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# A Study of the Omnipresence and Immensity of God

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A STUDY OF THE OMNIPRESENCE  
AND IMMENSITY  
OF GOD

by  
Patrick Francis Ahern

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School  
of Loyola University in Partial Fulfillment of  
the Requirements for the Degree of  
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## LIFE

Patrick Francis Ahern was born in Chicago, Illinois, September 11, 1925.

He was graduated from Quigley Preparatory Seminary, Chicago, Illinois, June, 1943, and from the University of St. Mary of the Lake, Mundelein, Illinois, June, 1946, with the degree of Bachelor of Arts.

From 1946 to 1948 the author studied the Sacred Sciences at the University of St. Mary of the Lake. From 1948 to 1949 he taught English and History at Leo High School, Chicago, Illinois. He began his graduate studies at Loyola University in September, 1949. He has served as an Assistant in the department of Philosophy at that university in 1950.

## PREFACE

The purpose of this thesis is to clarify the difference between the divine attributes of omnipresence and immensity. To do so, the writer has integrated the notions of place and space, as understood in a scholastic cosmology, with the above-mentioned attributes of God, and he has shown the attribute of immensity to be the greater perfection.

An important phase of this thesis is the clarification of the traditionally scholastic notions of place and space for a better understanding of the significance of the attributes of omnipresence and immensity. It is likewise very important to have stressed the teaching of St. Thomas, as found particularly in the Summa Theologica, for a more thorough understanding of God's special mode of presence.

The author has found it necessary to make many translations of his own from the Latin. Throughout the thesis, therefore, translations are his, unless the name of the translator is given.

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## CHAPTER I

### THE APPROACH TO GOD

From the time of their formulation, some eight centuries ago, the five proofs of St. Thomas for the existence of God have become classic. The ultimate reason for this is not to be found in the fact that Thomas Aquinas has formulated them, nor in any other of a host of extrinsic explanations. Rather do these proofs rest upon their intrinsic characteristics and worth. It is true that many other arguments have been offered to prove the existence of God which are, in the opinion of many, as equally forceful as those proposed by Thomas. But nonetheless the widespread acclaim which has been afforded these proofs stems, as it were, from their over-all metaphysical nature.

Before anything can be said of God's essence or His attributes, it is necessary to indicate briefly the general pattern of the five proofs for a better understanding of why God is spoken of as the Immovable Mover, the Uncaused Cause, the Necessary and Supremely Perfect Being, as well as the Infinite Ruler of the Universe.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A detailed analysis of these proofs may be found in Appendix I of this work.



In all five of these arguments St. Thomas bases his conclusions on an empirical fact which he introduces as the major premiss of the argument. The principle of sufficient reason, at times formulated as the principle of causality or of finality, serves as the minor in an effort to account for the data of experience. The conclusion of each argument is a demand for the existence of a Being Who has within Himself the sufficient reason for His own existence as well as the existence of the data attested to by experience.

From the existence of motion in the world, St. Thomas is able to prove the existence of an Immovable Mover to account for that motion. Although he does not mention the fact in his actual proof from motion, the concept of an Immovable Mover contains the notion of Pure Act. A mover may be referred to as act, because he acts only insofar as he is in act; and an Immovable Mover is nothing else but act, because what is in potency is movable as regards the act to which it is in potency. Therefore an Immovable Mover is Pure Act, having no potency for a further act.<sup>2</sup> St. Thomas reserves considerations such as these for his

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<sup>2</sup> See Carolus Boyer, S. J., Cursus Philosophiae, Paris, 1935, II, 310-311.

"The first Immovable Mover is Pure Act, or God. This part indeed needs only a brief declaration. For a mover is act, since he acts only insofar as he is in act; and an Immovable Mover is act alone, since what is in potency is movable toward the act to which it is in potency. Therefore an Immovable Mover is Pure Act."

actual treatment of the essence and the attributes of God. However, it is profitable to note in passing the content of such notions as the Immovable Mover, for they give a basis and serve as the foundation for the vast storehouse of a reasoned knowledge of God's essence.<sup>3</sup>

In the second argument St. Thomas proceeds from the existence of an order of efficient causes in the world to the existence of an Uncaused Cause, This Uncaused, Unconditioned, and First Cause must be Its own action and Its own being, since, as Thomas himself remarks, operation follows being, and the mode of operation the mode of being.<sup>4</sup> He further points out, when discussing the nature and the attributes of God, that this First Cause is in reality Self-subsisting Being, completely independent of all other beings.<sup>5</sup>

In the third way St. Thomas argues from the existence of a being which is possible to be or not to be to the existence of a necessary being whose necessity is caused by no other--a

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<sup>3</sup> See John F. McCormick, S. J., Natural Theology, Chicago, 1943, 95.

"Having built up our idea of God by a posteriori reasoning from the evidence which the human mind in the exercise of its natural powers is able to find in the universe around us, we now proceed to follow out what is implied in the idea so built up."

<sup>4</sup> S. T., I, q. 25, a. 2, Basic Writings of St. Thomas Aquinas, ed. Anton C. Pegis, New York, 1945, I, 261.

<sup>5</sup> S. T., I, q. 3, a. 4, Basic Writings, ed. Pegis, I, 30.

Being, therefore, Who has within Himself the sufficient reason for His own existence.

The fourth Thomistic argument for the existence of God rests upon the grades of perfection which are found in the world. It must be noticed, however, that not all perfections are regarded in this argument, but only those which admit of degrees.<sup>6</sup> Such are the transcendental perfections of unity, truth, goodness, and beauty. Such also are accidental perfections, such as heat, wisdom, and holiness. As regards substantial or essential perfections, some admit of degrees, as does life, but others such as humanity do not. Here again the principle of sufficient reason demands the existence of the Supremely Perfect Being to account for the varied degrees of perfection in the world.

In the major of the fifth argument, from the governance of the world, recourse is had once again to a fact of experience. It is evident that natural beings, lacking intelligence, do attain their ends constantly and designedly. To explain this constantly recurring phenomenon, the principle of sufficient reason taking the form now of the principle of finality is invoked. And the conclusion that a Being Who is endowed with supreme intelli-

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<sup>6</sup> Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, O. P., The One God, trans. Dom Bede Rose, O. S. B., St. Louis, 1943, 146.

"We are concerned with the absolute perfections of being, truth, goodness, predicated of different things in varying degrees..."

gence must exist is an obvious one.

There are, it is true, other arguments which have been offered down the ages to prove the existence of God, some of which are more readily understood and perhaps more cogent in their suasive power. Nevertheless, the widespread acclaim afforded these proofs of Thomas is substantiated in the over-all metaphysical nature of the proofs. Their force is undeniable. Either the existence of God must be admitted, or the principle of sufficient reason must be denied.<sup>7</sup> The reason for this is that "every being which is contingent, changeable, composite, imperfect, and relative is caused," and hence a first and unchangeable Being, who is essentially and absolutely perfect, must exist.<sup>8</sup> Doubting or denying the principle of sufficient reason would involve the doubting or denying of the principle of contradiction, since a contingent being, having no reason for existence, could not be distinguished from nothingness.

In the Thomistic proofs for the existence of God, the Prime Mover, the First Cause, the Necessary Being, the Most Perfect Being, and the Ruler of the universe is shown to be His own

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<sup>7</sup> Etienne Gilson, The Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas, trans. Edward Bullough, ed. Rev. G. A. Eirington, O. P., Cambridge, England, 1929, 94.

"At bottom...there is not one of the proofs that does not demonstrate God to be the sole conceivable cause of the sense experience from which the proof has set out...ex nihilo, nihil fit."

<sup>8</sup> Garrigou-Lagrange, The One God, 154.

action, and therefore His own existence. In Him alone are essence and existence identified.<sup>9</sup> This is the golden key to the whole treatise on the one God, and its "dominating principle."<sup>10</sup>

In the proofs for God's existence it is necessary to proceed by a posteriori argumentation, building up an idea of God from what the human reason is capable of exhausting from the limited, finite, and contingent world about it. It seeks to know the cause of the wondrous effects it daily beholds. The proofs thus far have hinted to the inquiring searcher something of the majesty of God. But he wishes to know more of the essence of that Supreme Being, the First Mover, the Uncaused Cause, the Necessary and Absolutely Perfect Being, the Supreme Ordainer of all things. The starting point of a study of the essence and the attributes of God is had in the nature of God as expressed in the proofs for His existence.<sup>11</sup> A priori reasoning will characterize the further inquiry into the nature of God.

Since the human reason cannot adequately encompass the nature of God in any one concept, it must use terms after a human pattern, distinguishing conceptually between the divine es-

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9 The Summa Contra Gentiles of St. Thomas Aquinas, Lib. I, c. 21, literally translated by the English Dominican Fathers, London, 1924, 51.

10 Garrigou-Lagrange, The One God, 153.

11 McCormick, Natural Theology, 95.

sence and its attributes and between the divine attributes themselves, not, however, maintaining that such a distinction is to be found in the reality which is God.<sup>12</sup>

When the human mind begins to delve into the problem of the nature of God, it asks itself the question: What is God? The answer could be given either with regard to His physical essence or His metaphysical essence. This distinction is made to accord with the notions of what God's essence is in Itself, and what It is conceived of by mankind, since the human reason cannot know God as He is in Himself.<sup>13</sup> The physical essence of God, the reality which He is, can only be the "one absolutely simple reality which is His fulness of Being."<sup>14</sup> The human reason can, however, arrive at a knowledge of the metaphysical essence of God which is, as it were, an instrument or means to an understanding of the physical essence of God. The metaphysical essence of God will be given in terms of that note which the human reason conceives as the primary constituent of God as God; likewise will it be that note which is conceived as the root and

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12 Ibid.

13 Contra Gentiles, Lib. I, c. 14, trans. English Dominicans, 33.

"In treating of the divine essence the principal method to be followed is that of remotion; for the divine essence by its immensity surpasses every form to which our intellect reaches; and thus we cannot apprehend it by knowing what it is. But we have some knowledge of it by knowing what it is not."

14 McCormick, Natural Theology, 99.

the source of all other perfections, and that note which will distinguish God from all other beings.<sup>15</sup>

It is important to establish a certain definite order in treating the essence and the attributes of God. As was mentioned above, the metaphysical essence of God will be a certain note which will serve as the root of all other perfections which are found in God. It is necessary, therefore, to treat first of that one note and then proceed with the discussion of God's attributes.

St. Thomas has sufficiently demonstrated that there does exist a First Cause. But the First Cause is a Being of Itself, a Being through Its very essence, or a Necessary Being. This is evident, since a cause which depended upon another being could not be first. To say, moreover, that something exists of itself is to imply that it have within itself the sufficient reason for its existence, and hence that it exists by its own essence, and not by participation. Likewise, whatever is had essentially is had necessarily, just as man, if he exists, necessarily is rational. Therefore God necessarily exists, or He is a Necessary Being.<sup>16</sup>

As a consequent of God's being the Necessary Being, it

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15 Boyer, Cursus Philosophiae, II, 357.

16 Ibid., 358.

is clearly evident that He is His very existence and that He is Infinitely Perfect. As a proof of the former assertion, it need only be pointed out that only that very act of existence is such that it exists by its very nature; other things are, only insofar as they receive it. Wherefore, were God not Existence Itself, He would be a caused and participated being. Therefore God is Existence Itself,<sup>17</sup> which means that in Him essence and existence are really identified.<sup>18</sup>

From the fact that God is Existence Itself, it readily follows that He is Infinitely Perfect, since all perfections are found in Him in the highest degree, as is made manifest from the very nature of a being which is Existence Itself. A being enjoys that portion of perfection which it receives from the act of existing. The essence of a being dictates that portion of the act of existence which that being is to receive. However that being which is Existence Itself is the unreceived Pure Act of existence, and, as it is so, it contains within Itself no principle of limitation whatsoever, and hence enjoys the fullest perfection of existence. The words of St. Thomas are outstanding in clarity: "Thus God in His very existence has all perfections."<sup>19</sup>

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17 Ibid.

18 St. Thomas Aquinas, De Ente et Essentia, Marietti edition, Rome, 1948, 17-18.

19 Ibid., 18.



The question as to the metaphysical essence of God has been raised, but apparently no decision has been made as to what would constitute that essence. Boyer studies the opinions which were offered by the Nominalists, such as Occam, by the Scotists, and by John of St. Thomas.<sup>20</sup> Occam asserted that God's metaphysical essence consisted in his actual infinity, or the surplus of perfections which are God's. However the sum of all God's perfections constitutes His physical, rather than His metaphysical, essence. The Scotists claimed that His metaphysical essence consists in His radical infinity, which is the need of extolling to the infinite whatever is predicated of God. But first of all, the reason for such a predication must be found, and this reason itself will be the metaphysical essence of God. John of St. Thomas said that the metaphysical essence of God is found in His immateriality or intellectuality, notes which are actually the source of other perfections, but it is not primarily conceived nor primarily constitutive, since it is deduced from other notes, and especially from the notion of Existence Itself.

For the above reasons, Boyer concludes that the metaphysical essence of God is to be assigned to the fact that He is Existence Itself, "or a being by His essence, or a necessary

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<sup>20</sup> The opinions which are cited here are Boyer's interpretations. His criticisms of these opinions are to be found in the same place. Boyer, Cursus Philosophiae, II, 360.

Being, all of which mutually imply one another; nor does *Àseity* seem to mean anything different."<sup>21</sup> The notion of Existence Itself, however, is the primarily constitutive reason of God's essence. For the identity of God's essence with His existence is the reason for His being a Being by His essence, a Necessary Being, and a Being dependent upon no other. Upon this notion, therefore, depend all other predications which the human reason makes of God.<sup>22</sup>

Since the metaphysical essence of God consists in the fact that He is Existence Itself, the perfections which are predicated of God will have their foundation in this essence. St. Thomas conceived an attribute to be anything which can be predicated of a subject. He considered, therefore, Infinity to be one of the attributes of God.<sup>23</sup> However, in a much more restricted sense, an attribute is understood as a perfection which is conceived as flowing from an essence, and hence the divine attributes will be certain predicates, flowing from the divine essence, which are properly and conversely referred to God. They are not simple metaphors, but proper attributes. They can only

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21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.

23 McCormick, Natural Theology, 113.

be applied to God.<sup>24</sup>

Before speaking of the various attributes of God, it is necessary to keep in mind that these attributes are not really distinct one from the other. If a real distinction is applied to any nature, there must be a real composition in that nature. Hence in God there can be no accidents. All perfections which are found in Him must be really identified with His essence and with one another.

From what has been said above, it is evident that God enjoys the transcendental unity of being, since He is a being. However, there is a further consideration to be made: scilicet, whether or not the divine nature can be multiplied, or whether many Gods can exist.<sup>25</sup> Is God, of His very nature, one and unique? From the fact that God is existence Itself, it is clear that He cannot be in any genus, for He has no notes which could be shared in or common to many.<sup>26</sup> From the fact that God is Pure Act, it follows that He is not in any species as the result of an individual difference, for individuation results from matter which cannot be found in a being who is Pure Act.<sup>27</sup> God, there-

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24 Boyer, Cursus Philosophiae, II, 376.

25 S. T., I, q. 11, a. 3, Basic Writings, ed. Pegis, I, 88-90.

26 Ibid., 89

27 Boyer, Cursus Philosophiae, II, 378.

fore cannot be multiplied. If it be supposed that two or more infinite beings existed, they would necessarily differ as regards some perfection, and hence they would not all enjoy the same perfections, making them, therefore, less than infinite.<sup>28</sup>

God is, moreover, absolutely simple, having no composition whatsoever--whether it be substantial or accidental, physical or metaphysical. Since all composition implies potentiality, there can be no composition in God Who is Pure Act.<sup>29</sup> Quantitative parts suppose matter, which is a potential principle, and includes the capacity of divisibility. Essential parts would be matter and form, matter being in potency to form, and each in potency to the union. The composition of essence and existence is excluded by the fact that God is Existence Itself. Moreover, there are no accidents in God, since they suppose a potentiality in the subject of which they are acts. There is no composition of a nature and a supposite, since there are no accidents in God, nor an existence distinct from the essence. Hence there is no physical composition in God. That there is no metaphysical compo-

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28 S. T., I, q. 11, a. 3, Basic Writings, ed. Pegis, I, 89.

29 S. T., I, q. 3, a. 1-8, Basic Writings, ed. Pegis, I, 25-36.

Boyer, Cursus Philosophiae, II, 378-379.  
Garrigou-Lagrange, The One God, 171-204.  
McCormick, Natural Theology, 119.

sition in Him is evident from what has been said of the unity of God.

By divine immutability is meant that God will always be the same.<sup>30</sup> That He is immutable is evident from the fact that He is Pure Act. All change supposes some potency, since what is changed either receives an act which it did not have or it loses some perfection which it did have. In the first instance, it is in potency to the new act, and in the second case the act which it loses is received in some receptive potency. Hence it is evident that God Who is Pure Act cannot change. The same conclusion results from a consideration of the Infinity of God as well as from the notion of His simplicity.

The divine attribute of eternity follows from the fact that God is immutable.<sup>31</sup> That which is immutable cannot have any real succession, since this form of secession, when internal, is a real change. For this reason it cannot begin, nor can it end. Hence it is necessary that God, being immutable, be eternal. And since God is Existence Itself, He perfectly and simultaneously

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30 S. T., I, q. 9, a. 1-2, Basic Writings, ed. Pegis, I, 70-73.

Boyer, Cursus Philosophiae, II, 381-383.

Garrigou-Lagrangé, The One God, 268-275.

McCormick, Natural Theology, 120-122.

31 S. T., I, q. 10, a. 1-6, Basic Writings, ed. Pegis, I, 74-84.

Boyer, Cursus Philosophiae, II, 382-383.

Garrigou-Lagrangé, The One God, 276-292.

McCormick, Natural Theology, 122-123.

possesses His entire life, illustrating, as it were, the classic definition of eternity offered by Boethius: "the whole and perfect simultaneous possession of interminable life."

What may be spoken of as the fifth absolute attribute of God is His immensity.<sup>32</sup> This attribute refers to God's special mode of presence. In keeping with His divine nature and infinite perfections, His mode of presence will be different than that enjoyed by a body, the human soul, or a pure spirit. Although His immensity necessarily follows from the fact that He is infinitely perfect, it is considered profitable to study that special presence which God enjoys. The remainder of this thesis will concern itself precisely with that study.

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32 Boyer, Cursus Philosophiae, II, 383-384.

## CHAPTER II

### STATE OF THE QUESTION

With what has been said of the existence, the essence, and a few of the absolute attributes of God, a sufficient foundation is established for a presentation of the purpose of this thesis. Only a brief mention of the immensity of God has thus far been made, but the remainder of this work will be concerned, either directly or indirectly, with it.

Although it is true that an exhaustive analysis of the arguments for the existence of God has not been offered, nor has a thorough treatment been given to the essence of God, nor, in deed, have all the absolute attributes of God been discussed, enough has been said and sufficient proofs have been offered thus far for the conclusions which have been proposed. There has been no need to discuss the Divine Knowledge or the Will of God, for, although these attributes are themselves identical with God's essence, their consideration does not have an immediate bearing upon this thesis. Occasion shall arise for a discussion of a few of the relative attributes of God, but it shall be more profitable to reserve a consideration of these until the sixth chapter of this work.

As has been said above, the immensity of God is a divine attribute which refers to God's special mode of presence. It is a truism that His presence must be entirely different than that enjoyed by beings endowed with bodies, by the human soul, or by pure spirits, since His nature is essentially different from all of these. As an Infinite Being, His presence should be, in a very real manner, endowed with characteristics of the Infinite. His presence, in a word, should be, and is, a most unique one. As an Infinite Being He cannot be defined or limited to any one place, as quantified and otherwise limited beings are. And although it can be most truly affirmed that God is everywhere, caution must be employed, so as not to limit His presence to a created being, a finite world, a very much limited universe.

God is everywhere. He is truly omnipresent.<sup>1</sup> However, He can be said to be present only where His presence is actual. He can only be actually present where there is actual space and actual place, namely in the world, in the created universe which here and now exists. Although He is actually present to all actual place and space which does exist in this created universe, His presence seems to be, as it were, dependent upon the existence of this universe. To say that God is everywhere is to say that He is omnipresent, which is not an absolute attribute attribute of God, but rather a relative one, insofar as it is de-

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<sup>1</sup> S. T., I, q. 8, a. 1-4, Basic Writings, ed. Pegis, I, 63-69.



pendent upon the actual existence of the world.<sup>2</sup>

There is, however, an absolute attribute of God which refers to His special mode of presence in the world. It is called divine immensity. As an absolute attribute, it does not depend upon the existence of the world. In other words, God would still be immense, even if the world never did exist.

It is the purpose of this thesis to clarify the distinction between these two attributes of God for a better understanding of God's presence in things. It will be necessary to treat of the difficult cosmological notions of space and place in detail, showing their divisions as well as the relation which the various types of being have to them, thereby assisting to clarify God's relation to them.

As regards the method which is to be followed in this paper, a few things must be said. The first chapter has laid the foundation for a logical discussion of these attributes of God, and this second chapter has brought up the difficulties which are to be discussed as well as a few of the more important aspects of the problem at hand. In the following chapters attention shall be given, first of all, to a clarification of the terms of place, space, and presence. It shall also be necessary to discuss the distinction between absolute and relative perfections, for this distinction is to be applied to these two attributes. A de-

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2 Boyer, Cursus Philosophiae, II, 376.

tailed comparison of the two attributes will follow their individual consideration, as a prelude to the proof that God is immense.

The fifth chapter is chiefly concerned with God's existence in things patterned after the eighth question in the first part of the Summa Theologica, but it shall also witness some explanations in the light of the remarks which have been made to that point in the paper. There are also some further considerations which will serve as corollaries of the fourth and fifth chapters and which will also be a means of better explaining the difference between the two attributes and the necessity of maintaining immensity to be the greater perfection.

## CHAPTER III

### PLACE, SPACE, AND PRESENCE

The classic definition of place<sup>1</sup> is the one given by Aristotle in the fourth book of the Physics.<sup>2</sup> There he speaks of place as the first, immovable term of a containing thing. An analysis of the terms in this definition will give meaning to it.<sup>3</sup>

It is the term, or boundary, of a container. The place

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1 John of St. Thomas begins his discussion of place by dividing the generic notion of place, scilicet that which is acquired by local motion, into extrinsic and intrinsic place. "Extrinsic [place] is that body or surface by which the placed thing is circumscribed and contained. Intrinsic place is that passive presence of a placed thing which is called ubi [the where]."

The writer of this thesis has chosen to consider the extrinsic place of John of St. Thomas as place in the strict sense, and to discuss intrinsic place under the notion of presence. This is done to lessen the danger of confusion. [John of St. Thomas, O. P., Cursus Philosophicus Thomisticus, ed. P. Beatus Reiser, O. S. B., Taurini, 1935, 335.]

2 Aristotle, Physics, Bk. 4, chap. 6, trans. Thomas Taylor, London, 1806, 202.

"So that the first immovable boundary of that which contains is place."

This is a descriptive definition, "for it describes in what particular manner place is related to the body which is in place." [Gerard Esser, S. V. D., Cosmologia, Techny, 1939, 65.]

3 This explanation may be found in Cotter, A. C., S. J., Cosmologia, Boston, 1931, 264.

See also Boyer, Cursus Philosophiae, I, 395-396.

of a body in place is the surface of another body by which it is immediately touched and surrounded, and in which it is contained.<sup>4</sup> A man is said to be in a room when he is surrounded by the four walls of that room. If a thing is not contained by another body, it is not in place, just as the entire universe, taken together, is not in place, since it has no container.

It is immovable; for a body in place does not change its place unless the body itself be moved. If place itself were movable, a change of place would occur without any motion of the thing in place.<sup>5</sup> Boyer answers the difficulty presented in the case of a ship anchored in the rapidly flowing waters of a river. The place remains the surface of the container, not materially understood, but insofar as the container has a fixed relation to

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4 John of St. Thomas, Cursus Philosophicus, II, 337.

"Since a thing can be circumscribed only by reason of a surrounding surface, if indeed place must be adequated to the thing placed, and since we do not say that man exists in all the air, but only in that part in which he is circumscribed, consequently place must be constituted in the surrounding surface, which is contiguous to the body."

5 Ibid.

"It is certain that place must be absolutely immovable...because it is distinguished from a vessel in this that...a vessel is moved with the thing contained, place however is not moved. Place, therefore, as the term both a quo and ad quem of motion is not moved; otherwise if place were moved, it would have to move to some place, and thus a place of place would be had, and again that other place would have to be moved to another place, and thus an infinite process would be had."

These words of John of St. Thomas are clear enough in explaining the immobility of place.

all the immovable points, which surround the ship. That surface of water which is the place of the immovable ship on the river is understood in accord with the relations of position and of distance to the banks of the river and the river as a whole.

It is first, or immediate. This is the meaning of place in the strictest sense of the term and is had when the surface of a body immediately surrounds and contains one thing. Place, on the other hand, is said to be common, when the surface of a body surrounds and contains many things.<sup>6</sup>

The considerations which have just been made as regards place are sufficient and complete enough for a proper understanding of the relation which God has to place. However, it is rather important to say a few words of the objective validity of the concept of place. Experience manifests that some bodies, such as air and water, touch and immediately surround other bodies. But place is nothing else but the surface of that body which immediately surrounds and contains a thing. Therefore, place does exist, and is as real as a body itself.<sup>7</sup>

Space can be defined as extension conceived as the receptacle of a body. Such a definition of space can certainly be

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6 Dario, J. M., S. J., Praelectiones Cosmologiae, Paris, 1928, 137.

7 Cotter, Cosmologia, 266.

justified, even though it is not commonly offered.<sup>8</sup> Dario employs a somewhat similar definition when he says, "Space is extension, conceived as penetrable, or as capable of containing extended things."<sup>9</sup> The formal concept of space is not the same as the formal concept of corporeal extension, for extension is in bodies, whereas bodies are in space; extension is something which is as movable as bodies, but space is something in which bodies move.<sup>10</sup>

As regards the validity of the concept of space,<sup>11</sup> the

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8 Ibid., 303.

"...it is a fact that almost one hundred different opinions are offered on the nature of space..."

9 Dario, Praelectiones, 69.

10 Ibid.

11 Cotter shows that space is neither a purely subjective phenomenon, nor a real being, but a being of reason with a foundation in reality. His threefold proof follows:

"Space would be a purely subjective phenomenon, if not even an objective foundation for our concept could be assigned. But such a foundation can be assigned, scil. the extension of bodies, which is real. Therefore space cannot be called a purely subjective phenomenon.

"Whatever is real either is a substance or an accident. ..But space is neither a substance nor an accident. Therefore space is not a real being...If space were a substance, it would be a body, for it is conceived as formally extended. But we conceive space as distinct from all bodies and as a receptacle of bodies. Therefore space is not a substance...If space were an accident it would have to inhere in some body, for it is conceived as formally extended; this body, however, would again be in another space--and thus infinitely. But an infinite process is repugnant. Therefore space is not an accident..."

"A being of reason is a non-being conceived as a being. But space in itself is nothing...it is nonetheless conceived by

words of Dario are quite clear: "Space as such, or formally, is only a concept--frequently conjoined with a vague phantasm."<sup>12</sup> Space does not enjoy a real existence, but it does have a foundation in the reality of extension, which in the opinion of Dario actually gives birth to the concept of space. He even describes in detail the origin and the foundation of the concept.<sup>13</sup>

This generic notion of space is subject to a fourfold division into actual, possible, imaginary, and absolute space.<sup>14</sup> Actual space is had where there actually are bodies and three dimensions, for although actual space is not the actual corporeal extension, it nonetheless follows from it, since it, as it were, receives the dimensions of the quantified object. Actual space, therefore, is the space which the book occupies on the

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us as a real receptacle. Therefore space is a being of reason... The extension of bodies is something real. But the extension of bodies is the ontological foundation of our concept of space. Therefore our concept has a foundation in reality." [Cotter, Cosmologia, 309-310.]

12 Dario, Praelectiones, 70.

13 Ibid.

14 Absolute space is implied in imaginary space, but, for reasons of clarity, it receives a special division. This will become more apparent further on in this thesis. This division is not to be understood as one which is commonly accepted by scholastic cosmologists. Just as there are innumerable definitions offered of space, so there are countless divisions. It would be futile to attempt their numeration. The division which has been offered is sufficient for the purpose of this thesis. Boyer, Cursus Philosophiae, I, 400.

desk, or the box occupies in the store. Possible space is that which is conceived as arising from the position of possible bodies; as for example, the space which Pope Pius, the fifteenth, could occupy in Rome. Imaginary space is that which is represented as existing without existing bodies, as would occur were space imagined to exist before the actual existence of a sensible world, or beyond such a world. Absolute space is infinite extension conceived as something existing independently of the world and as containing the world.

One further consideration remains to be made as regards the presence of a quantified being, a pure spirit, and an infinite being in place or in space.

Since place is defined as the surface of a body which surrounds and contains a thing, it is evident that only bodies are in place in a proper sense, for only bodies have surfaces. Moreover, the surface of a body is said to be extended, since it consists of various parts which both are in contact with the parts of the containing body and occupy proportionate parts of the space in which it exists. Wherefore a body in place is united by a quantitative contact with the surface of the surrounding body, and it fills the parts of space with its own parts. Therefore a containing body surrounds or circumscribes a body in place and it is measured by the place in which it is. For this reason bodies are said to be in place by a circumscriptive presence.



Bodies, therefore, are in place in such a way that their parts occupy the various parts of a place.<sup>15</sup> Circumscriptive presence designates the presence of a body in place or in space, and that presence is by parts. This type of presence, moreover, is limited, since only one place is in contact with the dimensions of a thing in place. In other words, if a body is circumscriptively present in one place, it cannot at the same time be circumscriptively present in another place, not even by a divine intervention.<sup>16</sup>

It is clear that a spirit, such as an angel or the human soul, cannot be in place or in space as a body is, since it does not have extended parts. Nevertheless, spirits actually are in place. They occupy space. The human soul, as an example, is in the same place as the body.<sup>17</sup> As regards the presence of an angel, a pure spirit, in place St. Thomas teaches that it cannot be in a body or in a place except by its operation which would bring about some effect in the body.<sup>18</sup> He becomes more specific when

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15 "That which by its very own dimensions is commensurate with the dimensions of a place is in place circumscriptively or essentially." [Ibid., 406.]

16 Peter Hoenen, S. J., Annotationes Cosmologiae, Rome, 1930, 114.

Here the author proves his thesis: "It seems that it is absolutely repugnant for the same body to be circumscriptively present in many places."

17 Cotter, Cosmologia, 268.

18 St. Thomas Aquinas, Scriptum Super Libros Sententiarum, Lib. I, dist. XXXVII, q. 3, a. 1, ed. R. P. Mandonnet, O. P., Paris, 1929, 871.

he says that as a body is in place by the contact of quantified dimensions, so an angel is in place by the contact of its power.<sup>19</sup> Since spirits do not have extended parts but exist rather in their simple essence, they are present in their entire essence in each part of the place which they occupy. The entire spirit is actually present in some place and the entire spirit is entirely present in each particular part of that place, just as the human soul is entirely present in the body and is entirely present in each individual part of the body.<sup>20</sup> The claim is not made that these spiritual beings are present in place by some quantified contact, but rather that they exercise their activity in place either as formal causes, as the human soul, or as efficient causes, such as the angels. This is the reason why St. Thomas maintains that they are present, not by a quantified contact, but rather by the contact of their power, but nonetheless they are still substantially present, since their power is but a manifestation of their presence; not the presence itself. Definitive presence, therefore, describes the presence of the human soul and of a pure spirit in place or in space. It is a limited presence,

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19 S. T., I, q. 8, a. 2, ad 1, Basic Writings, ed. Pegis, I, 65.

20 "That which is not commensurate with the dimensions of the place in which it is, and is only in this determined place and not everywhere, is definitively in place." [Boyer, Cursus Philosophiae, I, 406.]

since they can be present in only one determined place and not everywhere. A human soul, for example, is present only within the body of this particular person. This same individual soul cannot be in many men.

There is, however, a third type of presence which is peculiar to God alone. Just as God Himself is an unquantified Being, He cannot enjoy the same type of presence as a body does. Nor can His presence be the same as that of the human soul or of a pure spirit, such as an angel, since their presence is limited. His presence cannot be circumscribed, nor can it be defined to any one place. As in the case of spirits, the reason for His presence is the power which He exercises upon His subjects.<sup>21</sup> It is sufficient merely to state this fact here, since a more exhaustive treatment will be offered when, in the fifth chapter, a discussion of the opinion of St. Thomas as regards God's special mode of presence is presented. Repletive presence, therefore, designates that special presence of God in place, a presence which is proper to Him alone. God is entirely present in all space, just as He is entirely present in each particular part of that space.<sup>22</sup> His presence is unlimited, just as His perfec-

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<sup>21</sup> S. T., I, q. 8, a. 2, ad 1, Basic Writings, ed. Pegis, I, 65.

<sup>22</sup> "God is everywhere eminently, neither circumscribed nor defined." [Boyer, Cursus Philosophiae, I, 406.]

tions are unlimited and infinite.

Although His presence can be truly said to be unlimited, since He actually is everywhere, it is likewise true that the number of individual created places, when added together, are still of a finite number. Although His presence is not limited to any one or the other of places, still He can only be present where there actually are places and space which He can occupy. But these are of a finite number, and hence it would seem that His presence is limited. This difficulty is to be considered in the chapter which immediately follows.

## CHAPTER IV

### GOD'S RELATION TO PLACE AND SPACE

Although there are many different ways of classifying and distinguishing the divine attributes,<sup>1</sup> there is one special division which can clearly embrace all the attributes. This division will serve as an invaluable aid in clarifying the distinction between the omnipresence and the immensity of God.<sup>2</sup> Every attribute of God is either an absolute or a relative one. It is absolute when it can be predicated of God independently of the existence of the world. This type of attribute refers to the Divine Substance in Itself, or to the Divine Operation when it regards the Divine Nature alone, independently of a relation to creatures. Thus, regardless of the existence of a created universe, God would still be one, simple, immutable, eternal, and immense. He would still be endowed with an intellect and a will, since their proper object is God Himself. An attribute is said to be relative when it indicates some relation, though not a real one, between creatures and the Godhead. It is an attribute

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1 Garrigou-Lagrange, The One God, 164-170.

2 This division is the same as the one offered by Boyer, Cursus Philosophiae, II, 376.

which depends upon the actual existence of a created universe. In other words those attributes are said to be relative attributes if they refer to God's virtually transient operations, such as His creation, conservation, and concurrence. The divine knowledge and the divine will likewise can be considered as relative perfections, when these two faculties are concerned with their secondary objects. Every attribute, therefore, which of its very nature involves the existence of finite, contingent, and created being is a relative attribute.

Omnipresence is a divine attribute whereby God is actually present in all actual space. This mode of presence is different than that enjoyed by any finite being, whether it be a body, the human soul, or a pure spirit, for God is in all things as an agent is present to that which it acts upon. St. Thomas bases his proof for the omnipresence of God upon the very fact that God is Existence Itself.<sup>3</sup> Since He is so, created existence must be His proper effect. But He causes this effect in creatures not only as regards beginnings in existence, but as long as they are preserved in existence.<sup>4</sup> Hence, as long as a thing has existence, God must be present to it. And just as He is the cause of

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3 S. T., I, q. 8, a. 1, Basic Writings, ed. Pegis, I, 63.

4 "...God causes this effect in things not only when they first begin to be, but as long as they are preserved in being..." [Ibid.]

the existence and the conservation in existence of all things, He must be in all things, and hence everywhere.<sup>5</sup>

In the fifth chapter of this thesis a more thorough discussion of the teaching of St. Thomas will be offered. For the present it is sufficient merely to understand what is meant by divine omnipresence. It is an attribute which regards God's actual presence in actually existing things. It implies nothing more, since He can only be actually present where there is actual space.

Immensity, on the other hand, is a divine attribute whereby God is actually present in all actual space as soon as it begins to exist, without any change occurring to Him.<sup>6</sup> There are three elements in this definition of immensity which should be explained. Existence in actual space is a perfection, and hence God, as the Infinite Being, must possess it. Otherwise, He would be limited and imperfect. Moreover, He must be present in all actual space, for this is a greater perfection, and were He not to possess it, He would be to that extent limited. It is evident from His immutability that no change can be predicated of Him.

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5 Ibid.

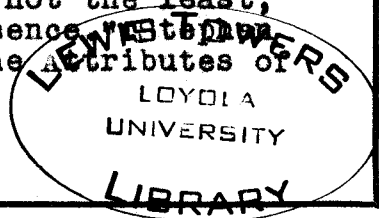
6 "...The immensity of God is understood as a property by which God can in no place be either circumscribed or defined, so that no matter how often places and spaces are multiplied, not only will God be in them, but He will remain capable of being in all others without end." [Boyer, Cursus Philosophiae, II, 382.]

It has already been said that the mode of presence of a finite being is measured by the space it occupies or in which it exercises its activities. Circumscriptive presence and definitive presence are, in a word, limited perfections. Moreover, it is evident that God is present in all things which are by virtue of His omnipresence.<sup>7</sup> However, His mode of presence must surpass all space, so that His presence is not misunderstood as measured or limited by the finite space in which that presence is. Imminence, as an absolute attribute of God, is not dependent upon the existence of a finite, created universe, and hence it does not limit God's presence to that universe. Although God is actually present in all actual space which does exist, He nonetheless possesses, as it were, an overflowing of perfection which demands that He be actually present to all space as soon as it becomes actual, so that were He to create another universe, as vast and as complex as this one, His divine immensity would demand that He be actually present therein, possessing, however, the self-same overflowing of Infinite Perfection.

Independently of the existence or the non-existence of the created universe, God is immense. Only on the condition that

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7 "God is...entirely in all places, not by scraps and fragments of His essence...there is no space, not the least, wherein God is not wholly according to His essence." Stephen Charnock, Discourses upon the Existence and the Attributes of God, London, 1842, 238.]





this universe does exist does God enjoy omnipresence. Immensity, therefore, is an absolute attribute of God. Omnipresence, on the other hand, is a relative one.

The proof for the immensity of God depends upon the fact that God is Infinite.<sup>8</sup> But repletive presence in space or in place is an absolutely pure perfection, which positively excludes all imperfection. Therefore God is repletively present. But repletive presence implies immensity, and hence God is immense. If the argument is to have any force, it must be shown that repletive presence is an absolutely pure perfection and that it implies immensity.

As regards the former assertion, it is readily admitted that the presence of anything in space or in place is a perfection, since it is better to have than not to have. Repletive presence, however, means that all the imperfections which are implied in the presence of a creature are removed. These imper-

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<sup>8</sup> The exact wording of the proof offered by Boyer is the following:

"That which is so related to all places whatsoever that it is neither circumscribed nor defined by them is immense. But God in no way can be circumscribed or defined. Therefore He is immense. The minor is proved. What is circumscribed in place has parts which are commensurate to the parts of the place. But God is simple. Therefore He is not circumscribed in place. Finally, what is defined in place does not have the power by which it may at the same time occupy another place. But God is of infinite power. Therefore He is not defined in any place." [Boyer, *Cursus Philosophiae*, II, 383-384.]

fections are twofold. In circumscriptive presence it consists in the fact that a body is present quantitatively or by parts. In both circumscriptive and definitive presence it consists in the fact that the presence is restricted to some determined space. Repletive presence, therefore, is a perfection which involves no imperfection. Moreover, it positively excludes all imperfection. It is therefore an absolutely pure perfection.

Divine immensity has been defined as that attribute whereby God is actually present in all actual space, as soon as it begins to exist, without any change occurring to Him. If, however, the divine nature were not to demand that He be immediately present in all new actual space without any change, His presence would not be repletive, since it would be in a very real manner limited to the space in which He is. Hence repletive presence implies immensity. And the conclusion that God is immense is a valid one.

## CHAPTER V

### THE EXISTENCE OF GOD IN THINGS ACCORDING TO ST. THOMAS

From what has been said of the omnipresence and the immensity of God to this point, it is clear that both of these attributes stem from the fact that God is Existence Itself, or an Infinite Being. St. Thomas was so well aware of this fact that immediately after his discussion of the Infinity of God in the Summa Theologica, he considers the existence of God in things.<sup>1</sup> It is profitable to study in detail the four articles which comprise this question, for Thomas considers the actual presence of God in things as well as the mode of that presence. He considers, likewise the reasons why God is everywhere, and shows, finally, that His mode of presence is a most unique one.

In the first of these articles entitled, "Whether God is in all things," the positive teaching of St. Thomas is that God is in all things in a most intimate manner, namely, as an agent is present to that upon which it acts. Every agent must be

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<sup>1</sup> S. T., I, q. 8, a. 1-4, Basic Writings, ed. Pegis, I, 63-69.

joined to that upon which it acts immediately, either by some virtual contact or by quantitative contact.<sup>2</sup> An incorporeal agent cannot, however, exercise any quantitative contact. And hence the contact which God exercises, as the cause of the production and the conservation of all things in existence is a virtual contact which cannot be really distinct from His essence.<sup>3</sup>

St. Thomas thus shows that God is innermost in all things since He is the cause of their very existence, which is more inherent in a thing than the very form of a thing, since existence is the ultimate actuality of every form.<sup>4</sup> However, he does not prove in this article that God is the conservative and immediate cause of the existence of all things. Such a proof is forthcoming later on, when he writes, "As the becoming of a thing cannot continue when the action of the agent, which causes the becoming of the effect, ceases, so neither can the existence of

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2 Commentary of Cardinal Cajetan, O. P., S. T., I, q. 8, a. 1, Opera Omnia Thomae Aquinatis, Leonine Edition, Rome, 1888, IV, 83.

"Therefore He is in all things...because every agent must be joined to that upon which it immediately acts."

3 "God is Existence Itself through His essence; therefore He has created existence for His proper effect, not only in becoming, but also in conservation." [Ibid.]

4 "Existence is formal with respect to all things which exist in reality; therefore it is profoundly in all things; therefore it is intimate to each thing. Therefore God, the proper agent of existence, is intimately in all things." [Ibid.]

a thing continue after the action of the agent, which is the cause of the effect, not only in becoming but also in existence, has ceased."<sup>5</sup> If, then, God is the proper cause of all created being, then the being of things cannot continue in existence without God's preservative action. In the body of the article, however, Thomas shows that created existence is the proper effect of God, Who is a Being by His very essence, just as to ignite is the proper effect of fire. Thus God both brings things into existence and preserves them in existence.

The conclusion therefore which Thomas makes is that as long as a thing has existence, God must be actually present to it, and since existence is the most ultimate actuality of every form, God must be present in all things and innermostly.

It is perhaps in answer to the second objection that St. Thomas gives a slightly different slant to what he has said in the body of the article. The second objection maintained that God rather contains things than is contained by them. His response points out that corporeal things are said to be in the thing which contains them, but spiritual things rather contain the things in which they are, as the soul contains the body. God, likewise, is in all things as containing them, not, however, as a form determining the matter, but rather as a cause

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<sup>5</sup> S. T., I, q. 104, a. 1, Basic Writings, ed. Pegis, I, 964.

conserving the effect.<sup>6</sup>

In the second article St. Thomas concerns himself with the question as to whether God is everywhere. The purpose of this question is to determine whether God is in all things as well as in all places, insofar as they are places. The difficulty narrows itself down to this: it seems as though God cannot be said to be in place, for incorporeal things are not in place. St. Thomas answers this objection of Boethius by asserting, as he did in the first article, that incorporeal things can be said to be in place by their virtual contact.

In the body of the article a twofold answer is given by Thomas. He is careful to warn that God is not present in place as corporeal things fill a place to the exclusion of other bodies. He is in things as giving them their very existence. He is, moreover, in the real place itself, in the same manner as He is in the thing placed, insofar as He gives existence even to the surface of the surrounding body. Hence God is in all things and in every place.<sup>8</sup> He is, briefly, everywhere.

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6 Garrigou-Lagrange, The One God, 257.

7 God is everywhere, because He is in all things, sustaining them in being; and because, while bodies fill space, God too fills space, since He fills all the world." [A. G. Hebert, Studies in St. Thomas, London, 1938, 48.]

8 Commentary of Cajetan, S. T., I, q. 8, a. 3, Leonine Edition, IV, 86.

In the third article, "Whether God is everywhere by His essence, presence, and power," St. Thomas distinguishes between God's special mode of presence in the just and His general mode of presence in all things as an agent, or as an efficient cause. He is especially in the rational creatures who know and love Him habitually, and most especially in the saints by grace.<sup>9</sup> The article likewise concerns itself with the threefold manner in which God, the efficient cause of all things, is in all things. He is there by His power, insofar as all things are subject to that power. He is there by His presence, insofar as all things are known to Him and are the immediate objects of His providence, and He is there by His essence, insofar as He is the cause of the existence of all things.<sup>10</sup>

In the reply to the fourth article, "Whether to be everywhere belongs to God alone," St. Thomas asserts that to be everywhere primarily and essentially belongs to God alone, for only God, after creation, is necessarily and immediately in His whole Self, undividedly, in all things and places, for He main-

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9 "God is in something in a twofold manner: scilicet effectively and objectively...the former is general, the latter, special." [Ibid., 88.]

10 "The general mode...is distinguished into existence in things by His essence, presence, and power." Ibid.

tains all things in existence. What is primarily or immediately everywhere must belong to a thing in its entire self, and not according to its parts. And hence, although the whole world can be said to be everywhere, it is not primarily or immediately everywhere, but it is there according to its different parts. Moreover, what is essentially or necessarily everywhere is so, when, on any supposition, it must be everywhere. And hence, on the supposition that no other body existed, a grain of sand would be everywhere, not essentially or necessarily, but only hypothetically.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, "to be everywhere primarily and essentially belongs to God, and is proper to Him; because whatever number of places be supposed to exist, God must be in all of them, not by a part of Him, but by His very Self."<sup>12</sup>

In this article St. Thomas bases his chief proof of the fact that God is omnipresent upon the fact that God, the efficient cause of the beginning and the conservation in existence of all places and things, is inherently present in things by a virtual contact. This contact is opposed to the contact of dimensive quantity by which bodies are in place. The human soul and pure spirits, as has been said above, cannot be in place in

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11 Garrigou-Lagrange, The One God, 262-263.

12 S. T., I, q. 8, a. 4, Basic Writings, ed. Pegis, I, 69.



the same manner as bodies are, since they are incorporeal. Their presence, just as the presence of God, must be described in terms of the power which they exercise in the place in which they exist. The human soul, therefore, has its presence restricted to the body which it animates and vivifies. As regards the presence of a pure spirit,<sup>13</sup> St. Thomas indicates the various points of difference between an angel's presence and the divine omnipresence:

An angel's power and nature are finite, whereas the divine power and essence, which is the universal cause of all things, is infinite. Consequently, through His power God touches all things, and is not present merely in some places, but everywhere. Now since the angel's power is finite, it does not extend to all things, but to one determined thing. For whatever is compared with one power must be compared with it as one determined thing. Consequently, since all being is compared as one thing to God's universal power, so one particular being is compared as something one to the angelic power. Hence, since the angel is in a place by the application of his power to the place, it follows that he is not everywhere, nor in several places, but in only one place.<sup>14</sup>

The considerations which have been offered in this

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<sup>13</sup> Commentary of Cajetan, S. T., I, q. 52, a. 2, Leonine Edition, V, 25-26.

"An angel is not everywhere, but in one particular place...He is not everywhere, from the difference between the power of an angel and the divine power: since the former is finite, the latter infinite; the former is a particular cause, the latter is the universal cause of all things...An angel can have only one particular effect; therefore he can be in only one particular place...And just as universal being is related to God's universal power, so some particular being is related to the power of an angel."

<sup>14</sup> S. T., I, q. 52, a. 2, Basic Writings, ed. Pegis, I, 499.

chapter are, at the very least, indicative of the fact that St. Thomas ranked the omnipresence of God as one of His more important attributes. He does not formally discuss the immensity of God, but nonetheless it is important to keep in mind the distinction which already has been made between the two attributes. The relative attribute of omnipresence is that attribute whereby God is actually present in all actual space. The absolute attribute of immensity is that attribute whereby God is actually present in all actual space, as soon as it begins to exist, without any change occurring to Him. Briefly, then, omnipresence refers to God's actual presence in all things, and immensity refers to His aptitude to exist in them.

## CHAPTER VI

### SOME COROLLARIES

The claims which the divine attributes of omnipresence and immensity make on God's special mode of presence in the world are not to be confused with the claims of Pantheism. It is hardly necessary to study here the countless forms of Pantheism which have been introduced down the ages to a truth-searching people, for no matter how many forms are proposed, Pantheism always stresses God's immanence in the universe with an utter disregard for His transcendence.<sup>1</sup>

Pantheism may be defined as any explanation of the universe which, although admitting the existence of God, identifies His reality with that of the universe.<sup>2</sup> Such an identification is made to explain the unity of all reality--a unity which is preserved intact without any separation from the source of that unity. A Pantheistic philosophy seeks this unity in maintaining that there is but one essence for all things. It completely ig-

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<sup>1</sup> "In whatever way it is expressed, Pantheism always maintains that God is immanent in the universe but does not transcend it." [McCormick, Natural Theology, 185.]

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

nores the contribution of St. Thomas which safeguards and defends the unity of the multiple by reason of the relation of the multiple to the One Cause.<sup>3</sup>

It is sufficiently clear that God is immanent in the universe as the originating and conserving Cause of the universe, since there is no being in existence to which God is not intimately present, contacting it by His power and keeping it in existence. The omnipresence and the immensity of God certainly attest to this fact. But it is this very truth which is distorted by Pantheism.<sup>4</sup> As the Cause of the universe, God cannot be identified with the universe. So that, although He is immanent in the universe, His reality must be really distinct from it, "since God is neither the material cause nor the formal cause of the world, nor its necessary and efficient cause, but its absolutely transcendent and free efficient cause."<sup>5</sup>

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3 Ibid., 189.

4 Some of the other truths which are distorted by Pantheism are the following: "There is nothing that is not, as to the whole of its being, caused by God. There is nothing that is not preserved by God, for the being of things is the proper effect of God...God operates in every agent, not to dispense the creature from acting, as the Occasionalists think, but to apply it to action. God moves the created intellect and immediately moves the created will, but He does no violence to it..." [Garrigou-Lagrange, The One God, 203.]

5 Ibid., 204.

Therefore, although God is intimately present in all things as the efficient cause of their beginning to exist and of their conservation in existence, His reality is not identified with the reality which is theirs. It is hardly necessary, nor is it considered fitting, to delve into the countless arguments which have been offered against Pantheism. It is sufficient merely to have indicated the difference between the claims of God's special mode of presence and the claims of Pantheism. In a word, then, Pantheism stresses God's immanence in reality, failing to consider His transcendence, whereas, Theism clearly maintains His immanence as well as His transcendence.<sup>6</sup>

From what has already been said of the presence of a thing in place or in space, it is clear that nothing could be actually present unless actual space exists. Actual space exists only where there actually are bodies and three dimensions, since it receives, as it were, the actual dimensions of the quantified object.<sup>7</sup> An actually existing quantified object is said to be in actual space because its dimensions fill the space in which it is. Hence, if no actual space were to exist, it would follow that nothing could be actually present, for just as the exis-

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6 "As a cause...He has His reality distinct from the reality of the universe. His reality is immanent in the universe, but also transcends it." [McCormick, Natural Theology, 186.]

7 See Chapter III

tence of actual space depends upon the existence of actual and quantified beings, so too does the actual presence of an extended being depend upon the existence of actual space.

Do the same considerations hold true for the presence of an unquantified being in space? In other words, does the actual presence of the human soul, a pure spirit, and God Himself likewise depend upon the existence of actual space? It may be recalled that an incorporeal being can be truly said to be in space, not by any quantitative contact, but rather by a virtual contact, insofar as that being exercises its power upon a corporeal object.<sup>8</sup> It has likewise been pointed out that the power which the human soul or a pure spirit exercises upon a quantified object is a limited power, so that its presence at any one time is limited to one determined corporeal object. Were actual space, therefore, not to exist, a quantified object could not be actually present, and neither the human soul nor a pure spirit could enjoy actual presence.

A similar consideration holds true in the case of the divine presence. His presence in a thing is, in a word, through the power which He exercises upon that thing, and since His power is infinite, so too He must be in all things, as the cause of their existence and their conservation in existence. However,

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<sup>8</sup> S. T., I, q. 8, a. 2, ad 1, Basic Writings, ed. Pegis, II, 65.

if actual space were not to exist, there would be no quantified objects in which God could exercise His infinite power, and so He Himself could not enjoy actual presence without the actual presence of quantified objects in actual space.

Before the creation of the world only God existed. There was nothing other than God in which He could exercise His infinite power. As an Infinite Being, furthest removed from corporeity, He, the only existing Being, possessed no actual presence. It is true that He was in Himself, but, having no other being in which to exist, He was nowhere. Since actual presence demands the existence of actual space, and since the existence of actual space depends upon the existence of quantified being, which did not exist before the creation of the world, God was nowhere. Before the creation of the world, the world was possibly existent. The space which it here and now does occupy, and which now is actual space, was then only possible space. And although it may be truly said that God was present in that possible space, He was only potentially there, since actual presence can only be had where there is actual space. A being can be said to be only potentially present, however, in potential space. God, therefore, potentially present in potential space which was the world before its creation, could not enjoy actual presence.

Now just as God was nowhere before the creation of the world, He did not then possess the attribute of omnipresence, for

there was no place for Him to be. This is why divine omnipresence is called a relative attribute. For, although the divine nature demands that God be actually present in all actual space, nevertheless such an attribute depends upon the actual existence of the world. Even before the creation of the world, however, God was truly immense. He possessed then, as He does now, that aptitude, or capacity, of being actually present in all actual space, as soon as it begins to exist, without any change occurring to Him. Independently of the existence or the non-existence of the world, therefore, God is immense. This is the reason why immensity is referred to as an absolute attribute of God.

Absolute space is defined as infinite extension conceived as something existing independently of the world and as containing the world. It is readily admitted that this notion of absolute space is rather confusing. There is no reality, nor any foundation in reality, for the notion of absolute space.<sup>9</sup> Actual space, as was said above, could not exist were there not extended objects, because actual space consists in the actual dimensions of a quantified object. Independently of the world, there is no such thing as actual space, for it is only in the created uni-

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<sup>9</sup> Actually, as has been said in the third chapter, absolute space is simply imaginary space, which "is a being of reason conceived after the manner of being, although it cannot exist." [Boyer, *Cursus Philosophiae*, I, 400.]



verse that quantified being is found. Outside the universe, therefore, there is no actual space, nor any actually extended objects in which God exercises His infinite power. If one were to maintain that God were actually present in absolute space, he would likewise have to maintain that God is actually present nowhere, for there is no possibility of actual presence where there is no actual space.

Beyond the world, or beyond the created universe which is the world, no actual presence is possible.<sup>10</sup> For just as there are no quantified objects outside the world, so it is that no actual presence is possible. And since nothing can be actually present where there is no actual space, so God, who is nonetheless omnipresent and immense, cannot be actually present beyond the world, where actual space is not had.

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<sup>10</sup> Charnock shows, at length, that "God is present beyond the world." His reason is that "if God were only confined to the world, He would be no more infinite in His essence than the world is in quantity. As a non-Scholastic, his language will have a shade of difference in meaning than the traditionally scholastic notion of presence. Furthermore, he seems to be carried away with the necessity of stressing the fact that God's presence is unlimited. [Charnock, Discourses, 239.]

## CHAPTER VII

### CONCLUSION

The threefold distinction of the presence of a thing in place or in space is readily seen to be a valid one, if the various types of existing being be considered. Circumscriptive presence indicates the presence of a body in space or in place. Since this presence is by quantitative parts, it is a limited perfection, and hence cannot be predicated of the supremely Infinite Being. Definitive presence designates the presence of the human soul or a pure spirit in place or in space. Although this presence is not by quantitative parts, it nonetheless is a limited perfection, insofar as their presence, at any one time, is restricted to one individual body upon which they exercise their power. They are entirely present in each part of the body and entirely present in each part of that space which the body occupies. Their presence, likewise, is limited. Repletive presence, on the other hand, characterizes the existence of God in space or in place. It is a most unique presence, since the twofold limitation of circumscriptive and definitive presence is removed. God is entirely present in all actual space, and He is entirely present in each individual portion of all actual space.

But even though this twofold limitation is not characteristic of God's actual presence, it nevertheless seems as though there is a limit to God's presence, since He can only be actually present where there is actual space, and actual space is had only where there actually are bodies and three dimensions. But only in this created, finite, and contingent universe do bodies enjoy actual existence. Hence, it seems as though His actual presence is limited, not by reason of Himself, but rather by reason of the finiteness of the universe. This is the reason why a distinction is made between the relative attribute of omnipresence and the absolute attribute of immensity.

Repletive presence not only removes the twofold limitation of circumscriptive and definitive presence, but it likewise removes the danger of the apparent limitation contained in the notion of omnipresence, since repletive presence implies the absolute attribute of immensity. Not only is God everywhere, as His omnipresence implies, but the repletive presence which He enjoys positively excludes all limitation and imperfection, which may be suggested by His being omnipresent. Were the Divine Substance not to demand that God be actually present in all actual space, as soon as that space begins to exist, without any change whatsoever occurring in Him, the presence of the divinity would indeed be limited.

From the considerations which have been made in this

thesis, one great conclusion stands out. Although it is true that God is everywhere, His omnipresence is a relative attribute, which depends upon the actual existence of the universe, whereas His immensity, as an absolute attribute of the Godhead, does not need the actual existence of the universe to justify its predication of the Godhead. As such, immensity is the greater of the two perfections.

In conclusion, it is considered fitting to quote the opening lines of Robert Montgomery's classic poem, entitled The Omnipresence of the Deity:<sup>1</sup>

Thou Uncreate, Unseen, and Undefined  
Source of all life, and fountain of the mind;  
Pervading Spirit, Whom no eye can trace,  
Felt through all time, and working in all space,  
Imagination cannot paint that spot  
Around, above, beneath, where Thou art not!

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Montgomery, The Omnipresence of the Deity, London, 1841, 29.

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## APPENDIX I

### CONSIDERATIONS OF THE FIVE THOMISTIC ARGUMENTS FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

The first argument which St. Thomas offers for the existence of God is taken from the concept of motion. His classic argument may be summed up in the following form.<sup>1</sup> Something in the world is moved. But everything which is moved is moved by another. Therefore that something in the world which is moved is moved by another. But this mover either here and now is moved, or it is not. If it is not moved, then an Immoveable Mover is had, and the thesis stands. If it is moved, the second mover, either here and now is moved, or it is not. If it is not moved, then an Immoveable Mover is had and the thesis stands. If it is moved, the same considerations must again be made. But it is impossible to proceed infinitely in such a series of essentially subordinated movers.<sup>2</sup> Therefore there exists an Immoveable Mover, Who is God.

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1 For the exact wording of all these proofs, see S. T., I, q. 2, a. 3, Basic Writings, ed. Pegis, I, 22-23.

2 "We are not concerned with past movers as in the series of generations either of animals or of men; for these movers are accidentally and not essentially subordinated, and their influence has ceased." [Garrigou-Lagrange, The One God, 140.]

There are, however, two assertions in this proof which must be validated. First of all, as regards the first minor, scilicet that everything which is moved is moved by another, St. Thomas offers this proof. The same thing cannot at once be in potency and act as regards the same perfection. But what is moved is in potency and what moves is in act. Therefore the same thing cannot at the same time move and be moved as regards the same perfection. Therefore nothing can move itself. Therefore everything which is moved is moved by another.

There is a further assertion in the principal part of this Thomistic proof which must be clarified, and that is that it is impossible to proceed infinitely in a series of essentially subordinated movers. In such a series of movers all the movers would be instrumental. But if there were not a principal mover, the possibility of any instrumental mover would be taken away, and as a consequent the possibility of any motion would be destroyed. Therefore an infinite regress of essentially subordinated movers is impossible. St. Thomas is here concerned with essentially subordinated movers. He claims that it is not impossible for man to be generated to infinity, but in such a case the sufficient reason for the motion of each being could not be found within this infinite series. The sufficient reason for their motion must be looked for without the series of accidentally subor-



dinated movers.<sup>3</sup>

The conclusion of St. Thomas is that it is necessary to arrive at a First Mover, set in motion by no other, and this everyone understands to be God. The First Mover is immobile, "not with the immobility of inertia or of passive potency, which implies imperfection and is inferior to motion, but with the immobility of actuality, who does not need to be removed so as to act."<sup>4</sup>

An almost identical procedure as in the proof from motion is found in the second Thomistic argument for God's existence. In this argument St. Thomas considers the empirical fact that an order of efficient causes exists in the world. Two principles are applied to this fact which lead to the conclusion of the existence of a First Cause, who is uncaused, and to whom everyone gives the name of God.

The first of these principles which St. Thomas introduces in the minor of the argument is that nothing can be the cause of itself. If a thing were the cause of itself, it would be prior to itself, which is impossible. Such a proposition, then, involves a contradiction, since the thing would be both existing and non-existing at the same time, for from the very

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3 "If this series is eternal, it is an eternally insufficient explanation of motion, and is not its own reason for this." [Ibid., 141.]

4 Ibid.

notion of causality, a thing can be caused only insofar as it does not exist, and it can cause only insofar as it does exist.<sup>5</sup>

The second principle introduced by Thomas is that it is impossible to proceed to infinity in efficient causes. It is evident that St. Thomas speaks of the order of essentially subordinated causes because of the very wording of this second principle. Were he speaking of accidentally subordinated causes, his asseption would be invalid.<sup>6</sup> As a proof of this principle, St.

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5 There is a need for some explanation of the distinction which is made between the cause in fieri and the cause in esse. For this explanation, the following citation is made:

"It might seem that from the existence of an effect at the present time we cannot prove the present existence of its cause...This apparent difficulty will be solved if we take note of the difference between what is called a cause in fieri, that is, the cause of the thing's becoming, and the cause in esse, that is, the cause of the thing's being. Now the becoming of a thing takes place once for all, and the cause of the thing's becoming must exist at the time of the thing's becoming, but need not exist thereafter...The existence of an effect in the present requires the present existence of its cause in esse...Now, it is the existence in the present of the universe as an effect of God's power, and not the beginning of the universe, from which we argue the present existence of God as its cause." [McCormick, Natural Theology, 51.]

6 Boyer points out that, although a series of accidentally subordinated causes could proceed to infinity, within the series there would be no sufficient reason for the series itself. There would be no series, without a First Cause. These remarks underly Boyer's conclusion: "Wherefore even if the eternity of the world be supposed, the need of a First Cause is not taken away but rather increased. In accidentally subordinated causes, there is not found an ultimate reason for the effects; however in essentially subordinated causes, it is impossible to proceed to the infinite." [Boyer, Cursus Philosophiae, II, 317.]

Thomas shows that there must be a First Cause in such a series of essentially subordinated causes, and if it be supposed that there is not a First Cause, then no cause whatsoever could exercise causality, for, as in his proof from motion, the relation of all instrumental causes to the one principal cause is evident. If there be no first, or principal, cause, then the possibility of the instrument's exercise of causality is destroyed.

In the third way, the argument from contingency, St. Thomas distinguishes between three different types of being. He speaks of contingent beings which are capable of being or not being. They are those beings which in their very nature have the capacity of not-being, of successively receiving various forms. They are corporeal, corruptible, contingent beings, which are capable of being or not-being. The second type of being which he considers may be referred to as necessary beings which have and receive their necessity from another. They are necessary beings which have a cause of their necessity. They are those beings which in themselves do not have a capacity of receiving various forms successively, and whose essence is not composed of matter and form. They are pure forms, pure spirits, and hence incorruptible beings. St. Thomas speaks of them as necessary, but they are necessary receiving their necessity from another. The third type of being which St. Thomas mentions in this proof is the absolutely and essentially necessary being. It is that being which

possesses most perfectly the reason why it is impossible for it not to exist, That reason is that its essence is its very existence.

There is a twofold structure to this argument. In the first stage St. Thomas argues to the existence of a necessary being whose necessity depends upon some cause. He shows that not all things which exist can be corruptible beings by the following argument. There are things in the world which are possible to be and not to be. But not all things which exist can be such, since what is possible to not be, at one time was not, for of itself such a being is nothing, since it is of itself indifferent to existence or non-existence. Wherefore if all beings were such, at one time nothing existed, and nothing would here and now exist. But things do here and now exist, manifesting that there must be some necessary being whose necessity is derived, at least, from some cause. This is all that Thomas, thus far in the proof, insists upon.

It is the second stage of his argument which witnesses his proof of the existence of an absolutely and essentially necessary being. St. Thomas has thus far shown that not all beings are merely possible, since there must exist something whose existence is necessary. He continues his argument in this fashion. A necessary being either has its necessity caused by another, or it does not. If it does not, then an absolutely and essentially necessary

being is had, and the thesis stands. If it has its necessity caused by another, the same considerations must again be made. Then St. Thomas, as he did in the first two arguments, introduces the notion of an infinite regress, showing that an infinite series of necessary beings whose necessity is caused by another is impossible, since, as in efficient causes, if it were possible to go on to infinity, there would be no First Cause, any principle cause, nor any intermediary causes, so likewise here without a first necessary being, whose necessity is absolutely uncaused.<sup>7</sup>

Present-day Scholastics do not propose the argument for the existence of God from contingency in the exact manner as St. Thomas, since the Thomistic argument supposes the doctrine of the composition of bodies. The scholastic argument is more easily understood than is Thomas' argument, and it is hardly necessary to summarize it here. Their argument concerns itself with but two different types of being--contingent and necessary. A contingent being is one which exists, but is likewise capable of not existing; it exists, but not by virtue of its own essence. A necessary being is one which exists and is absolutely incapable of not existing; it exists by virtue of its own essence. With this twofold division of being, there is no need for a distinction to be made between a being which is necessary, having a cause

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<sup>7</sup> Garrigou-Lagrange, The One God, 144-145.

of its necessity, and a being which is absolutely and essentially necessary.<sup>8</sup>

The fourth Thomistic argument for the existence of God is taken from the grades of perfection in the world. The major of the argument merely states the empirical fact that grades of perfections do exist in the world. For the sake of simplicity, the argument is conveniently limited to the transcendental perfections which St. Thomas, principally if not exclusively, regards. His words are these, "There are found in things some more and less good and true and noble."

In the minor of the argument St. Thomas applies the principle of sufficient reason to the empirical fact enunciated in the major. A sufficient reason is sought to explain why perfections can exist according to a greater or less degree. Recourse is had to the principle of exemplary causality which St. Thomas formulates in the following manner: "More and less are predicated of different things insofar as they resemble in different ways something which is the greatest." It may rightly be said that the reason why more and less are so predicated of different things is that they are so conceived, and they are so conceived, because it is necessary to do so, since a diminished or participated perfection does not have within itself a sufficient

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<sup>8</sup> For a clear example of the present-day Scholastic argument, see Boyer, Cursus Philosophiae, II, 317-319.

reason why it exists. It is not self-explanatory. Could it explain itself, it would exist in the highest degree, for perfection of its very nature implies no limitation. Therefore if a diminished or participated perfection does exist, there exists also a being which has that perfection to the infinite degree, of which degree inferior things are but mere resemblances or imitations.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore there exists a being which is the exemplary cause of all things which have a perfection in a greater or less degree, since an exemplary cause is that in whose imitation something exists.<sup>10</sup>

The conclusion of the first part of the argument is that there exists a being which is the highest good, the highest truth, and the highest beauty. And since these notions are convertible with the notion of being, since they are properties of being, there exists a being which is the highest being, a being whose existence is infinite. And since existence, as it were, is the heart and core of every perfection since every perfection is only some mode of existence, it follows that his being is infinitely perfect.<sup>11</sup>

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9 Boyer, Cursus Philosophiae, II, 326-327.

10 "Therefore if there exist essences which are greater or less degrees of some perfection, it is necessary that there exists a higher degree of that same perfection, of which degree inferior essences are but imitations." [Ibid.]

11 "And since these perfections are convertible with being, there exists a being which is the greatest." [Ibid.]

In the second part of this argument St. Thomas shows that this being is God Himself and is commonly acknowledged by men as the efficient cause of the world and of all the perfections in the world.<sup>12</sup> He appeals to the principle that what is the maximum in any genus is the cause of all things which are of that genus. Therefore, what does not essentially possess perfection, but only by participation, must receive that perfection from some efficient cause. And if this cause itself does not essentially possess perfection, a third cause must be analyzed. And since an infinite regress of efficient causes is impossible, there exists an efficient cause which essentially possesses perfection. But what essentially possesses perfection possesses it to the greatest degree. Therefore that highest being which is the exemplary cause of all perfections which exist in a greater or less degree, at once, is the efficient cause of the world, and of all the perfections which are found in the world.<sup>13</sup>

The fifth way of St. Thomas is the argument from the governance of the world. In the major of this argument recourse

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12 Gilson, Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas, 90

"As regards the appeal to the principle of causality at the end of the proof...its object is by no means to establish the existence of a supreme being; that conclusion is already secured. Its object is simply to lead us to recognize in this First Being...the cause of all the perfections which appear in secondary things."

13 Boyer, Cursus Philosophiae, II, 328-329.



is had once again to an empirical fact. It is evident that natural beings, beings which lack intelligence, move toward an end, and they do attain their end constantly and designedly. It should be noted that St. Thomas is here excluding the case of man, who is a natural being though endowed with a certain amount of intelligence which is not sufficient, however, to direct all other beings to their end, as the argument implies.<sup>14</sup> But what is lacking in knowledge can act for an end only if it be directed by something or someone endowed with knowledge and intelligence, since a thing acts for an end insofar as it is ordered to an effect as to its end. But such ordering supposes the abstract relation of the means to the end be known prior to the actual ordering, at least to the ultimate cause of such ordering. Therefore the abstract relation of the means to the end must first be known before the agent be ordered to the ultimate cause of the ordering. But only an intelligent cause can know this abstract relation. Therefore, what acts for an ultimate end is directed by someone endowed with knowledge and intelligence.<sup>15</sup> St. Thomas concludes, then, that some intelligent being exists who directs all natural things to

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14 Ibid., 344.

15 "If the end is intended, and if the effect is had from the intention and desire of the end, it is necessary that the end be known; for nothing moves if it be not known and willed. But to know and to will an end is proper only to a being endowed with an intellect." [Ibid.]

their end. This men speak of as God.

Although St. Thomas does not bridge the gap between his conclusion that some intelligent being exists who is responsible for the order in the world and his ultimate assertion that this being is God, it is nonetheless implied in the notion of an ordainer possessing the exemplary ideas of the resultant order.<sup>16</sup> Now the mind whence the order of the world proceeds either of itself possesses the exemplary ideas of that order, or receives them from another being. If it possesses them of itself, it has them to the highest degree and must needs be a being which is superior to all other beings. In a word, that being must be God Himself. If, however, it receives them from another, and since an infinite regress is impossible, there must exist some one intellect which is the ultimate source of that order, namely, God Himself.<sup>17</sup>

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16 Garrigou-Lagrange, The One God, 152.

17 Boyer, Cursus Philosophiae, II, 348.

APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by Patrick Francis Ahern has been read and approved by three members of the Department of Philosophy.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts.

5 Jan., 1951  
Date

John D. McKiernan  
Signature of Adviser