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**LA THÈSE A ÉTÉ
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NECESSARY ASSENT IN THE DEMONSTRATIONS
OF THE EXISTENCE OF GOD
CONTRA
THE VOLUNTARINESS OF FAITH
IN ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

by Albert T. Pollock

Thesis submitted to the School
of Graduate Studies of the
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ABSTRACT

St. Thomas Aquinas taught that the existence of God could not be both known and believed by one and the same person at any one time, that is, he taught that faith and knowledge were exclusive of one another. The reason St. Thomas held this position was due to his understanding of the dissimilar natures of the intellectual assent involved in faith and demonstrative proof.

Faith, St. Thomas explains, is a voluntary intellectual assent due to the invisibility of its object, while science or demonstrative knowledge effects a necessary intellectual assent because of the visibility of its object. The reasoning process of science, by its very nature, renders evident to the intellect the necessary truth of a proposition. Faced with such a proposition, the intellect is compelled to assent to its truth. The reasoning process affiliated with faith, however, does not render evident to the intellect the necessary truth of a proposition; thus, for the intellect to assent to the truth of such a proposition, it must be moved by the will.

Consequently, St. Thomas argued, if someone knows and understands the demonstrations of the existence of God, such a person could not simultaneously believe in God's existence for the necessary intellectual assent effected by the proof would exclude the voluntary assent of faith.

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"The teacher," St. Thomas says, "furnishes the pupil's intellect with a stimulus to knowledge of the things which he teaches, as an indispensable mover." The present writer sincerely thanks Professor Garceau for having been his teacher in a pre-eminent degree, in having suggested the topic of this thesis, in having guided the various stages of this research, and especially for having given generously of his knowledge and encouragement.

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INTRODUCTION

The problem of the relationship between faith and reason has long been a concern to both the philosopher and the theologian. In fact, the origin of the problem is in seminal form simultaneous with the genesis of philosophy itself. One is able to witness throughout the writings of the ancient Greek philosophers, from Thales through Plato and Aristotle, the birth and development of a critique of both the content and complexion of the Greek religious mind. In the hands of Plato and Aristotle, this critique, coupled with the further development of philosophy itself, became "first philosophy" or theology and it was on the whole a positive clarification of the most essential intuitions of the mytho-poetic thought of Greek religion.

A similar process happened once again commencing with the introduction of the Judaeo-Christian religious mind into the Graeco-Roman world. It was but a short time before Christianity developed a speculative theology and not surprising it initially found its philosophical roots in Plato or Neo-Platonism through St. Augustine, and later in Aristotle through St. Thomas Aquinas. In light of their acceptance of Divine Revelation, both St. Augustine and St. Thomas conceived the difference between the religious and philosophical mind in terms of the broad categories of faith and reason, and both devoted considerable effort and attention to the clarification

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of their distinct natures and affiliation. St. Thomas' analysis in particular, as it was in large part established in an Aristotelian psychology, made careful and clear distinctions between faith, doubt, suspicion, opinion, science or demonstrative knowledge and intuition. The fruit of which was a profound explication of the difference between the religious and the philosophical mind, on the one hand, and the possibility of a harmony of the two minds, on the other.

However, with the advent of the Reformation, followed by the Enlightenment, the possibility of a harmony between the religious and philosophical mind was again put in question. In recent years this questioning has set in motion once more various examinations of the relationship between faith and reason in what has come to be known as the philosophy of religion.

One such investigation is found in the work of Terrence Penelhum called, Problems of Religious Knowledge. In the first part of this study, Professor Penelhum offers an interpretation and critique of St. Thomas' doctrine of faith. He argues that St. Thomas is in error in his understanding that faith and demonstrative knowledge (science) are exclusive of one another. This distinction, however, is easily seen to be central to St. Thomas' understanding of the fundamental difference between the religious mind properly speaking and the

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philosophical mind in its most perfect expression. And the obfuscation of this distinction was undoubtedly seen by St. Thomas to run the risk of injuring a proper appreciation of both the religious and the philosophical mind and the human intellect in general.

It is in light of Penelhum's work, therefore, that we have chosen to study this distinction in St. Thomas' thought in greater detail than was done in Problems of Religious Knowledge.

In Chapter I of our study, we have exposed Penelhum's interpretation and critique of St. Thomas' doctrine of faith as an elucidation of the precise problem of our thesis. Which, succinctly stated, is the analysis of St. Thomas' doctrine of the separateness of the voluntary intellectual assent of the act of faith and the necessary intellectual assent effected by demonstrative proof and in particular of the proofs of the existence of God.

In Chapter II, therefore, we first investigate St. Thomas' conception of demonstrative proof and the related intellectual assent involved. This chapter is to a considerable extent an analysis of Book One of St. Thomas' Commentary on the Posterior Analytics of Aristotle.

Chapter III is devoted to an analysis of St. Thomas' doctrine of faith and its related intellectual assent. The

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primary texts studied in this chapter are St. Thomas' two major treatises on faith found separately in the Summa Theologiae and De veritate, The Disputed Questions on Truth.

In Chapter IV, we look more specifically at St. Thomas' position of the exclusiveness of faith and knowledge; and we consider the relationship of the Praeambula Fidei to the articles of faith and the believer's assent to such articles, as this question is related to St. Thomas' general position of the exclusiveness of faith and knowledge.

Finally, In Chapter V, we investigate St. Thomas' proofs of the existence of God, given in Book One of the Summa Theologiae, in light of his understanding of demonstrative proof in general, with a view to seeing more directly his understanding of the necessary intellectual assent involved.

As we are primarily concerned with deliberating upon St. Thomas' thought itself, our study basically confines itself to a textual analysis of the more significant sections of Aquinas' writings which immediately address the central problem of our thesis. We have, therefore, consulted only those secondary sources which we found to be essential and necessary aids to an understanding of the most difficult questions that developed within our analysis.

CHAPTER 1

PENELHUM: INTERPRETATION AND CRITIQUE OF ST. THOMAS - CLARIFICATION OF THE PROBLEM

The work, Problems of Religious Knowledge, by Terrence Penelhum attempts to describe and clarify the nature of the disparity between men of faith and sceptics and to describe in partial degree the nature of faith itself. From a position of philosophical neutrality, the work considers claims made by men of faith to knowledge of truths about God, and the reasons for the rejection of these claims by unbelievers. A portion of the first chapter of the book presents an interpretation of two accounts of the nature of religious faith and its relation to knowledge. The first account is representative of the Catholic tradition and is that of St. Thomas Aquinas. "On this view faith is a reasonable and free acceptance of certain propositions about God and man, belief in which is a prerequisite for salvation."¹ The second account is expressive of the Protestant tradition stemming from the sixteenth-century Reformers and twentieth-century neo-orthodoxy. This is the account of faith given by John Hick. "On this view faith is a complex cognitive-conative

¹ Terrence Penelhum, Problems of Religious Knowledge, Herder & Herder, New York, 1971, p. 9.

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response to God's alleged revelation of Himself in human history."² In the succeeding chapters of the book, a critique of these two accounts is developed within which it is argued that one of the principles of the Thomistic doctrine is in error: Which principle, simply stated, is that faith and knowledge are exclusive. This interpretation and critique of St. Thomas' doctrine of faith is the source which gives rise to and orientates our present research. Consequently, in this chapter we intend to reconstruct Penelhum's interpretation and critique of St. Thomas' account of faith and to define our point of research. While we are fundamentally concerned with the discussion of St. Thomas' doctrine of faith, we are forced to consider both accounts of faith because they are set forth in contrast to one another and because the critique is aimed simultaneously at both accounts on a critical point understood to support the Thomistic principle in question i.e., that faith and knowledge are exclusive.

St. Thomas' position is considered first. Penelhum explains that the postulate that grace perfects nature is at the heart of St. Thomas doctrine on the nature of faith.

2 Ibid.

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Faith is one of the fruits of divine grace, but is at the same time a natural extension of activities of the human intellect that do not in themselves require it. For faith is essentially a matter of assenting to certain propositions which, though they cannot be arrived at by reason alone, it is nevertheless reasonable to assent to because certain others can be known to be true by reason alone.³

Those propositions which can be attained by reason alone comprise the division of philosophy entitled natural theology and those beyond the grasp of natural reason form the science of revealed theology. Therefore, the assent to revealed truths "... is not irrational, since someone who has learned the truths of natural theology ... can then reasonably give voluntary assent to the truths of revelation."⁴ It is not to be thought, however, that each and every believing individual can or must learn the truths of natural theology in order that their voluntary assent to revealed truths be reasonable; rather, that some men are philosophers and have grasped the truths of natural theology is sufficient for all and provides every believer with a rational justification for their voluntary assent to revelation.

... the assent which the faithful freely give to the truths revealed to them is shown to be a rational assent because grounds for expecting God to have revealed them can be found in natural theology by those qualified to search.⁵

3 Ibid., pp. 9-10.

4 Ibid., p. 10.

5 Ibid.

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In light of this general reflection about St. Thomas' teaching where the relation between faith and knowledge and the rationality of faith's voluntary assent is outlined, Penelhum presents a more formal analysis of St. Thomas' doctrine of faith in the form of six theses which we will now consider.

The first thesis: "Faith is a form of assent to propositions."⁶ This thesis refers to the object of assent. Insofar as faith is an intellectual assent, the object is truth. However, referring to the Summa Theologiae, Penelhum explains that for St. Thomas the human intellect grasps truth through the combining and separating of ideas, that is through the complexity of propositions. Though the object of faith may be simple in itself, i.e. God; to the human intellect he is only presented in complexity by way of propositions for this is the proper mode of knowing for the human intellect. The assent of faith then is the assent to propositions about God.

The second thesis: "Revelation is of propositions."⁷ Penelhum states that faith and revelation are correlative

6 Ibid., p. 10.

7 Ibid., p. 11.

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notions in the thought of St. Thomas; for the truth which is the object of faith is only that which is revealed by God. This truth is subject to the proper mode of human knowing which, as stated in thesis one, is by way of propositions. Thus the truth revealed by God is by way of propositions. These being contained in the Scriptures and the doctrinal proclamations of the Church. It follows from this, Penelhum points out, that faith cannot assent to false propositions for God reveals nothing false.

The third thesis: "The assent which characterizes faith is not tentative, but wholehearted."⁸ This thesis indicates the psychological or mental state, which characterizes the assent of faith. Though the propositions which one assents to in faith are revealed propositions and not propositions demonstrated as true by the unaided reason alone, as has been stated, they are nevertheless held and assented to by the intellect with equal certainty. The Summa Theologiae (IIa IIae, q. 1, a. 4) is quoted. Here Aquinas explains that the intellect gives assent in two ways. (1) It may be moved by the object itself; the object being either indubitable first principles obviously known or conclusions scientifically known through demonstration. The assent involved here is

8 Ibid.

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necessary. (2) It may be moved by the will through choice, i.e. voluntary assent. Of the latter assent, if it is accompanied by doubt or misgivings, it is opinion. If it is choice without hesitation and with certainty, it is faith. Thus, faith is midway between knowledge and opinion in that it has the certainty proper to knowledge while being moved under the influence of the will as is opinion.

The fourth thesis: "Though the assent is voluntary, it has a rational basis."⁹ Thesis four defines the nature of the assent. Faith is a voluntary assent of the intellect and therefore meritorious insofar as it involves an act of the will as indicated within the rationalization of the previous thesis. Penelhum states that the rational grounds for this assent are twofold according to St. Thomas and that this twofold ground constitutes the preambles to faith. This twofold ground consists in those propositions about God which can be demonstrated by unaided reason, such as God's existence and unity, and ". . . the historical evidences of the authority of the Church."¹⁰ For example, Penelhum quotes the Summa Theologiae, ". . . the authority of divine teaching confirmed by miracles and what is more, by the inward prompting of divine invitation." (IIa IIae, q. 2, a. 9, ad. 3).

9 Ibid., p. 12.

10 Ibid.

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The fact that Penelhum has identified this twofold ground with the Thomistic notion of the praeambula fidei is evidently due to his reading John Hick's work, Faith and Knowledge.¹¹ When discussing this thesis, Penelhum makes specific reference to pages sixteen to twenty of the first chapter of Hick's work, a chapter entitled, "The Thomistic-Catholic View of Faith."¹² John Hick does, in fact, identify this twofold ground with the praeambula fidei, however, he does so on the authority of M. C. Darcy and George D. Smith and not on the authority of St. Thomas himself. In a later chapter of this research, we will consider whether this twofold ground can be justifiably attributed to the praeambula fidei within the thought of St. Thomas. We do not believe it can. Further, we intend to show that St. Thomas did not consider the praeambula fidei as the rational ground which renders the voluntary assent of faith reasonable.

The fifth thesis: "The rational basis lies partly in the fact that some truths about God can be demonstrated."¹³ This thesis appears merely to emphasize what Penelhum believes to be the primary rational basis of the assent of faith for

11 Cornell University Press, New York, 1966.

12 Penelhum, Religious Knowledge, p. 12 & p. 162,
No. 7.

13 Ibid., p. 12.

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St. Thomas discussed in thesis four. We note that the only reference (quoted above) made to the works of Aquinas in which St. Thomas explicitly considers ". . . sufficient reason for believing" (S.T., IIa IIae, q. 2, a. 9, ad. 3) does not mention demonstrated truths as a rational basis for faith.¹⁴

The sixth thesis: "Faith and knowledge are exclusive."¹⁵ This thesis gives attention to the relationship obtaining between the assent of faith and the assent of knowledge. Penelhum explains that, according to St. Thomas, the object of the assent of faith is indemonstrable truths revealed by God i.e., mysteries. He then simply states.

. . . the mutual exclusiveness of faith and knowledge follows independently from the necessary connection thought to obtain between the freedom of assent in faith and the absence of conclusive demonstration for its articles.¹⁶

However, a sedimentary distinction concerning the relationship between faith and knowledge in St. Thomas' thought is exposed by Penelhum under this thesis. It embraces the fact that there exists propositions which can be known i.e., demonstrated, which nevertheless, can be objects of faith. There are situations in which an individual may be unable to

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid., p. 13.

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assent to a proposition by means of demonstration not because the proposition in itself is indemonstrable but because of some deficiency on the part of the individual e.g., lack of intellectual ability or lack of time. In such a case, however, that individual may give assent by means of faith. It remains impossible, however, for an individual to hold one and the same proposition both on faith and by demonstration at the same time. For, once a proposition is held by means of demonstration, it is no longer held on faith. A distinction may therefore be made between faith's proper object i.e., any truth whether demonstrable in itself or not which is nevertheless undemonstrated for a particular individual.

Up to this point we have sought to do no more than to present the content of Penelhum's interpretation of Aquinas' account of faith. We have shown that Penelhum understands Aquinas to argue that faith is a wholehearted, voluntary, meritorious assent of the intellect, having a rational basis, to revealed propositions about God. He has argued that this rational basis, for St. Thomas, comprises the preambles of faith which contain: (1) historical evidences confirming the Church's teaching authority; and more importantly, (2) certain propositions about God which can be demonstrated. He has further argued that St. Thomas holds faith and knowledge to be exclusive because of the necessary connection believed to

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exist between the voluntariness of the assent of faith and the lack of conclusive demonstrations for its propositions.

We now set forth the substance of Penelhum's analysis of John Hick's account of the nature of faith. As he presented Aquinas' doctrine of faith in the form of six theses, he has done the same with Professor Hick's account.

The first thesis: "Faith is not a form of assent to propositions, but a 'total interpretation' of experience."¹⁷ Hick desires, Penelhum argues, to emphasize the interpretive element within all human experience. Like many post-Kantian epistemologies, the attention here is being directed to the subjective conditions of knowledge. While recognizing that faith involves the formation and affirmation of certain propositions, the stress here is being placed upon the more comprehensive conative-cognitive response to one's total experience within which such propositions derive their significance. This thesis is further clarified and developed by thesis three.

The second thesis: "Revelation is in the form of events and actions, not propositions."¹⁸ In contrast to Aquinas, Penelhum tells us, Hick argues that the revelation

17 Ibid., p. 18.

18 Ibid.

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of God does not take the form of pronouncements of propositions. Rather, revelation is in the form of historical acts and events subject to interpretation, and it is the content of this interpretation which is expressed within the propositions of faith. The events themselves are thus able to be interpreted in non-theistic ways and in a greater variety of theistic ways than allowed for in the Thomistic doctrine.

The third thesis: "The interpretation of which faith consists can be understood in terms of 'seeing-as'."¹⁹ Just as Jastrow's famous duck-rabbit picture is susceptible to two alternative interpretations, likewise our experience is open to an alternate theistic-atheistic interpretation. Further, though the interpretation of experience are options; in the case of faith, it is wholehearted.

The fourth thesis: "Although faith is voluntary, it is rational."²⁰ Penelhum explicates that Hick's epistemological analogies (as in the third thesis), his characterization of faith as cognitive, and his assertion of its ultimate verifiability are offered to negate the criticism that it is an irrational opinion.

19 Ibid., p. 19.

20 Ibid.

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The fifth thesis: "Its rationality is not, however, due to the possibility of prior demonstration of the existence of God."²¹ On the grounds that faith is a voluntary and meritorious act, Hick rejects the very attempt of natural theology to establish God's existence through demonstration from non-theistic premises. That is, insofar as proof is conceived as coercive of assent, it negates the essential voluntary character of faith and therefore its meritorious character. As a consequence, however, unbelief cannot be considered irrational as it seems it would be were proofs of some theistic propositions from non-theistic premisses possible.

The sixth thesis: "Faith and knowledge are not exclusive."²² The opposition between faith and knowledge is erroneous for the man of faith can properly claim that he knows that God exists. The fact that this claim can only be made within the context of faith affirms that this claim, that faith is a form of knowledge, is a claim of faith and not a merely philosophical claim. Since through philosophy it is impossible to know God, the only possible knowledge of God is through faith.

It is evident that Penelhum's recount of both doctrines of faith presents thesis six of Hick's account in

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.

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apparent contradiction with thesis six of St. Thomas' account. We are told that St. Thomas conceives faith and knowledge to be exclusive, whereas Hick does not; and that faith is a form of knowledge for Hick and that it is not for St. Thomas. Yet, it is clear that "knowledge" used in the Thomistic thesis is understood as scientific demonstration i.e., proof; while the use of "knowledge" in the thesis attributed to Hick's doctrine of faith is not. An equivocation is therefore contained in the use of the word "knowledge." Knowledge (understood as demonstration) and faith are as exclusive for Hick as they are for Aquinas. This, in fact, is the import of the fifth thesis of Penelhum's interpretation of Hick's position. Faith is no more a form of scientific demonstration for Hick than it is for St. Thomas. However, the real significance of this thesis seems to consist in attributing an intrinsic rationality to faith in Hick's doctrine while denying its presence in the Thomistic doctrine. In fact, the fruit of theses four and five of the Thomistic account is to identify rationality primarily with demonstration while the effect of the same theses of Hick's account is to deny this identification. We, however, have already raised the doubt as to whether St. Thomas identifies the rationality of the assent of faith with the demonstrations of propositions about God.

In concluding his interpretation, Penelhum offers a summary of both accounts of faith indicating their similarities

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and dissimilarities. Concerning the first thesis, he points out that it would be unwise to exaggerate the distance between the two positions for though Hick stresses the total interpretive response to experience, which he understands to characterize faith, he makes the logically necessary acknowledgement of its propositional character as well. Further this same consideration, he infers, can be extended to the two related theses concerning revelation. He states again that both regard faith as voluntary as well as rational and that both recognize a tension between demonstration and the voluntary, meritorious character of faith. Lastly, in reference to this final point he comments:

This is the main reason why Hick rejects the enterprise of proving God's existence, and why St. Thomas only allows natural theology a very limited sphere, and refuses to admit that one and the same person can have faith in a proposition and learn it from philosophical demonstration.²³

It is possible for us now to commence the exposition of Penelhum's critical examination of these two doctrines of faith.

In chapter two Penelhum inquires into the nature of proof from premisses. He identifies this form of proof as "indirect proof" to distinguish it from the more direct way of proving something through immediate appeal to empirical

23 Ibid., p. 20.

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evidence. He indicates that the traditional ontological, cosmological and teleological arguments are proofs from premisses.

The method of investigation employed by Penelhum is in the manner of a commentary upon G. E. Moore's examination of proof found in his well-known lecture, "Proof of an External World."²⁴ In this lecture, Moore proposes three conditions of a successful proof. One of the conditions, Penelhum explains, is actually a double condition, therefore, he will outline four conditions of a satisfactory proof. We shall follow Penelhum's treatment of these four conditions as the foundation of his critique of the two accounts of faith is constructed within it.

The first condition states: ". . . the premiss must be different from the conclusion."²⁵ Explicating the first condition, Penelhum argues that the suggestions that this condition is not met if the premiss entails the conclusion cannot be accepted for this would, in effect, bar all deductive proofs absolutely. However, he suggests an alternative determination: ". . . in a successful proof one must not have to state the conclusion in order to state the premiss."²⁶

24 Philosophical Papers, Allen & Unwin, 1959, pp. 127-150.

25 Penelhum, Religious Knowledge, p. 25.

26 Ibid., p. 26.

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This having been conceded, Moore's first condition can be accepted.

The second condition states: ". . . the premiss must be true."²⁷ Two points are made concerning this condition. (1) Proof and valid argumentation are distinct; an argument may be valid though it proceeds from false premisses. Proof, on the other hand, requires truth. (2) Reductio ad absurdum arguments can be considered as proofs even though it may be said that they lack premisses properly speaking.

The third condition states: ". . . the premiss must be known to be true."²⁸ It is within the deliberation upon this condition that Penelhum sketches the foundation of his critique and stipulates the groundwork which challenges a suspected erroneous conviction found within both accounts of faith concerning the nature of proof. He begins:

There are temptations both to accept and to reject the conditions. To decide between them is in effect to decide how far proof is 'person-relative'. It is to decide whether to think of proofs as sets of propositions with logical relationships between them, which satisfy the standards of proof whether anyone knows them or not, or to think of proof as an act which someone performs and which requires for its performance a speaker and a hearer.²⁹

27 Ibid., p. 27.

28 Ibid., p. 28.

29 Ibid.

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The first mode of proof has its paradigm in mathematics, and in demonstrations in formal logic; here the components are formulae. In the latter type of proof, the elements are statements. Penelhum explains that insofar as the theistic proofs and the type of which we are concerned are of the latter kind, it seems preferable to consider proof in this very way. He wishes, however, to offer grounds, other than the preference based on this association, for such a decision. Not only because of this association, therefore, should proof be considered in this way but also because the most common use of the notion of proof involves the understanding that someone does know the premisses to be true.

In this we are adopting the use of 'proof' in which proof is an act performed by making statements which serve as premisses and which have to be known to be true for the proof to succeed. Proof in this sense has to be done by someone to someone, although of course in some instances the speaker and the hearer may be the same person. I would hold that this use of 'proof' is not invented, but actual and common.³⁰

Penelhum next proposes three critical questions raised by the acceptance of the third condition.

30 Ibid., pp. 29-30.

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(a) If the premisses have to be known to be true, is it necessary that the conclusion not be known? Can one, that is, prove something, or have something proved to one, if one knows it already? (b) Granted that proof requires knowledge, must proof yield knowledge? If something is proved to someone, does it follow that he knows it? (c) Who has to know the truth of the premisses or conclusion - the speaker, the hearer, or both?³¹

The first question is treated under two aspects:

(1) proving something to oneself while already knowing it, and (2) proving something to someone else who already knows it. We are told first, that many thinkers have attempted to prove conclusions (e.g., that God exists) which they already thought they knew and therefore that their success in proving them could not be conditioned by their not having known them first. For, on the one hand, it would be near impossible to determine this, and further, because the knowledge of a truth is a prime condition or reason for attempting to prove it to others. In reference to the first aspect therefore, he states:

³¹ Ibid., p. 30.

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. . . if someone already knows, or thinks he knows that p, then in trying to prove that p he is not trying to learn that p is true; he already has learned this. But, leaving aside the needs of his hearers, he might still have reason to want to prove it for his own benefit - to prove it to himself or at least for himself. He might quite reasonably want to reinforce his previous knowledge. He might want to see the interrelationships between different things that he knows. He might want to deepen his understanding of what he already knows. There seems no reason, therefore, to suggest that proving that p is either impossible or pointless if the speaker already knows that p, even if the speaker and the hearer are identical.³²

It is not difficult to see that the same reasoning can be extended to the second aspect as well. He therefore concludes,

So although proof is person-relative, it can be done even though the person proving, or the person proved to, or both know the truth of the conclusion already.³³

Having set forth this reasoning, Penelhum reflects that confusion about this question can readily come about if a relationship between faith and knowledge, such as conceived by St. Thomas, is accepted. As previously explained, Aquinas argues that a person cannot hold a proposition both on faith and know it at the same time. Consequently, if a proposition is held on faith and then that proposition becomes known

32 Ibid., pp. 30-31.

33 Ibid., p. 31.

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through proof, faith is replaced by knowledge. Penelhum argues:

Suppose, however, someone were to deny that faith and knowledge are exclusive in this way, or even hold, as Hick would seem to, that faith is a form of knowledge? In such a case, the fact that p was one of the things he held on faith would not be incompatible. If such a person then had p proved to or for him, his faith could be reinforced by this, not replaced by it.³⁴

It appears to us that Penelhum has again in this passage employed an equivocal use of "knowledge." We have evidenced earlier that faith and proof are as exclusive for Hick as for St. Thomas; proof, consequently, would replace faith as much for Hick as for Aquinas.

Faith consists in an intellectual assent with certainty. Likewise knowledge, which is the result of proof, is an intellectual assent with certainty. Knowledge of this kind, however, is not faith for the principle or, if you will, the productive cause of assent and certainty differs in each act. In the case of knowledge resulting from proof, assent and certainty involve necessity. In the case of faith, assent and certainty involve freedom. In the act of faith, volition is the principle of assent and certainty. In the act of knowledge produced by proof, evidence alone is the principle

³⁴ Ibid., pp. 31-32.

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of assent and certainty. It is, therefore, involuntary.

In faith the intellect is moved to assent with certainty to the truth of a proposition not through the knowledge of why a proposition is true and certain but through the force of the will. In faith the will functions in place of evidence. It seems impossible, therefore, for proof to reinforce faith for proof replaces precisely that which makes faith faith, namely, the function of the will; knowledge replaces the will as the principle of assent and certainty. It does not appear that Hick denies any of this; he simply denies that the rationality of the assent of faith must be ultimately dependent upon proof. Thus an acceptance of the position of the exclusiveness of faith and proof does seem in contradiction to an affirmative answer to the question of whether something can be proven which is already known, and Penelhum's appeal to his interpretation of Hick's position would appear to be an appeal to an equivocation. However, both St. Thomas and Hick would not deny that something already known through one proof could not also be known through another, nor would St. Thomas deny that something known through faith might also come to be known through proof. Hick of course denies this because he denies in principle that any matter of faith could ever be proven.

The second question raised in connection with the third condition of a successful proof asks: "Must proof

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result in knowledge."³⁵ It is particularly under this question that Penelhum lays the groundwork for his critique. While recognizing that it seems quite natural to argue that proof results in knowledge, the purpose of Penelhum's argument is to establish that it doesn't necessarily. He argues that even if the premisses of an argument are true and are known to be true and even if they proceed to a conclusion by valid steps, known to be valid, and where the person is not lying:

There might be cases where these conditions were satisfied and yet it was still uncertain whether or not B knew that p. He might not accept it. He might, for example, have an ingrained tendency of long standing to believe p to be false. It being proved to him will set up a conflict between this tendency and his new tendency to behave as though p is true. He will oscillate, so that we shall be unclear whether he knows p or not. Such a person is acting irrationally; but people do do this. Alternatively, B might know the truths of the premisses and see that they lead to p, but find p so unpalatable that he cannot admit it either to us or to himself. He may, in other words, deceive himself with regard to p. In cases like this it is clear that the proof ought to result in knowledge on the part of the hearer, but it is not clear that it has done so I submit that in these cases, where a hearer behaves irrationally with regard to the conclusion of a proof, or deceives himself with regard to its truth, and yet knows the truth of the premisses and can see the validity of the inferences, the conclusion has been proved to him even though it is not clear that he knows that it is true. Conversely, I would submit that where

35 Ibid., p. 32.

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a conclusion has thus been proved to someone, yet he still does not clearly know it, he must be guilty of irrationality or self-deception with regard to it.³⁶

The substance of this long passage is the denial of the notion that proof compels assent of the intellect. This, in brief, is the foundation of Penelhum's critique of St. Thomas' position that faith and knowledge are exclusive. Once we conclude his examination of proof, we will treat this in greater detail.

Penelhum rejects the argument that not knowing in the face of proof can only be due to ignorance or pretense. He is arguing that self-deception is also a condition of not knowing in the face of proof. Self-deception, he states, is a:

. . . conflict state: one in which men have a strong motive to believe the opposite of that which the evidence directs them. In so far as they are successful in doing it, they will seem not to know that which the evidence points to; in so far as they have some need to do it, they will give some signs that suggest they know it nevertheless.³⁷

He admits of course the difficulties attached to the concept of self-deception, acknowledging its inherent paradoxical qualities. Nevertheless, he considers it a familiar fact frequent in human life which contradicts the opinion that proof compels assent.

36 Ibid., p. 33.

37 Ibid., p. 34.

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Finally, the third question of ". . . who has to know the truth of the premisses or conclusion for there to be proof." is answered quite readily; the hearer must know. If the hearer does not know the truth of the conclusions, however, it will be due either to irrationality or self-deception.

We turn now to the fourth condition of a successful proof ". . . the conclusions must follow from the premisses."³⁹ Concern is raised under this condition regarding the place of probability arguments within the category of proof. Penelhum suggests that the qualification which will allow such arguments to be classified as proofs alongside deductive proof is the condition that ". . . the premisses render the conclusion overwhelmingly probable."⁴⁰ The rejection of the overwhelmingly probable would once again be either irrational or self-deceptive.

In summary, therefore, a successful indirect proof is understood to consist of true premisses which when stated do not state the conclusion and which are known by the hearer to be true, further, the conclusion must follow deductively or with overwhelming probability and the hearer must know this. A successful indirect proof may also be a reductio ad absurdum

38 Ibid., pp. 35-36.

39 Ibid., p. 37.

40 Ibid., p. 39.

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argument, that is an argument which proves a proposition by manifesting that an affirmation of its contradictory is itself a contradiction, and this is known by the hearer. For a successful indirect proof, however, it is not necessary that the truth of the conclusion be unknown beforehand or that it should be clearly known afterwards. Yet, if it is not clearly known afterwards, this must be on account of irrationality or self-deception on the part of the hearer.

The analysis of the conditions of a successful proof having been completed, Penelhum next addresses himself to the traditional Protestant conviction, expressed by Hick, that the failure to prove God's existence or any proposition about the nature or actions of God from non-theistic premisses is the fundamental starting point of the meritorious, voluntary assent of faith. Penelhum assumes that God's existence has not been proved. He does not assume, however, as does Hick, that it is impossible to prove His existence. He concerns himself with Hick's conviction because many philosophers and theologians have argued, on the basis of this conviction, that the thesis that God's existence is impossible to prove can serve to negate the opposing argument that the de facto failure in evidence for proving the existence of God is a real ground for claiming His actual non-existence. The lack of proof of God's existence, it can be argued is not sufficient evidence for the metaphysical thesis that God does exist; but it is, however, the binding evidence for the epistemological thesis

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(supporting the implicit metaphysical thesis that God does exist) that his existence can only be known through the form of knowledge proper to the assent of faith.⁴¹ Penelhum contends, however, that this argument presupposes the same erroneous conviction about the nature of proof which underlies the Thomistic thesis that faith and knowledge are exclusive.

The unique thesis which Penelhum has developed within the description of the nature of proof is the thesis that proof is not coercive of assent. This he concludes from the observation that men can and do act irrationally or self-deceptively. Based on this principle, therefore, and having understood that Hick's conviction (i.e., that the existence of God cannot be demonstrated because such a demonstration would deny the voluntary, meritorious character of faith) and that Aquinas' conviction (i.e.; that faith and knowledge are exclusive) rest upon the doctrine that there is a necessary connection between the voluntary assent of faith and the non-demonstrability of its object, Penelhum believes himself justified in arguing:

" . . . one doctrine on which both of our two accounts of the nature of religious faith are agreed is mistaken. This is the doctrine that there is some necessary connection between the voluntary character of faith and the non-demonstrability of that which the man of faith believes For proof does not compel assent; so the voluntariness of the

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 48.

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assent involved in faith does not itself show that a man cannot hold on faith something that has been proved to him. Once this is seen, it becomes harder to try to turn the absence of good proofs to God's existence to theological advantage the voluntariness of faith, and any spiritual merit it may show,⁴² would not be put in jeopardy if there were such proofs.

In denying that proof compels assent and in denying the necessary connection between the voluntary character of faith and the non-demonstrability of its object, Penelhum is arguing that whether one has faith or not is independent of whether its object can be demonstrated or not. Faith extends even to the conclusions of proof.

. . . I would argue that the compatibility of faith and knowledge could extend equally to propositions that had been proved from non-theistic premisses, since men could still, even if such proofs existed, refuse to accept them and the knowledge that they had if they did accept them⁴³ would still need to be maintained through faith.

This essentially completes Penelhum's critique of St. Thomas' doctrine of faith as presented in, Problems of Religious Knowledge. His conviction (however incompletely established in its lack of an adequate account of the concept of irrationality and self-deception) that proof does not, as part of its nature, necessitate intellectual assent is the principle upon which he denies that St. Thomas' position

42 Ibid.

43 Ibid., p. 144.

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concerning the relationship between faith and knowledge is accurate.⁴⁴

It is the present writer's conviction that Professor Penelhum has raised a significant question for the philosophy of religion in discussing the intellectual assent involved in proof and in faith. More to our interest, however, is the context within which he has raised it, that is, within an

⁴⁴ In an article entitled, "The Analysis of Faith in St. Thomas Aquinas," published after Problems of Religious Knowledge, Penelhum again argues that faith and knowledge are not necessarily exclusive. "It is probably true that when someone recognizes that the grounds for a proposition are enough to establish it conclusively he cannot not accept it; but he can fend it off through fear or pride or sophistry. Perhaps what makes faith voluntary is not that its grounds are inconclusive, but that even if they are conclusive, men are free to deceive themselves and refuse to admit that they are. Faith would be the outcome of a willingness to admit this, and faith and knowledge need not then be exclusive at all." (Religious Studies, 1977, Vol. XIII, p. 153) In this article, Penelhum argues that there is ". . . an unresolved tension between Aquinas' insistence that the propositions of faith are not established conclusively and his insistence that the assent to those propositions is a rational assent." (Ibid., p. 148) This supposed tension within St. Thomas' doctrine of faith results, Penelhum argues, on the one hand from the apparent fact that St. Thomas considers the rationality of the assent of the believer to the authority of the Scriptures and the Church, which proclaim the articles of faith to reside in the conclusiveness of the evidence which establishes the authority, and on the other hand, from the likewise apparent fact that St. Thomas holds that the meritoriousness of the assent of the believer stems from the inconclusiveness of the evidence. Consequently, if one understands that proof does not compel assent, this tension would be overcome.

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interpretation and critique of St. Thomas Aquinas' doctrine of faith. We believe that the raising of the question in this context encourages a more thorough investigation of St. Thomas' doctrine than is offered by Professor Penelhum in the Problems of Religious Knowledge. As we pointed out, there is evidence of inaccuracy in Professor Penelhum's interpretation of St. Thomas' position due to his reliance upon other sources. Further, the limited textual analysis of St. Thomas' thought does not afford as satisfactory an exposition of his doctrine of faith and its relationship to knowledge as one would like.

Consequently, what in effect we have hoped to do in this chapter is to allow Terrence Penelhum, as a contemporary Canadian philosopher of religion, to set the stage for a detailed investigation of St. Thomas' doctrine of faith as it relates to proof and particularly his understanding of the intellectual assent involved in proof and faith.

To state clearly then the point of our research, this thesis is an exposition of St. Thomas Aquinas' doctrine of faith as it relates to his understanding of demonstrative proof. More specifically, it is an investigation of St. Thomas' understanding of the exclusiveness of the voluntary intellectual assent of faith and the involuntary assent of demonstrative proof and in particular the proofs of the existence of God. Therefore, we will study: (1) St. Thomas' understanding of

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demonstrative proof and the intellectual assent involved; (2) the act of faith and the intellectual assent involved; (3) the exclusiveness of these two assents; (4) the "five ways" and their relation to the theory of demonstration and the doctrine of faith in terms of the inherent intellectual assent involved. In this last part of our thesis, when we examine the proofs of the existence of God themselves, we will only be concerned with seeing more directly how they were understood by St. Thomas to effect necessary assent to God's existence and therefore, in turn, to have a more immediate grasp of how the proofs were perceived by St. Thomas to be exclusive of the voluntary assent of faith.

CHAPTER II

DEMONSTRATIVE PROOF AND THE ASSENT OF THE INTELLECT

In the first chapter, we explored Professor Penelhum's critique of St. Thomas' doctrine of faith and we found that essential to his critique is the conviction that proof does not compel intellectual assent. Concerning this point, we should remember that his critique does not address the proofs of the existence of God as such but rather it questions proof in general. He argues against the more universal position which holds that proof necessitates intellectual assent. Concerning the proofs themselves, he holds on the authority of others that they are not proofs; that is, that the existence of God has not been proven. Similar to Professor Penelhum, our aim in this chapter is to investigate St. Thomas' doctrine of demonstrative proof in general and the intellectual assent involved. With the foreknowledge that St. Thomas held the position that demonstrative proof necessitates intellectual assent, we seek to expose the essential elements of demonstrative reasoning which in fact are responsible for this assent and at the same time to define the act of assent itself.

As St. Thomas developed his understanding of demonstrative proof in large part from Aristotle's Posterior Analytics, a work dedicated to its analysis and the subject of a commentary by St. Thomas, the larger part of this chapter

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will be concerned with St. Thomas' Commentary on the Posterior Analytics.¹

In the Posterior Analytics, "science" has a very restricted and strict meaning and the requirements and conditions for demonstrative proof are discussed in light of this definition. Nevertheless, the Posterior Analytics recognizes a proportionality in types of demonstration though it principally focuses upon the most rigorous type which is called propter quid demonstration. A second type of demonstration is also considered in the text, namely quia demonstration, and this in its proportional relatedness to propter quid demonstration. Consequently, we have the intention to expose the general conditions and characteristics of both kinds of demonstrative proof and at the same time to consider the intellectual assent involved in each. The proportionality acknowledged between these two types of demonstration has presented a difficulty in answering the question of the related intellectual assent involved. Further, insofar as no independent study of the act of assent is discoverable in the text of St. Thomas, as it was not a problem attracting great attention in the thirteenth century, an understanding of intellectual assent both as it relates to demonstrative proof and the act of faith

¹ Trans. by F.R. Larsken, pref. by James A. Weisheipl, Magi Books, Albany, N.Y., 1970.

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depends upon the consideration of various texts more or less dispersed throughout Aquinas' works.² In the course of this chapter and the next, therefore, we will make reference to the more important of these texts in an effort to expose St. Thomas' understanding of the intellectual assent involved in demonstrative proof and the act of faith.

As we indicated, demonstrative proof in the Posterior Analytics is divided into two kinds. Aquinas identifies them as proof propter quid and proof quia. Both proofs have scientific knowledge as their end though the more ". . . proper and perfect manner of knowing scientifically . . ." ³ is propter quid. The Posterior Analytics first considers proof propter quid and secondly proof quia.

² We say "more or less dispersed" for Benoit Garceau, O.M.I. indicates that of the 115 texts containing the term, "assensus," at least 70 of these texts are found in St. Thomas' treatises on Faith, (cf., Judicium: vocabulaire, sources, doctrine de Saint Thomas d'Aquin, Institut d'études médiévales, Montreal Univ., Montreal, 1968, p. 266). Besides Fr. Garceau's text, we are acquainted with two other works which incorporate a discussion of St. Thomas' understanding of intellectual assent and which identify the various texts throughout St. Thomas' work within which the act of assent and its related concepts are considered. We refer to: (L.M. Regis, O.P., Epistemology, Macmillan Co., New York, 1959); (F.M. Tyrell, The Role of Assent in Judgment: A Thomistic Study, Catholic U. Press, Washington, 1948).

³ Aquinas, Commentary on the Posterior Analytics, p. 16.

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In beginning our study, we find this passage in the foreword of Aquinas' Commentary.

Now there are three acts of the reason, the first two of which belong to reason regarded as intellect. One action of the intellect is the understanding of indivisible and uncomplex things, and according to this action it conceives what a thing is The second operation of the intellect is its act of combining or dividing, in which the true or the false are for the first time present the third act of reason is concerned with that which is peculiar to reason, namely, to advance from one thing to another in such a way that through that which is known a man comes to a knowledge of the unknown.⁴

The third act of the reason, i.e. moving from the known to the knowledge of the unknown, is a discursive movement and the work of rational inference⁵ of which the demonstrative proof is its most perfect form. Its more imperfect forms achieve opinion and suspicion. The three forms of inference are respectively distinguished by St. Thomas as follows:

⁴ Ibid. pp. 1-2.

⁵ Following P.F. Strawson, by "inference" we mean the drawing of conclusions from truths already known, "Inferring, drawing conclusions, is different again. Here you know some facts or truths already, and are concerned to see what further information can be derived from them; to find out their logical consequences." (Introduction to Logical Theory, Methuen & Co. Ltd., London, 1952, p. 13.) Whenever the words "proof" or "demonstration" are used by themselves, they mean "demonstrative proof" the meaning of which it is the purpose of the text to clarify.

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For there is one process of reason which induces necessity, where it is not possible to fall short of the truth; and by such a process of reasoning the certainty of science is acquired. Again there is a process of reason in which something true in most cases is concluded but without producing necessity. But the third process . . . fails to reach a truth because some principle which should have been observed in reasoning was defective.⁶

The Posterior Analytics, of course, devotes itself to the analysis of that process of reason which produces necessity and the certainty of science. In other words, it concerns itself with the study of that movement of reason which reaches necessary truth and effects intellectual assent.

Following Aristotle, therefore, St. Thomas holds that we achieve further knowledge or science only through some knowledge which we already possess. This knowledge already possessed within us is that starting point from which demonstration proceeds to a knowledge of what is unknown. This pre-knowledge makes up the principles of demonstration which must possess certain characteristics if necessary truth is to be reached. The unknown which we are seeking to know through demonstration takes the form of some conclusion inferred from the principles.

Considering the conclusion, however, Aquinas explains that even it, in a certain sense, can be considered foreknown.

⁶ Aquinas, Commentary, p. 2.

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For just as effects pre-exist virtually in their efficient causes and not actually, so also conclusions pre-exist virtually though not absolutely in self-evident principles.

. . . there is nothing to prevent a person from somehow knowing and somehow not knowing a fact before he learns it. For it is not a paradox if one somehow already knows what he learns, but it would be if he already knew it in the same way that he knows it when he has learned it. For learning is, properly speaking, the generation of science in someone. But that which is generated was not, prior to its generation, a being absolutely, but somehow a being and somehow non-being; for it was a being in potency although actually non-being. And this is what being generated consists in, namely, in being converted from potency to act . . . it was known in potency, i.e., virtually, in the pre-known universal principle; however, it was not actually known in the sense of specific knowledge. And this is what learning consists in, namely, in being brought from potential or virtual or universal knowledge to specific actual knowledge.⁷

Even the conclusion, therefore, may be considered fore-known insofar as it is virtually known in the principle from which it proceeds though to speak of it as actually foreknown is paradoxical.

Having explained that all knowledge proceeds from some pre-existing knowledge, which is fundamentally the passage of reason from principles known to unknown conclusions inherent

⁷ Ibid., p. 13. We include this passage in light of Penelhum's discussion of proving something to oneself which one already knows and suggest that it is the only way in which the word "know" is not used equivocally or paradoxically, as it appears to be in his usage.

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in the principles, Aquinas proceeds to formulate a definition of demonstrative proof, the most perfect form of this movement. He begins by stating:

. . . in all things which exist for an end, the definition which employs a final cause is both the explanation of the definition which expresses the material cause, and is the middle which proves the latter.⁸

St. Thomas, therefore, offers two definitions of demonstrative proof, one which uses the final cause and another which presents the material cause, and he infers the latter from the first. The one which employs the final cause, simply states: ". . . a demonstration is a sciential syllogism, i.e., producing scientific knowledge."⁹ In terms of its end, therefore, demonstrative proof is a syllogism, producing scientific knowledge as its effect. The nature of scientific knowledge therefore demands articulation. Aquinas therefore tells us what scientific knowing is:

. . . to know something scientifically is to know it completely, which means to apprehend its truth perfectly. For the principles of a thing's being are the same as those of its truth, . . . to know perfectly, [one] must know the cause of the thing known; . . . one who knows scientifically in the full sense must

8 Ibid., p. 14.

9 Ibid., p. 16.

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know the application of the cause to the effect; . . . [and] because science is also sure and certain knowledge of a thing, whereas a thing that could be otherwise cannot be known with certainty, it is further required that what is scientifically known could not be otherwise.¹⁰

Something is known in a scientific manner in the complete sense when it is known fully and entirely, i.e. when its truth is grasped perfectly, when the cause of the thing is known as applied to the thing as to an effect and when it is known that it cannot be other than it is, when it is necessary. This last condition of scientific knowing, i.e. the knowledge that it cannot be otherwise, stamps the character of certain truth and therefore necessary intellectual assent upon scientific knowing which is the effect of demonstrative proof. With reference to the knowledge of the causes, Aquinas explains that this is the "proper and perfect manner" of scientific knowing, nevertheless, he also tells us that ". . . it is possible to know scientifically through an effect . . ."¹¹ This will be discussed when we consider proof quia.

The definition of demonstrative proof having been stated in terms of its end, a definition of demonstration is then set down in terms of its matter:

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 15.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 16.

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. . . it is necessary that demonstrative science, i.e., science acquired through demonstration, proceed from propositions which are true, first and immediate, i.e., not demonstrated by some other middle, but clear in virtue of themselves (they are called 'immediate' inasmuch as they do not have a middle demonstrating them but 'first', in relation to other propositions which are proved through them); and which further are better known than, prior to, and causes of, the conclusion.¹²

The propositions from which demonstration proceeds must be true, that is, they state what is. For Aquinas, truth and being are convertible, that which does not exist is not true and that which is not true does not exist. Thus the principles of a demonstration must state being if they are true. The propositions from which demonstration ultimately proceeds must be first and immediate; they are principles which are not themselves demonstrable. If the premisses of any demonstration are demonstrable, then their demonstration must be known if the conclusion is to be known scientifically. If their demonstration is not known, then they cannot be known as science. Insofar as a process to infinity is impossible in demonstration,¹³ principles immediate and indemonstrable must ultimately be reached. Therefore, the principles of demonstration must be immediate and first in themselves or reducible

¹² Ibid.

¹³ The impossibility of proceeding to infinity in demonstration is proved in Lectures 31 through 35 of Book One of the Commentary on the Posterior Analytics.

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to the immediate and first. Further, the propositions of a demonstration are prior to, the causes of, and better known than the conclusion. The propositions are the causes of the conclusion because scientific knowledge is a knowledge of the causes. The propositions are prior because causes are prior. The propositions are better known because causes by nature are better known.

. . . the propositions of a demonstration are the causes of the conclusion, because we know in a scientific manner when we know the causes . . . they are prior and better known, because every cause is by nature prior and better known than its effect.¹⁴

Here an important distinction is made by St. Thomas regarding that which is better known. That which is by nature more intelligible and better known is not necessarily better known to us, though it may be. He says, therefore:

. . . in every demonstration one must proceed from things better known to us, provided they are not singulars but universals. For something is made known to us only by that which is more known to us. But sometimes that which is more known in reference to us is also more known absolutely and according to nature, as happens in mathematics where on account of abstraction from matter the demonstration proceeds from formal principles alone. In this case, the demonstrations proceed from things which are more known absolutely. But sometimes that which is more known in reference to us is not more known absolutely, as happens in natural sciences where the essences and powers

14 Ibid., p. 18.

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of a thing are hidden, because they are in matter, but are disclosed to us through the things which appear outwardly. Hence, in these sciences the demonstrations are for the most part made through effects which are better known in reference to us but not absolutely. But he is not now speaking of this form of demonstration, but of the first.¹⁵

Here St. Thomas explains that all proof must proceed from that which is better known to us and if it is to proceed from that which is better known absolutely, i.e. the causes, then they also must be better known to us at the same time. He indicates that, in fact, this is the type of demonstration had in mind in the material definition put forth and being discussed at present, which has previously been identified as demonstration propter quid and again he indicates that there is also demonstration from effects which are more knowable to us rather than causes which, though more knowable in themselves, are less knowable to us.

Clarifying further the material definition of demonstration, St. Thomas discusses and identifies "immediate propositions." An immediate proposition is one which is not established by another proposition; that is, it is a proposition which has no middle whereby its predicate is demonstrable of its subject. Aquinas tells us there are three types of immediate principles of a syllogism: (1) The "dignity" or

15 Ibid., p. 19.

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"maxim" is a proposition which everyone must assent to,

. . . for no one can believe the contrary of this in his mind, even though he should state it orally. To such principles we give the aforesaid name of 'dignity' or 'maxim' on account of their certainty in manifesting other things.¹⁶

These are immediate propositions ". . . known in virtue of themselves not only as they stand but also in reference to us."¹⁷ These principles are self-evident to all men and are therefore also called "common" principles. (2) The "position" is a proposition which is known in virtue of itself as it stands though not necessarily in reference to us. That is, though the predicate is contained in the notion of the subject, the definition of the subject is not evident or known by all and thus not necessarily assented to by everyone. These principles are evident to some, i.e. the learned, and are thus called "proper" principles insofar as they are the immediate principles of a particular science and not all sciences and thought as are the "common" principles. (3) The "supposition" is a proposition immediate in one science though demonstrated in another. Immediate principles, therefore, are better known than their conclusions and the falsity of their contraries is most evident precisely due to the certainty of our assent to them.

16 Ibid., p. 21.

17 Ibid.

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. . . we know conclusions and give our assent to them because of the principles. Therefore, we know the principles with more conviction and give them stronger assent than the conclusion.¹⁸

St. Thomas next discusses per se predication and explains that things predicated per se are in a thing necessarily. He explains further that the principles of a demonstration must be necessary because things known scientifically according to definition cannot be otherwise; that is, they are necessary. It therefore follows that if the conclusion of the demonstrative syllogism (scientific) is to be known scientifically, the premisses from which it proceeds must be necessary, i.e. per se premisses.¹⁹ He therefore states:

Herein lies the difference between a demonstration and other syllogisms. For in the latter it is enough if one syllogizes from true principles. Nor is there any other type of syllogism in which it is required to proceed from the necessary; in a demonstration alone must this be observed. An this is proper to demonstration, i.e., to proceed from the necessary.²⁰

18 Ibid., p. 23.

19 The immediate propositions discussed above are of this kind. However, it should be noted that these are not the only type of immediate propositions. Any proposition not proved through a middle is immediate though it may not be necessary. There are such things as immediate contingent propositions, e.g., "The man is not in motion." (cf. Ibid., p. 158) For an excellent discussion of immediate propositions, (cf.; E. Simmons, "Demonstration and Self-evidence," The Thomist, 24, 1961, pp. 139-162.

20 Aquinas, Commentary, p. 44.

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Further, to say that the principles of a demonstration are necessary is to understand that the middle through which the conclusion is reached is necessary and therefore that the conclusion itself is necessary.

. . . since a thing must be necessary it is made known by way of demonstration, it is clear from the foregoing that a demonstration must rest on a necessary middle. For otherwise it would not be scientifically known that the conclusion is necessary, neither propter quid nor quia, since the necessary cannot be known through the non-necessary And this is to be universally understood both of scientific knowledge quia, in which something is known through mediate principles, and of science propter quid, in which something is known through immediate principles.²¹

The unique characteristic of demonstrative proof then is that it proceeds from necessary things for science is a knowledge that cannot be otherwise and this is to be understood as applying both to proof propter quid and proof quia through mediate principles. This passage would seem to imply that only in proof propter quid and in proof quia through mediate principles is there a necessary middle and therefore necessity in the conclusion. We will discuss the significance of this when we consider quia proof as a whole.

Everything thus far discussed has had proof propter quid or proof quia through mediate principles in mind and as of yet proof quia, through effects though mentioned, has not

21. Ibid., pp. 46-47.

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yet been considered. It will be shortly. First, however, St. Thomas makes an important distinction which bears upon the necessity involved in demonstration and is relevant to the discussion of propter quid proof in general. He states:

. . . questions solved by contingent premises are not of such a nature that the conclusion is necessary absolutely; on the basis of the things investigated, i.e., in virtue of the contingent premises, but because it is necessary for one who admits the premises to admit the conclusion and to admit truth in the conclusion, if the things premised are true . . . although a conclusion which is necessary with absolute necessity does not follow from contingent premises, yet it follows with the necessity of consequence according to which the conclusion follows from the premises.²²

In this passage St. Thomas makes the distinction between conclusions which are necessary absolutely and conclusions which are necessary according to the necessity of consequences. Conclusions absolutely necessary presuppose necessary principles or premisses and make it necessary to admit the truth of them absolutely. Conclusions which are necessary through the necessity of consequence, also make it necessary to admit the truth of them though conditioned by the admittance of the premisses which are contingent. In both cases admittance is necessary, though in the first case the principles of necessity are twofold.

22 Ibid., p. 48.

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Having thus established the material characteristics of demonstrative proof in the more perfect sense, namely propter quid, according to the strict definition of scientific knowledge, St. Thomas then considers proof quia. St. Thomas states:

. . . demonstration is a syllogism causing scientific knowledge and proceeds from the causes both first and immediate of a thing. Now this is to be understood as referring to demonstration propter quid. But there is a difference between knowing that a thing is so and why it is so. Therefore, . . . , it is necessary that a demonstration quia which makes one know that a thing is so should differ from the demonstration propter quid which makes one know why.²³

The scientific knowledge resulting from the demonstration propter quid is the sure and certain knowledge of the reason why a thing is so; it is a knowledge through causes. The scientific knowledge resulting from the demonstration quia is the sure and certain knowledge that a thing is so; it is a knowledge of the fact. Aquinas therefore explains in detail:

. . . each of the above is said to differ in regard to the two things required for demonstration in the strict sense - which causes knowledge of the why - namely, that it be from causes and from immediate causes. Hence one way that scientific knowledge quia differs from propter quid is that it is the former if the syllogism is not through immediate principles but through mediate ones. For in that case the first cause will not be employed, whereas science propter quid is according to the first cause; consequently the former will not be science propter quid.

23 Ibid., p. 74.

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It differs in another way, because it is science quia when the syllogism, although not through middles, i.e., mediate, but through immediate things is not through the cause but through 'convertence,' i.e., through effects convertible and immediate. Hence a demonstration of this kind is through the better known, namely to us; otherwise it would not effect scientific knowledge. For we do not reach a knowledge of the unknown except through something better known For sometimes the effect is better known than the cause both in respect to us and according to sense-perception, although absolutely and according to nature the cause is better known. Consequently, through an effect better known than the cause there can be demonstration which does not engender propter quid knowledge but only quia.²⁴

Two kinds of quia demonstration are discussed in the above passages. One is demonstration from convertible effects which are better known to us than the causes. The other kind of demonstration is through mediate causes, that is, not first and proper causes.²⁵ Another kind of quia through effects is also possible, as Aquinas explains later, this is through non-convertible effects.²⁶

24 Ibid., pp. 74-75.

25 Examples given in the text of these two types of quia demonstration are as follows: (1) quia through convertible effects. "Whatever does not twinkle is near; but the planets do not twinkle; therefore, they are near." (Ibid., p. 75); (2) quia through mediate causes - Whatever is not an animal does not breathe; a wall is not an animal; therefore, a wall does not breathe. (Ibid. p. 77)

26 An example given in the text of a quia demonstration through non-convertible effects is as follows: Whatever does not twinkle is near; Venus does not twinkle; therefore, it is near. Here Venus and the not twinkling are not convertible. (Ibid., p. 76)

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A demonstration through a non-convertible effect is quia . . . in those syllogisms in which the middles are not converted with the extremes, and in which an effect rather than a cause is taken as the middle better known in reference to us, even in those cases the demonstration is quia and not, propter quid.²⁷

Thus, in all, three kinds of quia demonstrations are possible:

- (1) through effects convertible; (2) through effects non-convertible; (3) through mediate causes.

Now the question that arises in light of this comparison of the two types of demonstration is the question of the exact scientific status of the quia demonstration. From what we have already said about the nature of scientific demonstration and scientific knowledge, two characteristics above all were seen to be essential to it; first, that it is a knowledge of and through immediate causes, and second, that it involves the necessary and results in necessary knowledge. It is quite clear that neither the quia demonstration through mediate causes nor the quia demonstration through effects satisfies the first condition of scientific demonstration; and it is certain that for this reason it is not considered demonstration in the "proper and perfect manner." The question that remains is whether quia demonstration, particularly quia demonstration through effects, meets the second condition; that is, whether

27 Ibid.

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it is a demonstration resulting in necessary knowledge. We have a certain hesitancy here in light of the passage previously recorded which would seem to imply that the necessity essential to scientific demonstration extends only to quia through mediate causes and not to quia proofs through effects.

Nevertheless, in the Material Logic of John of St. Thomas, the most significant work we have discovered directly discussing this question, we find an affirmation of the scientific status of quia demonstration insofar as it satisfies the second condition, i.e. necessary knowledge.

In addressing the question of necessity in science, John of St. Thomas writes:

Science must deal with a necessary object because the scientific assent to the inferred conclusions must be certain and firm; if it were not, there would not be science but opinion, and rather than an intellectual virtue there would be only an imperfect and weak cognition Now, there cannot be certain and firm assent if the connection is not necessary but contingent, for assent must be firmly established in truth

A certain and evident act relative to a contingent matter is an impossibility both in a priori and in a posteriori science.²⁸

²⁸ John of St. Thomas, The Material Logic, trans. by Y.R. Simon, J.J. Glanville, G.D. Hollenhorst, pref. by Jacques Maritain, Univ. of Chicago Press, Chicago, Illinois, 1955, p. 483. It should be noted that the term a priori science extends to both propter quid demonstration and quia demonstration through mediate causes, and that a posteriori science extends to quia through effects. (cf., Ibid., p. 495)

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Then, in commenting upon the comparative scientific character of quia demonstration having first acknowledged that it does not meet the condition of immediate causes, John of St. Thomas writes:

From another standpoint, it seems that both are demonstrations in a univocal sense, for the demonstration of fact grasps its object with certainty and evidence, and thereby contrasts with opinion - which is uncertain and inevident - in the same way as explanatory science. The demonstration of fact contains the substance and essence of science, since it contains the substance and essence of evidence and certainty, by which it contrasts with opinion and excludes it: Consequently, it is scientific.

The demonstration or science of fact possesses intrinsically and substantially the character of demonstration, for it enjoys certainty and evidence. It is demonstration in an absolutely univocal sense inasmuch as it proceeds according to a formal method of certainty and evidence.²⁹

Further, John of St. Thomas argues that there is necessity in the quia demonstration from effects as well as in the demonstration from the remote cause and significantly his example is taken from St. Thomas' proofs of the existence of God.

A text of St. Thomas (i.2.2) shows that the demonstration of fact is truly and properly a demonstration so far as certainty and evidence are concerned. In this text, St. Thomas proves that there is demonstration of the existence of God, even though we proceed through effects, which are better known to us. The reason for this is clear. The demonstration of fact is based upon a necessary

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connection between effect and cause, or between remote cause and effect; for instance it is proved by a necessary connection that everything which is in process of becoming is caused by something else and that there is not regression to infinity.³⁰

We can see from this that according to John of St. Thomas the necessity involved in the quia demonstration from effects is based upon the necessity present in the relationship between effects and causes. It is because every effect necessarily has a cause that the quia demonstration from effects is able to demonstrate necessarily the existence of the cause.

St. Thomas confirms this when before actually demonstrating the existence of God he answers the question of whether the existence of God can be demonstrated in the following way:

Demonstration can be made in two ways: One is through the cause, and is called a priori, and this is to argue from what is prior absolutely. The other is through the effect, and is called a demonstration a posteriori; this is to argue from what is prior relatively only to us. When an effect is better known to us than its cause, from the effect we proceed to the knowledge of the cause. And from every effect the existence of its proper cause can be demonstrated, so long as its effects are better known to us; because since every effect depends upon its cause, if the effect exists, the cause must pre-exist. Hence the existence of God, in so far as it is not self-evident to us, can be demonstrated from those of His effects which are known to us.³¹

30 Ibid., p. 498:

31 Summa Theologiae, I, q. 2, a. 2.

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In the demonstration quia from effects the intellect proceeds from effects better known to us than the cause and, in fact, it establishes the necessary existence of the cause due to the necessary relationship between any actually existing effect and its proper cause. In this sense, then, we can conclude that demonstration quia from effects meets the conditions of necessity which are essential to science precisely insofar as it manifests the necessary existence of a cause from the existence of an effect.

Fr. Joseph Owens defends the necessary and therefore scientific character of quia demonstration through effects in his article, "The 'Analytics' and Thomistic Metaphysical Procedures." He has in mind the proofs of the existence of God. He discusses the necessary relationship of effect and cause in terms of the necessary connection between qualified and absolute being and links it to the demonstrative process operative in a posteriori proof.

The reasoning follows the necessary phase of being, and the necessary phases only. The same necessary phases continue in rigorous sequence to the conclusion that the finite thing's being depends upon another existent, and ultimately upon an existent whose very nature is to be. There is no possibility at any stage in the reasoning that some finite being may or may not be dependent on another. Dependence on another appears in every link of the reasoning as a thoroughly necessary characteristic of finite being.

From the standpoint of necessary sequence, then, this metaphysical procedure of St. Thomas is strictly demonstrative. It is indeed dealing with an act that is always accidental to finite things as well as

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essential to them. But the reasoning does not at any time use the accidental side as a link. It is grounded throughout its whole process on the necessary features only. In its final conclusion the accidental phase of being has disappeared completely, and the necessary characteristics alone remain in the subsistent act of existing. In a word, the procedure recognizes fully the accidental side of finite being but at no time lets the accidental phase condition any of its links. It arrives at knowledge of a cause, as cause of the effect in question, and shows that the effect could not be otherwise than dependent upon that cause. From this standpoint it satisfies the norms of the Aristotelian Analytics.³²

To sum up Fr. Owens' remarks, we may say that any actually existing finite being has its being necessarily connected to infinite subsistent being as to its cause; (it should be noted that this necessarily implies that the being of the cause is extrinsic to the being of the effect) and it is this necessary connection in being which is the foundation of the necessity present in a posteriori proof. When in our final chapter we consider the proofs of the existence of God themselves, we hope to make evident this necessity involved in a posteriori proof.

Another contemporary philosopher, James Anderson, also discusses the scientific status of quia proof, however, from a different perspective. He writes:

32 Mediaeval Studies, Vol. 26, 1964, p. 96.

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But I would point out that quia proof is properly scientific in that it, too, is a causally decisive knowledge. Note also that quia proof is 'through the cause' even when it moves from effect to cause, since an effect, in knowledge, is the cause of the conclusion reached; the mediating factor in all proof (whether quia or propter quid) is the epistemological cause of the demonstrative effect.³³

Now, as to the question of the relative scientific value of quia and of propter quid proof, let this be said: Quia proof is not less scientific than propter quid proof either in procedure or in certitude. On the contrary, quia proof is, as a demonstrative means, fully scientific; it is fully scientific as a method issuing in certain-knowledge-through-causes.³⁴

Anderson has been influenced by his reading of John of St. Thomas, who, when discussing how one is to understand that in the demonstrative syllogism the principles are as the "causes of the conclusion" writes:

The foregoing is principally a definition of the explanatory demonstration. Yet as already mentioned, it can be adapted to the demonstration of fact, if we understand, by 'causes of the conclusion,' not causes in being, but causes in knowing and relatively to us; such causes can also be effects.³⁵

We must admit that Anderson has shown us an equivocal, or let us rather say an analogical, way in which quia demonstration is scientific demonstration, at least in terms of the condition, "through the causes;" yet he does not satisfactorily

³³ "On Proof in Metaphysics," Essays on Knowledge and Methodology, ed. E. Simmons, Milwaukee, 1965, p. 99.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 100.

³⁵ John of St. Thomas, The Material Logic, p. 476.

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address the question of the univocal scientific status of quia demonstration through effects in terms of the second condition, i.e. "necessary knowledge." It is quite clear, however, that Anderson is convinced that quia proof through effects is as certain a knowledge as propter quid proof.

We would like to turn our attention now to St. Thomas' notion of intellectual assent and its relation to demonstrative proof. It would seem proper for us first to attempt to define intellectual assent in general and then to examine its place within demonstrative proof.

We find St. Thomas describing assent in the following passages from The Disputed Questions on Truth.

. . . we are not said to assent to anything unless we hold it as true. Likewise, one who doubts does not have assent, because he does not hold to one side rather than the other. Thus, also, one who has opinion does not give assent, because his acceptance of the one side is not firm. The Latin word sententia (judgement) as Isaac and Avicenna say, is a clear or very certain comprehension of one member of a contradictory proposition. And assentire (assent) is derived from sententia. Now, one who understands gives assent because he holds with great certainty to one member of a contradictory proposition.³⁶

³⁶ Vol. II, Questions X-XX, trans. by J.V. McGlynn, S.J., Henry Regnery Company, Chicago, Illinois, q. 14, a. 1. In commenting on this text, Benoit Garceau, O.M.I. explains that this description of assent ". . . a clear and very certain comprehension . . ." of a proposition was not, in fact, attributed to sententia by Avicenna, but rather, it was attributed by him to scientia, an attribution which has its origin

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. . . assent properly belongs to the intellect, because it means an absolute adherence to that to which assent is given.³⁷

We can understand from these passages that assent is a clear, certain and definitive determination or adhesion of the intellect to a proposition as true and because of this it is incompatible with doubt and even with opinion both of which it transcends in clarity and certainty.³⁸

This "absolute adherence" of assent is most emphatically and significantly experienced and exemplified in the intellect's grasp of the first principles of thought and discovers in them the clearest and most certain of truths

in the Stoics. It would appear that St. Thomas misread Avicenna's scientia for sententia and attributed to the latter the meaning that the former had for both Avicenna and the Stoics. St. Thomas' misreading, Fr. Garceau indicates, is due in part to the medieval habit of abbreviation of terms and in part to St. Thomas' concern that scientia be clearly distinguished from intellectus, the habit of grasping first principles. (Judicium, pp. 157-159)

37 Aquinas, Truth, q. 14, a. 1, ad. 3.

38 Concluding a comparison of "consent" with "assent" in St. Thomas, Fr. Garceau defines assent in the following way: ". . . assentir, c'est appliquer le mouvement de l'intellect à un énoncé reconnu comme vrai, mais c'est aussi, pour l'intellect spéculatif, proférer sa sentence propre qui ne consiste en rien d'autre qu'à tenir pour vrai un énoncé dont il a reconnu la valeur de vérité." (Judicium, p. 167)

Fr. Garceau goes on to compare assent to the other operations of the mind and shows that it is the final and definitive adherence of the mind to the truth of a proposition and as such presupposes both apprehensio and judicium. (cf., Judicium, pp. 184-188)

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naturally attainable by the human intellect. Thus the paradigm of infallibly evident propositions are the first principles whose clarity of truth necessitates assent. In fact, the evidence of the truths of the first principles is so cogent and effects assent in such a way that the intellect cannot conceive their opposite.

. . . a common conception in the mind does not bear on a reason from without (because it cannot be proved by any argument), but bears on that reason which is in the soul, because it is made known at once by the natural light of reason. That it does not bear on any reason from without is shown by the fact that a syllogism is not formed to prove such common conceptions of the mind. Furthermore, that these are not made known by an outward reason but by the inward he proves by the fact that it is possible to contest an outward reason, either truly or apparently, but it is not always possible to do so with the inward reason. This is so because nothing is so true that it cannot be denied orally. (For even this most evident principle that the same thing cannot be and not be has been orally denied by some). On the other hand, some things are so true that their opposite cannot be conceived by the intellect. Therefore, they cannot be challenged by the inward reason but only by and outward reason which is by the voice. Such are the common conceptions of the mind.³⁹

³⁹ Aquinas, Commentary, pp. 61-62. For an excellent discussion of assent to first principles, (cf., L.M. Regis, Epistemology, Chapter XI).

Professor Penelhum has argued that proof does not compel assent and the ultimate criteria of his argument has consisted in arguing that self-deception is an experience of fact and that self-deception is a: "conflict state: one in which men have a strong motive to believe the opposite of that which the evidence directs them. Insofar as they as they are successful in doing it, they will seem not to know that which the evidence points to. Insofar as they have some need to do it, they will give some signs that suggest they know it nevertheless." (Problems of Religious Knowledge, p. 34)

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Assent in this context is in the strictest sense a determination of the intellect to one member of a contradictory proposition. When we find St. Thomas considering the assent involved in scientific or demonstrative reasoning as compared, on the one hand, to this assent to first principles and on the other to the assent of faith, we discover that the assent in demonstration is directly related to and participates in the assent to principles.

Sometimes, again, the possible intellect is so determined that it adheres to one member without reservation. This happens sometimes because of the intelligible object and sometimes because of the will. Furthermore, the intelligible object sometimes acts mediately, sometimes immediately. It acts immediately when the truth of the proposition is unmistakably clear immediately to the intellect from the intelligible objects themselves. This is the state of one who understands principles, which are known as soon as the terms are known. . . . Here, the very nature of the thing itself immediately determines the intellect to propositions of this sort. The intelligible object acts mediately, however, when the understanding, once it knows the definitions of the terms, is determined to one member of the contradictory proposition in virtue of the first principles. This is the state of one who has science.

Sometimes, however, the understanding can be determined to one side of a contradictory proposition neither immediately through the definitions of the terms, as in the case with principles, nor yet in virtue of principles, as is the case with conclusions from a demonstration. And in this situation our understanding is determined by the will, which chooses

We suggest that St. Thomas' distinction between the "inward" and "outward" reason can profitably serve as a partial clarification on this phenomenon.

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to assent to one side definitely and precisely because of something which is enough to move the will, though not enough to move the understanding, namely, since it seems good or fitting to assent to this side. And this is the state of one who believes. This may happen when someone believes what another says because it seems fitting or useful to do so.⁴⁰

Here, St. Thomas clearly explains to us that not only in the case of the first principles, but also in the case of mediate truths, i.e. discursive thought, the intellect can be determined to one member of a contradiction and adhere to it with complete assurance of its truth. This can happen from two causes: (1) the intelligible object itself, i.e. propositions known as true in virtue of first principles, and (2) the force of the will choosing to assent to a proposition as true. The first situation occurs in relation to conclusions from demonstrative proof and the second occurs in faith. In demonstrative proof the intellect assents to the conclusions in virtue of the intellect's unconditional assent to the first principles. It is by an act of reduction of the conclusion to the evidence of the first principles that the assent to conclusions is effected.

One who has scientific knowledge, however, does use discursive thought and gives assent, but the thought causes the assent, and the assent puts an end to the discursive thought. For by the very act of relating the principles to the conclusions he

⁴⁰ Aquinas, Truth, q. 14, a. 1.

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assents to the conclusions by reducing them to the principles. There, the movement of the one who is thinking is halted and brought to rest. For in scientific knowledge the movement of reason begins from the understanding of principles and ends there after it has gone through the process of reduction. Thus, its assent and discursive thought are not parallel, but the discursive thought leads to assent, and the assent brings thought to rest.⁴¹

Whatever things we know with scientific knowledge properly so called we know by reducing them to first principles which are naturally present to the understanding. In this way, all scientific knowledge terminates in the sight of a thing which is present.⁴²

It is evident from these passages that the assent to the conclusions in demonstrative proof is a necessary assent due to the fact that the conclusions are seen by the intellect to participate in the evidence of the principles. This means that in demonstrative proof, the intellect assents to the conclusions insofar as it sees in the conclusions the same evidence as it sees in the principles. Thus, the intellect is determined to the conclusions of a demonstrative proof just as it is determined to one member of a contradictory proposition by the first principles. We will look at this more closely when we consider the proofs of the existence of God themselves.

41 Ibid.

42 Ibid., q. 14, a. 9.

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We saw above in our analysis of St. Thomas' understanding of demonstrative proof that it is precisely the work of demonstration to render evident to the intellect necessarily true conclusions. When we were discussing demonstrative proof, we discovered that it was divided into two types, propter quid and quia, both of which we concluded resulted in necessary true conclusion, though about different things. Propter quid demonstration, we saw, results in necessarily true conclusions answering the question why a thing was so, that is it proved through the cause. Quia demonstration through effects, we saw, results in necessarily true conclusions answering the question if a thing was so, that is, it proved the existence of a thing through the necessary connection obtaining between the actual existence of some effect and its extrinsic cause. It proves the existence of the cause. Both forms of demonstration, then, we may conclude, involve and effect necessary assent though about different things. Propter quid proof effects necessary assent to the reason why a thing exists and quia proof effects necessary assent to the fact that a thing exists. When, in our last chapter, we investigate the proofs of the existence of God, we will explicitly consider the assent involved in them in light of the understanding of demonstrative proof and intellectual assent given in this chapter.

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In drawing this chapter to a close, then, we remind and impress upon our reader St. Thomas' position that demonstrative proof necessitates intellectual assent to the conclusion. In this chapter we have attempted to explain St. Thomas' notion of proof and to clarify how St. Thomas understood proof to compel assent. We discovered and discussed the two types of proof, i.e. proof propter quid and proof quia and attempted to explain the role of assent in each. We found it more difficult at first to clarify the scientific status of quia proof through effects due to the ambiguity in St. Thomas' text concerning the necessity involved in such proof. Nevertheless, we found significant evidence and argument to support the position that a posteriori proof involves necessity and therefore effects involuntary assent to the conclusion.

CHAPTER III

FAITH AND INTELLECTUAL ASSENT

Having discussed St. Thomas' understanding of demonstrative proof and assent in the previous chapter, we now turn our attention to his doctrine of faith and assent. As St. Thomas presents his doctrine of faith at length in both the Summa Theologiae and De veritate, the Disputed Questions on Truth, these two works will provide the primary source of our analysis of his doctrine of faith. We have, however, chosen to follow the order of analysis found in the Summa which first discusses the object of faith, secondly the act of faith, and thirdly the virtue of faith.¹ Just as our central interest in the analysis of demonstrative proof was to understand and explain the nature of the intellectual assent involved, so here in the analysis of faith our paramount concern is the question of assent.

To begin, St. Thomas explains that the object of faith is God, the First Truth. God, however, though simple in

¹ Summa Theologiae, II-II, q. 1, a. 1. For a comparative study of the two approaches to the question of faith found in De veritate and the Summa, (cf., T.W. Guzie, S.J., "The Act of Faith According to St. Thomas: A Study in Theological Methodology," The Thomist, Vol. 29, pp. 239-280). Relative to our study, Fr. Guzie remarks that ". . . the psychological description of 'thinking' as an act of deliberating, and the psychological definition of 'assent' are new elements found in the Summa and absent from the earlier work De veritate . . ." (cf., Ibid., p. 268).

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Himself is known to us in a complex manner by way of propositions. What is known is known according to the conditions of the knower and the proper condition of human knowing is through propositions.

Accordingly the First Truth which is in itself simple, is the object of faith. But our understanding receives it in its own manner by means of the composition (of judgment). Thus, our understanding, by giving assent as true to the composition which is made in judgment, tends towards first truth as toward its object. Thus, nothing prevents the first truth from being the object of faith, although faith treats of propositions.²

Aquinas does not say that propositions are known but that God is known through them. The simple is known by us through the complexity of a proposition. That in which the act is faith is completed, therefore, is not a proposition but that which is known through it, i.e. God, the First Truth.

Now the act of the believer does not terminate in a proposition, but in a thing. For as in science we do not form propositions, except in order to have knowledge about things through their means, so is it in faith.³

Faith, therefore, is like science in that it finds its end and completion in a knowledge of things themselves. Though it is through propositions that the First Truth is known, what is known is the First Truth itself.

2 Truth, q. 14, a. 8, ad. 5.

3 Summa Theologiae, II-II, q. 1, a. 2, ad. 2.

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Further, there is another sense as well in which faith may be understood to go beyond propositions and this because of the intrinsic role of the will in faith. Faith may be spoken of as going beyond propositions insofar as it involves love and trust in the person of God. When St. Thomas asks, is "the act of faith suitably distinguished as believing God, believing in a God, and believing in God?" his answer reveals this sense of faith.

Now the object of faith can be considered in three ways . . . the object of faith can be considered either on the part of the intellect, or on the part of the will that moves the intellect.

If it be considered on the part of the intellect, then two things can be observed in the object of faith One of these is the material object of faith and in this way an act of faith is to believe in a God The other is the formal aspect of the object, for it is the medium on account of which we assent to such and such a point of faith; and thus an act of faith is to believe God

Thirdly, if the object of faith be considered in so far as the intellect is moved by the will, an act of faith is to believe in God. For the First Truth is referred to the will, through having the aspect of an end.⁴

"To believe in God" means for St. Thomas, primarily because of the activity of the will, to long for, trust and love God as the infinitely good personal being with whom we have a friendship. This involves the entire person, both

⁴ Ibid., q. 2, a. 2.

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intellect and will, and completes one's entire life and purpose for being. It is in light of the will that the First Truth becomes an end for man and the object of love. It is in this love of God that one may properly speak of faith as going beyond mere assent to statements about God.⁵ Later in this chapter, we will have occasion to look more thoroughly at the function of the will in faith and we are confident that this sense of faith spoken of here will be more readily appreciated.

Just as it is a proper condition of human knowing to know through propositions, so also is it proper to human knowledge to reason and think. In the Summa Theologiae, St. Thomas begins his discussion of the role of thought and reason in faith by commenting upon St. Augustine's well-known definition

⁵ In another passage of the Summa found later in the questions on faith, St. Thomas describes for us a manner in which the act of faith should be understood not to terminate in a proposition but rather in a person. ". . . whoever believes, assents to someone's words; so that, in every form of belief, the person to whose words assent is given seems to hold the chief place and to be the end as it were; while the things by holding which one assents to that person hold a secondary place. Consequently, he that holds the Christian faith aright, assents, by his will, to Christ, in those things which truly belong to His doctrine." (Summa Theologiae, II-II, q. 11, a. 1)

Josef Pieper refers to this as the "personal element" in faith and offers a significant and valuable discussion of it in chapter two of his work entitled, (Belief and Faith, trans. by Richard Winston and Clara Winston, Henry Regnery Company, Chicago, Illinois, 1963). We recommend also: (James A. Mohler, S.J., The Beginning of Eternal Life, Philosophical Library Inc., New York, 1968, pp. 80-81), on the subject of the personal dimension of faith in St. Thomas.

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of faith given in his work, De Praedestinatione Sanctorum.⁶ Here St. Augustine tells us that to believe is ". . . to think with assent . . .," ". . . cum assensione cogitare."⁷ In this definition, St. Thomas first addresses himself to the meaning of cogitare.

"To think" can be understood in three ways explains Aquinas: (1) in the most general sense, as any actual consideration of the mind; (2) more specifically, as the consideration of the intellect with inquiry and deliberation about universals preceding the arrival at the certitude of sight; (3) as the consideration of particulars performed by the cogitative power or the sensitive faculty.⁸

Given this tripartite division, ". . . to think with assent. . ." properly expresses the meaning of "to believe" if "to think" is understood in the second sense, that is, as the consideration of the intellect with inquiry and deliberation about universals preceding the certitude of sight.

6 Summa Theologiae, II-II, q. 2, a. 1; Truth, q. 14, a. 1.

7 De Praedestinatione Sanctorum, II, Patrologiae cursus completus, Series Latina, 44:963, ed. J.P. Migne, Paris, 1844-55.

8 Summa Theologiae, II-II, q. 2, a. 1.

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If, on the other hand, to think be understood in the second way, then this expresses completely the nature of the act of believing. For among the acts belonging to the intellect, some have a firm assent without any such kind of thinking, as when a man considers the things that he knows by science, or understands, for this consideration is already formed. But some acts of the intellect have unformed thought devoid of a firm assent, whether they incline to neither side, as in one who doubts: or incline to one side rather than the other, but on account of some slight motive, as in one who suspects; or incline to one side yet with fear of the other, as in one who opines. But this act to believe, cleaves firmly to one side, in which respect belief has something in common with science and understanding; yet its knowledge does not attain the perfection of clear sight, wherein it agrees with doubt, suspicion and opinion. Hence it is proper to the believer to think with assent: so that the act of believing is distinguished from all other acts of the intellect, which are about the true or the false.⁹

St. Thomas, in this passage, has identified six different acts of the intellect in clarifying the uniqueness of the act of faith. These are: to understand, to have science, to doubt, to suspect, to opine and to believe. Science and understanding have firm assent without involving the kind of thinking understood as "unformed thought." Doubt, suspicion, and opinion consist of "unformed thought" yet do not enjoy firm assent. Faith alone consists of the union of "unformed thought" and "firm assent."¹⁰

9 Ibid.

10 Josef Pieper offers an explanation of cogitare which we find applicable here as an aid in clarifying the significance of "unformed thought." "It is therefore vital to see just what

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In question fourteen on faith in De veritate, St. Thomas enlightens us further about the relation of thinking and assent to be found in faith. He does this by way of comparison to the thinking and assent characterizing the sciences.

One who has scientific knowledge, however, does use discursive thought and gives assent but the thought causes the assent, and the assent puts an end to the discursive thought. For by the very act of relating the principles to the conclusions he assents to the conclusions by reducing them to the principles. There, the movement of the one who is thinking is halted and brought to rest. For in scientific knowledge the movement of reason begins from the understanding principles and ends there after it has gone through the process of reduction. Thus, its assent and discursive thought are not parallel, but the discursive thought leads to assent, and assent brings thought to rest.¹¹

One who has faith, on the other hand, employs discursive thought and assents to one member of a contradictory proposition, yet the cause of the assent is not the thought nor does the assent put the thought to rest.

is meant here by cogitare and cogitatio. What is meant is searching investigation, probing consideration, conferring with oneself before deciding, being on the track of, a mental reaching out for something not yet finally found. All of these processes, taken together, may be subsumed within the term 'mental unrest.'

It is therefore the linking of final assent with a residual cogitatio, that is, the association of rest and unrest, which distinctively characterizes the believer." (Belief and Faith, pp. 45-46)

¹¹ Truth, q. 14, a. 1.

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But, in faith, the assent and the discursive thought are more or less parallel. For the assent is not caused by the thought, but by the will; as has just been said. However, since the understanding does not in this way have its action terminated at one thing so that it is conducted to its proper term, which is the sight of some intelligible object, it follows that its movement is not yet brought to rest. Rather, it still thinks discursively and inquires about the things which it believes, even though its assent to them is unwavering. For, insofar as it depends on itself alone, the understanding is not satisfied and is not limited to one thing; instead, its action is terminated only from without Due to this, also, a movement directly opposite to what the believer holds most firmly can arise in him, although this cannot happen to one who understands or has scientific knowledge.¹²

We might, by contrast to this parallel relationship between discursive thought and assent found in faith, describe the relationship between thought and assent in science as a perpendicular relationship where the line of thought itself ends in assent.

In faith, discursive thought or thinking does not come to rest in the certitude of sight or evidence as in science, therefore, it is characterized as "unformed thought," i.e. unterminated thinking. It does, however, "reach the certitude of assent through the efficacy of the will."¹³ St. Thomas

¹² Ibid.

¹³ It is important to note that the assent of faith as such does not terminate thinking concerning matters of and related to faith. Such a termination of the discursive process about any matter of faith is an act of the will in the order of the simple employment of the intellect, independent of the assent of faith.

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further explains that in terms of the certitude of the act of assent itself in faith, it may even be described as more certain than the assent of science, yet in terms of the evidence less certain.

Certitude can mean two things. The first is firmness of adherence, and with reference to this, faith is more certain than any understanding (of principles) and scientific knowledge. . . . The second is the evidence of that to which assent is given. Here, faith does not have certainty, but scientific knowledge and understanding do.¹⁴

We turn our attention now more directly to the consideration of the assent involved in faith. First, we reiterate the definition of assent given in the previous chapter. We are not said to have assented to anything unless it is held as true. ". . . assent properly belongs to the intellect, because it means an absolute adherence to that to which assent is given."¹⁵ Firm assent is intrinsic to the act of faith and separates it from doubt, suspicion, and opinion which do not incorporate assent, for in these acts there is not absolute adherence to one member of a contradictory proposition as in faith. However, it is like understanding and knowledge because of its firm assent but different from them also in terms of the cause of assent.

¹⁴ Truth, q. 14, a. 1, ad. 7.

¹⁵ Ibid., ad. 3.

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In common with understanding and knowledge it [faith] possesses certain and fixed assent; and in this it differs from opinion, which accepts one of two opposites, though with fear that the other may be true and on account of this doubt it fluctuates between contraries.¹⁶

We said that faith differs from understanding and science in terms of the cause of the firm assent. This distinction in the cause is a distinction between the seen and the unseen or between the intelligible object and the will. The intellect assents to propositions in two distinct manners, namely as seen and as unseen. The intellect can be moved to assent by an object such as the first principles of the understanding or the conclusions of demonstrative knowledge; or the intellect can be moved to assent through choice, that is, by the will. The first way, through the object, is vision. The latter, through the influence of the will, is as unseen. The seen is that which by itself moves the senses or the intellect to knowledge, i.e. assent independent of the will.

Faith implies assent of the intellect to that which is believed. Now the intellect assents to a thing in two ways. First, through being moved to assent by its very object, which is known either by itself (as in the case of first principles, which are held by the habit of understanding), or through

¹⁶ St. Thomas Aquinas, The Trinity and The Unicity of The Intellect, (Commentary on De Trinitate), trans. by Sr. Rose Brennan, S.H.N., B. Herder Book Co., St. Louis, MO, 1946, q. 3, a. 1.

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something else already known (as in the case of conclusions which are held by the habit of science). Secondly, the intellect assents to something not through being sufficiently moved to the assent by its proper object, but through an act of choice, whereby it turns voluntarily to one side rather than to the other; and if this be accompanied by doubt and fear of the opposite side, there will be opinion, while, if there be certainty and no fear of the other side, there will be faith.

Now those things are said to be seen which, of themselves, move the intellect or the senses to knowledge of them. Wherefore it is evident that neither faith nor opinion can be of things seen either by the senses or by the intellect.¹⁷

In faith, consequently, the intellect is moved to assent by the will; and it is the will which causes the assent and not vision or evidence, i.e. the sensible object, the intellectual object, or discursive thought as in understanding and science.

We find the same point made in a more comprehensive manner in De veritate. We restate here an important passage quoted earlier.

Sometimes, again, the possible intellect is so determined that it adheres to one member without reservation. This happens sometimes because of the intelligible object and sometimes because of the will. Furthermore, the intelligible object sometimes acts immediately, sometimes immediately. It acts immediately when the truth of the proposition is unmistakably clear immediately to the intellect from the intelligible objects themselves. This is the state of one who understands principles, which are known as soon as the terms are known, as the Philosopher says. Here, the very nature of the thing itself immediately determines the

¹⁷ Summa Theologiae, II-II, q. 1, a. 4.

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intellect to propositions of this sort. The intelligible object acts mediately, however, when the understanding, once it knows the definitions of the terms, is determined to one member of the contradictory proposition in virtue of first principles. This is the state of one who has science.

Sometimes, however, the understanding can be determined to one side of a contradictory proposition neither immediately through the definitions of the terms, as is the case with principles, nor yet in virtue of principles, as is the case with conclusions from a demonstration. And in this situation our understanding is determined by the will which chooses to assent to one side definitely and precisely because of something which is enough to move the will, though not enough to move the understanding, namely, since it seems good or fitting to assent to this side. And this is the state of one who believes.¹⁸

In light of these reflections, St. Thomas is able to formulate a quintessential description of the act of faith. The act of faith, he concludes, is ". . . an act of the intellect determinate to one object by the will's command."¹⁹

Having established that the will is the cause of the firm adherence or assent of the intellect to one side of a contradictory proposition, which is the act of faith, we must examine in detail the way in which the will causes this assent of the intellect. To do this, we must first understand adequately how faith is said to reside in the intellect, though the cause of its assent is the will.

¹⁸ Truth, q. 14, a. 1.

¹⁹ Summa Theologiae, II-II, q. 4, a. 1.

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First, faith is said to reside in the intellect because the object of faith is the First Truth and truth is the proper object of the intellect.

Now, to believe is immediately an act of the intellect, because the object of that act is the true, which pertains properly to the intellect. Consequently, faith which is the proper principle of that act, must needs reside in the intellect.²⁰

Further, it is evident that faith resides in the speculative intellect and not the practical intellect, even though the will is involved, for the object of faith is uncreated truth and not a truth which can be made.

But, to be practical, the understanding must be the proximate rule of action, as that by which one studies the thing to be done, the methods of operation, and the causes of work. It is evident, however, that the object of faith is not a truth which can be produced, but the uncreated truth, which can be an object only of speculative understanding. Consequently, faith is in the speculative understanding, although it is the remote occasion of doing something.²¹

But because the act of faith as such proceeds from both the will and the intellect, ". . . it [faith] is not in the speculative understanding absolutely, but only insofar as it is subject to the will."²² The one act of faith belongs principally to the intellect which is its proximate subject as

20 Ibid., a. 2.

21 Truth, q. 14, a. 4.

22 Ibid.

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its object is the First Truth, but it does not belong absolutely to the intellect as the assent is dependent on the influence of the will which is the productive principle of the assent of faith.

Faith, therefore, has a twofold principle: (1) the intellect and its object, i.e. truth, and (2) the will and its object, i.e. the good.

For the state of the believer, as has been said above, is such that the intellect is determined to something through the will, and the will does nothing except in so far as it is moved by its object, which is the good to be sought for and its end. In view of this, faith needs a twofold principle, a first which is the good that moved the will, and a second which is that to which the understanding gives assent under the influence of the will.²³

Aquinas explains that man has a twofold final good, the first, natural, i.e. proportionate to his nature and the second, transcending nature, i.e. not in proportion to man's nature but beyond it. It is on account of this latter good that the will moves the intellect to believe. The natural good consists in contemplative wisdom and moral virtue, i.e. prudence. The transcendent good consists in eternal life.

Man, however, has a twofold final good, which first moves the will as a final end. The first of these is proportionate to human nature since natural powers are capable of attaining it. This is the happiness

²³ Ibid., a. 2.

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about which the philosopher speaks, either as contemplative, which consists in the act of wisdom, or active, which consists first of all in the act of prudence, and in the act of the other moral virtues as they depend on prudence.

The other is the good which is out of all proportion with man's nature because his natural powers are not enough to attain to it either in thought or desire. It is promised to many only through the divine liberality; 'The eye hath not seen . . .' (1Cor. 2:9). This is life everlasting. It is because of this good that the will is inclined to give assent to those things which it holds by faith.²⁴

The will, therefore, presents to the intellect as worthy of assent that which is not evident to the understanding naturally, i.e. that which does not effect assent involuntarily and necessarily, and therefore determines the intellect's assent to it. It determines the intellect to assent insofar as it apprehends in this truth a supreme good for man, and it is the will's appetite for this supreme good which is the initial productive principle of the intellect's assent. Further, truth as truth is itself a good for the intellect and the will apprehends truth as such as a good for the intellect and therefore worthy of assent.

But the will, under the movement of this good, proposes as worthy of assent something which is not evident to the natural understanding. In this way it gives the understanding a determination to that which is not evident, the determination, namely, to assent to it. Therefore, just as the intelligible

²⁴ Ibid.

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thing which is seen by the understanding determines the understanding, and for this reason is said to be conclusive evidence (arguere) to the mind; so also, something which is not evident to the understanding determines it and convinces (arguere) the mind because the will has accepted it as something to which assent should be given.²⁵

The will, in light of the promised good of eternal life, moves the intellect to assent. However, because the promised good of eternal life is an end beyond the attainment of the will naturally, even though it has an inclination toward it, it must be aided by God with grace.

. . . since man, by assenting to matters of faith, is raised above his nature, this must needs accrue to him from some supernatural principle moving him inwardly; and this is God. Therefore faith, as regards the assent which is the chief act of faith, is from God moving man inwardly by grace.²⁶

To believe does indeed depend on the will of the believer: but man's will needs to be prepared by God with grace, in order that he may be raised to things which are above his nature . . .²⁷

We have now looked at both the object of faith and the act of faith. The definition at the heart of St. Thomas' description of the act of faith as we saw was St. Augustine's, "cum assensione cogitare." To complete his understanding of faith, St. Thomas discusses the habit or virtue of faith; and

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Summa Theologiae, II-II, q. 6, a. 1.

²⁷ Ibid., ad. 3.

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just as St. Augustine's definition of faith offered a starting point for the analysis of the act of faith, so here St. Paul's famous definition of faith given in the letter to the Hebrews becomes the starting point of his analysis of the virtue of faith and the foundation of his own complete and final definition of faith.

The definition of faith given in the letter to the Hebrews reads: "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things that appear not."²⁸ St. Thomas argues that this is a complete definition of faith even though it is not presented in the finished form of a definition. He then states:

In order to make this clear, we must observe that since habits are known by their acts, and acts by their objects, faith, being a habit, should be defined by its proper act in relation to its proper object.²⁹

Thus, it is in the light of all that we have already seen that St. Thomas shows St. Paul's definition of faith to be a fitting and complete definition. We saw that the proper act of faith involves both the will and the intellect. It involves the intellect because its proper object is the First Truth; it involves the will, first because the First Truth is

²⁸ Ibid., q. 4, a. 1. Here St. Thomas quotes from the Vulgate, Heb. 11:1, "Fides est substantia sperandarum rerum, argumentum non apparentum."

²⁹ Summa Theologiae, II-II, q. 4, a. 1.

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itself the Supreme Good of eternal life³⁰ and secondly because the First Truth is unseen.

In terms of the will and its object, then, the Supreme Good as unseen and unpossessed, faith is properly spoken of as ". . . the substance of things to be hoped for."

For we are wont to call by the name of substance, the first beginning of a thing, especially when the whole subsequent thing is virtually contained in the first beginning; In this way then faith is said to be the substance of things to be hoped for, for the reason that in us the first beginning of things to be hoped for is brought about by the assent of faith, which contains virtually all things to be hoped for. Because we hope to be made happy through seeing the unveiled truth to which our faith cleaves,³¹

In terms of the intellect and its object, faith is properly spoken of as ". . . the evidence of things that appear not."

The relationship of the act of faith to the object of the intellect, considered as the object of faith, is indicated by the words, evidence of things that appear not, where evidence is taken for the result of evidence. For evidence induces the

³⁰ ". . . for man to be ordained to the good which is eternal life, there must be some initial participation of it in him to whom it is promised. However, eternal life consists in the full knowledge of God, as is clear from John (17:3): 'Now this is eternal life'. Consequently, we must have within us some initial participation of this supernatural knowledge. We have it through faith, which by reason of an infused light holds those things which are beyond our natural knowledge." (Truth, q. 14. a. 2)

³¹ Summa Theologiae, II-II, q. 4, a. 1.

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intellect to adhere to a truth, wherefore the firm adhesion of the intellect to the non-apparent truth of faith is called evidence here.³²

We have here in St. Paul's description of faith, therefore, a complete definition of faith which when put in the proper form of a definition by St. Thomas reads as follows: ". . . faith is a habit of the mind, whereby eternal life is begun in us, making the intellect assent to what is non-apparent."³³ Then in demonstrating the complete satisfactoriness of this definition, St. Thomas explains how this definition distinguishes faith from all other acts and habits pertaining to the intellect.

For when we describe it as evidence we distinguish it from opinion, suspicion and doubt, which do not make the intellect adhere to anything firmly; when we go on to say, of things that appear not, we distinguish it from science and understanding, the objects of which is something apparent; and when we say that it is the substance of things to be hoped for, we distinguish the virtue of faith from faith commonly so called, which has no reference to the beatitude we hope for.³⁴

32 Ibid. For a more extensive commentary by St. Thomas on St. Paul's text, (cf., Super Epistolas S. Pauli Lectura, Ad Hebraeos, Vol. II, Caput XI, Lectio I., Cura P. Raphaelis cai, O.P., Marietti, Tourini Romae, 1953). This commentary, in fact, is something of a summary of the whole of St. Thomas' doctrine on faith.

33 Summa Theologiae, II-II, q. 4, a. 1.

34 Ibid.

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Having reached a complete definition of faith in light of St. Paul's definition, St. Thomas develops the analysis of faith specifically insofar as it is a virtue. Insofar as faith is said to be a virtue, i.e. a perfection, St. Thomas describes what is presupposed if this habit is to be perfect and in what its perfection specifically consists. He tells us therefore:

. . . to believe is an act of the intellect, inasmuch as the will moves it to assent. And this act proceeds from the will and the intellect, both of which have a natural aptitude to be perfected in this way. Consequently, if the act of faith is to be perfect, there needs to be a habit in the will as well as in the intellect. . . .³⁵

Not only does the will need to be ready to obey, but also the intellect needs to be well disposed to follow the command of the will, . . .; hence there needs to be a habit of virtue not only in the commanding will but also in the assenting intellect.³⁶

If the act is to be perfect, therefore, both the will and intellect must possess the disposition to act well and the actual perfection of the act of faith consists in the intellect and the will acting infallibly towards their respective object and end, namely the First Truth and the Supreme Good. This habit is what Aquinas calls "living faith," that is faith formed by charity. And it is precisely living faith which is the virtue of faith.

³⁵ Ibid., a. 2.

³⁶ Ibid., ad. 2.

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. . . hence, any habit that is always the principle of a good act, may be called a human virtue. Such a habit is living faith. For since to believe is an act of the intellect assenting to the truth at the command of the will, two things are required that this act may be perfect: one of which is that the intellect should infallibly tend to its object, which is the true; while the other is that the will should be infallibly directed to the last end, on account of which it assents to the true: and both of these are found in the act of living faith. For it belongs to the very essence of faith that the intellect should ever tend to the true, since nothing false can be the object of faith, as proved above (Q. 1, A. 3): while the effect of charity, which is the form of faith, is that the soul ever has its will directed to a good end. Therefore living faith is a virtue.

On the other hand, lifeless faith is not a virtue, because, though the act of lifeless faith is duly perfect on the part of the intellect, it has not its due perfection as regards the will:37

Charity, then, is the form of faith, living faith, and the principle of its perfection, that is, it is the principle of its being a virtue in the proper sense. Dead faith on the other hand is not a virtue, for the will is not perfected in the disinterested love which is charity.³⁸

37 Ibid., a. 5.

38 "Therefore charity is friendship . . . not every love has the character of friendship, but that love which is together with benevolence, when to wit, we love someone so as to wish good to him. If, however, we do not wish good to what we love, but wish its good for ourselves . . . it is love not of friendship, but of a kind of concupiscence." (Ibid., q. 23, a. 1)

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. . . voluntary acts take their species from their end which is the will's object. Now that which gives a thing its species, is after the manner of a form in natural things. Wherefore the form of any voluntary act is, in a manner, the end to which that act is directed, both because it takes its species therefrom, and because the mode of an action should correspond proportionately to the end. Now it is evident from what has been said, that the act of faith is directed to the object of the will, i.e., the good, as its end; and this good which is the end of faith, viz., the Divine Good, is the proper object of charity. Therefore charity is called the form of faith in so far as the act of faith is perfected and formed by charity.³⁹

Further, charity is not only the cause of the perfection of faith, but it is also the real cause of its meritoriousness. The fact that faith is voluntary is the first condition of its meritoriousness for nothing can be meritorious but the voluntary, but the specific and actual cause of its meritoriousness is that it has been formed by charity. The beginning of faith or non-living unformed faith, then, which is an initial assent by the will's ordination to the promised good of eternal life is an exclusively self-interested act on the part of the will and even though aided by God, is not in itself meritorious. Only habits proceeding from charity are meritorious.

But, with reference to its end, faith is perfected in the affections, because it is by reason of charity that it can merit its end. The beginning of faith, too is in the affections, insofar as the will

39 Ibid., q. 4, a. 3.

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determines the intellect to assent to matter of faith. But that act of the will is an act neither of charity or hope, but of the appetite seeking a promised good.⁴⁰

or again,

A virtue is said to be formed in so far as it is able to elicit a meritorious act. But no act can be meritorious and acceptable to God unless it proceeds from love. Therefore, charity is the form of all the virtues.⁴¹

The fact that charity is the principle of merit of any voluntary act allows St. Thomas to argue that even the intellectual act of the scientist can in one respect be meritorious, that is, in the order of the employment of the intellect in the simple consideration of scientific things.

Two things may be considered in science; namely, the scientist's assent to a scientific fact, and his consideration of that fact. Now the assent of science is not subject to free will, because the scientist is obliged to assent by the force of the demonstration, wherefore scientific assent is not meritorious. But the actual consideration of what a man knows scientifically is subject to his free-will, for it is in his power to consider or not to consider. Hence scientific consideration may be meritorious if it be referred to the end of charity, i.e. to the honor of God or the good of our neighbor. On the other hand, in the case of faith, both these things are subject to the free-will so that in both respects the act of faith can be meritorious: . . .⁴²

40 Truth, q. 14, a. 2, ad. 10.

41 Ibid., a. 5, Sed contra 3'.

42 Summa Theologiae, II-II, q. 2, a. 9, ad. 2.

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What is more, for those who have charity, there is a way in which the merit of faith is not diminished even in those cases of scientific assent where truths about God are known through demonstrations. For St. Thomas argues that charity so disposes the will that such truths would have been readily accepted on faith had they not been known through demonstrations and this is sufficient for the merit to be maintained though the act of faith itself is diminished.

. . . though demonstrative reasons in support of the preambles of faith, but not of the articles of faith, diminish the measure of faith, since they make the thing believed to be seen, yet they do not diminish the measure of charity, which makes the will ready to believe them, even if they were unseen; and so the measure of merit is not diminished.⁴³

Here, we see just how important it is for anyone wishing to understand the relationship of merit and faith in St. Thomas' doctrine to understand that in his mind charity alone is the principle of merit within faith and not simply the fact that it is voluntary.

Now, before we end our analysis, there are a few final though significant remarks we must make in regard to the

⁴³ Ibid., a, 10, ad. 2. It is our critique that throughout Professor Penelhum's analysis of St. Thomas' doctrine of faith, in his articles as well as in his book, St. Thomas' strict attribution of merit to charity is never really appreciated, nor does it seem to have been appreciated by Professor Hick.

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distinction mentioned above by St. Thomas in reference to science. In this passage, St. Thomas states quite clearly that even though scientific assent is necessary, scientific consideration as such is not.⁴⁴ We believe that it is only within an acknowledgement of this liberty of scientific consideration can the difficulties raised by Professor Penelhum concerning dissent in the face of proof be resolved without paradox and contradiction.

When John of St. Thomas comments on this liberty of scientific consideration in relation to the necessity of scientific assent, he writes:

When the intellect is confronted by evident premises, it is directly necessitated, in exercise, to assent to the conclusion. Yet, such assent can be indirectly prevented by the will inasmuch as the intellect is not necessitated to give attention to the premises and to think of them.⁴⁵

the will can indirectly prevent assent to a conclusion inasmuch as it can turn attention of the intellect away from the premises, likewise, in the presence of a clearly visible object, it is possible to turn the eyes away or to shut them. If assent to the premises is delayed or withheld or if no thought is given to the inferential power of their disposition, illumination of the conclusion does not follow.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ As a further elaboration of this distinction, (cf., I-II, q. 17, a. 6).

⁴⁵ John of St. Thomas, Material Logic, p. 455.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 457.

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If the notion of self-deception is to make any sense, it must be explained in terms of the liberty of scientific consideration, that is, within an understanding of the fact that the intellect is at all times under the command of the will as to its simple employment or not. We can always suspend the simple consideration of a thing. However, when once the intellect is employed, it falls under the command of the intelligible object, and if this be evidently true, the intellect must assent.

We are now ready to conclude our analysis of St. Thomas' doctrine of the nature of faith. Recalling that the primary intention of this chapter was to identify the specific character of the intellectual assent involved in faith, we found that this assent is most properly identified as a voluntary yet fixed assent, i.e. a voluntary determination of the intellect to ~~one~~ member of a contradictory proposition. For as St. Thomas explains, the intellect assents to a proposition as true in the act of faith only under the command of the will. The reason being that the object of faith, i.e. the First Truth, is unseen. The assent of faith is like the assent of science and understanding in terms of its firm adherence to the truth of one member of a contradictory proposition, but it is unlike science and understanding in terms of the productive cause of the assent. In understanding and science, the productive cause is the seen intelligible object itself and the discursive thought which renders a mediated intelligible

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object visible to the intellect. In faith, the productive cause of the assent is the will's appetite for the proposed good presented in the truths of faith and not the seen intelligible object itself as known immediately as in understanding or mediately through discursive thought as in science.

We have left for ourselves the more complete and explicit task of comparing the necessary involuntary assent involved in demonstrative proof to the voluntary assent of the act of faith for our next chapter. That is, in Chapter IV, we will explicitly consider St. Thomas' position concerning the exclusiveness of demonstrative proof and faith. As this further examination inevitably involves consideration of the praeambula fidei, part of Chapter IV will be devoted to an appreciation of them insofar as they are related to the problem discussed in Chapter I concerning their relationship to the reasonableness of faith's voluntary assent.

CHAPTER IV

THE EXCLUSIVENESS OF FAITH AND KNOWLEDGE

In the way of a conclusion of Chapters II and III, here in this section we will more explicitly discuss the exclusiveness of faith and knowledge within St. Thomas' doctrine of faith.¹ We do this, of course, in light of what we have already discovered from our study of St. Thomas' understanding of the nature of the intellectual assent involved in demonstrative proof and the intellectual assent involved in faith. We will also discuss the relationship of the praeambula fidei to the articles of faith and to the rationality of the believer's assent to such articles as these are subsidiary questions within the overall context of the exclusiveness of faith and knowledge.

First, it will be necessary to review what we have learned about St. Thomas' understanding of the nature of demonstrative proof and the act of faith and the intellectual assent involved in each.

We said that St. Thomas understood demonstration to be, as he called it, a "sciential syllogism;" that is, a syllogism

1 For an historical reconstruction of the origins of this question as it finds its resolution in St. Thomas' doctrine which shows that St. Thomas' position is directly related to and a logical consequence of his acceptance of Aristotle's notion of science, cf., Martinus Grabmann, "De quaestione 'utrum aliquid possit esse simul creditum et scitum' inter scholas Augustinismi et Aristotelico - Thomismi medi aevi agitata," in Acta Hebdomadae Augustianae - Thomisticae, Marietti, Taurini Romae, 1931, pp. 110-139.

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which produces scientific knowledge. We explained that scientific knowledge was a full and perfect knowledge of a thing and that a thing was known fully and completely when its truth was grasped perfectly in a sure and certain manner. A perfect grasp of a thing, we said, meant a knowledge of the causes of a thing. We said further that a sure and certain grasp of a thing consisted in the knowledge that a thing could not be other than it is, i.e. that it was necessary. We saw St. Thomas state that it was precisely in this necessity that the principal difference between the sciential syllogism and all other syllogisms consisted. Only in the demonstrative syllogism does the intellect see that the truth of the conclusion cannot be otherwise and, therefore, that it is necessarily true necessitating assent resulting in a sure and certain knowledge. When we considered St. Thomas' definition of assent, we saw that it meant a determination of the intellect to one side of a contradictory proposition and that the paradigm of such a determination of the intellect was found in the intellect's assent to first principles. For we saw St. Thomas argue that in the case of first principles, their opposite could not even be thought by the intellect. St. Thomas argued further that conclusions seen by the intellect to ultimately participate in the necessary truth of such principles (as they do in demonstration) were themselves recognized by the intellect to necessitate assent. This entire work of demonstration we characterized as

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the perpendicular relationship between discursive thought and assent. We discovered, however, that demonstrative proof was divisible into two distinct types, propter quid and quia, and that the latter was further divisible into proof through mediate causes and proof from effects. Propter quid and quia through mediate causes we identified as a priori reasoning. We saw that a priori proof was directly spoken of by St. Thomas as involving necessity though a posteriori proof was not spoken of directly in this way. Nevertheless, on the basis of St. Thomas' remarks concerning the possibility of demonstrating the existence of God, and from the exegesis of a posteriori proof found in John of St. Thomas' Material Logic as well as Fr. Owens' evaluation of the scientific status of a posteriori proof, we concluded that quia proof through effects involved necessity and therefore resulted in necessary assent.

On the part of faith, we found that the intellectual assent; albeit firm and fixed, was voluntary; that faith was a determination of the intellect to one member of a contradictory proposition by the influence of the will. We saw that the assent of faith was not caused by discursive thought as in science but rather that its assent was caused by the will; it being the principal mover in the act of faith. The cogitatio of faith, we saw, did not cause or terminate in assent but rather, as St. Thomas remarked, it operates parallel to the assent.

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When we, therefore, place science and faith face to face, we see that what characterizes one contradicts the other. Demonstrative proof consists in a necessary assent of the intellect due to the visibility of the object, and faith consists oppositely in the voluntary assent of the intellect due to the object's invisibility.

. . . the reason why science and faith cannot be about the same object and in the same respect is because the object of science is something seen, whereas the object of faith is the unseen.²

Faith implies assent of the intellect to that which is believed. Now the intellect assents to a thing in two ways. First, through being moved to assent by its very object, which is known either by itself (as in the case of first principles which are held by the habit of understanding), or through something else already known (as in the case of conclusions which are held by the habit of science). Secondly the intellect assents to something, not through being sufficiently moved to this assent by its proper object, but through an act of choice, whereby it turns voluntarily to one side rather than to the other . . .³

So it is on the basis of this difference between the visibility and invisibility of the objects and between the involuntary and voluntary character of the assents that St. Thomas holds that faith and knowledge (science) are exclusive of one another. This is the entire essence of and the fundamental necessity for their separative nature. And

2 Summa Theologiae, II-II, q. 1, a. 5, ad. 4.

3 Ibid., a. 4.

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everything that St. Thomas has to say about the possibility or impossibility of the co-existence of faith and science in individual knowers is guided by this understanding.

The first and most obvious statement he makes, following from this understanding, is that it is not possible for there to be science and faith about the same object in any one person at any one time.

It is impossible that one and the same thing should be believed and seen by the same person. Hence it is equally impossible for one and the same thing to be an object of science and of belief for the same person.⁴

However, in the case of two different people, it is possible that what is an object of science for one can and may be an object of faith for the other. "It may happen, however, that a thing which is an object of vision or science for one is believed by another."⁵

These two facts seem undeniable. Yet, since about any one thing, there can be more than one possible truth, St. Thomas finds it necessary to qualify his first statement regarding the possibility of there being science and faith simultaneously in one person about one thing..

4 Ibid., a. 5.

5 Ibid.

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. . . it is possible for one and the same man to have science and faith about the same thing relatively, i.e., in relation to the object, but not in the same respect. For it is possible for the same person, about one and the same object to know one thing and to think another and in like manner, one may know by demonstration the unity of the Godhead, and, by faith the Trinity.⁶

In any one person, therefore, about any one truth of an object, there cannot be both science and faith yet about two different truths of an object there can.⁷

To summarize: (1) science and faith are absolutely and only exclusive of one another in one and the same person at any one time about any one truth of an object; (2) science and faith are not necessarily exclusive of one another in two different people about any one truth of an object. One person

6 Ibid., ad. 4.

7 This fact allows Etienne Gilson to argue that in a certain sense the existence of God can be both known and believed at the same time. "In the case of the existence of God, it certainly is impossible to know by demonstration that there is a Prime Immobile Mover and at the same time to hold on faith that this Prime Mover is, or exists. This would be a contradiction in terms. But God is much more than the Prime Mover of Aristotle To believe in the existence of God is not to believe the existence of the Prime Mover, of the Prime Cause, of the Perfect Being, or of the Ultimate End. It is not even to believe in the existence of a single being that is all these perfections together; it is to believe in the existence of Him Who has spoken to us, a thing that the Prime Mover as such never did. The God Whose existence we demonstrate is but a part of the God we hold to be true on the strength of our faith in His words. In this sense, the God of rational knowledge is, so to speak, included in the God of faith." (Elements of Christian Philosophy, Doubleday & Co. Inc., Garden City, New York, 1963, pp. 53-54)

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may know the truth and the other believe it; (3) science and faith are not necessarily separative of one another in one and the same person given the possibility of two different truths concerning one object. One truth may be known through science and the other believed through faith.

Now directly related to the fact of there being more than one possible truth about an object, and, therefore, the possibility of there being both science and faith about an object, is St. Thomas' conception of the ways in which a truth may be understood as an object of faith. St. Thomas argues that a thing may be considered an object of faith absolutely, being in itself essentially beyond the capacity of the natural reason, or it may be an object of faith conditionally, being only accidentally beyond the capacity of the majority of humans though not beyond human reason absolutely.

A thing can be the object of belief in two ways. In one it is such absolutely, that is, it exceeds the intellectual capacity of all men who exist in this life, for instance, that there is trinity and unity in God, and so on. Now, it is impossible for any man to have scientific knowledge of these. Rather, every believer assents to such doctrines because of the testimony of God to whom these things are present and by whom they are known.

A thing is, however, an object of belief not absolutely, but in some respect, when it does not exceed the capacity of all men, but only of some men: In this class are those things which we can know about God by means of a demonstration, as that God exists, or is one, or has no body, and so forth. There is nothing to prevent those who

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have scientific proofs of these things from knowing them scientifically, and others who do not understand the proofs from believing them. But it is impossible for the same person to know and believe them.⁸

There are some truths about God, therefore, which by their very nature are exclusive of the grasp of science. There are others, however, which are able to be known both by science and by faith though, of course, not simultaneously in any one person. Yet, in the case of two different people, it is possible. Now it is precisely within this distinction that the difference between what St. Thomas calls the praeambula fidei and the articles of faith consists.

The existence of God and other like truths about God, which can be known by natural reason, are not articles of faith, but are preambles to the articles, for faith presupposes natural knowledge, even as grace presupposes nature, and perfection supposes something that can be perfected.⁹

In this passage we find Aquinas discussing two types of propositions about God. The first type is a proposition which can be established by demonstration and is understood to be presupposed by the articles of faith. The second type of proposition is understood as the article of faith itself and the distinguishing characteristic of this type of proposition

8 Truth, q. 14, a. 9.

9 Summa Theologiae, I, q. 2, a. 2, ad. 1.

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is that it cannot be established by demonstration. The first type of proposition is a preamble to the second type of proposition which is an article. Analogically, the preamble is akin to nature, the imperfect, and the article akin to grace, the perfect.

This seems simple enough; however, there remain large questions concerning the relationship of the praeambula fidei to the articles of faith both in themselves and in relation to the believer's assent; and this (1) in terms of their separateness; and (2) in terms of the fact that one is said to presuppose the other. For example, are the preambles presupposed simply insofar as they are demonstrable? Must the believer have scientific assent to some truths about God before he can believe those which are by nature indemonstrable? Does the rationality of the believer's assent to the articles of faith depend upon the fact that some truths about God can be known with scientific assent?

We saw in Chapter I that Professor Penelhum has understood St. Thomas to answer this last question in the affirmative. We pointed out then, however, that the passage taken from the Summa Theologiae by Penelhum which spoke of the rational justification of the believer's assent did not include reference to the praeambula fidei. In fact, in none of the texts which we have found in which St. Thomas discusses the rational foundation of assent to the articles of faith have the

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praeambula been mentioned.

In Question II of the Commentary on De Trinitate, St. Thomas discusses the use of philosophy in sacred doctrine. In his summary of its use, he remarks that philosophy has the responsibility:

First, to demonstrate those truths that are preambles of faith and that have a necessary place in the science of faith. Such are the truths about God that can be proved by natural reason - that God exists, that God is one; such truths about God or about His creatures, subject to philosophical proof, faith presupposes.¹⁰

We are indebted to Dennis Brand's study entitled, Philosophy and the "Praeambula Fidei" in Saint Thomas Aquinas, for pointing out that this is the only text throughout the works of St. Thomas in which the phrase praeambula fidei, as such, is used.¹¹ In all other passages, a variation or a synonym is used in reference to the praeambula.¹² Brand's philological study of the phrase within the works of St. Thomas has established that it is not a technical term in the works of St. Thomas and therefore that its meaning and nature must be

¹⁰ Commentary on De Trinitate, q. II, a. 3.

¹¹ University of Ottawa, Ottawa, 1976, p. 52.

¹² Ibid., p. 52. It should be noted that the English phrase, "preambles of faith," which is the literal translation of praeambula fidei is sometimes used as the translation for the variations of the phrase as well.

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exposed solely through a study of the context in which the variations and synonyms for the phrase are used.¹³

In light of the text which we have already seen, we seem justified in saying that insofar as a proposition about God is able to be established and known through demonstration, it cannot be considered an article of faith properly speaking but rather a praeambula, for an article of faith in the strict sense is absolutely separative of science; and a praeambula insofar as it is demonstrable, is separative of faith. St. Thomas makes this clearer yet in another passage.

We do not say that the proposition, God is one, insofar as it is proved by demonstration, is an article of faith but something presupposed before the articles. For the knowledge of faith presupposes nature. But the unity of the divine essence such as is conceived by the faithful, that is to say, together with omnipotence, providence over all things, and other attributes of this sort which cannot be proved, makes up the articles of faith.¹⁴

The praeambula fidei, however, are not exclusive of faith absolutely, for such propositions which can be established by demonstration are considered among the articles of faith for those who do not, in fact, know the demonstrations; because

13 Ibid., p. 63.

14 Truth, q. 14, a. 9, ad. 8.

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such propositions are nevertheless first and necessary in matters of faith.

Things which can be proved by demonstration are reckoned among the articles of faith, not because they are believed simply by all but because they are necessary presuppositions to matters of faith, so that those who do not know them by demonstration must know them first of all by faith.¹⁵

This text is cardinal for an accurate understanding of the full meaning of the praeambula fidei and their relationship to both the articles of faith, as such, and to the believer's assent to the articles.

An article of faith, properly speaking, is that which is believed simply by all. In this light, the preambles are not articles of faith, precisely because they can be demonstrated. The preambles of faith, however, can be spoken of as among the articles of faith for those who do not know them through demonstrations. They are considered among the articles of faith because their truth is necessarily presupposed by all matters of faith. A person must grasp the truth, either through demonstration or through faith that God exists before any other truth about God can properly be said to be known. In the above passage, therefore, it seems that "necessary presupposition" does not refer to the preambles as preambles properly speaking, i.e. as demonstrable truths, but rather to

¹⁵ Summa Theologiae, II-II, q. 1, a. 5, ad. 3.

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the truth of the propositions considered in themselves independent of whether they can be demonstrated or not. That is why St. Thomas says if they are not known through demonstration, they must be known by faith.

Therefore, speaking broadly, the praeambula fidei can be said to have two distinct possible meanings for St. Thomas, which, when understood, clarify their relationship to the articles of faith and the believer's assent to the articles. The first and strict meaning being propositions about God and His creatures which can be demonstrated scientifically. Secondly, praeambula fidei can be understood to mean essential and primary truths, necessarily first in the order of knowledge about God, that is, within divine science and faith. As such, they are articles of faith relatively and they must be known first in the order of truths about God by all believers in order for the revealed truths about God, i.e. the articles of faith absolutely, to be believed. Praeambula, therefore, can mean truths able to be scientifically known before the act of faith, though not necessarily; that is, one does not have to know them scientifically before assent to the articles. And praeambula can mean truths necessarily first in the order of matters of faith and in this sense they can and must be either known or believed before assent to the articles of faith.¹⁶

16 This understanding is attested to by G. de Broglie

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Therefore, when we consider the praeambula fidei and their relation to the act of faith, that is, the personal voluntary assent of the believer, we recognize that the praeambula fidei are able to be known prior to the assent of the believer through demonstration. That is, the first and necessary propositions which must be known by the believer are able to be known by him independent of his act of faith. However, though they are able to be known by the believer independent of his act of faith, it is not necessary that they are known independent of the act of faith. It is simply necessary that they are known, be it either through demonstration or through the act of faith itself.

. . . there is nothing to prevent a man, who cannot grasp a proof accepting, as a matter of faith something which in itself is capable of being scientifically known and demonstrated.¹⁷

in his article, "La vraie notion Thomiste des 'praeambula fidei,'" Gregorian, 34, 1953, pp. 341-389. Dès qu'on a bien saisi ce caractère complexe et synthétique de l'objet de la foi, les textes de saint Thomas sur les 'praeambula fidei' deviennent tout à fait clairs. Ce qu'ils visent à souligner par ce mot de 'préambules,' ce n'est aucunement que le sujet ait besoin, pour croire, de connaître d'abord par sa raison naturelle une certaine partie de ce que la foi lui dira: c'est tout simplement que les objets essentiels et caractéristiques de la foi, c'est-à-dire les 'articles' du Credo, contiennent intelligiblement en eux, comme éléments de base, des vérités relevant, en droit, de la simple connaissance naturelle, lesquelles peuvent donc également bien nous être connues avant la foi, ou ne nous arriver, au contraire, que par elle." (cf., pp. 386-387)

17 Summa Theologiae, I, q. 2, a. 2, ad. 1.

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We have one last question to consider in this chapter related to St. Thomas' understanding of the exclusiveness of faith and knowledge and the praeambula fidei. Does the rationality of the believer's assent to the articles of faith, which are exclusive of scientific knowledge, depend upon the fact that some truths about God can be scientifically known? Penelhum has argued that since, for Aquinas, the praeambula fidei are able to be demonstrated prior to the personal voluntary assent of faith that this fact is for Aquinas the fundamental rational justification of the personal voluntary assent to the articles of faith which are exclusive of science.

We have found no textual evidence which explicitly supports this interpretation, for whenever Aquinas does consider rational justification of the voluntary assent to the articles of faith, he fails to include the praeambula fidei as the grounds for the rationality of the act of faith.

St. Thomas does admit that there must exist a certain evidence for the natural reason which precedes the assent to the articles of faith and which as evidence invests the voluntary assent of the act of faith with rationality. Such evidence, however, does not make the object of faith seen in the strict sense, that would destroy faith. Rather, it simply endows it with a credibility sufficient to move the will.

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Those things which come under faith can be considered in two ways. First, in particular; and thus they cannot be seen and believed at the same time as shown above. Secondly, in general, that is under the common aspect of credibility; and in this way they are seen by the believer. For he would not believe unless, on the evidence of signs, or of something similar, he saw that they ought to be believed.¹⁸

The believer has sufficient motive for believing, for he is moved by the authority of Divine teaching confirmed by miracles, and what is more, by the inward instinct of the Divine invitation; hence he does not believe lightly. He has not, however, sufficient reason for scientific knowledge, hence he does not lose merit.¹⁹

The believer's assent to the articles of faith must participate in vision to some extent for it to be a rational assent, however, it is not the vision of science. Within these texts, we find three categories of evidence which lend credibility to faith: (1) the authority of Divine teaching; (2) the evidence of signs; (3) the interiority of the Divine presence and call. These three categories of evidence supply the rational foundation of the assent of faith. That is, these three categories are linked with the personal voluntary assent of every believer and renders it reasonable.

Chapter VI, Book I of the Summa Contra Gentiles is entitled, "That to give assent to the truths of faith is not

¹⁸ Ibid., II-II, q. 1, a. 4, ad. 2.

¹⁹ Ibid., q. 2, a. 9, ad. 3.

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foolishness even though they are above reason," and states this position clearly.

Those who place their faith in this truth, however, 'for which the human reason offers no experimental evidence, ' do not believe foolishly, as though 'following artificial fables' (II Peter 1:16). For these 'secrets of divine Wisdom' (Job 17:6) the divine Wisdom itself, which knows all things to the full, has deigned to reveal to men. It reveals its own presence, as well as the truth of its teaching and inspiration, by fitting arguments; and in order to confirm those truths that exceed natural knowledge it gives visible manifestation to works that surpass the ability of all nature . . . and what is more wonderful, there is the inspiration given to human minds, so simple and untutored persons, filled with the gift of the Holy Spirit, come to possess instantaneously the highest wisdom and the readiest eloquence.²⁰

For a personal voluntary assent to the articles of faith to have a rational justification, the individual believer must himself have some evidence which supports the assent of faith and which itself to an extent is prior to the act of faith. Yet, it is not the demonstrations in support of the preambles of faith which are this rational justification. That is, it is not the fact that some truths about God are able to be demonstrated which makes the assent of the believer to the articles of faith rational.

²⁰ St. Thomas Aquinas, On the Truth of the Catholic Faith: Summa Contra Gentiles, trans. by Anton C. Pegis, Image Books, Doubleday & Co. Inc., Garden City, New York, 1955, Bk. I, Ch. VI, #1.

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In Chapter III, we saw St. Thomas argue that the discursive thought, the cogitatio, of faith was not itself the productive cause of faith but rather it operated parallel to the assent of faith. The arguments which lend rationality to the assent of the believer find their place within this dimension of reason. Such arguments invest the believer's assent to the articles of faith with credibility and rationality by manifesting to the intellect the possibility and probability of the truths of faith.

The reasons which are brought forward in support of the authority of faith, are not demonstrations which can bring intellectual vision to the human intellect, wherefore they do not cease to be unseen. But they remove obstacles to faith, by showing that what faith proposes is not impossible; wherefore such reasons do not diminish the merit or the measure of faith.²¹

We may conclude that for St. Thomas, it is not the fact that some truths about God, i.e. the praeambula fidei, are able to be demonstrated which makes the assent of the believer to the articles of faith a rational assent, as if, were there not such demonstrable truths, faith would not be rational. We believe St. Thomas would certainly consider the assent of the believer to the articles of faith to be a rational assent even were there no such demonstrated truths.

²¹ Summa Theologiae, II-II, q. 2, a. 10, ad. 2.

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We realize that the brevity of this chapter has not permitted a final answer to the questions concerning the relationship of the praeambula fidei to the articles of faith and to the believer's assent to, such articles. Nevertheless, we believe we have produced significant evidence in support of the conclusions that we did reach.

Concerning the exclusiveness of faith and knowledge, as such, however, there can be no doubt that St. Thomas understood this separateness between the two to be undeniable when once the nature of their respective objects and acts are understood. For both object and act are in contradiction with one another, just as the invisible contradicts the visible and the voluntary contradicts the compulsory.

CHAPTER V

NECESSARY ASSENT IN THE "FIVE WAYS"

We have now come to the final consideration of our thesis. In this chapter, we will examine St. Thomas' proofs of the existence of God with the purpose not of defending them but simply of seeing directly how they were understood by St. Thomas to invoke an involuntary assent to God's existence. In doing so, we hope to indicate how the proofs exemplify the established criteria of demonstrative proof outlined in Chapter II of this thesis. Wherein we saw how demonstrative proof, and particularly quia proof through effects, was understood to involve the necessary and effect necessary assent.

We saw clearly from Chapter III and IV that St. Thomas unquestionably understood faith to involve a voluntary assent exclusive of the necessary assent effected by demonstration, and we saw that the praeambula fidei were understood by St. Thomas to be those truths about God which could be demonstrated and which, as such, were distinct from the articles of faith properly speaking, the truth of which could only be assented to in the voluntary act of faith. It was further evident that paramount among the praeambula fidei stood the truth that God exists.

When we discussed the characteristics of demonstrative proof propter quid as proper and perfect science, we recognized that fundamentally there were two identifying characteristics

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of such a syllogism: (1) that it was through immediate causes, and (2) that it proceeded from the necessary and therefore resulted in necessarily true conclusions necessitating intellectual assent. When we discussed a posteriori proof or quia proof through effects, we saw clearly that it did not meet the standard of proper and perfect science precisely because it was through effects and not through the causes of a thing as was propter quid proof. The next question, therefore, concerning the scientific status of a posteriori proof revolved around the second condition, that is, whether it involved necessary things. On the basis of John of St. Thomas and Fr. Joseph Owens' remarks about quia proof through effects, and more importantly, those of St. Thomas himself, found in his article of the Summa Theologiae concerning the possibility of demonstrating the existence of God, we concluded that the necessity requisite for scientific proof was present in a posteriori proof insofar as it presupposed as its foundation the necessary connection in being obtaining between actually existing effects and their extrinsic causes. We were able to conclude, therefore, that a posteriori proof resulted in necessarily true conclusions and thus effected necessary assent just as did propter quid proof. We pointed out, however, that they rendered certain and evident two different objects. Propter quid proof renders certain and evident the reason why a thing exists while quia proof renders certain and evident the simple fact that a thing exists.

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To repeat, what we intend to do in this chapter, through our analysis of the proofs of the existence of God themselves, is to manifest their characteristics as a posteriori proof and to show clearly and directly how they were perceived by St. Thomas to reach necessarily true conclusions and effect necessary assent. In this light, we hope to see more immediately how the proofs were understood by St. Thomas to be exclusive of the voluntary assent of faith.

As is well known, St. Thomas proposed five ways of demonstrating the existence of God in the Summa Theologiae. Yet there is a certain sameness in the ways which allow them to be spoken of collectively as one demonstration. The sameness is due on the one hand to a common structure but even more profoundly to the existential character of St. Thomas' metaphysics. Gilson, in commenting upon the article in the Summa which contains the proofs, writes:

It discloses five different ways to God and reduces them all to the unity of the same structure: an empirical starting point discovered in the observation of a certain mode of being found in nature, a proof of the fact that the cause of the said mode of being cannot be found within natural things themselves, the necessity of affirming the existence of a prime cause whose actual existence is the only conceivable cause of the existence, within nature, of the mode of being under discussion.¹

Joseph Owens writes, having interpreted the Prima Via

¹ E. Gilson, Elements, pp. 79-80.

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specifically in light of the existential character of St. Thomas' metaphysics;²

If the nature of God is existence, one may well expect that the only perfection in creatures to open the way philosophically to God is existence. Basically, then, only the one demonstration will be contained under all five ways, or under whatever number of ways that are selected for its development.³

Given this sameness in the ways, which we hope to make more explicit, we shall devote our primary, though not exclusive, attention to the first way insofar as St. Thomas calls this proof the "more manifest way" of demonstrating the existence of God.

Gilson offers a general description of the reasoning process involved in establishing the existence of God which we quote as an introduction to our investigation.

In the last analysis, this kind of demonstration assumes the form of a syllogism, but its main part consists in building up its own major; that is to say, in establishing the existence of a prime cause in a certain order of effects. In order to do so

2 The existential character of St. Thomas' metaphysics is expressed succinctly in the following statement made by J. Owens in his article, "Actuality in the 'Prima Via' of St. Thomas," Mediaeval Studies, 29, 1967, pp. 26-46, "... the fundamental metaphysical doctrine of St. Thomas is that existence is the actuality of every form or nature." (p. 37) The existential character of St. Thomas' metaphysics, therefore, consists in having identified the actuality of any form or nature ultimately with its existence.

3 Ibid., p. 44.

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the philosopher must bring into play all sorts of notions, or even principles, whose use can be verified by means of syllogistic reasoning but which cannot always be syllogistically demonstrated. In the case of principles, they cannot be demonstrated at all. Moreover, the whole demonstration presupposes the presence to the mind of a certain notion of God; namely, that which Thomas himself calls 'the meaning of the name.' In other words, one cannot inquire into the existence of a thing without having some notion of what, if it exists, the thing is.⁴

The main part of the first way, as in all of them, consists in establishing the major premiss of the syllogism which actually proves the existence of God. Once this premiss has been proven, St. Thomas does not even find it necessary to put forth the entire syllogism establishing the existence of God. This syllogism would read as follows were it fully stated: A prime mover exists. God is a prime mover. Therefore, God exists. This is the final quia demonstration of the first way which proves the existence of God. It is a demonstration which employs a common notion or nominal definition of God as the middle term of the syllogism.

In our reading of the five ways, we have agreed with Gilson that the proofs are best understood in light of a two-part division: (1) the establishing of the major premiss of the quia syllogism which actually proves the existence of God, and (2) the quia syllogism proper. Therefore, we will follow

⁴ E. Gilson, Elements, pp. 50-51.

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this plan in our analysis of the proofs by first examining the reasoning which proves the major premiss and second by examining the quia demonstration proper of God's existence which employs the proven major.

Before we begin, however, a few more remarks must be made concerning the first part of the proofs. As Gilson indicates, the first part of the proofs, de facto, is not in the form of a syllogism. That is, it is not an immediately evident demonstration conforming exactly to the description of a demonstrative syllogism outlined in the Commentary on the Posterior Analytics. This fact in itself has caused considerable discussion and even disagreement among interpreters of the proofs as to how they should be understood as demonstrations. Some of the commentators on the proofs, however, that we have read, attempt to show how this first part can be reduced to the syllogistic form.⁵ We ourselves admit that this seems both possible and legitimate. However, we do not think that it is absolutely necessary to do so in order to show how

⁵ cf., O. Bennett, The Nature of Demonstrative Proof According to the Principles of Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas, Catholic University, Washington, 1943, p. 30; "What passes from potentiality to actuality must depend eventually upon what is in pure actuality; Things in the world which change pass from potentiality to actuality; Therefore: Things in the world which change must depend eventually upon being in pure actuality."; (cf., also Klubertanz and Halloway's description of the proofs in Being and God, Meridith Publishing Co., New York, 1963, pp. 227-228).

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the given reasoning process conducts the intellect to the necessary truth of the major premiss of part two of the proof. In fact, we believe that an analysis of the proof as it stands, without transformation of it into the syllogistic form as such is sufficient if not more adequate in enlightening us as to why St. Thomas understood them to effect necessary assent and therefore to merit the appellation of scientific demonstration. St. Thomas remarks, in his Commentary on the "De Trinitate" of Boethius, in regards to the different modes of thinking attributed to the different speculative sciences, that the divine science is the science whose reasoning is closest to intellectual vision as such.

To proceed by way of intellect is not attributed to divine science as if this science did not make use of ratiocination in proceeding from principles to conclusions, but because its method of reasoning is nearest to intellectual speculation, and its conclusions nearest to its principles.¹⁶

We see (particularly in the first part of the proofs of the existence of God) in the reasoning process as it stands, a method of reasoning highly intuitive in character. That is, it is a process wherein the intellect moves from one proposition to another through a kind of immediate inference whereby the intellect comes to see in succeeding stages the ultimate

⁶ Commentary on De Trinitate, q. 6, a. 1, ans. to obj. to 3rd part, # 1.

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meaning of finite being.⁷ Consequently, in our analysis of the first part of the proofs, we have not attempted to reduce them to syllogistic form, but rather, we have simply analyzed them in terms of the essential propositions of the proofs as they stand.

The first proof reads as follows:

The first and more manifest way is the argument from motion. It is certain, and evident to our senses, that in the world some things are in motion. Now whatever is in motion is put in motion by another, for nothing can be in motion except it is in potentiality to that towards which it is in motion; whereas a thing moves in as much as it is in act. For motion is nothing else than the reduction of something from potentiality to actuality. But nothing can be reduced from potentiality to actuality except by something in a state of actuality. Thus that which is actually hot, as fire, makes wood, which is potentially hot, to be actually hot, and thereby moves and changes it. Now it is not possible that the same thing should be at once in actuality and potentiality in the same respect, but only in different respects. For what is actually hot cannot simultaneously be potentially hot; but it is simultaneously potentially cold. It is therefore impossible that in the same respect and in the same way a thing should be both mover and moved, i.e., that it should move itself. Therefore, whatever is in

6
7 Mieczyslaw A. Krapiec in his article, "The Analysis of Reasoning: the Problem of Proof in Philosophy," argues against the notion that there is strict, syllogistic inference in St. Thomas' metaphysics, yet he holds that there is real proof within it. As an evidence supporting his position, he examples the first proof of the existence of God and remarks: "The argument shows no trace of syllogistic inference; it reveals only successive stages of thinking, in which, necessary ontic relations are apprehended." (Saint Thomas Aquinas 700th Anniversary of His Death, Wydawnictwo Towarzystwa Naukowego, Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, 1976, p. 101)

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motion must be put in motion by another. If that by which it is put in motion be itself put in motion, then this also must needs be put in motion by another, and that by another again. But this cannot go on to infinity because then there would be no first mover, and, consequently, no other mover, seeing that subsequent movers move only inasmuch as they are put in motion by the first mover; as the staff moves only because it is put in motion by the hand. Therefore it is necessary to arrive at a first mover, put in motion by no other; and this everyone understands to be God.⁸

St. Thomas tells us that the "first and more manifest" way is from motion. The meaning of this remark is implied by St. Thomas himself when he says that the senses perceive the motion in things to be "certain and evident." This way is the more manifest way because nothing is more obvious to our senses than the motion in things, particularly accidental change and change of place, as the examples indicate.⁹ Further, it is

⁸ Summa Theologiae, I, q. 2, a. 3.

⁹ "St. Thomas gives no explanation of why the prima via is more evident. The reason, however, seems to be fairly clear. The starting point of the secunda via is the acquisition of esse by things which did not have the esse before and so could not be efficient causes of themselves when they did not even exist. The starting point accordingly, is substantial change - that is, generation - which is a particular type of motion. But substantial change is not so immediately evident through sensation as the change from cold to heat or the local motion of the stick that is being moved by the hand. Substantial change had been denied by more men - for example, all the early Greek natural philosophers - than had motion in general, as for instance by Parmenides. The starting point, motion in general, with the particular instances of alteration and local motion, is much more evident than is substantial change. The argument built upon it, accordingly, is "more

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certain to us precisely because it is so obvious to our senses.¹⁰ Gilson, in defining what St. Thomas means by sense experience in the proofs, comments, "Sense experience here means the apprehension of empirically given facts along with the notions and judgements through which we immediately conceptualize them."¹¹ The idea of motion is the immediate conceptualization of the senses' encounter with changing beings. However, not only is the concept of motion appropriated through sense experience, but so also is the fact of its existence.

manifest." There is, again, no question regarding the prima and secunda or any of the other viae as separate proofs. They are merely different ways of proceeding in what is fundamentally the same argument. All five viae proceed by finding in various ways the existential act in sensible things and the reason to the source of that act, which is substantial esse." (Joseph Owens, "The Conclusion of the Prima Via," The Modern Schoolman, 30, 1952/53, p. 214)

10 A second remark can be made concerning this phrase which is directly related to the significance of identifying this proof as the "first" way. It is our very experience of motion which gives rise to the intellect's grasp of the two metaphysical notions which provide the implicit foundation of all the proofs, namely, "actual" and "potential" being. That our experience of motion is the origin of these notions is evidenced by the fact that the definition of motion is as St. Thomas states, ". . . the reduction of something from potentiality to actuality."

11 E. Gilson, Elements, pp. 72-73.

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In noting at the commencement of the Prima Via, then that some things are being moved in this world, the text of the Summa Theologiae definitely contains a judgement of the existence of this motion, even though existence is not expressly mentioned.¹²

The existence of motion, therefore, being given in sense experience, the intellect assents to the first proposition of the proof: "In the world some things are in motion." Even though this proposition, in one sense, is a contingent proposition, the intellect involuntarily assents to its truth so long as it remains grounded in the immediate evidence of sense experience. That is, so long as it is considered:

. . . in itself, insofar as it is now in act; and in this sense it is not considered as future, but as present; neither is it considered as contingent (as having reference) to one of two terms, but as determined to one, and on account of this it can be infallibly the object of certain knowledge . . . ¹³

Therefore in regards to the proposition, "In the world some things are in motion," the intellect infallibly assents to the determined attribution of motion in things. That is, insofar as it has immediate reference to sense perception, as St. Thomas points out, the actual existence of motion is not considered contingent but necessary and

¹² J. Owens, "Actuality in the 'Prima Via,'" pp. 40-41.

¹³ Summa Theologiae, I, q. 14, a. 13.

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therefore the intellect is determined to the truth of this proposition.

John of St. Thomas proposes a possible objection to the position that a posteriori demonstration involves necessity, in the following way:

As to effects, they are supposed to be known by their cause or by experience. If by their cause, there is explanatory demonstration; if by experience, the argumentation is grounded on fallible knowledge, and consequently it is not a necessary demonstration.¹⁴

This is how he answers the critique:

To the further remark about effects, let it be answered that they are evident when they are known by certain and undoubted experience, or at least by an experience manifested inductively. Every science originates in induction; when, for instance, we use effects to show that there is a first cause, the existence of some effect is entirely beyond doubt.¹⁵

On the basis of sense experience and the intellect's necessary assent to the existence of motion, the intellect recognizes as immediately and necessarily true the second essential proposition of the proof: "Whatever is in motion is put in motion by another."¹⁶ This proposition is self-evident

¹⁴ John of St. Thomas, Material Logic, p. 501.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 502.

¹⁶ Klubertanz and Halloway comment, "We can formulate our direct experience of change into a proposition that has the force and validity of a universal principle: nothing is

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to the intellect and immediately known to be necessarily true thus necessitating assent. Its self-evidence is contained in the very meaning and definition of motion itself. Which is, as St. Thomas states, (for those who do not know the definition of motion), ". . . the reduction of something from potentiality to actuality." Insofar as this is what motion is, to say that a thing can put itself into actuality from potentiality is equivalent to saying that a thing can give something to itself which it does not have. This, in fact, would challenge the very principles of (non) contradiction for it would be the same as to argue that a thing can be and not be in the same respect at the same time. Therefore, the denial of this principle is as unthinkable as the denial of the principle of (non) contradiction.

Gilson expresses this quite clearly in two passages while commenting on the first way.

To use once more the same technical language, let us say that one and the same thing cannot be both in potency and in act in the same respect and at the same time. Nothing is more evident, since to be both in act and in potency in the same respect would amount to being and not being in the same respect at the same time. Once the identity of actuality and of being has been grasped, this conclusion follows in virtue of the principle of contradiction.¹⁷

moved from potency to act except by a being already in act."
(Being and God, p. 231)

17 E. Gilson, Elements, p. 63.

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The oft-repeated statement that nothing can move itself is taken as self-evident. It simply means that the contrary proposition is self-contradictory and literally unthinkable. The actuality of a being is one with its being; the degree of its actuality exactly measures that of its being, consequently, to say that something can add to its own being, or diminish it, is tantamount to saying that it has, or is something it has or is not.¹⁸

St. Thomas expresses the metaphysical corollary of the principle, "Whatever is in motion is put in motion by another" in the words "nothing can be reduced from potentiality to actuality except by something in a state of actuality."

Seeing the necessary truth of this proposition, the intellect begins to see the deeper implications of its truth and formulates the third essential proposition of the proof: "This cannot go on to infinity." We might say that this is the intellect's first response to the question, Why is there a reduction of things from potentiality to act?, i.e., Why is there motion at all? The intellect necessarily sees that to attribute infinity to motion is no answer whatsoever. In fact, it recognizes that the very notion of an infinite series of moved movers results in a contradiction.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 67. L.M. Regis lists ten first principles; number nine being, "Everything that is moved is moved by another." He remarks that it is not as universal as the principles that are affirmed of all being but that, nevertheless, it is a first principle in reference to "being in process of becoming." (Epistemology, p. 380)

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An infinite series would render the existing motion unintelligible. All these finite moved movers would have received their motion, but since there is no first mover, the whole series is one of received motion. And this is a contradiction. For such a motion would at one and the same time be received, since it has come from some other, and not received, since there is no first from which it originated.¹⁹

Therefore in recognizing that the notion of an infinite series of finite moved movers results in a contradiction the intellect necessarily assents to the truth of the proposition. "This cannot go on to infinity." The intellect sees that if there is no first actuality, that is, something which itself has not been reduced from potentiality to act by something else, if there is not something not itself in motion, motion as a condition of things could not exist for it would not have a cause. This is what St. Thomas means when he explains that the reduction of things from potentiality to act "cannot go on to infinity." He does not mean that motion could not have existed from eternity. Motion may or may not be eternal, this is irrelevant. The point is, if it exists at all, and it is obvious that it does, it must have a cause outside itself.

No matter how far the series is extended in time, the necessity for a sufficient reason of change remains, since it is of the nature of change to be passing from potentiality to actuality, and thus to depend on something in actuality. The eventual

19 Klubertanz and Halloway, Being and God, p. 232.

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dependence, i.e. the essential dependence which precedes from any consideration of time, is the dependence on the universal cause of motion as such, the dependence on being in pure actuality.²⁰

The deeper implication, then, of the truth of proposition two, which comes to be seen by the intellect may be formulated as follows: absolutely act must be prior to potency and being prior to non-being. Therefore, if one is going to explain the evident reduction of things from potentiality to actuality, which is motion, one must posit the existence of a first act, itself outside of the reduction, as the cause of it. "Therefore," St. Thomas says, "it is necessary to arrive at a first mover put in motion by no other," the fourth essential proposition of the proof.

Now, to see more clearly the necessary intellectual assent involved in the first part of the Prima Via as it finds its foundation in the necessary connection between effect and cause, we will first reproduce in a slightly paraphrased form only its four essential propositions and then analyze them again in terms of the necessary connection in being obtaining between effect and cause. The four essential propositions read as follows:

p. 31. ²⁰ O. Bennett, The Nature of Demonstrative Proof,

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1. In the world some things are in motion, i.e. motion exists.
2. Whatever is in motion is put in motion by another.
3. This, i.e. things put in motion by another, cannot go on to infinity.
4. Therefore, a first mover put in motion by no other must exist.

Repeating these propositions substituting for the word "motion" its actual definition, we have:

1. In the world things are being reduced from potency to act, i.e. this reduction exists.
2. Whatever is reduced from potency to act must be reduced by something already in act.
3. An infinity of things reduced from potency to act is impossible.
4. Therefore, a first act independent of all potency must exist.

The first proposition articulates the fact that both the nature and existence of motion are apprehended through sense experience; and it is precisely the existence of motion to which the intellect involuntarily assents on the basis of sense experience. It is this assent to the existence of motion which serves as the only efficacious starting point of proving the existence of God.²¹

21 "To prove the existence of a cause is to see, not merely that an effect is able not-to-be, and hence if it exists must have a cause; it is to see than an effect which does exist, would not exist if there were no cause of it. To

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The starting point of the prima via is the fact of sensible movement as grasped integrally in regard both to the nature and existence of the motion, with the nature seen as actual through its existence. No matter how limited and precise this starting point may be, it has to include these two factors if it is to ground metaphysical conclusions in the characteristic thought of St. Thomas.²²

Once the nature of motion has been grasped by the intellect and the fact of its existence assented to, the intellect recognizes in the self-evident truth of proposition two (a proposition seen as self-evident in light of the definition of motion), a self-evident truth about the same and actual being assented to in proposition one. In proposition two, therefore, the intellect necessarily assents to a self-evident truth about actual being seen by the intellect. Questioning the ultimate implication and significance of proposition two, that is, of the meaning of being therein assented to, the intellect comes to see in virtue of the principles of contradiction, i.e. the first principle of all being, the necessary

prove the existence of a cause, therefore, is simple to see two things: (1) there are participated beings which (2) would not be if there were no cause to them. To see point (2) alone does not prove that there exists a cause. The issue of point (2) is that participated beings would not be unless there were a cause of them. That is a principle which is self-evident to anyone who grasps its terms. Yet that principle does not reveal either that there are participated beings or that they are caused, because they are not caused before they exist." (Gerard Smith, Natural Theology, The Macmillan Co., New York, 1957, p. 82)

22 J. Owens, "Actuality in the Prima Via," p. 41.

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truth of proposition three. This is the point at which the intellect recognizes the fact that existing motion is an effect. It is the point at which the intellect sees beyond doubt that the being of motion is a thoroughly dependent and participatory mode of being which, if it is not to remain entirely unintelligible in itself and to the intellect, necessarily presupposes the existence of a cause transcendent to the mode of being evidenced by motion.

For we do not begin with things in the world as effects, but only as existing things. They become known as effects through analysis of their nature and operation and once seen as effects, the intellect sees that they have a necessary relation to a cause.²³

This would seem to be the very essence of the first part of the proof. It manifests to the intellect beyond doubt that motion, more precisely the very mode of existence proper to motion, has the character of an effect, that is, it is finite being. And in seeing that the actually existing motion is an effect, the intellect immediately and necessarily sees that it (motion) is necessarily related and connected to a more complete act of existence as its cause, i.e. subsistent being. The intellect sees the necessary ontic relationship obtaining between conditional, finite being and necessary being and therefore necessarily assents to the truth of proposition four.

23 Klubertanz and Halloway, Being and God, p. 226.

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It is in this that the a posteriori proofs of the existence of God involve the necessity requisite in scientific demonstration.

Though propositions two and three represent the intellect's comprehension of the nature of motion, they simultaneously represent the intellect's grasp of actual being and its existence which is penetrated by the intellect through the successive stages of the proof. The intellect concludes to the existence of motion contained in the first proposition even though existence as such is not spoken of in the proof.

For him [St. Thomas] a form or nature that is not made actual by existence lacks all actuality, and could not function as the starting point for a proof of God's existence. If in following the theological order, then, you stop at any crucial point in the reasoning and inquire into the metaphysical cogency of the deduction, you will find that actualization through existence is in each case the ground that makes the argument valid. The requirements of a movement other than the thing moved, of pure actuality in the primary movement, of identity of essence with existence, of infinity and of unicity, are all based upon the understanding that actuality is brought about by existence, even though existence is not mentioned till it comes to the fore in a question about the divine simplicity.²⁴

Let us now conclude our examination of the reasoning process and intellectual assent involved in establishing the major premiss of the final quia syllogism which proves the existence of God and then we will look at this final syllogism itself.

²⁴ J. Owens, "Actuality in the Prima Via," pp. 39-40.

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As a succinct summation of all that we have hoped to show, we can say that the intellectual assent involved in this reasoning process is properly described as scientific and necessary assent because in each stage of the reasoning process the intellect has seen the necessary characteristics or truths of an actual mode of being. Within proposition one, the intellect necessarily assents to the existence of motion. Within propositions two and three, the intellect necessarily assents to the meaning of motion's existence in light of the first principle of all being, the principle of contradiction.²⁵ That is, in propositions two and three, the intellect sees and necessarily assents to the fact that motion's being is not self-explanatory being. Finally, therefore, the intellect necessarily assents to the truth of proposition four as this is the necessary ultimate explanation of the mode of being in question. As Fr. Owens remarks:

The reasoning follows the necessary phases of being and the necessary phases only. The same necessary phases continue in vigorous sequence to the conclusions that the finite thing's being depends upon another existent, and ultimately upon an existent whose very nature is to be.²⁶

²⁵ It is interesting to note that in the Summa Contra Gentiles, propositions two and three are validated by various forms of indirect or negative proof showing the obvious absurdity of the contrary propositions. (cf., Bk. 1, Ch. 13, # 4-16)

²⁶ J. Owens, "The Analytics and Thomistic Metaphysical Procedure," p. 96.

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We indicated above that all the five ways of demonstrating the existence of God have essentially the same structure, the essential elements of which may be described as follows:

1. A proposition affirming the existence of a thing involuntarily assented to on the basis of experience.
2. A self-evident principle necessitating intellectual assent immediately seen as true in light of an understanding of the nature of a thing.
3. A third proposition showing the full significance of proposition two, immediately evident necessitating assent, establishing the effect as an effect, absolutely presupposing an existent supreme cause through the denial of the possibility of an infinite regress in existing caused causes, i.e. effects.
4. A fourth proposition immediately inferred from proposition three, necessitating assent, affirming the existence of an uncaused cause.²⁷
5. A final implied quia syllogism proving the existence of God through the employment of a nominal definition of God.

We will attempt to manifest this common structure of the proofs shortly in an actual look at the four remaining viae. First, however, we must examine in the Prima Via the second part of the proof, the final implied syllogism which

²⁷ When at the outset of this chapter, we remarked that the reasoning process of the proofs was highly intuitive in character, we had in mind this evident proximity of some of the essential propositions of the proofs to the first principles of being, even explicitly employing within them some of the first principles of mobile being.

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demonstrates the existence of God through the employment of the nominal definition of God.

In both the Summa Theologiae and the Summa Contra Gentiles, St. Thomas tells us the place and nature of the nominal definition of God in the a posteriori proofs of his existence.

When the existence of a cause is demonstrated from an effect, this effect takes the place of the definition of the cause in proof of the cause's existence. This is especially the case in regard to God, because in order to prove the existence of anything, it is necessary to accept as a middle term the meaning of the word, and not its essence for the question of its essence follows on the question of its existence. Now the names given to God are derived from His effects, consequently, in demonstrating the existence of God from His effects, we may take for the middle term the meaning of the word "God."²⁸

Now, in arguments proving the existence of God, it is not necessary to assume the divine essence or quiddity as the middle term of the demonstration. In place of the quiddity, an effect is taken as the middle term as in demonstration quia. It is from such effects that the meaning of the name God is taken. For all divine names are imposed either by removing the effects of God from Him or by relating God in some way to His effects.²⁹

In the quia syllogism from effects, St. Thomas tells us, the middle term, which is the effect, takes the place of

²⁸ Summa Theologiae, I, q. 2, a. 2, ad. 2.

²⁹ Summa Contra Gentiles, I, Bk. 1, Ch. 12, # 8.

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the definition of the cause because it is precisely the existence of the cause which is being demonstrated and we cannot, in fact, give a real definition of a thing before we know its existence. As he says, this is the case par excellence with God since we can never truly know the essence of God in Himself. Therefore, in the case of the quia syllogism which proves God's existence, the middle term is not the true essence or real definition of God but rather the effects of God or more precisely a name given to God taken from His effects. Therefore, by nominal definition is meant a name given to God which does not signify His essence, i.e. the ultimate reason why He exists, but rather which signifies His effects, i.e. the reason why we know, simply, that He exists.

Now, in the first proof, the existing motion in things is seen by the intellect to be an effect dependent upon a cause. The name given to this cause is derived from the effect itself and thus we have the "first mover." This name, then, serves as the nominal definition of God which functions as the middle term in the final quia syllogism which proves the existence of God.³⁰

³⁰ That such a name is predicable of God is understood by St. Thomas to be acceptable by all. What this means is that human beings have a certain natural notion of God inferred from His effects and on hearing the name "first mover" immediately understand this to be identical with their notion of God. We

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A first mover exists.
 God is a first mover.
 Therefore, God exists.

Again, it is absolutely imperative to understand, as St. Thomas points out, that "first mover" does not signify the very essence of God. That is, it does not signify the cause of God. God does not exist because He is a "first mover;" rather, He is a "first mover" because He exists. We can say this in a more comprehensive fashion: God's essence is His existence (something we cannot fully understand) and His existence is the cause of the existence of things which are the effects from which His name is derived. And it is precisely because of this necessary relationship in being between God and His effects that He can be proven to exist from His effects. Further, it is in light of the intellect's understanding that the very being of finite things has the nature of an

naturally and necessarily think of God in terms of our knowledge of the things of this world. As Gilson remarks ". . . every demonstration of the existence of God presupposes the presence of a certain notion of God which is itself not the conclusion of a demonstration. This precisely is the notion of God of which Saint Paul says that, through the mere sight of His creatures, God has manifested it unto them. There is a sort of spontaneous inference, wholly untechnical but entirely conscious of its own meaning, in virtue of which every man finds himself raised to the notion of a transcendent Being by the mere sight of nature in its awesome majesty One cannot overlook this background of spontaneous inference without missing the true meaning of the proofs, or ways, followed by Thomas Aquinas in his discussion of the problem." (Elements, p. 51)

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effect that the most accurate name of God derived from His effects is given to Him by St. Thomas. St. Thomas refers to God as Ipsum Esse.³¹

. . . the principal effect by which we know and name God is the act of being (esse) which is found in His creatures. The God to which reason comes by its demonstration quia is best named as Being, the Qui Est of Exodus, or in St. Thomas' scholastic language, Ipsum Esse. But, once again, in thus knowing and naming God, we do not grasp or even touch upon His Reality in Itself. Instead, Ipsum Esse is a kind of substitute or surrogate term that we use to talk about something which transcends all our naturally possible experience. In lieu of the Divine Reality itself, what this surrogate is tied to is the being which we know immediately and with complexity in our existential judgments of sensible creatures. Such being indicates its cause as incomplex and as better thinkable along the line of existence than of essence. Thus, the best notion or name which we can naturally have in place of God Himself is simply Existence Itself - Ipsum Esse.³²

Now, having first clarified the meaning and role of the nominal definition in the proofs, we can turn our attention to the intellectual assent involved in the final quia syllogism of the first way and it will be easily seen how St. Thomas understood the assent involved in the Prima Via to be a necessary and scientific assent. First, the major premiss,

³¹ Summa Theologiae, I, q. 3, a. 4.

³² John Doyle, "Ipsum Esse as God-Surrogate: The Point of Convergence of Faith and Reason for St. Thomas Aquinas," The Modern Schoolman, 50, 1973, p. 293.

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"A first mover exists," is already known and assented to as a necessarily true proposition in virtue of the reasoning process of the first part of the proof. Second, the minor premiss, "God is a first mover," is understood by St. Thomas to be necessarily assented to by all as a self-evident proposition in virtue of the meaning of the words albeit a nominal definition. Finally, the conclusion, "God exists," is necessarily assented to as a necessarily true conclusion being the direct and necessary inference from certain, evident and necessarily true premisses.

In Chapter II, we saw that St. Thomas understood the necessary assent to the conclusions of a demonstrative syllogism to be effected insofar as the conclusions are seen to participate in the evidence of first principles.

Now, it is through the demonstration itself that the intellect sees that the conclusion is, in fact, related to first principles.

But there are some propositions which have a necessary connection with first principles: such as demonstrable conclusions, a denial of which involves a denial of the first principles. And to these the intellect assents of necessity, when once it is aware of the necessary connection of these conclusions with the principles; but it does not assent of necessity until through the demonstration it recognizes the necessity of such a connection.³³

33 Summa Theologiae, I, q. 82, a. 2.

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It is the nature of the demonstrative syllogism to show a proposition to be necessarily true, that is, to show the necessary connection between the subject and predicate of a proposition. In seeing that the subject and predicate of a proposition are necessarily connected, the intellect sees that such a proposition participates in the evidence of first principles, they being the paradigm of such a connection. The subject and predicate of a conclusion of a demonstrative syllogism are shown to the intellect to have necessary identity in being the denial of which would be tantamount to the denial of the first principles of being themselves, which is something, of course, that is impossible. Thus, the intellect sees that the conclusion of the demonstrative syllogism participates in the evidence of the first principles.

The object of assent . . . is the very relation of the terms of the conclusion. It follows necessarily from the apprehension of the necessary connexion of consequent and antecedent and, therefore, of the truth of the conclusion as related to that of the premisses. However, its object is neither the consequence nor the conclusion sub specie connexionis necessariae cum antecedente. It is precisely the relation of identity or non-identity of the subject and predicate of the proposition which, in this instance, is the consequent of the syllogism

The assent is, of course, not unrelated to the necessary connexion of the conclusion and antecedent. It follows from it as effect from cause. The apprehension of the connexion between the antecedent and consequent, and, therefore, of the truth of the relation of the terms of the latter

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as dependent on that of the former, provide the irresistible motion for the assent to the conclusion itself.³⁴

Through the demonstrations of the existence of God, the intellect sees that in the conclusion, "God exists," the subject and predicate have a necessary identity in being, so that to think of God without existence, real existence, is impossible, that is, contradictory. For now we know that real existence is necessarily attributed to God. Therefore, to deny the proposition, "God exists," would be equivalent to denying the principle of identity, a first principle of being. In this way, the conclusion is seen by the intellect to be reduced to the evidence of first principles.

We stated earlier that all of the proofs of the existence of God have basically the same structure as the first proof and the necessary assent found in them is generated in the same fashion as the first proof. Though we cannot in this work examine all of the proofs in the same detail as we have the first proof, we can indicate the common structure of the proofs which manifests that the same reasoning process is found in all and, therefore, the same necessary assent.

³⁴ F. Tyrell, The Role of Assent in Judgment A Thomistic Study, p. 137.

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Therefore, we will briefly indicate the common structure of the five proofs through a simple recounting of the remaining four ways and a reduction of them to the five essential propositions proving the existence of God..

The second proof, the way of efficient causality reads:

In the world of sense we find there is an order of efficient causes. There is no case known (neither is it, indeed, possible) in which a thing is found to be the efficient cause of itself; for so it would be prior to itself, which is impossible. Now in efficient causes it is not possible to go on to infinity because in all efficient causes following in order, the first is the cause of the intermediate cause, and the intermediate is the cause of the ultimate cause, whether the intermediate cause be several or one only. Now to take away the cause is to take away the effect. Therefore, if there be no first cause among efficient causes, there will be no ultimate, nor any intermediate cause. But if in efficient causes it is possible to go on to infinity, there will be no first efficient cause, neither will there be an ultimate effect, nor any intermediate efficient causes; all of which is plainly false. Therefore it is necessary to admit a first efficient cause, to which everyone gives the name of God.³⁵

Reduction to the five essential propositions:

Effect given in sense experience

1. There is "an order of efficient causes" in sensible things, i.e. an order of efficient causes exists.

The principle

2. "There is no case known (neither is it possible) in which a thing is found to be the efficient cause of itself."

35 Summa Theologiae, I, q. 2, a. 3.

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- Denial of infinite regress 3. "in efficient causes it is not possible to go on to infinity."
 Conclusion 4. Therefore, a "first efficient cause" exists.
 Nominal definition - God is a "first efficient cause."

The third proof, the way of possibility and necessity, reads:

We find in nature things that are possible to be and not be since they are found to be generated, and to corrupt, and consequently, they are possible to be and not be. But it is impossible for these always to exist, for that which is possible not to be at some time is not. Therefore, if everything is possible not to be, then at one time there could have been nothing in existence. Now if this were true, even now there would be nothing in existence, because that which does not exist only begins to exist by something already existing. Therefore, if at one time nothing was in existence, it would have been impossible for anything to have begun to exist; and thus even now nothing would be in existence - which is absurd. Therefore, not all beings are merely possible, but there must exist something the existence of which is necessary. But every necessary thing either has its necessity caused by another, or not. Now it is impossible to go on to infinity in necessary things which have their necessity caused by another, as has been already proved in regard to efficient causes. Therefore we cannot but postulate the existence of some being having of itself its own necessity, and not receiving it from another, but rather causing in others their necessity. This all men speak of as God.³⁶

36 Ibid.

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Reduction to the five essential propositions:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Effect given in sense experience | 1. In nature there are "things that are possible to be and not be since they are found to be generated and to corrupt," i.e. possible beings <u>exist</u> . |
| The principle | 2. "every necessary thing either has its necessity caused by another, or not." ³⁷ |
| Denial of infinite regress | 3. "it is impossible to go on to infinity in necessary things which have their existence caused by another." |
| Conclusion | 4. Therefore, a necessary being "having of itself its own necessity, and not receiving it from another" exists. |
| Nominal definition | - God is a "necessary being having of itself its own necessity." |

The fourth proof, the way of the grades of perfection, reads:

Among beings there are some more and some less good, true, noble, and the like. But 'more' and 'less' are predicated of different things, according as they resemble in the different ways something which is the maximum, as a thing is said to be hotter according as it more nearly resembles that which is hottest; so that there is something noblest, and, consequently, something which is uttermost being; for those things that are greatest in truth are greatest in being, as it is written in

³⁷ It is important to realize that in this proof St. Thomas is concerned with accounting for the "necessity" which possible beings possess, i.e. "necessity from another." "Now since it is impossible for one and the same thing to be and not be at one and the same time, everything is necessary so long as it is. It is necessary so long as its cause makes it to be. This is called 'to be necessary by another'. The proof intends to show that one cannot go on to

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Metaphy. ii. Now the maximum of any genus is the cause of all in that genus; as fire, which is the maximum of heat, is the cause of all hot things. Therefore there must also be something which is to all beings the cause of their being, goodness, and every other perfection; and this we call God.³⁸

Reduction to the five essential propositions:

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|----------------------------------|--|
| Effect given in sense experience | 1. "Among beings there are some more or less good, true, noble, and the like," i.e. grades of perfection exist. |
| The principle | 2. "the maximum in any genus is the cause of all in that genus." |
| Denial of infinite regress | 3. " <u>more</u> and <u>less</u> are predicated of different things according as they assemble in their different way something which is the maximum."
Implied: an infinite regress in the <u>more</u> and the <u>less</u> is impossible. |
| Conclusion | 4. Therefore, "something which is to all beings the cause of their being, goodness, and every other perfection," exists. |
| Nominal Definition | - God is "something which is to all beings the cause of their being, goodness, and every other perfection." |

The fifth proof, the way of the order in natural things, reads:

We see that things which lack intelligence, such as natural bodies, act for an end, and this is evident from their acting always, or nearly always, in the same way, so as to obtain the best results.

infinity in necessary things 'which have "their necessity" caused by another.'" (Gilson, Elements, pp. 73-74)

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Hence it is plain that not fortuitously, but designedly, do they achieve their end. Now whatever lacks intelligence cannot move towards an end, unless it be directed by some being endowed with knowledge and intelligence; as the arrow is shot to its mark by the archer. Therefore some intelligent being exists by whom all natural things are directed to their end; and this being we call God.³⁹

Reduction to the five essential propositions:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Effect given in sense experience | 1. "things which lack knowledge, such as natural bodies, act for an end," i.e. things which lack knowledge and act for an end exist. |
| The principle | 2. "whatever lacks knowledge cannot move towards an end, unless it be directed by some being endowed with knowledge and intelligence." |
| Denial of infinite regress | 3. Implied: an infinity of ordering, directing intellects is impossible. ⁴⁰ |
| Conclusion | 4. Therefore, "some intelligent being exists by whom all natural things are directed to their end." |
| Nominal definition | - God is an intelligent being by whom all natural things are directed to their end. |

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Gilsón, in commenting on why the fifth way, which does not explicitly deny the possibility of infinite regress, writes, "Four of these ways establish that it is not possible to go on to infinity in the series of intermediate causes. The fifth does not do so, perhaps for the sake of brevity, more probably because, since the starting point of the demonstration is the presence of regularity, order, and purposiveness of non-knowing beings in general, the necessity of ultimately positing a single providence for the whole world is immediately evident." (Elements, p. 80)

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These, then, are the five ways presented by St. Thomas as demonstrations of the existence of God. Each begins with a proposition derived from sense experience affirming the existence of a particular effect. This proposition is considered by the intellect as evident and certain so long as it is confirmed by immediate experience. Proposition one is followed by a second proposition which is a self-evident principle (to anyone who knows the meaning of the words) which is formulated by the intellect in light of the intellect's grasp of the nature of the effect known to exist. Proposition two is then followed by a third proposition, seen as true in light of the principle of contradiction, which reveals the deeper implication of proposition two, establishing the effect as an effect necessarily in need of a cause. Proposition four follows necessarily, affirming the existence of the cause, and proposition five identifies the existing cause with God from which it is necessarily concluded that God exists.

The reader must remember that it was not the purpose of this chapter to defend the proofs, but rather, more simply, it was an attempt to see directly, through an examination of the proofs themselves how, in the mind of St. Thomas, the five ways were understood to necessitate intellectual assent to the truth of God's existence, and therefore, to be exclusive of faith's voluntary assent to the same. This, we trust, we have

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done, though we have not examined all the proofs in detail.

We believe we have, in fact, shown, how, in the mind of St. Thomas: (1) all of the demonstrations moved from effect to cause and were therefore quia or a posteriori in type; (2) all of the proofs consisted of premisses to which the intellect necessarily assented seeing them as infallibly true; (3) all of the proofs followed the necessary connection in being obtaining between an actually existing effect and its cause and were therefore truly demonstrative and scientific in character resulting in knowledge that could not be otherwise. In seeing these things directly in the proofs themselves, then, we believe we have shown more immediately why St. Thomas understood the proofs of the existence of God to necessitate intellectual assent, and consequently, to be exclusive of the voluntary assent of faith.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In our thesis, we have studied St. Thomas' doctrine of the exclusiveness of the voluntary intellectual assent of faith and the necessary intellectual assent effected through demonstrative proof and, in particular, of the proofs of the existence of God.

When we examined St. Thomas' definition of demonstrative proof, we saw that its unique distinction was that it rendered evident to the intellect the necessary truth of a proposition. We concluded that both propter quid and quia demonstrations achieved this though about different things. Propter quid demonstration renders evident to the intellect the reason why a thing is so, since it is through the causes of a thing; and quia demonstration renders evident to the intellect the simple fact that a thing is so, being either through the remote cause or the effect. In the proofs of the existence of God, we witnessed how St. Thomas understood such quia demonstrations through effects to render evident to the intellect the necessary truth of God's existence. That is, insofar as they were seen to follow the necessary connection in being obtaining between effect and cause.

In relation to demonstrative proof, we also examined St. Thomas' definition of assent and understood it to be a determination of the intellect to one member of a contradictory proposition, i.e. a determination of the intellect to the truth

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of a proposition. In connection with demonstrative proof, we saw that the intellect necessarily assented to the truth of a proposition, since the intellect perceived the proposition to be necessarily true, participating in the irrefutable evidence of the first principles. When we analyzed the proofs of the existence of God, we saw directly how they accomplished this and therefore necessitated assent to the truth of God's existence.

In our analysis of St. Thomas' doctrine of faith, it became evident that the intellectual assent of faith was a voluntary assent, the intellect needing to be moved by the will in order to assent to the truth of a proposition. The cogitatio that accompanies faith runs parallel to the assent and does not come to rest in the assent as it does in science. The reasoning process that accompanies the assent of faith does not render evident to the intellect the necessary truth of a proposition and, therefore, the intellect is not compelled to assent as it is in science where the necessary truth of a proposition is rendered evident to the intellect.

Consequently, in comparing the intellectual assent of faith to the intellectual assent of science and, in particular, to the intellectual assent involved in the proofs of the existence of God, it was seen that their separateness consisted in the contradictory character of their respective objects, i.e.

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the invisible and the visible, and therefore in the dissimilar moving principles of their assents, i.e. the will in the case of faith, and the intelligible object itself in the case of science. In the face of such a reality, for St. Thomas to have denied the intrinsic exclusiveness of faith and science would have been an obvious contradiction.

We saw, however, that St. Thomas did make an important distinction between the necessity of scientific assent and the liberty of scientific consideration, and we suggest again that more error is derived from Professor Penelhum's not having seen this distinction in St. Thomas than there is misjudgement found in St. Thomas' conception of the exclusiveness of faith and knowledge, as Penelhum would suggest. For it is Professor Penelhum, not St. Thomas, who ends by explaining the seeming dissent in the face of proof with having to defend a paradoxical and contradictory position.

Finally, then, let us conclude by remarking that it is St. Thomas' understanding of the exclusiveness of faith and science which allows for a clear and coherent apprehension of the unique characteristics of both the religious and the philosophical minds as well as a proper appreciation of both the limitations and the dignity of the human intellect and its knowledge of the Divine Reality.

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