

with a high reputation for sanctity. When she heard of the Order of Preachers, in its early days, she was very excited by its name and passionately wanted to see some of the friars. Eventually, when the opportunity offered, she did see two young friars. She was amazed and said to the Lord, "What is this, Lord? Has the preaching of your word been usurped by such unskilled babies as these?" Soon after she had said this, the Mother of Christ appeared to her and drew back her cloak and showed her the brethren of the Order, saying, "Do not despise any such as these, because I am the one who guides and protects them, and I direct their feet into the way of peace."

Now, reader, see how truly the Mother of Truth said this. Particularly in the beginning of the Order, but also in our own day, we have seen young men with no experience, delicately brought up, only recently converted from the world, touring round the world in pairs, not overthrown even though they are among wicked people, innocent among the harmful, simple as doves among the cunningly malicious, but at the same time prudent as serpents in their care of themselves. Who would not be amazed at boys like this, now even more than before, not being burned though they are in the thick of the blazing furnace, while religious who belong to other Orders which are very strictly kept away from the turmoil of the world can hardly win through without tremendous difficulty, as we have, alas, seen and heard all too often? The friars are tormented by work, distracted by all kinds of different

business, and yet they survive unbroken; but these others have nothing else to attend to except their own mental and bodily health, and yet they still wobble. To what are we to ascribe this? To their own strength? Surely not. Rather to the Mother of Christ. If there are some who fall, because they are flesh as well as spirit, it is because they have idly tried to support themselves on a broken reed of Egypt instead of on Mary, the pillar of heaven.

So let our evil-mouthed and impious detractors beware of going against the patronage of the Mother of Christ by persecuting her children; if they do, they are liable to incur her anger, because she supports and defends her children. A certain pope in our days, whose name we pass over in silence, out of respect for the Holy See, issued letters against the privileges which had been granted by himself and the four previous popes to these two orders, one of which is called by the Creator from all eternity "Beauty," through the prophet Zechariah, and that is the Order of Preachers, the other of which is called "Rope," by which we may obviously understand the minors. We have it from people who were in the Roman court at the time, and there can be no doubt about it, that on the same day that he wrote these letters he was struck down by paralysis and lost his ability to talk; nor did he ever again regain his health or leave his bed. What is more, he was seen after his death by a certain holy man living outside the walls of Rome, being handed over to the two saints of God, Francis and Dominic, to be judged.

### 35. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

#### ON THE PROOFS OF GOD'S EXISTENCE

Thomas Aquinas (1224/25–1274), from a comital family in Aquino, Italy, was a Dominican philosopher and theologian who sought to defend Aristotelian philosophy within the Christian tradition and thus drew the ire of both traditionalists and radical interpreters of Aristotle. As an Aristotelian, he was certain that all knowledge began with sense perception and thus rejected arguments for God's existence such as that posited by Anselm of Canterbury (see p. 298). In this excerpt from his unfinished *Summa Theologica* (or *Summa Theologiae*), he offers other proofs of God's existence presented in the standard scholastic form of premise, objections, solution, and responses to each objection.

Source: St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), 5–17.  
Further Reading: Anthony Kennedy, *The Five Ways: Saint Thomas Aquinas' Proofs of God's Existence* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969).

### Question 2. Whether there is a God

Under the first of these questions there are three points of inquiry:

1. Is it self-evident that there is a God?
2. Can it be made evident?
3. Is there a God?

#### Article 1. Is it self-evident that there is a God?

THE FIRST POINT: 1. It seems self-evident that there is a God. For things are said to be self-evident to us when we are innately aware of them, as, for example, first principles. Now as Damascene<sup>13</sup> says when beginning his book, *the awareness that God exists is implanted by nature in everybody*. That God exists is therefore self-evident.

2. Moreover, a proposition is self-evident if we perceive its truth immediately upon perceiving the meaning of its terms: a characteristic, according to Aristotle,<sup>14</sup> of first principles of demonstration. For example, when we know what wholes and parts are, we know at once that wholes are always bigger than their parts. Now once we understand the meaning of the word "God" it follows that God exists. For the word means "that than which nothing greater can be meant." Consequently, since existence in thought and fact is greater than existence in thought alone, and since, once we understand the word "God," he exists in thought, he must also exist in fact.<sup>15</sup> It is therefore self-evident that there is a God.

3. Moreover, it is self-evident that truth exists, for even denying it would admit it. Were there no such thing as truth, then it would be true that there is no truth; something then is true, and therefore there is truth. Now God is truth itself; *I am the way, the truth, and the life*.<sup>16</sup> That there is a God, then, is self-evident.

ON THE OTHER HAND, nobody can think the opposite of a self-evident proposition, as Aristotle's discussion of first principles makes clear.<sup>17</sup> But the opposite of the proposition "God exists" can be thought, for *the fool in the psalms said in his heart: There is no God*.<sup>18</sup> That God exists is therefore not self-evident.

<sup>13</sup> John of Damascus (ca. 676–749).

<sup>14</sup> *Posterior Analytics* I, 2. 72a7–8.

<sup>15</sup> This is the argument of Anselm. See above, p. 298.

<sup>16</sup> John 14:6.

<sup>17</sup> *Metaphysics* IV, 3. 1005b11; *Posterior Analytics* I, 10. 76b23–27.

REPLY: A self-evident proposition, though always self-evident in itself, is sometimes self-evident to us and sometimes not. For a proposition is self-evident when the predicate forms part of what the subject means; thus it is self-evident that man is an animal, since being an animal is part of the meaning of man. If therefore it is evident to everybody what it is to be this subject and what it is to have such a predicate, the proposition itself will be self-evident to everybody. This is clearly the case with first principles of demonstration, which employ common terms evident to all, such as "be" and "not be," "whole," and "part." But if what it is to be this subject or have such a predicate is not evident to some people, then the proposition, though self-evident in itself, will not be so to those to whom its subject and predicate are not evident. And this is why Boethius can say that *certain notions are self-evident and commonplaces only to the learned, as, for example, that only bodies can occupy space*.

I maintain then that the proposition "God exists" is self-evident in itself, for, as we shall see later, its subject and predicate are identical, since God is his own existence. But, because what it is to be God is not evident to us, the proposition is not self-evident to us, and needs to be made evident. This is done by means of things which, though less evident in themselves, are nevertheless more evident to us, by means, namely, of God's effects.

Hence: 1. The awareness that God exists is not implanted in us by nature in any clear or specific way. Admittedly, man is by nature aware of what by nature he desires, and he desires by nature a happiness which is to be found only in God. But this is not, simply speaking, awareness that there is a God, any more than to be aware of someone approaching is to be aware of Peter, even should it be Peter approaching: many, in fact, believe the ultimate good which will make us happy to be riches, or pleasure, or some such thing.

2. Someone hearing the word "God" may very well not understand it to mean "that than which nothing greater can be thought," indeed, some people have believed God to be a body. And even if the meaning of the word "God" were generally recognized to be "that than which nothing greater can be thought," nothing thus defined would thereby be granted existence in the world of fact, but merely as thought about. Unless one is given that something in fact exists than which nothing greater can be thought—and this nobody denying the existence of

<sup>18</sup> Psalms 13(14):1; 52(53):1.

God would grant—the conclusion that God in fact exists does not follow.

3. It is self-evident that there exists truth in general, but it is not self-evident to us that there exists a First Truth.

### Article 2. Can it be made evident?

THE SECOND POINT: 1. That God exists cannot, it seems, be made evident. For that God exists is an article of faith, and since, as St. Paul says, faith is concerned with *the unseen*,<sup>19</sup> its propositions cannot be demonstrated, that is, made evident. It is therefore impossible to demonstrate that God exists.

2. Moreover, the central link of demonstration is a definition. But Damascene<sup>20</sup> tells us that we cannot define what God is, but only what he is not. Hence we cannot demonstrate that God exists.

3. Moreover, if demonstration of God's existence were possible, this could only be by arguing from his effects. Now God and his effects are incommensurable; for God is infinite and his effects finite, and the finite cannot measure the infinite. Consequently, since effects incommensurate with their cause cannot make it evident, it does not seem possible to demonstrate that God exists.

ON THE OTHER HAND, St. Paul tells us that *the hidden things of God can be clearly understood from the things that he has made*.<sup>21</sup> If so, one must be able to demonstrate that God exists from the things that he has made, for knowing whether a thing exists is the first step toward understanding it.

REPLY: There are two types of demonstration. One, showing "why," follows the natural order of things among themselves, arguing from cause to effect; the other, showing "that," follows the order in which we know things, arguing from effect to cause (for when an effect is more apparent to us than its cause, we come to know the cause through the effect). Now any effect of a cause demonstrates that that cause exists, in cases where the effect is better known to us, since effects are dependent upon causes, and can only occur if the causes already exist. From effects evident to us, therefore, we can demonstrate what in itself is not evident to us, namely, that God exists.

Hence: 1. The truths about God which St. Paul says we can know by our natural powers of reasoning<sup>22</sup>—that

God exists, for example—are not numbered among the articles of faith, but are presupposed to them. For faith presupposes natural knowledge, just as grace does nature and all perfections that which they perfect. However, there is nothing to stop a man accepting on faith some truth which he personally cannot demonstrate, even if that truth in itself is such that demonstration could make it evident.

2. When we argue from effect to cause, the effect will take the place of a definition of the cause in the proof that the cause exists; and this especially if the cause is God. For when proving anything to exist, the central link is not what that thing is (we cannot even ask what it is until we know that it exists), but rather what we are using the name of the thing to mean. Now when demonstrating from effects that God exists, we are able to start from what the word "God" means, for, as we shall see, the names of God are derived from these effects.

3. Effects can give comprehensive knowledge of their cause only when commensurate with it: but, as we have said, any effect whatever can make it clear that a cause exists. God's effects, therefore, can serve to demonstrate that God exists, even though they cannot help us to know him comprehensively for what he is.

### Article 3. Is there a God?

THE THIRD POINT: I. It seems that there is no God. For if, of two mutually exclusive things, one were to exist without limit, the other would cease to exist. But by the word "God" is implied some limitless good. If God then existed, nobody would ever encounter evil. But evil is encountered in the world. God therefore does not exist.

2. Moreover, if a few causes fully account for some effect, one does not seek more. Now it seems that everything we observe in this world can be fully accounted for by other causes, without assuming a God. Thus natural effects are explained by natural causes, and contrived effects by human reasoning and will. There is therefore no need to suppose that a God exists.

ON THE OTHER HAND, the book of *Exodus* represents God as saying, *I am who I am*.<sup>23</sup>

REPLY: There are five ways in which one can prove that there is a God.

The first and most obvious way is based on change. Some things in the world are certainly in process of change: this we plainly see. Now anything in process of change is being changed by something else. This is so because it is characteristic of things in process of change

that they do not yet have the perfection toward which they move, though able to have it; whereas it is characteristic of something causing change to have that perfection already. For to cause change is to bring into being what was previously only able to be, and this can only be done by something that already is: thus fire, which is actually hot, causes wood, which is able to be hot, to become actually hot, and in this way causes change in the wood. Now the same thing cannot at the same time be both actually *x* and potentially *x*, though it can be actually *x* and potentially *y*: the actually hot cannot at the same time be potentially hot, though it can be potentially cold. Consequently, a thing in process of change cannot itself cause that same change; it cannot change itself. Of necessity therefore anything in process of change is being changed by something else. Moreover, this something else, if in process of change, is itself being changed by yet another thing; and this last by another. Now we must stop somewhere, otherwise there will be no first cause of the change, and, as a result, no subsequent causes. For it is only when acted upon by the first cause that the intermediate causes will produce the change: if the hand does not move the stick, the stick will not move anything else. Hence one is bound to arrive at some first cause of change not itself being changed by anything, and this is what everybody understands by God.

The second way is based on the nature of causation. In the observable world causes are found to be ordered in series; we never observe, nor ever could, something causing itself, for this would mean it preceded itself, and this is not possible. Such a series of causes must however stop somewhere; for in it an earlier member causes an intermediate and the intermediate a last (whether the intermediate be one or many). Now if you eliminate a cause you also eliminate its effects, so that you cannot have a last cause, nor an intermediate one, unless you have a first. Given therefore no stop in the series of causes, and hence no first cause, there would be no intermediate causes either, and no last effect, and this would be an open mistake. One is therefore forced to suppose some first cause, to which everyone gives the name "God."

The third way is based on what need not be and on what must be, and runs as follows. Some of the things we come across can be but need not be, for we find them springing up and dying away, thus sometimes in being and sometimes not. Now everything cannot be like this, for a thing that need not be, once was not; and if everything need not be, once upon a time there was nothing. But if that were true there would be nothing even

now, because something that does not exist can only be brought into being by something already existing. So that if nothing was in being nothing could be brought into being, and nothing would be in being now, which contradicts observation. Not everything therefore is the sort of thing that need not be; there has got to be something that must be. Now a thing that must be, may or may not owe this necessity to something else. But just as we must stop somewhere in a series of causes, so also in the series of things which must be and owe this to other things. One is forced therefore to suppose something which must be, and owes this to no other thing than itself; indeed it itself is the cause that other things must be.

The fourth way is based on the gradation observed in things. Some things are found to be more good, more true, more noble, and so on, and other things less. But such comparative terms describe varying degrees of approximation to a superlative; for example, things are hotter and hotter the nearer they approach what is hottest. Something therefore is the truest and best and most noble of things, and hence the most fully in being; for Aristotle says that the truest things are the things most fully in being.<sup>24</sup> Now *when many things possess some property in common, the one most fully possessing it causes it in the others: fire, to use Aristotle's example, the hottest of all things, causes all other things to be hot*.<sup>25</sup> There is something therefore which causes in all other things their being, their goodness, and whatever other perfection they have. And this we call "God."

The fifth way is based on the guidedness of nature. An orderedness of actions to an end is observed in all bodies obeying natural laws, even when they lack awareness. For their behavior hardly ever varies, and will practically always turn out well; which shows that they truly tend to a goal, and do not merely hit it by accident. Nothing however that lacks awareness tends to a goal, except under the direction of someone with awareness and with understanding; the arrow, for example, requires an archer. Everything in nature, therefore, is directed to its goal by someone with understanding, and this we call "God."

Hence: 1. As Augustine says, *Since God is supremely good, he would not permit any evil at all in his works, unless he were sufficiently almighty and good to bring good even from evil*.<sup>26</sup> It is therefore a mark of the limitless goodness of God that he permits evils to exist, and draws from them good.

<sup>19</sup> Hebrews 11:1.

<sup>20</sup> *De Fide Orthodoxa* 1, 4.

<sup>21</sup> Romans 1:20.

<sup>22</sup> Romans 1:19–20.

<sup>23</sup> Exodus 3:14.

<sup>24</sup> *Metaphysics* II, 1. 993b30.

<sup>25</sup> *Metaphysics* II, 1. 993b25.

<sup>26</sup> *Enchiridion* II.

2. Natural causes act for definite purposes under the direction of some higher cause, so that their effects must also be referred to God as the first of all causes. In the same manner contrived effects must likewise be referred back to a higher cause than human reasoning and will, for these are changeable and can cease to be, and, as we have seen, all changeable things and things that can cease to be require some first cause which cannot change and of itself must be.

### Questions for Study

The mendicant movement was a response to the newly emerging urban spaces and merchant economy. In what ways does this religious movement reflect the interests of a more complex society? How does this life compare with that of Benedictine monasticism?

## Church and Society in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries

### 36. JACQUES FOURNIER

#### INQUISITION RECORDS

In 1320 the bishop of Pamiers, Jacques Fournier (ca. 1280–1342), later Pope Benedict XII, interrogated the inhabitants of the village of Montailou in southern France on the supposition of Cathar heresy in the village. This extraordinarily detailed record allows one to see not only the procedures of the Inquisition and the nature of fourteenth-century heterodox belief, but also the private lives of ordinary villagers.

The following testimony is that of a member of the minor nobility, Béatrice de Planissoles.

*Source:* Jean Duvernoy, *Le registre d'inquisition de Jacques Fournier* (Paris: Mouton de Gruyter, 1978).

*Further Reading:* Emmanuel LeRoy Ladurie, *Montailou: The Promised Land of Error*, trans. Barbara Bray (New York: George Braziller, 1978).

#### Witnesses against Béatrice, Widow of Othon of Lagleize of Dalou

In the year of our Lord 1320, the nineteenth of June. It came to the knowledge of the reverend father in Christ our lord Jacques, by the grace of God bishop of Pamiers, that Béatrice, widow of Othon, of Lagleize, of Dalou, who lives at Varilhes, had made comments that smelled of Manichean heresy or touched it, and especially against

the sacrament of the altar, he wished, with the assistance of Gaillard of Pomiès, substitute for my lord the inquisitor of Carcassonne, to inform himself on the events which preceded, and he received the following witnesses:

Guillaume Roussel of Dalou, sworn witness and ordered to say the truth, said:

Ten years ago, it seems to me, but I do not remember exactly the period or the day, I was