

# Introduction

There is more than one way to write a systematic theology. Most begin with a lengthy section called “prolegomena,” which, as one colleague remarks, few bother to read. Much of what goes into such a chapter is addressed in this introduction.

What follows is intended to be *Christian* theology. I am an ordained minister in the Reformed tradition. In this I intend to be catholic, building on the ecumenical consensus of the early centuries of the church. The Reformed have classically seen themselves as part of the one holy, catholic, and apostolic church for which Christ gave his life to redeem. I recognize the tensions that exist here.<sup>1</sup> I find Thomas Oden’s claim to unoriginality inspiring, in his hope that nothing of his own might intrude on his representation of the great tradition of the church.<sup>2</sup> I cannot say I have achieved this.

This book also is written from a confessional position. I am committed to the Reformed faith as it is expressed in the Westminster Assembly’s Confession of Faith and Catechisms and other kindred documents. The Westminster divines were thoroughly versed in the history and theology of the church, citing the fathers and medieval theologians freely, respecting adversaries like the Roman Catholic Bellarmine, and citing him on occasion as an authority.<sup>3</sup>

This raises the question of the relationship between Scripture and tradition, discussed more fully in chapter 7. Tradition, viewed as the past teaching of the church in its confessions, creeds, and representative

---

1. See Robert Letham, “Catholicity Global and Historical: Constantinople, Westminster, and the Church in the Twenty-First Century,” *WTJ* 72 (2010): 43–57.

2. Thomas C. Oden, *The Word of Life*, vol. 2 of *Systematic Theology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1989), xvi.

3. Robert Letham, *The Westminster Assembly: Reading Its Theology in Historical Context* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2009), 94–95.

theologians, effectively represents the sum total of the accumulated biblical exegesis of the Christian church. It is not on a par with Scripture—some of it may even mislead us—but we neglect it at our peril and use it to our great advantage. I make no attempt in what follows to reinvent the exegetical wheel. I engage in close biblical exegesis where it is necessary to consider a matter more thoroughly.

This is where the common misunderstanding of the post-Reformation slogan *sola Scriptura* can be confusing. When the slogan was devised, it was never intended to exclude the tradition of the church. Instead, it asserted that the Bible is the supreme authority. Adherence to the idea that the Bible is the only source to be followed was the mistake of the anti-Nicenes in the fourth century, the Socinians of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Jehovah's Witnesses in the nineteenth century, and many other sects and heretics. Effectively, it says that my understanding of the Bible is superior to the accumulated wisdom of every generation of Christians that has ever lived. Enough said.

So I agree with Oliver Crisp concerning the respective weight to be given to various authorities:

1. Scripture is the *norma normans*,<sup>4</sup> the *principium theologiae*. It is the final arbiter in matters theological. . . . the first-order authority in all matters of Christian doctrine.
2. Catholic creeds, as defined by an ecumenical council of the Church, constitute a first tier of *norma normata*,<sup>5</sup> which have second-order authority. . . . Such norms derive their authority from Scripture to which they bear witness.
3. Confessional and conciliar statements of particular ecclesiastical bodies are a second tier of *norma normata*, which have third-order in matters touching Christian doctrine. They also derive their authority from Scripture to the extent that they faithfully reflect the teaching of Scripture.
4. The particular doctrines espoused by theologians including those individuals accorded the title Doctor of the Church which are not reiterations of matters that are *de fide*, or entailed by something *de fide*, constitute *theologoumena*, or theological opinions, which

---

4. A norming, adjusting, or measuring standard by which other measuring tools are to be measured.

5. A standard or measure that is itself subject to, and defined by, a greater standard.

are not binding upon the Church, but which may be offered up for legitimate discussion within the Church.<sup>6</sup>

From this, I value a retrieval and restatement of the historic doctrines of the church. Experience shows that every few years new and exciting proposals arise, capture scholarly attention, and carry the day to the virtual exclusion of any competing claims. Yet, in ten or twenty years these intriguing new perspectives are discarded, overtaken by newer and even more exciting proposals. I am not being flippant—I have great interest in new research and appreciation for new insights it may bring—but this common phenomenon does give one pause to wonder just how long the latest predilections will last.

You may, or probably may not, be disappointed that space limitations preclude an exhaustive discussion of everything. No doubt some clever reviewer will point this out, happy to refer to this, that, or the other missing book, or to opine that the full historical context of every reference to past authors is not spelled out in detail. However, the longer the tome, the fewer the readers, and proportionately less will be read. Gone are the days when a fourteen-volume *Church Dogmatics* could stream off the press as from a conveyor belt. In a multivolume systematic theology, the first volume is likely to be remaindered before the last one is released. However, I will address some issues in more detail, since they are matters that have been disputed recently.

This of itself prevents extensive biblical exegesis. I do not write out biblical passages that readers can easily locate for themselves, although there are exceptions to every rule. Theology is more than the accumulation of biblical texts. It involves the interaction of a range of realities to which the cumulative witness of the Bible directs us. It is the entailment of “the sense of Scripture,” as Gregory of Nazianzus described it, a theoretical and metatheoretical account of the overall interrelationship and inherent connections of the holistic biblical teaching. I hope something of this may become clear as we go along. That does not preclude focus on key passages, nor does it set aside reference to the overall biblical witness on each matter. The Bible is the Word of God, the supreme authority in all matters of faith and practice. It simply means that we need to consider the whole teaching of Scripture.

---

6. Oliver D. Crisp, *God Incarnate: Explorations in Christology* (London: T&T Clark, 2009), 17 (italics original).

So my method is based on Scripture, but in dialogue with important voices from the church.

More basic than this is the question of whether and how we can speak about God. In part, we will consider this in the first chapter. For now, my answer is that we can speak about him since he has spoken to us, in our world, in our words. Even more, in his Son he has lived as one of us, taking our humanity as his own. We can think his thoughts after him and so speak, falteringly but truly, with the aid of the Holy Spirit.

In what follows, a few features differ from what is often encountered. I have already mentioned the absence of prolegomena. Additionally, I begin not with the doctrine of Scripture but with the Trinity. This stems from the overall arrangement of the book, which is centered on God and feeds thereafter into the works of God in creation, providence, and grace. While many, if not most, recent systematic theologies take Scripture as their starting point, so as to provide an epistemological foundation, it has struck me that to say that the Bible is the Word of God begs the question, in today's world, of the identity of the God whose Word it is. Moreover, God precedes his revelation. He brought all other entities into existence. The basic premise of the book is the living God, who communicates contingent life to his creatures, which humanity abandoned by sin—a choice for death—but which is renewed and superabundantly enhanced in Christ. Again, I deal with the Trinity before the divine attributes. While the revelation of the unity of God came first historically, God's ultimate self-revelation is as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in indivisible union. This is the Christian doctrine of God.

However, the main innovation is that I attempt to integrate soteriology and ecclesiology. The doctrine of salvation has long been treated in isolation from the doctrine of the church. In Roman Catholic theology the church comes first, with the sacraments at its heart; individual salvation is tacked on at the end. In contrast, in Reformed theology, individual soteriology is discussed in great detail, but the church and sacraments come later. In reality they stand together, since outside the church “there is no ordinary possibility of salvation” (WCF, 25.2). We are saved not merely as discrete individuals but as the one church of Jesus Christ. Consequently, I have long thought that the two should be treated together.

There are historical factors behind this separation of individual salvation from the church. First is the obvious dominance of individualism

in Western society. Beginning in the Renaissance and gaining ground in the Enlightenment, the focus on the individual has become pervasive and often unrecognized. Descartes's famous search for certainty began with the assumption of the thinking self—"I think, therefore I am." Whereas the New Testament places the salvation of the individual in the context of the church, both evangelical theology and its practical outworking have detached the two, viewing church and sacraments as effective optional extras.<sup>7</sup> Aiding and abetting this trend have been analytic modes of thought, in which realities are broken down into discrete elements, focusing on distinctions. Hence the doctrine of salvation is seen as not only distinct but in some cases separate from the doctrine of the church, in stark contrast to WCF, 25.2. We need a reorientation of mind to think these great realities together, and so to implement a more thoroughly ecclesial practice. Such would be closer to the focus of the apostles and the great tradition of the church.

In line with this, I seek to connect the preaching of the Word of God and the sacraments with the outworking of salvation by the Holy Spirit. From the analytic thinking I have outlined has arisen the idea that the sacraments are merely material and external rites, symbolic at best, to be distinguished from the work of the Spirit in the individual. Hence, the distinction of water baptism from Spirit baptism has become something of a commonplace. The Reformers and successive generations thereafter knew no such classification. That the Spirit's work was not to be restricted was clear in their writings, as was their resistance to any suggestion that he operated automatically on the performance of church ordinances. However, underlying their belief and practice was the fact that since God created the heavens and the earth, he uses material means to convey spiritual grace to his people. It was not by mistake that baptism came first in Jesus's last instructions to his apostles for their ongoing work (Matt. 28:19–20). It is no accident that Jesus was crucified at the Passover or that the Spirit came on the day of Pentecost rather than any other day. God honored the feasts he had established. He keeps his appointments. Those appointments are now related to his church.

---

7. Robert Letham and Donald MacLeod, "Is Evangelicalism Christian?," *EQ* 67 (1995): 3–33. I am using "evangelical" to refer to conservative theology that acknowledges, among other things, the supreme authority of Scripture, which includes but is not restricted to the Reformed, rather than—as is common in North America—being viewed in distinction from the Reformed.

On a more basic note, when referring to the Greek or Hebrew text, I have normally provided a translation and put a transliterated version as a footnote, so as to avoid disrupting the reading. I use the original text where it appears important to do so, if significant terms are used, or if there is an important exegetical question that depends on it. Readers may be amused to find that there are fewer of these in the early chapters than in the later ones. This is because of the subject matter; there happen to be more such questions arising the further we progress in the book.

An acquaintance, on hearing I was writing a systematic theology, remarked with a yawn, “Do we need *another* one?” As with biblical commentaries, theologies can give insight into different ways of understanding the faith. For nearly two hundred years after the Reformation they were coming off the press almost as quickly as one could say “Martin Luther.” I set this volume before you with the hope and prayer that it may be of some little help to your faith and to your ministry. I write for the church, intending it to be read by laypeople as well as students, ministers, and professional scholars, with the aim that we will deepen and broaden our understanding of the Christian faith and so advance in faith and love for Christ, his church, and those around us, and articulate it effectively in a rapidly changing world. I hope you will join me on this journey.

You probably will not agree with me on every point; that’s your freedom. Of necessity, any such book is inadequate to the task, to the vastness of the mystery. Owing to the scope of a systematic theology and the necessary restrictions of space, it is not feasible to discuss each matter in the detail that would be possible in a book devoted expressly to any one of them. However, we will grapple with questions arising from the greatest and most astounding story ever told. I hope you enjoy it; theology should be enjoyed, for our greatest privilege is “to glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever” (WSC, 1).

## PART 1

# THE TRIUNE GOD



Almighty and everlasting God, who has given to us your servants grace by the confession of a true faith to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity, and in the power of the divine Majesty to worship the Unity; we beseech you, that you would keep us stedfast in this faith, and evermore defend us from all adversities, who lives and reigns, one God, world without end. Amen.

*Collect for Trinity Sunday, Book of Common Prayer (1662)*





## The Revelation of God

The Bible never attempts to prove that God is. Attempts to do so by logic fall short of establishing the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God exists necessarily—there is no possibility that he cannot exist. The existence of God is not rationally attained, though it can be rationally explained and defended. Rather, God reveals himself in the world around us and has implanted a knowledge of his existence in all people, evidenced in the almost universal recognition of the need to worship a higher being. This implanted revelation is clear and fulfills the purpose God has for it, but it does not disclose the gospel and so cannot lead us to salvation. Nevertheless, it is essential as a basis for knowing God.



A few years ago, a group of atheists, which included the British Humanist Association, paid for a poster on the side of London double-decker buses. The poster said: “There’s Probably No God. Now Relax and Enjoy Your Life.”<sup>1</sup> Along similar lines, the geneticist Richard Dawkins has argued that the claim that there is a god has a very low probability, though Dawkins stopped short of zero. “I think God is very improbable and I live my life on the assumption that he is not there,” he acknowledged.<sup>2</sup> Again, “I am agnostic only to the extent that I am agnostic about fairies at the bottom of the garden.”<sup>3</sup>

---

1. “Atheists Launch Bus Ad Campaign,” BBC News, January 6, 2009, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/7813812.stm>; and “Atheist Bus Campaign,” Humanist UK (website), <https://humanism.org.uk/campaigns/successful-campaigns/atheist-bus-campaign/>; accessed December 9, 2017.

2. Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (London: Black Swan, 2007), 73.

3. Dawkins, *Delusion*, 74.

I couldn't agree more. If anything, the advertisers didn't go far enough. The god who is a product of the constructions of human thought and the predication of whose existence depends on human reasoning does not and cannot exist, since in any argument the premises have a higher degree of certainty than the conclusion to which the argument leads. Such argumentation could never establish that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is.

The Bible nowhere attempts to argue for the existence of God. It assumes that God is and that he has revealed himself; God is the necessary presupposition for human life, so much so that it is the fool who has said in his heart that there is no God (Ps. 14:1). Centuries ago the then archbishop of Canterbury, Anselm (1033–1109), wrote that God is that than which none greater can be thought. Necessary existence is entailed in that. If one were to conceive of a being that might not exist, one would not have conceived of One who is the greatest that can be thought, since it would be possible to conceive of a greater, about whom nonexistence is not predicable.

R. C. Sproul has gone a stage further, arguing strongly and correctly that, in an important sense, God does not exist.<sup>4</sup> From a different angle, if one has a hankering for etymological fallacies<sup>5</sup>—one does from time to time, doesn't one?—we can see how this works out. Our verb “to exist” is ultimately derived from the Latin verb *existere*, meaning, among other things, to come into view, to come forward, to come into being.<sup>6</sup> This entails being out of or from another entity. All things created are what they are in this way, derived from something else. We exist from our parents, our children exist from us, my desk comes from a tree, which in turn is derived from an acorn, which fell from another tree, and so on. The building in which I work was produced from a range of materials. The air we breathe, our planet, and its galaxy are all brought about by other entities. All such entities are in a constant process of change, growth, retraction, and flux. All things in the universe exist contingently. Once they did not exist; their present existence depends on God, while the possibility of their ceasing to be is ever present. This is not the case with Yahweh, the God of Israel, the God and Father of our

4. Nathan W. Bingham, “R. C. Sproul Proves That God Does Not Exist,” Ligonier Ministries, May 29, 2014, <http://www.ligonier.org/blog/rc-sproul-proves-god-does-not-exist/>.

5. See D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1984), 34–36.

6. P. G. W. Glare, *Oxford Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 656.

Lord Jesus Christ. He *is*. He is life itself. Created entities *exist*; but God *is*. As Aquinas wrote, God is his own existence—he is above existence and exceeds every kind of knowledge.<sup>7</sup> He subsists, for “those things subsist which exist in themselves, and not in another.”<sup>8</sup>

With these important provisos, we will accommodate ourselves to popular usage. There are a range of arguments devised to prove or to explain that God is.

## 1.1 Arguments for the Existence of God

One class of arguments for the existence of God might be intended to persuade an unbeliever. Not only does the Bible not follow this method, but it will not lead to the desired conclusion. Another type of argument is one presented to believers to disclose the rationality of what they hold already by faith. These can be helpful in establishing a rational basis for what is believed on other grounds. Among this second type, foremost is Anselm’s proof, often misleadingly called the ontological argument.

### 1.1.1 Anselm’s Proof for the Existence of God

Anselm had a distinctive line of thought. In his *Proslogion* he did not intend to prove to an unbeliever that God exists. He may never have met such a person. Instead, he wrote for his fellow monks, to demonstrate that their belief in God could be established on a rational basis without recourse to Scripture.<sup>9</sup> This purpose is vital to note, for his case must not be assessed as if it were intended to accomplish something he never had in mind. Moreover, he couched his proof in an attitude of prayer, addressing God in the flow of discussion. He assumed God but sought reasons to support what he already knew.<sup>10</sup> The context of the entire book, and the *Monologion* that preceded it, places it within a commitment to Christ. In the *Monologion* Anselm indicates that his work is grounded on Augustine’s treatise on the Trinity.<sup>11</sup> Barth comments that Anselm is

7. Aquinas, *ST* 1a.12.1.

8. Aquinas, *ST* 1a.29.2.

9. Anselm, *Proslogion*, preface, in Eugene R. Fairweather, *A Scholastic Miscellany: Anselm to Ockham* (New York: Macmillan, 1970), 69. See Karl Barth, *Fides Quaerens Intellectum: Anselm’s Proof of the Existence of God in the Context of His Theological Scheme* (Pittsburgh: Pickwick, 1975), 64.

10. Anselm, *Proslogion* 1, in Fairweather, *A Scholastic Miscellany*, 70. See Ian Davie, “Anselm’s Argument Reassessed,” *DRev* 112 (1994): 103–20.

11. Lydia Schumacher, “The Lost Legacy of Anselm’s Argument: Re-Thinking the Purpose of Proofs for the Existence of God,” *MTheol* 27 (2011): 87–101.

seeking not to prove logically but to understand in order to establish validity,<sup>12</sup> as the outcome of faith, a faith that impels us to understand and to delight in what we understand.<sup>13</sup> It is “the nature of faith that desires knowledge. *Credo ut intelligam* means: It is my very faith itself that summons me to knowledge.”<sup>14</sup> Hogg reflects that *probare* (to prove) can mean “to probe” or “to test.”<sup>15</sup>

When Anselm speaks of God existing necessarily, “*necessitas* means the attribute of being unable not to be, or of being unable to be different. . . . The *necessitas* that is peculiar to the object of faith is the impossibility of the object of faith not existing or of being otherwise than it is.”<sup>16</sup> Anselm does not pursue this on the basis of autonomous human reason<sup>17</sup> but seeks to let the truth disclose itself.<sup>18</sup> As I have indicated, he does not argue on the terms of unbelievers<sup>19</sup> but seeks to establish the certainty of what he already believes.<sup>20</sup> His argument can be summed up fairly concisely, but it is so dense that it requires a treatise properly to unpack it and, in effect, a library to discuss it.

*The crucial point in the Proslogion is the name of God that Anselm presupposes.* In prayer, he sought the name of God, and eventually it was revealed to him that God is “that than which none greater can be thought.”<sup>21</sup> This goes beyond God being the greatest entity ever conceived by humans, or the greatest that is possible to conceive. Rather, as Barth indicates, God is entirely independent of whether humans do or do not so conceive.<sup>22</sup>

*It follows that existence is an attribute of perfection,* since perfection could not be present in an entity that did not exist. Since God is “that than which none greater can be thought,” existence is entailed. Anselm argues that if a thing is in the mind but not in reality, nonexistence is implied; but if it is in reality, it exists apart from our thoughts.<sup>23</sup> For

12. Barth, *Fides Quaerens Intellectum*, 13–14. Barth regarded this as his greatest work.

13. Barth, *Fides Quaerens Intellectum*, 15–17.

14. Barth, *Fides Quaerens Intellectum*, 18.

15. David S. Hogg, *Anselm of Canterbury: The Beauty of Theology* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 91.

16. Barth, *Fides Quaerens Intellectum*, 49.

17. Barth, *Fides Quaerens Intellectum*, 52–53, 63.

18. Barth, *Fides Quaerens Intellectum*, 64.

19. Barth, *Fides Quaerens Intellectum*, 69.

20. Hogg, *Anselm*, 92.

21. Anselm, *Proslogion* 2, in Fairweather, *A Scholastic Miscellany*, 73.

22. Barth, *Fides Quaerens Intellectum*, 74.

23. Anselm, *Proslogion* 2, in Fairweather, *A Scholastic Miscellany*, 73–74; Barth, *Fides Quaerens Intellectum*, 91.

Anselm “the object then is first of all in reality, then following from that it exists, then as a consequence of that it can be thought.”<sup>24</sup> Anselm’s purpose in *Proslogion* 2–4 is to demonstrate the impossibility of thinking of God as merely a conception in the mind.<sup>25</sup> For Anselm, God is in a unique category.<sup>26</sup> It is impossible to conceive of a being as God who exists in the mind alone since God is that than which none greater can be thought.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, God exists in reality as well as in the mind, since it is impossible that he exist in the mind alone.<sup>28</sup> God is not merely the greatest being, or the greatest being about which we can think. There is no greater entity possible, nor can one possibly be conceived to be.

Opponents pointed out what to them was an obvious flaw: an idea of an absolutely perfect being does not entail that such a being exists. Anselm’s fellow monk Gaunilo, playing the devil’s advocate, objected on the grounds that one can have an idea of the existence of a perfect island, but that does not establish its existence.<sup>29</sup> Centuries later, Immanuel Kant used a similar line of reasoning, only in his case the perfect island was replaced by a hundred possible thalers.<sup>30</sup> However, what both objections missed is that God is not on the same footing as creatures. He cannot be compared to islands or currencies. Creatures exist contingently; they may or may not exist. But God is, and is of necessity, and is of necessity because of who he is. Since he is that than which none greater can be thought, his nonexistence is inconceivable, for any conception of his nonexistence would not be a conception of that than whom none greater can be thought; it would be a conception of an entity that could not be God. Neither Gaunilo nor Kant touch this central nerve of Anselm’s case.

Barth continues, “God exists in such a way (true only of him) that it is impossible for him to be conceived of as not existing.”<sup>31</sup> “The Name of God as it is heard and understood compels the more precise

24. Barth, *Fides Quaerens Intellectum*, 92.

25. Barth, *Fides Quaerens Intellectum*, 94–95.

26. Barth, *Fides Quaerens Intellectum*, 96.

27. Barth, *Fides Quaerens Intellectum*, 126.

28. Barth, *Fides Quaerens Intellectum*, 128.

29. Gaunilo of Marmoutiers, *Pro Insipiente (On Behalf of the Fool)*, in Brian Davies, *Anselm of Canterbury: The Major Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 105–10, esp. 109. For Anselm’s reply, see Anselm, *Reply to Gaunilo*, in Davies, *Anselm of Canterbury*, 110–22.

30. Immanuel Kant, *Immanuel Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason* (Norman Kemp Smith, 1933; repr., London: Macmillan, 1970), 504–7.

31. Anselm, *Proslogion* 3, in Fairweather, *A Scholastic Miscellany*, 74; Barth, *Fides Quaerens Intellectum*, 132 (my italics).

definition that God does not exist as all other things exist. . . . God exists—and he alone—in such a way that it is impossible even to conceive the possibility of his non-existence.”<sup>32</sup> The contrast is now advanced, Barth argues, to that “between something that certainly exists objectively as well as in thought but yet which is conceivable as not existing and on the other hand something existing objectively and in thought but which is not conceivable as not existing.”<sup>33</sup> We could paraphrase this by saying that if a person were to predicate the nonexistence of God, it could not possibly be God—the God who created the world and who has revealed himself in Jesus Christ—about whom this was predicated. In this light, Barth concludes, God “exists as the reality of existence itself, as the criterion of all existence and non-existence.”<sup>34</sup> Again, “The positive statement: God so exists that his non-existence is inconceivable.”<sup>35</sup>

Graham Oppy, an agnostic philosopher, concludes that ontological arguments can neither prove nor disprove the existence of God and so are worthless.<sup>36</sup> Correctly, he points to the presuppositions that underlie the arguments: “Only those who make the relevant presuppositions will suppose that ontological arguments are sound; but there is nothing in ontological arguments that establishes a case for those presuppositions from the standpoint of those who do not share them.”<sup>37</sup> Anselm, however, was never attempting to convince those who differed with his commitments, nor am I suggesting that his argument be used in such a context.<sup>38</sup>

Anna Williams remarks, “It is a curious feature of arguments for the existence of God that they presume an identity for that which they seek to prove.”<sup>39</sup> In reality, “God” denotes different things to different people, posing difficulties for Christians, for whom God is Trinity. The doctrine of the Trinity affirms that God is personal, his actions being those of a personal agent, which other religious conceptions cannot allow.<sup>40</sup>

32. Barth, *Fides Quaerens Intellectum*, 134–35.

33. Barth, *Fides Quaerens Intellectum*, 141.

34. Barth, *Fides Quaerens Intellectum*, 142.

35. Barth, *Fides Quaerens Intellectum*, 150.

36. Graham Oppy, *Ontological Arguments and Belief in God* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 199.

37. Oppy, *Ontological Arguments*, 198.

38. For discussions of Anselm’s argument and its critics, see G. R. Evans, *Anselm* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1989), 49–55; Hogg, *Anselm*, 89–124.

39. A. N. Williams, “Does ‘God’ Exist?,” *SJT* 58 (2005): 468.

40. Williams, “Does ‘God’ Exist?,” 468–84.

Along the same lines, Aquinas did not accept Anselm's argument as convincing for those who do not share his presuppositions.<sup>41</sup> Until recently, it has been thought that he took a different tack and sought to convince unbelievers, in the mode of the first type of argument I mentioned above. However, a newer school of thought holds that Aquinas, like Anselm, was explaining how the Christian faith was rationally defensible.<sup>42</sup> Brian Davies comments:

Aquinas is not at all worried about making out a case for God's existence. . . . It is most unlikely that he ever encountered an atheist in the modern sense. . . . He thinks it perfectly proper for someone to start by taking God's existence for granted. At the end of the day his basic position is roughly that of St Anselm . . . : "I do not seek to understand so that I may believe; but I believe so that I may understand."<sup>43</sup>

It has been suggested that, in the face of the challenge of the Islamic scholarship of Averroes (1126–1198) and Avicenna (ca. 980–1037) and their interpretation of Aristotle, some Latin Averroists held to "double truth," the idea that contradictories could be true. Thus, for example, the Christian account of creation could be true on religious grounds while false scientifically. Hence, the need for Aquinas to demonstrate the compatibility of faith with reason.<sup>44</sup> So, in terms of the doctrine of the Trinity, for Aquinas, "though . . . it cannot be rationally demonstrated, it can still be rationally discussed."<sup>45</sup>

Aquinas considered that the existence of God could be supported both a priori, from the cause to the effect, and a posteriori, from the effect to the cause. If the effect is more familiar to us, then we can reason from the effects of God, his works in the world, back to God as their cause.<sup>46</sup> From this, Thomas thought, the existence of God can be established in

---

41. Aquinas, *ST* 1a.2.1; Brian Davies, *Thomas Aquinas's Summa Theologiae: A Guide and Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 30.

42. Schumacher, "Lost Legacy," 97–99; Aquinas, *ST* 1a.2.1–2; David Braine, *The Reality of Time and the Existence of God: The Project of Proving God's Existence* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988); Leo Elders, *The Philosophical Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Leiden: Brill, 1990); Anthony Kenny, *The Five Ways: St. Thomas Aquinas; Proofs for God's Existence* (London: Routledge, 2008); Fergus Kerr, "Theology in Philosophy: Revisiting the Five Ways," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 50, no. 1/3 (2001): 115–30; Mark Jordan, *Reuritten Theology: Aquinas after His Readers* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006). All cited in Schumacher.

43. Brian Davies, *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992), 21–22.

44. Ralph McInerny, ed., *Thomas Aquinas: Selected Writings* (London: Penguin, 1999), xi–xiii.

45. Davies, *Aquinas*, 191.

46. Aquinas, *ST* 1a.2.2.