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The following Article titles are paraphrased; in the text itself, they are given both in paraphrase and in literal translation.

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Question 1, Article 1: Is it reasonable to think that the reach of our reasoning needs to be extended by divine Revelation? I

*It would hardly be persuasive for St. Thomas to say that we need divine Revelation just because divine Revelation tells us so. He does quote from Holy Scripture to show that it confirms his conclusions, but the argument in this Article is based squarely on reason: We need Revelation because some of the things we need to know cannot be found out by reason alone, and because even many of those things which can be are very difficult for reason to ascertain.*

*Text, Paraphrase, and Commentary* I

<i>Discussion: Preambles to Faith – and Preambles to Reason?</i>	13
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<i>When St. Thomas asks whether God exists, this is not like asking whether Zeus, Apollo, or Athena exists. Rather we are asking whether there is a Something or Someone on which all else depends. None of the five arguments St. Thomas presents for the existence of God depend on Scripture. Each is purely philosophical. We are not in the realm of faith, but still in the realm of the reasonable preambles to faith – although faith goes on to purify and fortify reason, and confirms the conclusions that reason has attained.</i>	
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<i>In everyday language, something is called simple if it is easy to understand. Here, though, simplicity is contrasted with being composite – with having distinct aspects or parts. Composite things might be compounds of bodily parts or portions, of matter and form, of nature and “suppositum,” of existence and essence, of genus and difference, or of substance and accident. The Tradition claims that God is not composite in any of these ways. Is it correct?</i>	
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<i>In the received view, God is perfect, meaning that He is complete, lacking in nothing, without undeveloped potentialities; He is always full. Contemporary English tends to use the term “perfect” differently, in the sense of what is entirely good. Though one might anticipate that if God is perfect, then He is entirely good, the question of His goodness per se is not explored until Question 6. Here we are asking only about His fullness or complete actuality.</i>	
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<i>good flow downward. His goodness and theirs cannot even be measured on the same scale. He is the Uncreated Source of all that is. He is the Original, of which created goods are but copies. Could even that be true?</i>	
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<i>This is the only Article we take up out of order. Could it be that since the universe contains things like cancer and tapeworms, God is just evil? Or that in some sense God is good, but His idea of good is entirely unintelligible and irrelevant to us? Or that, in His goodness, God doesn't mean to do us evil, but the evils we suffer are beneath His notice? St. Thomas addresses such concerns elsewhere in the Treatise on the One God. The equally dreadful possibility considered and rejected in the present Article is that God is indeed the Creator of good – but also the Creator of evil. Even if we understand the reasoning behind the proposition that God is altogether good, we may yet suffer the nagging doubt that He couldn't be. For where would evil come from, if not from Him? The Universal Doctor presents rational solutions to such doubts.</i>	
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*As St. Thomas is aware, God's changelessness is rather plainly implied by His perfection, since any change would be a decline from that perfection. Nonetheless, the Objectors present various reasons for thinking that God could not be immutable – that He would have to be subject to change – and so these need solutions. In our own day too, many people are inclined to object, thinking that an unchanging God would be “static.” Since in all of our finite experience, to be a living person is to be immersed in flux and change, we suppose that an unchanging God would be frozen in time, never doing anything, no more living or personal than a statue. But this is a false picture. We should not say that the eternal God is doing nothing, but that everything He does, He is doing all the time.*

*Text, Paraphrase, and Commentary* 126

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*If God is eternal, then he has no beginning and no end, and His action extends to every moment, rather than being limited in time as our action is. St. Thomas unpacks the implications of these ideas. We already know from the previous Article that eternity has to do with changelessness, and we already know from Question 9 that God is changeless – so He must be eternal too, and there is nothing left to do in this Article – right? Not quite. Besides, most of the heavy lifting in this Article is in the Replies to the Objections.*

*Text, Paraphrase, and Commentary* 138

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*Many polytheists would be perfectly happy to borrow yet another god from Christianity, but only so long as they could demote Him from the One God to a god among gods: “What have you got against the others?” The naïve assumption is that God belongs to the genus “gods” – that He is just one more of those things (but in Christian belief, the real one). St. Thomas has argued that He is not that sort of thing at all – in fact, He is not a “sort of thing.” Moreover He is of such a nature that there could not be more than of Him. But how do we know He is one? Even someone who considers the many gods of polytheism false, foolish, base, demonic, or all too human may ask “But is monotheism true?”*

*Text, Paraphrase, and Commentary* 155

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*The term “grace” refers to unmerited gifts of God, among which might be gifts of knowledge. Does God offer knowledge over and above what*

<i>we could have learned just through the still earlier gift of our inbuilt reasoning powers? At stake is the authenticity of the deeds, and the truth of the teachings, recorded in Holy Scripture. Thomas Aquinas always takes natural reason as far as he can before turning to what God has revealed by grace; he wants us to trust Revelation, but only authentic Revelation. Now, though, he turns the inquiry around. In order to know all that we need to know about God, do we need His grace at all? This inquiry amplifies the one in Question 1, Article 1.</i>	
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<i>Can we form true propositions about God? Some say no – but one would have to know a great deal about God in order to be certain that one could not know anything else about Him. At every stage of his writing, St. Thomas has taught that what we can say about God is limited. In this life we do not see His very essence, and the mere backwash of His glory would overwhelm us. However, whether our little speeches are inadequate is not the question: Rather we should ask whether their inadequacy makes them false. Can we say anything positive about God? Throughout this book St. Thomas has been making affirmative statements about Him. But even if we can, then what kinds can we make, and in what sense should we take them? We might even ask what it is about the reality of God that makes talking about His reality so difficult – and yet so important.</i>	
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<i>Doubtless many readers take the saying that God is truth in a merely figurative sense, as a dramatic way to emphasize that He loves truth, reveals truth, and loves those who live according to His truth and are truthful themselves. All of those claims are made in Scripture too. But</i>	

<i>could the statement that God simply is truth be meant literally? We should not carelessly dismiss the possibility, for by this point in the Treatise on the One God many other startling things about God have already proven to be the case. St. Thomas investigates whether this is another.</i>	
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<i>Life science students are taught that living things are distinguished from nonliving things by the functions they perform, such as nutrition, excretion, and adaptation to the environment. Such lists of functions are not drawn up with a view to life in general, but only with a view to biological life. It would be foolish to say that God is not alive because He does not excrete. In order to find out whether the Tradition is correct in attributing life to God, we need a better criterion of what it is to be alive, and it must be generally applicable, not crafted just to produce the conclusion that He is. St. Thomas has such a criterion, and puts it to work.</i>	
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<i>The hypothesis that God’s will is completely free, that He does not have to will what He wills, seems to present difficulties. Would it mean that His will does not have to be good or wise? That would make him an arbitrary tyrant. But the hypothesis that His will is not free, that it is compelled by necessity, that He cannot otherwise than as He does, turns Him into a kind of Fate. Presumably even our prayers to such a God would be pointless, because for Him to respond to a prayer would be to will something different than what He would have willed had the prayer not been offered. St. Thomas distinguishes the question of whether there is anything that God wills by necessity from the question of whether He wills all that He wills by necessity. These questions turn out to have different answers.</i>	
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<i>Love is an attitude that exults in the sheer existence of the other and wills the other’s good. In the words of the Thomist Josef Pieper, it wants to say</i>	

<i>“It is good that you exist; it is good that you are in this world!” Thus it is not primarily a condition of the feelings but an attitude of the will. But does God love the things that He creates? Does He cherish even the least of His creatures, as the Tradition claims? Much earlier we established that He is good. But does He will to impart good? Objections can be offered from many different directions. Of course Scripture asserts God’s love for all things, but St. Thomas inquires whether this can be demonstrated by logical considerations alone.</i>	
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<i>Mercy is the will to relieve another’s suffering. Justice is the will to give another person what he deserves. Sometimes, giving him what he deserves makes him miserable. Moreover, even apart from punishment, people do suffer. These facts make it difficult to see how mercy and justice can coexist. Yet according to the Tradition, they do. The claim is not merely that God is sometimes just and sometimes merciful – but that He is always both in every act at every time. How could this even be possible?</i>	
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<i>The term “providence” refers to God’s detailed rule of the universe, to His provision for all things. Why should He pay attention to details? In particular, why should He take notice of all our doings and govern what happens to us? According to a certain common view of God, He doesn’t. At most He exercises “general” providence, for example setting up space and time and the sorts of regularities that occupy physicists, but not paying attention to us. Our ability to govern even our own small affairs is limited. How then can a Being in charge of the whole universe take notice when each sparrow falls, and number each hair on our heads? Besides, the great among us do not trouble themselves much with the affairs of their underlings. So wouldn’t God be above all that sort of thing?</i>	
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<i>and His primacy in the order of causes? Yes, and in that sense, the Article proves nothing new. However, our imaginary Objectors think they have compelling reasons to think that God couldn't be omnipotent. If they are right, then despite appearances, the previous arguments must have been flawed somehow, and we need to backtrack and find out how. St. Thomas finds that each Objection misunderstands what it means for God to be omnipotent. So despite the wording of the "whether" in the title of this Article, the real question is not so much whether God is omnipotent, but what it means for Him to be omnipotent.</i>	
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<i>Beatitude is supreme happiness. The query before us is not whether God will give the blessed supreme happiness, but whether He is their supreme happiness. To put it another way, it is not whether He will give them beatitude as something different from Himself, but whether He will give it to them by giving them Himself. The answer, interestingly, depends on the sense in which the question is asked – for there are two ways of taking it, and they must be treated differently. With this Article we tremble at the threshold of the Gospel.</i>	
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<i>We saw at the outset of the book that Thomas Aquinas considers reason a preamble to faith. But to faith in what? Human life is triply haunted, by the specter of absurdity, by the burden of brokenness and guilt, and by the dread of mortality and incompleteness. Can there be meaning, can there be healing and forgiveness, can we be everlastingly fulfilled? According to St. Thomas, the answers to these three questions are provided in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, who bore our sins and opened the path to the Father. This scandalizes us because if the Gospel is true, then the facile and comforting proposal of "many roads to heaven" is false. It scandalizes us even more because it asks something of us. And so the Treatise on the One God is not the end of our investigation, but the beginning.</i>	
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