in negation and in the transgression of established religious oppositions. For his part, Aquinas shames 20th-century philosophers with his capacity for disinterested consideration of reasons from everyone everywhere. Now a reactionary retreat into immediate identity overwhelms religion, theology, philosophy, politics, and psychology.² This metaphysical closure

1. An address for the "Wisdom Belongs to God" Colloquium, delivered on June 21, 2017 at the University of King's College.

2. See Wayne J. Hankey, "Misrepresenting Neoplatonism in Contemporary *Dionysius*, Vol. XXXV, December 2017, 134-172.

of the West in the decline of speculative philosophy determines relations to crucially important forms of Eastern thought and life.

As indicated in "Augustine's Trinitarian Cosmos," it, and this paper on Aquinas' *de Deo*, are related as the way up and the way down to and from the divine Principle which is both end and beginning. In this manner Aquinas understood Heraclitus' ancient law which, without knowing its source, Aquinas quoted with approval at the beginning of the last Part of his *Summa contra Gentiles*: "eadem est via qua descenditur et ascenditur."³ My two addresses are placed together in this volume because they illuminate each other. In the Preface to the Augustine discourse, I have written about what they have in common. Where they differ brings us to a treatment in Aquinas of the logic of identity in its most abstract form, that belonging to the structure of being itself.

Coming between Augustine and Aquinas, and dividing the medieval Doctor from the patristic Bishop, are Thomas' two other greatest non-Scriptural authorities, Aristotle and Dionysius the Areopagite; the latter was, for Aquinas, "a quasi-biblical author,"⁴ whose texts have extraordinary weight. They are reconciled to each other through Proclus and, because of the *Liber de causis*, both convey the teaching of the divine Diadochos authoritatively. The Aristotle of the Arabic Peripateticism through which Aquinas first received "the philosopher" had absorbed Neoplatonism.⁵

Christian Dionysian Polemic: Eriugena and Nicholas of Cusa versus Vladimir Lossky and Jean-Luc Marion," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 82:4 (2008): 683–703.

3. Aquinas, o.p., *Summa contra Gentiles, Textum Leoninum emendatum ex plagulis de prelo Taurini* 1961. Busa, online *Corpus Thomisticum, lib. 4 cap. 1*: «quia omnes rerum perfectiones quodam ordine a summo rerum vertice Deo descendunt, ipse, ab inferioribus incipiens et gradatim ascendens, in Dei cognitionem proficiat; nam et in corporalibus motibus eadem est via qua descenditur et ascenditur, ratione principii et finis distincta." I use the *Corpus Thomisticum* texts for Aquinas except when otherwise indicated.

4. Bernard Blankenhorn, o.p., *The Mystery of Union with God: Dionysian Mysticism in Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2015), 157.

5. Alain de Libera, *La querelle des universaux: De Platon à la fin du Moyen Age*, Des travaux (Paris: Seuil, 1996), 117.

A result is manifest in and determines the first question of the *Summa*. It is created by the proposition, "It seems that apart from the philosophical disciplines no other teaching is necessary."⁶ Aristotle's thought appeared as "a total philosophical corpus,"⁷ known by natural reason, and set over against revealed teaching. By these authorities and this development, Aquinas is forced and enabled to separate himself from Augustine on points judged fundamental in the second half of the 13th century.⁸

The structure of Aquinas' system is strongly Proclean-Dionysian in character, with crucial Aristotelian elements and modifications. His theological science begins with five arguments constituting a proof for God's existence. Much of the *Quinque Viae* demonstration is a derivation from Aristotle's four causes modified in the Peripatetic-Neoplatonic developments. It leads first to a knowledge of God taken up in a treatment of the divine substance through a Proclean-Dionysian circuit of the divine names. Thus, the pinnacle of Being, known in a philosophical ascent and placed, following Dionysius, within a revealed theological structure, is the foundation from which we move step by step to Augustine's Trinity. The *Summa theologiae* progresses from *Ipsium Esse subsistens* to the Trinity, as a process of being's self-disclosure of its identity as self-related othering.

Writing in the *Contra Gentiles* of the sameness of the way of ascending and descending from and to God, Aquinas points to what we shall find when contemplating the Principle's self-revelation and self-giving. The same fundamental form will be discernable and at work in the beginning, the mediation, and the conclusion. Aquinas finds "the most perfect unity in God, the highest summit of things." From this emerges a greater and

6. Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, Textum Leoninum Romae 1888 editum. Busa, online *Corpus Thomisticum*, I^a q. 1 a. 1: "Videtur quod non sit necessarium, praeter philosophicas disciplinas, aliam doctrinam haberi."

7. Alain de Libera, *Penser au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Seuil, 1991), 20.

8. See Wayne J. Hankey, "The Concord of Aristotle, Proclus, the Liber de Causis & Blessed Dionysius in Thomas Aquinas, Student of Albertus Magnus," *Dionysius* 34 (2016): 137–209.

greater “diversity and variation in things.” So, “the process of emanation from God must be unified in the principle itself, but multiplied in the lower things which are its terms.”⁹ Thus, the structure of emanation is seen even in God in a simple form, the one proper to its nature as cause. We start there.

INTRODUCTION

Theology, as our participation in God’s self-knowledge, demands the unity of form and content. What God is (and is not), and our coming to Him in knowledge and ignorance, must be one. So, at about the last moment in the Middle Ages when Augustine alone was authority enough, Anselm, in his Benedictine monastery, where meditative ascent and teaching went together, sought “one argument.” It should “need nothing other for proving itself than itself alone, and by itself would suffice for showing that God truly is and that he is the highest good needing none other, which all things need for their existence and well-being, and whatever else we believe about the divine substance.”¹⁰ When he found the *unum argumentum*, St Anselm gave us his tiny *Proslogion* which leads to the *unum necessarium*. There reasoning became contemplation; the way to God and God’s nature were united.

Aquinas lived in intellectually and institutionally far more complex times and he increased their complexity. Nonetheless, he desired for his theological teaching the same, though more complicated, unification of our knowing and of our ignorance with the being of God and with the divine simplicity beyond knowledge. Writing the *Summa theologiae* gave him that

9. Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles*, lib. 4 cap. 1: “Et quia in summo rerum vertice Deo perfectissima unitas invenitur; ... ut quantum a primo principio receditur, tanto maior diversitas et variatio inveniatur in rebus. Oportet igitur processum emanationis a Deo uniri quidem in ipso principio, multiplicari autem secundum res infimas, ad quas terminatur.”

10. Anselm, o.s.b., *Proslogion*, ed. S. Schmitt, *Opera Omnia*, 6 volumes (Edinburg: T. Nelson, 1946), I, prooemium, 93: “unum argumentum, quod nullo alio ad se probandum quam se solo indigeret, et solum ad astruendum quia deus vere est, et quia est summum bonum nullo alio indigens, et quo omnia indigent ut sint et ut bene sint, et quaecumque de divina credimus substantia, sufficeret.”

opportunity. In consequence, this paper has two parts: I. The character, principles of order and plan of the *Summa theologiae*. II. The structuring structure of divinity in the *Summa* such that, by the way God Himself orders our science of Him, the internal logic of Being manifests itself as Trinitarian and Incarnational.

I. THE CHARACTER, PRINCIPLES OF ORDER AND PLAN OF THE *SUMMA THEOLOGIAE*

A. THE CHARACTER OF THE *SUMMA THEOLOGIAE*

The *Summa theologiae*, that is, sacred doctrine, or sacred Scripture, or the doctrine of theology, all names of the same science,¹¹ “is a school manual.” As a “summa,” it is at “the same time complete and summary,” and it “addresses itself to the students of the schools ... to novices.”¹² A work of the clergy, but not of the university, the *Summa* has the objective tone of what is “written in the third person singular or the first person plural.”¹³ Its author is a “Doctor of Catholic truth,”¹⁴ and a priest. The University of Paris made him a *Master of Sacred Scripture* in 1256, and thus he has a university licence to teach. A Dominican, the Order gave him the teaching post of Regent-Master in Paris, in Rome and in Naples;¹⁵ probably the origin of the *Summa theologiae* comes out of the demands of these Dominican positions. It “was destined in the first place for Dominicans being formed by the official lecturers in the convents of the Order”¹⁶; it is for such “beginners.” “This monument of

11. Adriano Oliva, o.p., “Quelques éléments de la doctrine théologie selon Thomas d’Aquin,” *Archa Verba. Subsidia I*, 167–93 at 168 and 240.

12. René-Antoine Gauthier, o.p., (éd.), Saint Thomas d’Aquin, *Somme contre les Gentils* (Paris: Éditions Universitaires, 1993), Introduction, 146.

13. Ruedi Imbach, in Ruedi Imbach et Catherine König-Pralong, *le defi laïque* (Paris: Vrin, 2013), 152.

14. *ST*, pr.: “Catholicae veritatis doctor.” I use the *Corpus Thomisticum* texts for Aquinas except when otherwise indicated.

15. J.-P. Torrell, o.p., *Initiation à saint Thomas d’Aquin. Sa personne et son œuvre*, Pensée antique et médiévale, Vestigia 13, (Paris/ Fribourg : Cerf / Editions Universitaires de Fribourg, 1993), 480–81.

16. Adriano Oliva, “La *Somme de théologie* de saint Thomas d’Aquin: Introduction historique et littéraire,” *χώρα REAM*, 7-8. 2009-2010, 217–53 at

wisdom ... originated in the charity of a teacher (*lector*) probably working in a Dominican convent and in his understanding of the needs of his brothers –and of the clergy of the period.”¹⁷ The author declares that to teach “what pertains to sacred doctrine,” “according as it conforms to the way beginners learn,”¹⁸ requires “proceeding briefly and lucidly according to the demands of the material.”¹⁹ It is necessary, then, to distinguish the logic inherent in the material from the order in which things are learned, but, in this case, an exposition “according to what the material will bear” will be “according to the way of learning,” and thus appropriate for “teaching beginners.” This explains how the *Summa* proceeds.

The matter of *sacra doctrina* is “God,” as the “subject” of a science. It treats its material “according as it is ordered to God.”²⁰ This ordering renders it intelligible. There are two such orderings. The primary logic of the matter proper to this science by which it is made intelligible is set out in the prologue to its second question; there understanding starts from the subject, God. However, the first two questions themselves, and the context in which Aquinas places *sacra doctrina*, require another logic, one moving in the opposite direction. By the union of the two contrary logical motions, the plan of the *Summa* develops.

B. THE PLAN AND ORDERING PRINCIPLES OF THE WHOLE.

The circle *sacra doctrina* describes is subordinate to the circle which is God’s self knowing. *Sacra doctrina* “proceeds from principles known in the light of a higher science;” it is subordinate to and dependent on the knowledge God possesses, shared with those in blessed union with God.²¹ The primary theology is the knowledge God has of himself from himself. So the ordering

234–35 citing Leonard Boyle, “The Setting of the *Summa theologiae* of Saint Thomas.”

17. Oliva, “La *Somme de théologie* de saint Thomas d’Aquin,” 236.

18. *ST*, pr.: “secundum quod congruit ad eruditionem incipientium.”

19. *ST*, pr.: “breviter ac dilucide prosequi, secundum quod materia patietur.”

20. *ST*, I^a q. 1 a. 7: “secundum ordinem ad Deum.”

21. *ST*, I^a q. 1 a. 2: “procedit ex principiis notis lumine superioris scientiae ... scientia Dei et beatorum.”

of sacred doctrine “according to the structure of divinity” respects not only what is known but also how it is known. What God is, and is not, and our coming to God in knowledge and ignorance, here are one. The character of this particular *Summa*, with a structure for teaching theological novices, enables Aquinas to unite human knowing and ignorance with the being of God and with the divine simplicity beyond knowledge.

Human Sacred Teaching “considers each matter according as it is divinely revealed;” not a narrow category for Aquinas. It derives from God’s own theology “by the light of divine revelation.”²² As “participation in God’s own science,”²³ or “a certain impression of the divine knowing” on ours,²⁴ it transcends the opposition of theoretical and practical sciences; “it includes both within itself; just as God knows himself and the things he has made by the same knowledge.” “More theoretical than practical” because of its primary orientation to God,²⁵ it shares God’s unity and begins with God.

As “a certain stamp of God’s knowledge,” the *Summa*, as a whole and in its parts, describes self-related circles:

1. remaining (μονή, “in Deo continentur omnia”²⁶);
2. going-out (πρόοδος, exitus);
3. return (ἐπιστροφή, reditus, “ad Deum convertuntur omnia”²⁷), by which all things come out from and circle back to their beginning.

22. *ST*, I^a q. 1 a. 1 ad 2: “lumine divinae revelationis.”

23. Oliva, “La *Somme de théologie* de saint Thomas d’Aquin,” 241.

24. *ST*, I^a q. 1 a. 3: “quaedam impressio divinae scientiae.”

25. *ST*, I^a q. 1 a. 4: “Magis ... speculativa quam practica ... comprehendit sub se utramque; sicut et Deus eadem scientia se cognoscit, et ea quae facit.”

26. Aquinas, *In De divinis nominibus*, cap. 13, l. 3.

27. Aquinas, *In De divinis nominibus*, cap. 13, l. 3.

Three parts of the *Summa* accomplish this:

1. "God"²⁸;
2. the movement of humans in, towards, and into God²⁹;
3. "Christ, who because he is human is our way of journeying into (tendendi) God."³⁰ The Third Part unites the other two, thus perfecting God's self-conversion.

Following Augustine, Aquinas imports the circle of conversion into the First Principle by his understanding of the Trinity. The process of emanation from God is in the Principle itself in a unified form. Thus, this theological circle, beginning and ending in God, and even within the Divine Essence, is total.

Besides Sacred Doctrine, however, another theology, one of the philosophical disciplines, which seem to give a complete account of reality without Christian revelation, is asserted, and in the *Summa theologiae* it appears first. The initial arguments in the *Summa* propose that whatever is not above reason, which treats all the forms of being, is sufficiently treated in the philosophical disciplines, this includes God. "Therefore," for historical reasons we noted in the Preface, Thomas argues in an objection, "it is not necessary, besides the philosophical disciplines, to have another teaching."³¹ However, Aquinas finds a compromise which makes a place for Sacred Doctrine: two theologies are possible because they differ "in kind."³² Both have their ground in "natural desire," both are imperfect "in comparison with the knowledge of God in our heavenly homeland,"³³ and both are necessary for us. Sacred Doctrine, in contradistinction to "the theology which is part of philosophy," e.g. Aristotle's *Metaphysics*

28. *ST*, I^a q. 2 pr.: "de deo."

29. *ST*, I^a q. 2 pr.: "de motu rationalis creaturae in Deum."

30. *ST*, I^a q. 2 pr.: "de Christo, qui secundum quod homo, via est nobis tendendi in Deum."

31. *ST*, I^a q. 1 a. 1 arg. 2: "Non fuit igitur necessarium, praeter philosophicas disciplinas, aliam doctrinam haberi."

32. *ST*, I^a q. 1 a. 1 ad 2: "secundum genus."

33. Adriano Oliva, "La contemplation des philosophes selon Thomas d'Aquin," *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 96 (2012): 585–662 at 589.

and the *Liber de causis*, is necessitated by the desire for God “as for an end which exceeds the comprehension of reason.”³⁴

The philosophical disciplines “treat matters according as they are knowable by the light of natural reason.”³⁵ However, the indication of a beyond is present here because reason’s knowledge of God itself depends on God’s sharing of his knowledge and is a form of his revelation.³⁶ When commenting on the introduction to Aristotle’s theology (*Metaphysics*, I.2), Aquinas faces the assertion of “certain poets” reported by Aristotle (following Plato) that God would jealously keep for himself the knowledge proper to him. In the very first argument of the *Summa theologiae*, he gives a Biblical version, taken from Ecclesiasticus III.22, of the poetic warning against humans seeking what is too high for them.³⁷ In his commentary, Aquinas sides with Aristotle and Plato when he maintains that, because “every good flows from his goodness as from an unfailing spring, ... there is no envy of any kind in God.” However, the other side of this also emerges: our knowledge of God is not “our own possession but borrowed from Him.”³⁸ When commenting on the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aquinas speaks of “participation.” The intellectual life “is most perfectly found in the superior substances but imperfectly and by a kind of participation in the human.”³⁹

34. *ST*, I^a q. 1 a. 1 co.: “sicut ad quendam finem qui comprehensionem rationis excedit.”

35. *ST*, I^a q. 1 a. 1 ad 2: “tractant secundum quod sunt cognoscibilia lumine naturalis rationis.”

36. See Wayne J. Hankey, “God’s Indwelling: Aquinas’ Platonist Systematization of Aristotelian Participation,” for *Participation in the Divine*, edited Douglas Hedley and Evan King, Notre Dame University Press, in press. Posted at <https://dal.academia.edu/WayneHankey>.

37. *ST*, I^a q. 1 a. 1 arg. 1: “Ad primum sic proceditur. Videtur quod non sit necessarium, praeter philosophicas disciplinas, aliam doctrinam haberi. Ad ea enim quae supra rationem sunt, homo non debet conari, secundum illud Eccli. III, *altiora te ne quaesieris*. Sed ea quae rationi subduntur, sufficienter traduntur in philosophicis disciplinis. Superfluum igitur videtur, praeter philosophicas disciplinas, aliam doctrinam haberi.”

38. Aquinas, *Sententia Libri Metaphysicae*, lib. 1 l. 3: “Sed radix huius opinionis est falsissima; quia non est conveniens, quod aliqua res divina invidet. ... quia ex eius bonitate, sicut ex indeficienti fonte, omnia bona effluunt. Unde etiam Plato dixit, quod a Deo est omnis relegata invidia. ... [Deus] maxime vero habet, in quantum suo modo etiam ab hominibus habetur, licet ab eis non ut possessio habeatur, sed sicut aliquid ab eo mutuatum.”

39. Aquinas, *Sententia Libri Ethicorum*, ed. Fratrum Praedicatorum,

From the start of his teaching,⁴⁰ on the basis of the Epistle to the Romans I.20, "the invisible things of God are clearly seen, being known from the things that are made,"⁴¹ Aquinas believed that Scripture revealed that the existence of God is "proved even by philosophers with irrefutable reasons."⁴² Further, they can enjoy the result. "Celebrated geniuses" among non-Christian philosophers are led to a real, even if incomplete and anguished,⁴³ felicity in the contemplation of God, to which philosophy and the lives of her servants are ordered.⁴⁴ Because "it is by their own very nature that humans love God more than themselves, by the love which makes friendship," devoting themselves to contemplation as the "reason of their lives,"⁴⁵ philosophers can develop "friendship love" for God. In turn, "God, ... if he loves the pagan sage, gives sanctifying grace (*gratia gratum faciens*) to him" in order to make this friendship a mutual reality.⁴⁶

Commissio Leonina, vol. 47, pars 2 (Rome, 1969), X, 11, p. 588, ll. 129-60: "quod quidem perfectissime invenitur in substantiis superioribus, in homine autem imperfecte et quasi participative."

40. Aquinas, *Super Sent.*, lib. 1 d. 3 q. 1 a. 3 arg. 1; *De Veritate*, q. 10 a. 12; see also q. 14 a. 9 resp. and ad 9.

41. E.g., *ST*, I^a q. 2 a. 2 s.c. "Sed contra est quod apostolus dicit, ad Rom. I, invisibilia Dei per ea quae facta sunt, intellecta, conspiciuntur. Sed hoc non esset, nisi per ea quae facta sunt, posset demonstrari Deum esse, primum enim quod oportet intelligi de aliquo, est an sit."

42. Aquinas, *De Veritate*, q. 10 a.12: "rationibus irrefragabilibus etiam a philosophis probatum," see also q. 14 a. 9 resp. and ad 9. *ST*, II^a-IIae, q. 167 a. 1 ad 3 and *ST*, I^a q. 2 a. 2 s.c.

43. Aquinas, *ScG*, lib. 3 cap. 48 n. 16: "In quo satis apparet quantum angustiam patiebantur hinc inde eorum praeclara ingenia." Cited in Oliva, "La contemplation des philosophes," p. 638.

44. Oliva, "La contemplation des philosophes:" 588, citing Aquinas, *In I Sent.*, prol., a. 1: "qui tamen felicitas est vie."

45. Oliva, "La contemplation des philosophes:" 603, citing Aquinas *In III Sent.*, dist. 29, q. 1, a. 3, co.: "bonum in ipso esse magis naturaliter complacet quam in nobis ipsis; et ideo etiam amore amicitiae naturaliter Deus ab homine plus seipso diligitur. ... amore amicitiae plus seipsum naturaliter quam Deum diligit, dum plus se vult esse et vivere et habere aliqua bona quam Deum; sed caritas ad hoc naturam elevat ut etiam per amicitiam aliquis plus Deum diligit quam seipsum."

46. Oliva, "La contemplation des philosophes:" 613. On the effect see *ST*, I^a q. 43 a. 3.

Sacred Doctrine gives the revealed truths surpassing the capacity of reason so that humans, in accord with the demands of the rational freedom which they possess as the divine image,⁴⁷ can direct their intentions and actions to the supernatural end, which alone fully satisfies it.⁴⁸ Philosophy's work by the light of nature is necessary not to God's own theology, but to our derivative sacred doctrine. The *Summa* depends on the strengthening of the human intellect to make it capable of understanding revelation: "this science is able to accept something from the philosophical disciplines ... because of what is lacking in our intellect."⁴⁹ "In effect, what we know in virtue of the natural exercise of our reason facilitates our access to the supernatural realities."⁵⁰

Thus, the descending and returning circle described by *Sacra Doctrina* must contain the movement upward of philosophy from creatures by the light of natural reason. Philosophy is maintained alongside and within what surpasses it because of a fundamental principle Aquinas ultimately derived from Proclus via Dionysius: "grace does not destroy nature but completes it."⁵¹ Grace is relative to nature. The two ordering logics meet with the proof for the existence of God in Q. 2. The necessity of philosophical proofs and the necessity of their efficacy, are given: "the invisible things of God are clearly seen ... but this would not be unless the existence of God was able to be demonstrated, for the first thing we must know about anything is whether it exists."⁵²

47. *ST*, I^a-II^a pr.: "sicut Damascenus dicit, homo factus ad imaginem Dei dicitur."

48. *ST*, I^a q. 1 a. 1 co.: "Finem autem oportet esse praecognitum hominibus, qui suas intentiones et actiones debent ordinare in finem."

49. *ST*, I^a q. 1 a. 5 ad 2: "haec scientia accipere potest aliquid a philosophicis disciplinis ... propter defectum intellectus nostri."

50. Ruedi Imbach et Adriano Oliva, *La philosophie de Thomas d' Aquin* (Repères, Paris, Vrin, 2009), 152.

51. *ST*, I^a q. 1 a. 8 ad 2: "gratia non tollat naturam, sed perficiat;" see Richard Schenk, o.p., "From Providence to Grace: Thomas Aquinas and the Platonism of the Mid-thirteenth Century," *Nova et Vetera* 3:2 (2005): 307–20. He writes: "This is especially evident in Thomas's use of Dionysius' axiom on providence from *De divinis nominibus* IV, 33. In his commentary on the work, written sometime in the 1260's, Thomas follows closely in the sense of Proclus and Dionysius: 'Providence preserves the nature of every given thing.'"

52. *ST*, I^a q. 2 a. 2 s.c.: "Apostolus dicit... invisibilia Dei per ea quae facta

The combination of philosophy and Scripture occurs in the article which contains Thomas' Five Ways for proving the existence of God. First we have the ultimate authority for God's existence: God speaks: "It is said in Exodus III by God in person, I am who is."⁵³ Then come the philosophical proofs. Uniting the way up and the way down is characteristic of St Thomas: "This correspondence between Biblical witness and philosophical analysis as well as the thesis of the demonstrability of the existence of God going along with the affirmation of the necessity of this proof, constitute several characteristic elements of the position of Thomas, critic and optimist at the same time, who wishes neither to leave knowledge of God to faith alone, nor to permit a reduction of the faith to the limits of simple reason."⁵⁴

I set out in order the lesser circles within his treatment of God in Himself (qq. 2-43). My aim is to demonstrate how, from the beginning, with the result of the *Quinque Viae*, purely actual and self-complete being (*Ipsium Esse subsistens*), Thomas' multilayered thearchy manifests the God whose going out and return is a self-othering which embraces us within a cosmos material and spiritual. I shall not give details of the structure of the *Summa*.⁵⁵ However, Adriano Oliva has recently brought out the role of final cause in the *Summa's* logical motions, this matches well with what I call "inclusive perfection," what moves God and the *Summa*.

sunt, intellecta, conspiciuntur. Sed hoc non esset, nisi per ea quae facta sunt, posset demonstrari Deum esse, primum enim quod oportet intelligi de aliquo, est an sit."

53. *ST*, I^a q. 2 a. 3 s. c.: "Dicitur Exodi III, ex persona Dei, ego sum qui sum."

54. Imbach et Oliva, *La philosophie de Thomas d'Aquin*, 74.

55. Recent works make that unnecessary. See J.-P. Torrell. *Initiation à saint Thomas d'Aquin. Sa personne et son œuvre*, 211–32; idem, "Life and Works," *Oxford Handbook to Aquinas*, edited Brian Davies & Eleonore Stump (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 20–25; Imbach et Oliva, *La philosophie de Thomas d'Aquin*, 121–29; Oliva, "La Somme de théologie de saint Thomas d'Aquin," 244–52.

C. MOVERS OF THE *SUMMA THEOLOGIAE* OVERALL: FINAL CAUSALITY AND
INCLUSIVE PERFECTION

Final cause justifies the *Summa* as a whole. "If the understanding of the rational creature should not be able to reach the first cause of things its natural desire will remain vain," something "alien to faith" and "similarly also against reason."⁵⁶ In consequence, right at the beginning, "the principal aim of Sacred Doctrine" is said to be "to transmit the knowledge of God, not only as He is in Himself but also as He is the beginning and the end of things and especially of the rational creature."⁵⁷ Fr Oliva has written à propos this preliminary sketch of the organization of the *Summa*: "the connection between the Second and the Third Parts appears already: in effect, after having shown in the Second Part the way in which the human, in so far as he is a rational creature, is capable of returning back towards his end, in the Third Part, Thomas shows us how this is possible within our actual human reality, through Christ and the mysteries of his human life, and through the sacraments which he has left us."⁵⁸

The resulting system has a finality which I call "inclusive perfection." By this I mean end as return to source, or beginning, but with this difference, the beginning as end includes what is traversed between the source and the end. Thus, God as end, attained in the ἐπιστροφή, "to God all is converted," through Christ, "who as human is our way of being drawn (*tendendi*) into God," is inclusive perfection vis-à-vis God as μονή, "everything is contained in God." Fr Oliva writes: "Christ, in that he is human, is the way of our return (*tendendi*) to God, and, in that he is God, he is the goal of this very return."⁵⁹ That

56. *ST*, I^a q. 12 a. 1 co.: "Si...intellectus rationalis creaturae pertingere non possit ad primam causam rerum, remanebit inane desiderium naturae." "Quod est alienum a fide" et "similiter etiam est praeter rationem."

57. *ST*, I^a q. 2 pr.: "Quia igitur principalis intentio huius sacrae doctrinae est Dei cognitionem tradere, et non solum secundum quod in se est, sed etiam secundum quod est principium rerum et finis earum et specialiter rationalis creaturae."

58. Oliva, "La *Somme de théologie* de saint Thomas d'Aquin," 245.

59. Oliva, "La *Somme de théologie* de saint Thomas d'Aquin," 250.

is, God again, but now known as containing and redeeming, by the life, death, and resurrection of the Son of God and Man, the Fall into alienated existence with its consequences.

D. ADVANCING BY CIRCLES OF INCLUSIVE SELF-OTHERING

Overall the *Summa theologiae* advances through circular movements by which an *aliud* (other) is included in the *per se* (what is through itself). Thomas' understanding of God in Himself, set out in the treatise on God, must be and is determinative of the whole. This inclusive finality appears first in the movement from the question "On the Simplicity of God" to the question "On the Unity of God" (q. 3 to q. 11) and, ultimately, in the conversion of the divine essence upon itself in the movement of the Trinity from the Father to the Spirit. In the Trinitarian going out and return, the other is the divine essence itself. In its real relations the divine essence is opposed to itself as given and received. We trace this development in the second part of this paper with the intention of showing that the principle of the Incarnation is present and operative in the treatise *de Deo*.

A hint of the importance of the movement from source to final cause is given in the Five Ways of proving God's existence. Four of them have a rough relation to at least three of Aristotle's four causes.⁶⁰ Thomas uses Aristotle's causes to structure his writing in the *de Deo* here, when moving from creatures to God, and at the end, for moving from God to creatures, employing an order not used by Aristotle.⁶¹ In the Five Ways, form is between the moving and final causes and, in Q. 44, which shows God to be creator in all four senses of cause, the order is efficient, material, exemplary, and final. The source of motion is the obvious beginning, just as its opposed cause, the final, is appropriate end. Glossing Aristotle,

60. See Wayne J. Hankey, *God in Himself: Aquinas' Doctrine of God as Expounded in the Summa Theologiae*, Oxford Theological Monographs / Oxford Scholarly Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987/ 2000), 42, 55–56, 139–42, and Stéphanie-Marie Barbellion, *Le "preuves" de l'existence de Dieu. Pour une relecture des cinq voies de saint Thomas d'Aquin* (Paris: Cerf, 1999), 224, 250, 252, and 309.

61. See *ST*, I^a q. 2 a. 3; and q. 44.

who also indicates their opposition, Aquinas writes: "motion begins from the efficient cause and terminates in the goal as cause."⁶²

By means of the Five Ways, the treatment of the Divine Names begins from:

1. An articulated cosmos: from mere motion, we pass to things ordered as necessary and possible and greater and less; finally all are united into one teleological order of nature bringing it to the best.
2. A cognition which can know it: the mind which has passed along the Five Ways progresses from sensing to making and judging, and concludes as a purposefully ordering knower.
3. A knowledge of God: the Unmoved Mover becomes a Maker necessary through himself, the standard of the greatest and best, the Intelligence who orders the movements of nature to their good. Thus, "the identification of this first with the God of religion."⁶³

This interconnection of nature, psyche, and divinity is characteristic of ancient and medieval understanding and of the movement of the *Summa*, "according to the order in which things are learned."⁶⁴

At the start of the Second Part, the structuring finalities appear strongly. As Fr Oliva writes: "The treatise on the human in the First Part ends with the study of man as the image of God (q. 93), a dynamic image in respect to final causality: this image is destined to fulfil itself in face to face vision [with God]." Just so, Part Two, founded on the human as divine image, reaches out immediately to beatitude at its opening.⁶⁵ The Second Part reiterates the First, in that, for a world remaining in God, because it either is God, or, made by him, it rests within his governance, Aquinas substitutes our virtues and vices, the vast world the image of God makes through freedom seeking happiness.

62. Aquinas, *Sententia Metaphysicorum*, lib. 1 l. 4: "Quarta causa est finalis, quae opponitur causae efficienti secundum oppositionem principii et finis. Nam motus incipit a causa efficiente, et terminatur ad causam finalem. Et hoc est etiam cuius causa fit aliquid, et quae est bonum uniuscuiusque naturae."

63. Imbach et Oliva, *La philosophie de Thomas d'Aquin*, 75.

64. *ST*, pr.

65. Oliva, "La *Somme de théologie* de saint Thomas d'Aquin," 248.

Freedom, inherent operative power, and the finality, which is their condition, are laid out. After a prologue “on the image of God,” that is, the human, like God, “being source of its own works, having freedom of choice and power over what it makes,” Aquinas takes up “the ultimate goal of human life,” “complete happiness.”⁶⁶ The character of our goal, “something which constitutes the ultimate happiness of humans, but exceeds what is human,” is, as Fr Oliva explains, what: “unites the humans to the first cause, God Himself, and, under a certain aspect, unites the human to the whole of creation, because every creature ultimately seeks God.”⁶⁷ In spite of this surpassing of human power, the foundation is natural desire which belongs to what is image of God, inherent “source of what it does,” not “compelled by anything other.”⁶⁸

The return to God as Goodness *per se*, takes place in the cosmos fallen in the *exitus* of the Second Part. That fall is a consequence of our pursuit of our good, happiness, a quest which, crucially, also contains the possibility of our return. Thus the Second Part is named by motion: “de motu rationalis creaturae.” Each thing is moved by, indeed, “is converted to its own good,” implicitly at least the cause from which it proceeds, primarily, and ultimately, God. In Christ, the human motion is given a way back.

The prologue of the Third Part says that “after the consideration of the ultimate end of human life and of the virtues and vices,” “for the completion of the whole business of theology,” its consideration of Jesus Christ will be as the way of truth “through which we are able to arrive at the blessedness of immortal life by

66. *ST*, I^a-IIae pr. et q. 1 pr.: “secundum quod et ipse est suorum operum principium, quasi liberum arbitrium habens et suorum operum potestatem... quia ultimus finis humanae vitae ponitur esse beatitudo, oportet primo considerare de ultimo fine in communi; deinde de beatitudine.”

67. Oliva, “La *Somme de théologie* de saint Thomas d’Aquin,” 248.

68. Oliva, “La *Somme de théologie* de saint Thomas d’Aquin,” 250, citing Aquinas, *Super Epistolam B. Pauli ad Romanos lectura*, cap. 2 l. 3: “Et iste est supremus gradus dignitatis in hominibus, ut scilicet non ab aliis, sed a seipsis inducantur ad bonum. Secundus vero gradus est eorum qui inducuntur ab alio, sed sine coactione.” The whole of *ST*, I^a-IIae q. 1 on the ultimate human end aims to preserve the human self-movement as seeker of happiness as end.

resurrection."⁶⁹ God as end includes the human, not only because of the hypostatic union, the fundamental basis of the doctrine of the Third Part, but also because God is the *human* beatitude. Nor is it solely as end that the human is included. "Jesus Christ," as "way of truth for us,"⁷⁰ includes and strengthens our character as rational and the proper freedom of the rational: "The goal must be known in advance to humans, who ought to order their intentions and actions in relation to the goal."⁷¹ We may sum up the whole with a passage from the *Compendium theologiae*: "The totality of the whole divine work is perfected by [the Incarnation], in that the human, which was the last to have been created, as if by a circling, returns to his beginning, united to the very principle of things by the work of the Incarnation."⁷² Identity is by way of going out and around.

II. THE STRUCTURING STRUCTURE OF DIVINITY IN THE *SUMMA THEOLOGIAE*

A. FROM SIMPLICITY TO UNITY

1. THE STRUCTURE

The consideration of God in the First Part is tripartite:

1. qq. 2–26 "the unity of the divine essence;"⁷³
2. qq. 27–43 "the Trinity of persons within divinity;"⁷⁴ qq. 2–43 together constitute the *de Deo in se*; it is followed by

69. *ST*, III^a pr.: "post considerationem ultimi finis humanae vitae et virtutum ac vitiorum," "ad consummationem totius theologici negotii," "per quam ad beatitudinem immortalis vitae resurgendo pervenire possimus."

70. *ST*, III^a pr.: "salvator noster dominus Iesus Christus ... viam veritatis nobis in seipso demonstravit."

71. *ST*, I^a q. 1 a. 1 co.: "Finem autem oportet esse praecognitum hominibus, qui suas intentiones et actiones debent ordinare in finem."

72. Aquinas, *Compendium theologiae*, lib. 1 cap. 201: "Perficitur etiam per hoc quodammodo totius operis divini universitas, dum homo, qui est ultimo creatus, circulo quodam in suum redit principium, ipsi rerum principio per opus incarnationis unitus."

73. *ST*, I^a q. 26 pr.: "ad divinae essentiae unitatem;" also designated as *ST*, I^a, q. 2, pr.: "ad essentiam divinam."

74. *ST*, I^a q. 27 pr.: "ad trinitatem personarum in divinis;" also also designated at *ST*, I^a, q. 2, pr. as "ad distinctionem personarum."

3. qq. 43–49 which consider “the procession of creatures from God.”⁷⁵

The consideration of the unity of the divine essence is also tripartite:

1. “Whether God exists,” q. 2.
2. “How God is or rather how God is not,” qq. 3–13.
3. God’s activities, qq. 14–26.

2. THE NAMES OF THE SUBSTANCE

Aristotle’s “first unmoved mover,” “actual being,” begins our knowing *de Deo* in the names of the divine substance (qq. 3–13)⁷⁶. It is negative theology; in the dividing mode of representation in reason and speech, it is compelled to be “more how [God] is not.”⁷⁷ However, when the circle of names of the substance has been traversed and Aquinas reflects on how God has been known and named, then he is clear that humans have real knowledge of the divine. The divine names “signify the divine substance, and are predicated substantially of God, although they fall short of a full representation of Him.”⁷⁸

The initial question, “On Simplicity,” argues from the absence of potentiality to the lack of all composition. The impassible God is set absolutely against everything else: it moves, he is unmoved and unmovable; its potentiality makes it movable, he is “in no way potential;” it is composite, he is utterly simple.⁷⁹ By way of Aristotle (with modifications and additions) we arrive at the beginning of a Neoplatonic circle of *μονή, πρόοδος, ἐπιστροφή*. The conceptual names common to the essence have a circular structure from simplicity to infinity and back around

75. *ST*, I^a q. 2 pr.: “ad processum creaturarum ab ipso;” also also designated at *ST*, I^a, q. 44, pr. as “de processione creaturarum a Deo.”

76. *ST*, I^a q. 14 pr.: “Post considerationem eorum quae ad divinam substantiam pertinent.”

77. *ST*, I^a q. 3 pr.: “quia de Deo scire non possumus quid sit, sed quid non sit, non possumus considerare de Deo quomodo sit, sed potius quomodo non sit.”

78. *ST*, I^a q. 13 a. 2 co.: “huiusmodi quidem nomina significant substantiam divinam, et praedicantur de Deo substantialiter, sed deficiunt a repraesentatione ipsius.”

79. *ST*, I^a q. 3 a. 4 co.: “Cum igitur in Deo nihil sit potentiale, ut ostensum est supra, sequitur quod non sit aliud in eo essentia quam suum esse.”

to unity. The treatise, the names, and its structure derive, with modifications, from Dionysius (and thence from Proclus).

Q. 3, "On Simplicity" is God as *μονή*, in which all is implicit. The First being negates all composition, is "form through itself," "form through its own essence;"⁸⁰ thus it is subsistent, and, uniquely, its existence is identical with essence.⁸¹ The entrance to the divine is the Platonic / Aristotelian denial of corporeality. Q. 4, "On Perfection," continues the *μονή*: "The perfections of all things are in God."⁸² God "in one existence possesses all things in advance."⁸³ Perfection is a negation by eminence. The logical starting point, established in the previous article, is that "the nature of God is being itself."⁸⁴ Not in a genus, God is uniquely "his own being subsisting through itself" (a formula repeated throughout this article) and can have no proper likeness, thus, creation is "participation," "according to a certain analogy."⁸⁵

Q. 5, "On the Good in common," begins the *exitus*. Plato merges with Aristotle in the Neoplatonic manner; the Good for Aquinas is simultaneously efficient and final cause; as the end, it presupposes the other causes.⁸⁶ In q. 6, "On the Goodness of God," "Good is diffusive of itself"⁸⁷ is applied to God: "All perfections ... flow from him."⁸⁸

80. *ST*, I^a q. 3 a. 2 co.: "per se forma ... per essentiam suam forma."

81. *ST*, I^a q. 3 a. 4 co.: "Sua igitur essentia est suum esse." For the structure of the *per se forma*, and the dialectical structure of the identification of esse and essentia, see Wayne J. Hankey, "Making Theology Practical: Thomas Aquinas and the Nineteenth Century Religious Revival," *Dionysius* 9 (1985): 85–127 at 106–7; *God in Himself*, 73, and idem, "Theoria versus Poesis: Neoplatonism and Trinitarian Difference in Aquinas, John Milbank, Jean-Luc Marion and John Zizioulas," *Modern Theology* 15:4 (October 1999): 387–415 at 398–99. All posted at <https://dal.academia.edu/WayneHankey>

82. *ST*, I^a q. 4 a. 2 co.: "in Deo sunt perfectiones omnium rerum."

83. *ST*, I^a q. 4 a. 2 sed contra: "in una existentia omnia praehabet;" see Aquinas, *In De divinis nominibus*, XIII, i, § 967.

84. *ST*, I^a q. 4 a. 2 arg. 3: "natura Dei est ipsum esse." (I adopt McDermott's reading in the Blackfriars *Summa theologiae* volume II, 1964).

85. *ST*, I^a q. 4 a. 2 co.: "ex hoc quod supra ostensum est, quod Deus est ipsum esse per se subsistens;" q. 4, a. 3, ad 3: "Deus est ens per essentiam, et alia per participationem;" q. 4, a. 3, co.: "secundum aliqualem analogiam."

86. See *ST*, I^a q. 5 a. 4: "id quod est primum in causando, ultimum est in causato." See Aquinas, *In De divinis nominibus*, I, iii, § 94.

87. See *ST*, I^a q. 5 a. 4 ad 2: "bonum dicitur diffusivum sui esse."

88. *ST*, I^a q. 6 a. 2: "Omnes perfectiones ... effluunt ab eo."

At Q. 7, "On the Infinity of God" we reach the furthest extent of the *exitus*: "God is everywhere and in all things inasmuch as he is without limits and infinite."⁸⁹ "Being itself [identified with God by Aquinas, is also by him asserted to be] of all things the most completely form," unrestricted by matter, and, thus, both is *and* also is perfect, which the infinitely material cannot be.⁹⁰ By Q. 8, "The Existence of God in things," God exists in all things "intimately" and "immediately," "just as every acting cause is present in that in which it acts." God is everywhere and in everything "as giving to them being and power and activity."⁹¹

The *reditus* begins at Q. 9 by denying mutability of what is "pure actuality."⁹² Because time depends on motion, mutability denied leads to eternity, another negation (q. 10). Inclusive, as "completely simultaneous," eternity is "not other than God Himself" and "the proper measure of Being itself," i.e. being simply and completely, fully actual being.⁹³

Q. 11, ending the circle of names predicated "of the divine substance," is "On the Unity of God." Because "one is mutually convertible with being," and adds nothing to it, everything possesses being to the extent that it is also one. This unity is above things, because of God's simplicity; in things, "because of the infinity of the divine perfection;" and of things, because from it comes the unity of the world.⁹⁴ Unity is, thus, an inclusive perfection, containing the

89. *ST*, I^o q. 7 pr.: "Post considerationem divinae perfectionis, considerandum est de eius infinitate, et de existentia eius in rebus, attribuitur enim Deo quod sit ubique et in omnibus rebus, in quantum est incircumscribibilis et infinitus."

90. *ST*, I^o q. 7 a. 1 co.: "Illud autem quod est maxime formale omnium, est ipsum esse."

91. *ST*, I^o q. 8 a. 1 co.: "Deus sit in omnibus rebus, et intime" & I^o q. 8, a. 2, co.: "est in omnibus rebus, ut dans eis esse et virtutem et operationem."

92. *ST*, I^o q. 9 a. 1 co.: "primum ens oportet esse purum actum absque permixtione alicuius potentiae."

93. *ST*, I^o q. 10 a. 2 ad 3 "aeternitas non est aliud quam ipse Deus;" I^o q. 10 a. 4, co.: "aeternitas est tota simul;" I^o q. 10 a. 4 ad 3: "aeternitas est propria mensura ipsius esse."

94. *ST*, I^o q. 11 a. 3 co.: "Deum esse unum, ex tribus demonstratur. Primo quidem ex eius simplicitate. ... Secundo vero, ex infinitate eius perfectionis. ... Tertio, ab unitate mundi." See Aquinas, *In De divinis nominibus*, I, ii, § 55, & XIII, ii, § 980: "Patet ergo ex praemissis, quod unum quinque modis habet rationem

difference between the starting perfection, simplicity as the exclusion of all composition, and the many and varied beings which, implicit in it, came out from it. As inclusive it is the beginning as goal.

B. FROM KNOWING TO BEATITUDE

1. THE STRUCTURE

God circles upon himself in self-knowing and self-loving. The “activities of God” are treated in three parts. First, eleven questions treat “knowledge and will,” and “the things which have to do with intellect and will together;” these “remain in the one who acts.”⁹⁵ What is known is an object of thought in the knower. Second, q. 25, “On the Power of God,” treats the “activity which goes out into an exterior effect.”⁹⁶ “Lastly,” q. 26, concluding the “consideration of what belongs to the divine essence, treating God’s blessedness (*divina beatitudine*),” is an inclusive perfection.⁹⁷

2. WIDENING INTERNAL DIFFERENCE: FROM SUBSTANCE TO OPERATIONS
AND FROM KNOWING TO WILLING

In the questions on “How God is known by creatures” and “The Names we give God” (qq. 12 & 13), we find three of Aquinas’ characteristic doctrines: created grace, his astonishing positive teaching that the names of God communicate his nature, and the analogy of being. We step out of the Dionysian circle and mentality, dominated by the One, into self-reflexive knowing; Aristotle re-emerges. These questions terminate the first naming and are a break in the argument. The greater transitions, like this one, are preceded by a gathering or an “inclusive perfection,” here unity as name of God.

We arrive at God’s own knowledge from one of its effects, our knowing and naming of the divine substance. The likeness of our

principii”

95. *ST*, I^o q. 14 pr.: “operatio quaedam est quae manet in operante.”

96. *ST*, I^o q. 14 pr.: “quaedam vero quae procedit in exteriorem effectum.”

97. *ST*, I^o q. 26 pr.: “post considerationem eorum quae ad divinae essentiae unitatem pertinent, considerandum est de divina beatitudine.”

created knowledge to the divine knowing is by analogy.⁹⁸ This will not surprise because we have already discovered that creatures come forth as analogous likenesses to the divine perfection. There are two sides. As manifesting a created likeness, knowing and naming are a further step in the ascent from effect to cause. The knowledge of himself God gives the rational creature as an effect leads to knowing God as knower. As self-reflexive, these two questions move us further in the descent into the divine self-differentiation.

Aquinas learned from Dionysius that “three things are found in spiritual substances, namely essence, power, and activity.”⁹⁹ The structure God as spiritual substance gives his effects because he is their cause, Aquinas applies to the *de Deo* by the division “of the things that belong to the divine substance” from “what pertains to his activities.”¹⁰⁰ Such structure requires thearchy, an articulated hierarchy within God, with an ever widening and strengthening of differentiation. The operations involve such a widening:

1. The separation of the activities from the names of the essence (qq. 3 to 11) according to the distinction between substance and the operations.
2. Both knowing and willing in the simple Being require self-relation. “What knows its own essence returns upon itself”¹⁰¹; it is converted to itself. Life, which requires motion, is attributed to “self-sufficient being,” because knowing is motionless motion.
3. Knowing is not ecstatic: “it has to do with creatures as they are within God,”¹⁰² but, in contrast, his will regards creatures as they are “in themselves.”¹⁰³ Thus, the procession of things

98. *ST*, I^a q. 4 a. 3: “secundum aliqualem analogiam, sicut ipsum esse est commune omnibus.”

99. *ST*, I^a q. 75 pr.: “tria inveniuntur in substantiis spiritualibus, scilicet essentia, virtus et operatio.” See Hankey, *God in Himself*, 12, n. 42. He later found the reasons in Proclus’ *Elementatio theologica*.

100. *ST*, I^a q. 14 pr.: “eorum quae ad divinam substantiam pertinent” from “quae pertinent ad operationem ipsius.”

101. *ST*, I^a q. 14 a. 2 ad 1: “Dicitur in libro de causis, quod sciens essentiam suam, redit ad essentiam suam.”

102. See *ST*, I^a q. 14 a. 15: “importat relationem ad creaturas secundum quod sunt in Deo.”

103. *ST*, I^a q. 14 a. 15 ad 1: “in seipsis” & *ST*, I^a q. 19 a. 3, ad 6.

existing in themselves outside God's essence requires the Will of God.

4. The affirmation of the known by the knower is the further identity by ecstatic impulse in which knower becomes lover. With will, God is moved by himself as if by an other: "When the principal object of the will is a good outside the will, the will must be moved by another."¹⁰⁴ The motionless motion, which enabled life to be predicated of God, arises again with will: God "is not moved by something other than himself, but by himself only." "And in this way, Plato said that the first mover moves itself."¹⁰⁵
5. Knowing is multiplied in the "many Ideas;"¹⁰⁶ this plurality in God is allowed because "the relation, by which the ideas are multiplied, is not caused by the things [outside God] but by the divine intellect comparing its own essence [which is the cause of things] to the things [it makes]."¹⁰⁷
6. Finally, because truth is in judgment, it requires reflective comparing: "truth is defined as the conformity of knowing to what it knows."¹⁰⁸ To be called truth, the divine intellect must circle around itself to compare what goes out from it to itself. The enjoyment of the result is part of the felicity of the divine beatitude.¹⁰⁹

Crucially for the central consideration of this paper, here we see God moving himself as other to himself.

104. *ST*, I^a q. 19 a. 1 ad 3: "Voluntas cuius obiectum principale est bonum quod est extra voluntatem, oportet quod sit mota ab alio" (I adopt Gilby's reading in the Blackfriars *Summa theologiae* volume V, 1966).

105. *ST*, I^a q. 19 a. 1 ad 3: "non movetur ab alio a se, sed a se tantum." "Et secundum hoc Plato dixit quod primum movens movet seipsum."

106. *ST*, I^a q. 15 a. 2 co..

107. *ST*, I^a q. 15 a. 2 ad 3: "respectus, quibus multiplicantur ideae non causantur a rebus sed ab intellectu divino comparante essentiam suam ad res."

108. *ST*, I^a q. 16 a. 2 co.: "per conformitatem intellectus et rei veritas definitur. Unde conformitatem istam cognoscere, est cognoscere veritatem."

109. *ST*, I^a q. 26 a. 4 co.

3. MOTIONLESS MOTION: RECONCILING PLATO AND ARISTOTLE

For Aristotle, and for Aquinas following him, physical motion is “the actuality of the imperfect so far as it is incomplete.” God cannot move in this way. When treating God’s knowing and willing, Aquinas follows those reconciling Plato’s self-moved creator and Aristotle’s Unmoved Mover. This allows the predication of life to God and God is said to be moved by his own goodness.¹¹⁰ For Aquinas, in the *De anima* Aristotle teaches that perceiving and thinking are motions in the general meaning of the word, rather than in its specific physical meaning; thus, motion can include the “activity of the perfect.” “Understanding is not a motion of the kind which is the actuality of the imperfect, that is from something other in another thing, but rather the activity of the perfect, which remains in the agent itself.”¹¹¹ House building turns trees into the timbers of a roof; I know you without each of us ceasing to be the substances we are. This perfect motion dissolves the difference between Plato’s creator and Aristotle’s God. Aquinas found this interpretation of Aristotle and the notion of God’s activity as motionless motion in Dionysius, in the Aristotelian, Neoplatonic and Arabic commentators on Aristotle, and in many other ancient sources.¹¹² Aquinas supposed that Aristotle did not assert against Plato that knowing was different *from* motion, but that thinking was a different kind *of* motion. “In the sense where intelligence is called a movement, the being which knows itself is said to move itself. It is in this way that Plato said God moved himself, but not by a movement which would be an actualization of the imperfect.”¹¹³

110. *ST*, I^a q. 19 a. 1 ad 3.

111. *ST*, I^a q. 14 a. 2 ad 2: “Non enim intelligere est motus qui est actus imperfecti, qui est ab alio in aliud, sed actus perfecti, existens in ipso agente.” See Aquinas, *Sententia libri De anima*, lib. 3 l. 12 n. 2: “Iste motus est actus perfecti.”

112. See Wayne J. Hankey, “Aquinas and the Platonists,” for *The Platonic Tradition in the Middle Ages: A Doxographic Approach*, edited by Stephen Gersh and Maarten J.F.M. Hoenen, with the assistance of Pieter Th. van Wingerden (Berlin – New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2002), 279–324 at 300–24, posted at <https://dal.academia.edu/WayneHankey>.

113. *ST*, I^a q. 18 a. 3 ad 1: “Hoc igitur modo quo intelligere est motus, id quod se intelligit, dicitur se movere. Et per hunc modum etiam Plato posuit quod

4. GOD AND CREATURES: AQUINAS' PERIPATETIC AND NEOPLATONIC
PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

The Problematic

i. First, simple subsistent being is without composition and cannot be affected from outside; its determinations are from itself (*per se*)—it is essence as well as existence. In consequence, the argument of the *de Deo* shows Being (*esse*) as self-determining and self-affected. The same holds for knowing, which cannot be affected by what is outside it or below it.

ii. Second, according to the Aristotelian identity of knower and known, the form of what is known, i.e., what makes something understandable, becomes the form of the mind of the knower, i.e. that by which I understand. With the Peripatetics, these two principles together prevent God's knowledge of the world of material particulars. For Aquinas, should these principles prevail in this way, God could also not be the cause of individual material things.

The Principle of a solution

iii. Aquinas knows and uses a Neoplatonic principle that a thing is received (or known) according to the mode of the receiver (or knower). Because it comes to him from the *Liber de causis* (as well as other sources), he does not think of it as Platonic rather than Aristotelian. This principle modifies the Aristotelian identity in such a way as to enable God's knowledge of creation, and is fundamental to the analogy of being, and the positive knowledge of God by us.¹¹⁴

Completing the solution

Two things prevent this third principle from being sufficient to solve all the problems.

- a. If the First Cause were only knowing, and caused by knowing, then all it knows would exist necessarily and eternally in accord with the mode of absolute subsistent

Deus movet seipsum, non eo modo quo motus est actus imperfecti."

114. Its logical basis is found in Porphyry at the latest and Aquinas has it early from Boethius as well.

Being. To prevent this result, for Thomas, the emanation of creatures requires will in addition to knowledge.

- b. The basis of the effect must be discernible in the cause in order for it to be known as cause.

Both of these create distinctions within God: differences in the mode of knowing and in the mode of willing.

Different modes within the divine correspond to and cause the differences between creatures. Aquinas distinguishes God's "knowledge of vision" (of what actually is) from "knowledge of simple intelligence" (of what could be but never is)¹¹⁵, and the love which creates irrational creatures, the "love of desire" (quasi concupiscible), from the "friendship love," creating rational creatures with whom God can enter into friendship.¹¹⁶ That rational creatures require a different form of creative love points us backwards, to the human "natural desire" which moves the whole *Summa* on the subjective side, and forwards, to the culmination of Aquinas' treatment of God Himself, the invisible missions of the Trinity, where, by sanctifying, grace, humans will love God by God's own subsistent love.

5. "WHAT HAS TO DO WITH INTELLECT AND WILL TOGETHER"¹¹⁷

Concerning providence, predestination, the Book of Life, qq. 22-24, is the third general distinction within the operations. To allow "very being itself" to have its proper effect, beings, as substantial and proper images of the first cause, thus causing as well as caused, Aquinas goes back to a distinction between providence and fate, as old at least as Plotinus.¹¹⁸ He distinguishes

115. See *ST*, I^a q. 14 a. 9 co.: "scientia visionis" versus "scientia simplicis intelligentiae."

116. See *ST*, I^a q. 20 a. 2 ad 3: "amor quasi concupiscentiae" versus "amor amicitiae."

117. *ST*, I^a q. 22 pr.: "Ea quae respiciunt simul intellectum et voluntatem."

118. See Wayne J. Hankey, "God's Care for Human Individuals: What Neoplatonism gives to a Christian Doctrine of Providence," *Quaestiones Disputatae* 2: 1 & 2 (Spring –Fall 2011): 4–36 and "Providence and Hierarchy in Thomas Aquinas and the Neoplatonic Tradition," for *The Question of Nobility. Aspects of Medieval and Renaissance Conceptualization of Man*, ed. by Andrea

between providence, which is in the cause, and governance or execution, which is in the governed and requires the substantial reality of second causes: "Providence is not in the things for which it provides, but is a certain plan in the intelligence which orders to the foreseen goal The execution of providence, which is called government, is something passive in what is governed but actively agent in the governing."¹¹⁹ These causes take us back to the fifth of the Five Ways and forward to the third and final section of Part One of the *Summa* (God): "On the Government of things" by which creatures are maintained within the good which is their end. Although the creation is manifest, it remains within God.

6. ON THE POWER AND BLESSEDNESS OF GOD: COMPLETION, SUMMATION,
AND BREAK¹²⁰

Q. 25, "On the Power of God," treats the "activity which goes out into external effects."¹²¹ This, and "On the Blessedness of God" (q. 26), conclude "what pertains to the unity of the divine essence."¹²² In q. 25, we move from the perfect operations or processions, "which remain in the one who acts,"¹²³ and become the real relations constituting equal Trinitarian subsistences in the Divine essence,¹²⁴ to the Power. Thomas indicates that a change in the form of his argument comes after these two questions. We cannot deduce "through natural reason"¹²⁵ that real relations exist in God, i.e. real giving and receiving as from another to another, and thus real opposition within the divine essence. In consequence,

A. Robiglio, *Studies on the Interaction of Art, Thought and Power* 8, Leiden-New York, Brill, 2014, in press; both posted at <https://dal.academia.edu/WayneHankey>.

119. *ST*, I^a q. 23 a. 2 co.: "providentia autem non est in rebus provisivis; sed est quaedam ratio in intellectu provisoris, ut supra dictum est. Sed executio providentiae, quae gubernatio dicitur, passive quidem est in gubernatis; active autem est in gubernante."

120. See Hankey, *God in Himself*, chapter V: *Intelligere est motus*, 109–114.

121. *ST*, I^a q. 14 pr.: "operatio ... quae procedit in exteriorem effectum."

122. *ST*, I^a q. 26 pr.: "quae ad divinae essentiae unitatem pertinent."

123. *ST*, I^a q. 14 pr.: "quae manet in operante."

124. *ST*, I^a q. 27 a. 5 co.

125. *ST*, I^a q. 32 a. 1: "per naturalem rationem."

although the Trinitarian real relations are formed from the internal activities of the essence, and are both necessary and natural, we need Scriptural revelation to be certain that they exist. This lack does not stem from weakness in their logical necessity but from the deficiency of human knowing.¹²⁶

Power originates in what has no prior in any sense (“power is proper to the Father, it is most manifested in the act of creation”¹²⁷) and is modified in the divine intellect and will¹²⁸ (“Word” and “Spirit”) to produce the “emanation of all beings from a universal cause.”¹²⁹ This relation of the unequal recipient to the divine *esse* is creation.¹³⁰ Creation “is in the creature and is the creature.”¹³¹

The discontinuity in the way theology requires Scriptural authority comes after another conclusion whose inclusivity is emphasised. Q. 26, “On the Blessedness of God,” argues that, because “the perfection of God encompasses all perfection, his blessedness encompasses every happiness.”¹³² Beatitude returns us to the first positive name of the simple substance and to the beginning of the operations in knowing: Beatitude is “the perfect good of an intellectual nature.”¹³³ Considered like this, beatitude takes us back to the origin of the *Summa* in the natural desire of reason: “To God we must attribute blessedness on account of intellect, and also to all the blessed who are called ‘blessed’ by assimilation to his happiness.”¹³⁴

126. See *ST*, I^a q. 32 a. 1 ad 2; see Hankey, *God in Himself*, 130–35.

127. *ST*, I^a q. 45 a. 6 ad 2: “patri appropriatur potentia, quae maxime manifestatur in creatione.”

128. See Hankey, *God in Himself*, 118, note 9; *ST*, I^a q. 42 a. 6 ad 3; *ST*, I^a q. 45 a3 et a. 6.

129. *ST*, I^a q. 45 a. 1 co.: “emanationem totius entis a causa universali.”

130. *ST*, I^a q. 47 a. 2 ad 2.

131. *ST*, I^a q. 45 a. 3 ad 2: “est in creatura, et est creatura.”

132. *ST*, I^a q. 26 a. 4 s.c.: “Divina autem perfectio complectitur omnem perfectionem, ut supra ostensum est. Ergo divina beatitudo complectitur omnem beatitudinem.”

133. *ST*, I^a q. 26 a. 1 co.: “bonum perfectum intellectualis naturae.”

134. *ST*, I^a q. 26 a. 2 co.: “Attribuenda ergo est Deo beatitudo secundum intellectum, sicut et aliis beatis, qui per assimilationem ad beatitudinem ipsius, beati dicuntur.”

Comparably to the inclusive conclusion of the circle constructed by the substantial names, happiness draws, according to an appropriate eminence, “everything that is desirable, whether true or false,” into the divine perfection. “From contemplative felicity, God keeps the perpetual and unending contemplation of himself and everything else, and, from the contrasting felicity of practical life, he retains that which belongs to the government of the whole universe.” As to “earthly happiness,” “from delight, he keeps joy in himself and everything else, instead of wealth he has the self-sufficiency of every kind which riches promise, for power, he has omnipotence, for dignity, every rule, for fame, the wonder of the whole creation.”¹³⁵

C. FROM GIVING AND RECEIVING IN THE DIVINE ESSENCE TO THE “GIFT WHICH CANNOT BE RECALLED”

1. PERFECT OUTGOING IN THE “INTERNAL PROCESSION OF GOD”¹³⁶

The structure of the treatise on the Trinity of persons within the divinity is complex, because the relations are both essential, based in the conceptual names (notions), and real, and therefore also subsistent individuals. In consequence, it has two circles moving in opposite directions, which correspond to the great movements from God’s self-revelation and from creatures. In them, the *exitus* – *reditus* encircling continues but differently.¹³⁷

135. *ST*, I^o q. 26 a. 4 co.: “quidquid est desiderabile in quacumque beatitudine, vel vera vel falsa, totum eminentius in divina beatitudine praeexistit. De contemplativa enim felicitate, habet continuam et certissimam contemplationem sui et omnium aliorum, de activa vero, gubernationem totius universi. De terrena vero felicitate, ... habet gaudium de se et de omnibus aliis, pro delectatione, pro divitiis, habet omnimodam sufficientiam, quam divitiae promittunt, pro potestate, omnipotentiam, pro dignitate, omnium regimen, pro fama vero, admirationem totius creaturae.”

136. *ST*, I^o q. 27 a. 1 co.: “procession ad intra.”

137. Despite the arguments of T.-D. Humbrecht, o.p., in *Trité et création au prisme de la voie négative chez Saint Thomas d’Aquin* (Paris: Parole et Silence, 2011) opposing Neoplatonic structure in the *de Deo* of the *Summa*. I have outlined the structure in *God in Himself*, Chapter VI: *Relatio est idem quod persona*, pp. 115–35.

The procession of persons draws us back to the identity of God's essence with his existence, treated in the first question on the divine substance. These processions are not the operations of the essence or substance,¹³⁸ but are the relations of the essence itself in which it is opposed within itself as giving and being received. Evidently this self-opposition within the essence is crucial to establishing my fundamental argument concerning identity and otherness.

The return to the origin, "subsistent being itself," is also the last internal development of the fundamental divine logic. The Trinitarian processions are the last perfect circular emanations within the essence and obey this law: "the more complete the going out is, so much the more its goal is one with that from which it comes."¹³⁹ The "exitus" within the divine essence produces persons who are "mutually opposed such that each is in the other."¹⁴⁰

"The *exitus* of the Son from the Father proceeds according to the mode of an interior procession, in the way a word goes out from the heart and yet remains in it. In God, this *exitus* is only that of the distinction of relative terms."¹⁴¹ Despite the *exitus*, "the divine nature is indivisible. Hence it is necessary that the Father, in generating the Son communicate to him the whole [divine] nature and remain distinct from him only by a pure relation of origin ..."¹⁴² Also, by love, God "is sent outside himself into the beloved."¹⁴³ And the gift is received: "Although there is no motion in the divine, there is, however, receiving," and its correlative, giving.¹⁴⁴

138. Treated in qq. 14–26.

139. *ST*, I^a q. 27 a. 1 ad 2: "quanto perfectius procedit, tanto magis est unum cum eo a quo procedit."

140. *ST*, I^a q. 42 a. 5 co. et ad 3: "oppositorum relative unum est in altero."

141. *ST*, I^a q. 42 a. 5 ad 2: "exitus filii a patre est secundum modum processionis interioris, prout verbum exit a corde, et manet in eo. Unde exitus iste in divinis est secundum solam distinctionem relationum."

142. *ST*, I^a q. 41 a. 3 co.: "divina natura impartibilis est. Unde necesse est quod pater, generando filium, non partem naturae in ipsum transfuderit, sed totam naturam ei communicaverit, remanente distinctione solum secundum originem ..."

143. *ST*, I^a q. 20, a. 2 ad 1: "amans sic fit extra se in amatum translatus."

144. *ST*, I^a q. 42 a. 1 ad 3: "Licet motus non sit in divinis, est tamen ibi accipere."

Because the divine processions are in the identity of nature and can only be the giving and receiving of God to himself as other from himself,¹⁴⁵ the relations formed are real.¹⁴⁶ Crucially, relation in God is not something existing in a subject “instead it is attributed as if one thing were related to another,”¹⁴⁷ and “it is assimilated to the relation of identity.”¹⁴⁸ “By definition relation implies reference to another, according as two things stand in relative opposition to each other. Therefore, since in God there is real relation, real opposition must also be there.”¹⁴⁹ Opposites are by necessity closest to each other. The same infinity is opposed to itself as given and received and remains, in this activity, the divine infinity. This is the ultimate structure of *Ipsium Esse subsistens*: a relation as if with another assimilated to the relation of identity.

In the ever complete process of the divine self-relation, God modifies himself on the way to making others. The knowledge which belongs to the divine *esse* as subsisting and returning on itself is modified as producing or received. “The Son is God as generated, not as generating deity; hence he is someone understanding, not as producing a Word, but as a Word produced.”¹⁵⁰ “The Father and the Son have the same essence and dignity, but, in the Father, it has the character belonging to a giver, in the Son, of one who receives.”¹⁵¹ This chariot is clearly on the road to existence outside the Divine essence and will be drawn there by the same horses which are carrying it around the circuit of its endless eternal life.

145. *ST*, I^a q. 27 a. 2 ad 3: “Sic igitur id quod est genitum in divinis, accipit esse a generante, non tanquam illud esse sit receptum in aliqua materia vel subiecto (quod repugnat subsistentiae divini esse); sed secundum hoc dicitur esse acceptum, inquantum procedens ab alio habet esse divinum, non quasi aliud ab esse divino existens.”

146. *ST*, I^a q. 28 a. 1 co.: “Cum igitur processiones in divinis sint in identitate naturae, ut ostensum est, necesse est quod relationes quae secundum processiones divinas accipiuntur, sint relationes reales.”

147. *ST*, I^a q. 28, a. 1 ad 1: “magis per modum ad aliud se habentis.”

148. See *ST*, I^a q. 28, a. 1 ad 2: “assimilat relationi identitatis.”

149. *ST*, I^a q. 28 a. 3 co.: “De ratione autem relationis est respectus unius ad alterum, secundum quem aliquid alteri opponitur relative. Cum igitur in Deo realiter sit relation, ... oportet quod realiter sit ibi oppositio.”

150. *ST*, I^a q. 34 a. 2 ad 4: “Est autem filius Deus genitus, non autem generans Deus. Unde est quidem intelligens, non ut producens verbum, sed ut verbum procedens.”

151. *ST*, I^a q. 42, a. 4 ad 2: “eadem enim est essentia et dignitas patris et filii, sed in patre est secundum relationem dantis, in filio secundum relationem accipientis.”

2. "THE BOND OF TWO" AND "A GIFT THAT CAN HAVE NO RETURN": THE SPIRIT AS TRANSITION AND INCLUSIVE PERFECTION

Father and Son are two subsistences and opposed as knower and known. The "bond of the two"¹⁵² is the Holy Spirit who "proceeds from the Father and the Son as plural, for he proceeds from them as the love which unifies the two."¹⁵³ He is their "mutual love."¹⁵⁴

The Spirit has two opposed aspects. On the one hand, as *connexio, nexus, unitas*, it is the bond of love overcoming the opposition of Father and Son, as giving and receiving. The connection of the two (*connexio duorum*) is the Spirit who receives his being from both as love: "If you leave out the Spirit, it is not possible to understand the unity of connection (*unitas connexionis*) between the Father and the Son."¹⁵⁵ As "Spiritus," the proper name of the third person, as well as the nature of divinity as such,¹⁵⁶ the return to Spirit is return to the unity from which personal difference arises.¹⁵⁷ This is the language and doctrine of Augustine. Thus the whole Trinitarian process is a conversion, an *exitus* and *reditus*, the basis of that other going out and return, that is, creation.

On the other hand, the Spirit is love as ecstatic. Love is "an action passing from the lover to the beloved."¹⁵⁸ "The word 'spirit' in bodily things, seems to signify a certain impulse and motion; we give the name 'spirit' to breath and to wind. It is distinctive of love that it move and impel the will of the lover toward the beloved."¹⁵⁹ In this way, the Spirit is gift. Love is the primal gift,

152. *ST*, I^a q. 37 a. 1 ad 3: "nexus duorum."

153. *ST*, I^a q. 36 a. 4 ad 1: "spiritus sanctus procedit a patre et filio ut sunt plures, procedit enim ab eis ut amor unitivus duorum."

154. *ST*, I^a q. 37 a. 1 ad 3: "mutuus amor."

155. *ST*, I^a q. 39 a. 8 co.: "excluso spiritu sancto, qui est duorum nexus, non posset intelligi unitas connexionis inter patrem et filium."

156. *ST*, I^a q. 36 a. 1 co. and ad 1.

157. *ST*, I^a q. 36 a. 4: "Sicut igitur pater et filius sunt unus Deus, propter unitatem formae significatae per hoc nomen Deus; ita sunt unum principium spiritus sancti, propter unitatem proprietatis significatae in hoc nomine principium."

158. *ST* I, qu. 37 a. 1 arg. 2: "actio quaedam ab amante transiens in amatum."

159. *ST*, I^a q. 36 a. 1 co.: "Nam nomen spiritus, in rebus corporeis, impulsionem quandam et motionem significare videtur, nam flatum et ventum

since, as Aquinas quotes Aristotle, “a gift is a giving that can have no return.”¹⁶⁰ The Spirit is the love by which all graces are given. So, by the Holy Spirit, the Trinity comes in mission to humans.

In sum, the divine Love is both the bond of unity and ecstatic. In the treatise on God as three, the consideration of the Spirit is transitional. The Spirit is the term of the outward movement within God and of the divine Trinitarian conversion in a return to principle; the Spirit is also the mission of God to fulfill the “desire of nature” and the way to the procession of creatures. The motion and impulse of love carry both God *in se* and us back to unity and out again.

3. WE POSSESS GOD HIMSELF

With the gift of God Himself by way of the grace of the Holy Spirit, we have arrived at the destination theology seeks: our direct participation in God’s own knowing and loving.¹⁶¹ The union of the divine and the human in time, treated here, anticipates the contemplation of God in glory after this present life, and both the temporal and eternal exceed the comprehension of reason.¹⁶² Nonetheless, the reasoning creature arrives at his end beyond nature in accord with his rational nature. Not only do women and men intentionally reach out for it in desire because it was made known to them by faith, what makes Sacred Doctrine necessary according to the very first argument of the *Summa*, but also the divine-human fulfilling activities are those of intellect and will:

God is said to be as the known in the knower and the beloved in the lover. And because, by these acts of knowing and loving, the rational creature by its own activity touches God Himself, according to this special mode, God is not only said to be in the rational creature, but to dwell in him as in his own Temple.¹⁶³

spiritum nominamus. Est autem proprium amoris, quod moveat et impellat voluntatem amantis in amatum.”

160. *ST I*, qu. 38 art. 2 co.: “donum proprie est datio irreddibilis, secundum philosophum.”

161. See Hankey, “God’s Indwelling.” Posted at <https://dal.academia.edu/WayneHankey>.

162. *ST*, I^a q. 1 a. 1 co.: “qui comprehensionem rationis excedit.”

163. *ST*, I^a q. 43 a. 3 co.: “Deus dicitur esse sicut cognitum in cognoscente et amatum in amante. Et quia, cognoscendo et amando, creatura rationalis sua

The question on the "Sending of the Divine Persons" in time bridges the eternal and the temporal. It takes us back first to the circle of the questions on the divine substance and operations, and the "common mode" of participation detailed there: "God is in all things ... just as an agent cause is in that in which it acts," "giving to them being, power and activity."¹⁶⁴ Then, it recalls the divine love, the ecstatic self-giving of God and the friendship love which creates the rational creature who is also fulfilled by it. With the gift of God Himself in his Persons, the "natural desire" of the rational creature¹⁶⁵ and God's friendship love, meet. By this new mode of the presence of God, in which humans touch God and He inhabits them as his temple, they "possess" the "power of enjoying a divine Person:" "It is the Holy Spirit who is possessed and who inhabits humans. Also it is the Holy Spirit itself which is given and sent."¹⁶⁶ In this mode God is possessed by us!

The Sending of the Divine Persons belongs to the *reditus*, the enjoyment of God as the Good, the purpose of creation, through the medium of the Holy Spirit. Fr Camille de Belloy writes of the soul to whom this gift comes:

without leaving its temporal and created condition, [it] receives by grace the Son and Holy Spirit according to the immanent mode in which these persons eternally proceed, one as Word, the other as Love, within the uncreated Trinity, and by which each of them does not cease, in a movement without change, to return to the Father, but also to bring back there, in time and as its final end, the rational creature whom they have chosen for a dwelling place.¹⁶⁷

operatione attingit ad ipsum Deum, secundum istum specialem modum Deus non solum dicitur esse in creatura rationali, sed etiam habitare in ea sicut in templo suo."

164. *ST*, I^a q. 8 a. 1 and a. 2 co. quoted above.

165. *ST*, I^a q. 1 a. 1 co. quoted above.

166. *ST*, I^a q. 43 a. 3 co.: "Sic igitur nullus alius effectus potest esse ratio quod divina persona sit novo modo in rationali creatura, nisi gratia gratum faciens. Unde secundum solam gratiam gratum facientem, mittitur et procedit temporaliter persona divina. Similiter illud solum habere dicimur, quo libere possumus uti vel frui. Habere autem potestatem fruendi divina persona, est solum secundum gratiam gratum facientem. Sed tamen in ipso dono gratiae gratum facientis, spiritus sanctus habetur, et inhabitat hominem. Unde ipsemet spiritus sanctus datur et mittitur."

167. Camille de Belloy, o.p., *Dieu comme soi-même. Connaissance de soi et*

Fr de Belloy then takes us further by way of an earlier treatment of this gift. Aquinas wrote: “this knowing and perception of the divine Person in this gift, which is appropriated to Him and by which He accomplishes a true joining to God according to the mode proper to the Person sent, is a knowing of an experiential kind (“*cognitio ista est quasi experimentalis*”).”¹⁶⁸ By the divine mission through which humans possess the power of enjoying Him, theological ontology embraces our subjective experience.

4. THE LOGIC BY WHICH THE DIVINE PERSONS PROCEED CONTAINS THE
CAUSALITY OF CREATION

The radical conclusion of Thomas’ treatment of God in the missions by which humans possess the power of enjoying union with divinity was banalized, forgotten or neglected and is now being rediscovered. This is also true of what follows; the ground of creation is in the coming forth of the persons.¹⁶⁹ Creation is “the emanation of the whole of being from a universal being,”¹⁷⁰ the proper action of God alone. Its distinguishing effect, “absolute being,”¹⁷¹ the subsistence on which everything else in the creature depends, images “Being itself,” God.¹⁷² As at the beginning of the *Summa*, we have what is common to the divine *esse*, but now it is known to be acting according to its Trinitarian nature by knowledge

connaissance de dieu selon Thomas d’Aquin: l’herméneutique d’Ambroise Gardeil.
Bibliothèque thomiste LXIII (Paris : Vrin, 2014), 13.

168. de Belloy, *Dieu comme soi-même*, 13; Aquinas, *Super Sent.*, lib. 1 d. 14 q. 2 a. 2 ad 3: “non qualiscumque cognitio sufficit ad rationem missionis, sed solum illa quae accipitur ex aliquo dono appropriato personae, per quod efficitur in nobis conjunctio ad Deum, secundum modum proprium illius personae, scilicet per amorem, quando spiritus sanctus datur. Unde cognitio ista est quasi experimentalis.” See Camille de Belloy, o.p., *La visite de Dieu : Essai sur les missions des personnes divines selon saint Thomas d’Aquin* (Genève: Ad Solem, 2006), 74–9.

169. Gilles Emery, *La Trinité Créatrice. Trinité and création dans les commentaires aux Sentences de Thomas d’Aquin et de ses précurseurs Albert le Grand et Bonaventure*, Bibliothèque thomiste XLVII (Paris: Vrin, 1995).

170. *ST*, I^o q. 45 a. 4 ad 1: “emanatio totius esse ab ente universale.”

171. *ST*, I^o q. 45 a. 5 co.: “esse absolute.”

172. *ST*, I^o q. 45 a. 5 co.: “creare non potest esse propria actio nisi solius Dei. Oportet enim universaliores effectus in universaliores et priores causas reducere. Inter omnes autem effectus, universalissimum est ipsum esse.”

and love. "The creative strength of God is common to the whole of the Trinity, hence it pertains to the unity of the essence."¹⁷³

The creation of things is Trinitarian. The origin of the "procession of creatures"¹⁷⁴ is the divine power: "the activity which goes out into an exterior effect."¹⁷⁵ Power originates in what has no prior, the Father.¹⁷⁶

To create is not proper to any Person, but is common to the whole Trinity. Nevertheless the divine Persons, according to the structure of their procession, have causality in respect to the creation of things. ... God is the cause of things by His intellect and will ... Hence God the Father creates through His Word, which is His Son; and through His Love, which is the Holy Ghost. And so the processions of the Persons are the reasons for the production of creatures ...¹⁷⁷

Because there is no motion or mutation in the act of creation, its fundamental structure is the same as that of divinity itself, relation and the opposition of giving and receiving. It is the divine essence given and received: "Creation is passively accepted in the creature and is the creature."¹⁷⁸ Or, put another way, it is God as creature. However, creation involves diverse relations in the Creator and the created. Their relation is not a mutual equality; creation is a real relation of the creature to God, but not of God to the creature.¹⁷⁹ Received outside the essence, this divine *exitus* is an imperfect othering. The ultimate procession is the coming forth of "the creature to which inequality is proper."¹⁸⁰ For Aquinas "the good is

173. *ST*, I^a q. 32 a. 1: "Virtus ... creativa Dei est communis toti Trinitati, unde pertinet ad unitatem essentiae."

174. *ST*, I^a q. 44 pr.

175. *ST*, I^a q. 14 pr.: "operatio... quae procedit in exteriorem effectum."

176. *ST*, I^a q. 42 a. 6 ad 3; *ST*, I^a q. 45 a3 et a. 6.

177. *ST*, I^a q. 45 a. 6 co. "creare non est proprium alicui personae, sed commune toti Trinitati. Sed tamen divinae personae secundum rationem suae processionis habent causalitatem respectu creationis rerum.... Deus est causa rerum per suum intellectum et voluntatem, ...Unde et Deus pater operatus est creaturam per suum verbum, quod est filius; et per suum amorem, qui est spiritus sanctus. Et secundum hoc processiones personarum sunt rationes productionis creaturarum..."

178. *ST*, I^a q. 45 a. 3 ad 2: "Creatio passive accepta est in creatura, et est creatura."

179. *ST*, I^a q. 45 a. 3 ad 1: "Relatio vero creaturae ad Deum est relatio realis, ut supra dictum est, cum de *divinis Nominibus* ageretur."

180. *ST*, I^a q. 47 a. 2 ad 2: "Et ideo a patre, cui, ... appropriatur unitas,

self-diffusive," "in the sense in which purpose is said to move."¹⁸¹ God's good will is that the divine self-communication be as complete as possible; for this difference, another otherness, is necessary.

As in Plato's *Timaeus*, because there cannot be identity between the divine cause and the creature,¹⁸² in order for the creature to be as much like the Creator as possible, difference must be introduced. "The perfection of the universe consists in the diversity of things. ... In consequence, the distinction of things and their multiplicity comes from the intention of the primary agent, God."¹⁸³ He produces things in order to communicate and represent his goodness. No single creature is adequate to this; therefore, he produces a multitude of creatures of diverse kinds. "Goodness, which in God is simplicity and uniformity, is multiplicity and division in creatures."¹⁸⁴

CONCLUSION: THE CONVERSION OF GOD

As we moved through the *de Deo* of Aquinas' *Summa theologiae* from the "I am Who am" to the mission of the Spirit by which humans possess God, and the procession by which another substantial being, another god, emerges, determining structure is manifest. It is circular—or perhaps, better, elliptical. Knowing the first principle requires two motions, both drawn by God as final cause, the first containing the other, but requiring it. The first descends from God by the light of revelation; the other rises from

processit filius, cui appropriatur aequalitas; et deinde creatura, cui competit inaequalitas."

181. *ST*, I^o q. 5 a. 4 ad 2.

182. See Plato, *Timaeus*, 37d4, 39e2, etc.

183. *ST*, I^o q. 47 a. 1: "Sic igitur complementum universi, quod in diversitate rerum consistit, Unde dicendum est quod distinctio rerum et multitudo est ex intentione primi agentis, quod est Deus."

184. *ST*, I^o q. 47 a. 1 co.: "Produxit enim res in esse propter suam bonitatem communicandam creaturis, et per eas repraesentandam. Et quia per unam creaturam sufficienter repraesentari non potest, produxit multas creaturas et diversas, ut quod deest uni ad repraesentandam divinam bonitatem, suppleatur ex alia, nam bonitas quae in Deo est simpliciter et uniformiter, in creaturis est multipliciter et divisim. Unde perfectius participat divinam bonitatem, et repraesentat eam, totum universum, quam alia quaecumque creatura."

creatures by the light of natural reason. Within these, because *esse* as “form through itself (*per se forma*)” is self-related and self-affecting in an internal dynamic of self-differentiation, remaining, *exitus* and *reditus* is established as the universal governing structure, within and without. The *per se* generates and includes its own *aliud*. When we come to the divine Trinity itself, Aquinas assimilates this to the logic of identity. That being is other to itself and converts upon itself as the ground of othering in all which is. Being is Trinitarian. God converts upon himself, drawing the cosmos, including humans according his will and their own desire, into the circle of his life. In consequence, the Incarnation, complete othering, is not added at the end of the system; its deep ground is established in the beginning with the difference in identity of the nature and existence of self-subsistent being. This is the Wisdom which belongs to God.

The key both to Thomas’ differentiations, and the movement through them, is that the argument is step by step. Aquinas ends with God as three, but begins with God as one. We pass by way of the self-reflectivity of God as knowing, but we begin with the circle described by the names of the simple substance. We get to real relations in God based on internal opposition by way of God’s self-knowing and self-loving. These activities are not themselves the Trinitarian persons, although the middle term is the self-affectivity of the divine giving and receiving of itself.

Aquinas repeats the same content under different perspectives. The mutual interplay of form and content enables both our transition from one perspective to another and our acceptance of the changes to the immutable content consequent on these transitions. While our theology cannot start with being as Trinitarian, or God as Incarnate, step by step our reasoning about it and its representation to us are more conformed, as the differentiated multiplicity within the simplicity becomes more manifest. By this means “learning (*disciplina*)” and the doctrinal content (*doctrina*) are united and Sacred Doctrine proceeds so that, as God converts upon Himself, we are converted to our own Good and to Him.

Two consequences arrest our attention in our present circumstances. One is that, because, ultimately, we know and will by the knowing and willing by which God knows and wills himself, God passes over to the human in his self-conversion. Christianity reveals a radical humanism. Alienation, or the death of God, Good Friday, is an inescapable moment in the logic of Being. Another is that the assertion of identity in opposition to our being in and through the other, including ourselves as other, is vain imagination and self-betrayal. I close first by quoting Jean Trouillard on the Proclus he made his own: "The soul is the perfect mediation because it is the plenitude of negations It is in this that it is self-moving."¹⁸⁵ Then, by quoting Stanislas Breton on what Fr Trouillard and his radically Neoplatonist priest associates accomplished: "What they inaugurated under the appearance of a return to the past was well and truly a new manner of seeing the world and of intervening in it, of practicing philosophy, of comprehending the givenness of religion, both in its Christian form and in its mystical excess; since, and I hasten to add, they reconnected the old West to its Far Eastern beyond."¹⁸⁶

In the world western Christian imperialism has made, this is now our necessity. In meeting a like necessity in their own time in respect to Islamic philosophy and Greek Christian theology, Aquinas and his teacher Albertus Magnus, set us examples.¹⁸⁷ In the way they practiced both philosophy and theology, they surpassed our world overwhelmed in thought and action by reactionary assertions of unmediated self.

185. Jean Trouillard, *L'Un et l'Âme selon Proclus*. Collection d'études anciennes (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1972), 4–8.

186. Stanislas Breton, *De Rome à Paris. Itinéraire philosophique* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1992), 154.

187. See Hankey, "Misrepresenting Neoplatonism."