**Summa theologia: First Part, Question 2, Article 3. Whether God exists?**

**Objection 1.** It seems that [God](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608a.htm) does not [exist](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608b.htm); because if one of two contraries be [infinite](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08004a.htm), the other would be altogether destroyed. But the word "God" means that He is [infinite](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08004a.htm) [goodness](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06636b.htm). If, therefore, [God existed](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608b.htm), there would be no [evil](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05649a.htm) discoverable; but there is [evil](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05649a.htm) in the world. Therefore [God](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608a.htm) does not [exist](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608b.htm).

**Objection 2.** Further, it is superfluous to suppose that what can be accounted for by a few principles has been produced by many. But it seems that everything we see in the world can be accounted for by other principles, supposing [God](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608a.htm) did not [exist](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608b.htm). For all [natural](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10715a.htm) things can be reduced to one principle which is [nature](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10715a.htm); and all [voluntary](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15506a.htm) things can be reduced to one principle which is [human](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09580c.htm) [reason](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12673b.htm), or [will](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15624a.htm). Therefore there is no need to suppose [God's existence](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608b.htm).

**On the contrary,** It is said in the person of [God](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608a.htm): "I am Who am." ([Exodus 3:14](http://www.newadvent.org/bible/exo003.htm#verse14))

**I answer that,** The [existence of God](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608b.htm) can be [proved](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12454c.htm) in five ways.

The first and more manifest way is the argument from motion. It is [certain](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03539b.htm), 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](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01124a.htm) to that towards which it is in motion; whereas a thing moves inasmuch as it is in [act](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01124a.htm). For motion is nothing else than the reduction of something from [potentiality](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01124a.htm) to [actuality](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01124a.htm). But nothing can be reduced from [potentiality](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01124a.htm) to [actuality](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01124a.htm), except by something in a state of [actuality](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01124a.htm). Thus that which is [actually](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01124a.htm) hot, as fire, makes wood, which is [potentially](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01124a.htm) hot, to be [actually](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01124a.htm) hot, and thereby moves and changes it. Now it is not possible that the same thing should be at once in [actuality](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01124a.htm) and [potentiality](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01124a.htm) in the same respect, but only in different respects. For what is [actually](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01124a.htm) hot cannot simultaneously be [potentially](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01124a.htm) hot; but it is simultaneously [potentially](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01124a.htm) 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 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](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08004a.htm), 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](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10733a.htm) to arrive at a first mover, put in motion by no other; and this everyone understands to be [God](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608a.htm).

The second way is from the [nature](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10715a.htm) of the efficient [cause](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03459a.htm). In the world of sense we find there is an order of efficient [causes](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03459a.htm). There is no case [known](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08673a.htm) (neither is it, indeed, possible) in which a thing is found to be the efficient [cause](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03459a.htm) of itself; for so it would be prior to itself, which is impossible. Now in efficient [causes](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03459a.htm) it is not possible to go on to [infinity](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08004a.htm), because in all efficient [causes](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03459a.htm) following in order, the first is the [cause](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03459a.htm) of the intermediate [cause](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03459a.htm), and the intermediate is the [cause](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03459a.htm) of the ultimate [cause](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03459a.htm), whether the intermediate [cause](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03459a.htm) be several, or only one. Now to take away the [cause](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03459a.htm) is to take away the effect. Therefore, if there be no first [cause](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03459a.htm) among efficient [causes](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03459a.htm), there will be no ultimate, nor any intermediate [cause](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03459a.htm). But if in efficient [causes](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03459a.htm) it is possible to go on to [infinity](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08004a.htm), there will be no first efficient [cause](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03459a.htm), neither will there be an ultimate effect, nor any intermediate efficient [causes](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03459a.htm); all of which is plainly [false](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05781a.htm). Therefore it is [necessary](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10733a.htm) to admit a first efficient [cause](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03459a.htm), to which everyone gives the name of [God](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608a.htm).

The third way is taken from possibility and [necessity](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10733a.htm), and runs thus. We find in [nature](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10715a.htm) things that are possible to be and not to be, since they are found to be generated, and to corrupt, and consequently, they are possible to be and not to 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](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05543b.htm). Now if this were [true](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15073a.htm), even now there would be nothing in [existence](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05543b.htm), because that which does not [exist](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05543b.htm) only begins to [exist](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05543b.htm) by something already [existing](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05543b.htm). Therefore, if at one time nothing was in [existence](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05543b.htm), it would have been impossible for anything to have begun to [exist](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05543b.htm); and thus even now nothing would be in [existence](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05543b.htm) — which is absurd. Therefore, not all beings are merely possible, but there must [exist](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05543b.htm) something the [existence](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05543b.htm) of which is [necessary](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10733a.htm). But every [necessary](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10733a.htm) thing either has its [necessity](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10733a.htm) [caused](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03459a.htm) by another, or not. Now it is impossible to go on to [infinity](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08004a.htm) in [necessary](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10733a.htm) things which have their [necessity](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10733a.htm) [caused](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03459a.htm) by another, as has been already [proved](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12454c.htm) in regard to efficient [causes](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03459a.htm). Therefore we cannot but postulate the [existence](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05543b.htm) of some being having of itself its own [necessity](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10733a.htm), and not receiving it from another, but rather causing in others their [necessity](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10733a.htm). This all [men](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09580c.htm) speak of as [God](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608a.htm).

The fourth way is taken from the gradation to be found in things. Among beings there are some more and some less [good](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06636b.htm), [true](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15073a.htm), noble and the like. But "more" and "less" are predicated of different things, according as they resemble in their 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 which is truest, something best, something noblest and, consequently, something which is uttermost being; for those things that are greatest in [truth](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15073a.htm) are greatest in being, as it is written in Metaph. ii. Now the maximum in any genus is the [cause](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03459a.htm) of all in that genus; as fire, which is the maximum heat, is the [cause](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03459a.htm) of all hot things. Therefore there must also be something which is to all beings the [cause](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03459a.htm) of their being, [goodness](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06636b.htm), and every other perfection; and this we call [God](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608a.htm).

The fifth way is taken from the governance of the world. We see that things which lack [intelligence](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08066a.htm), such as [natural](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10715a.htm) 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 result. Hence it is plain that not fortuitously, but designedly, do they achieve their end. Now whatever lacks [intelligence](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08066a.htm) cannot move towards an end, unless it be directed by some being endowed with [knowledge](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08673a.htm) and [intelligence](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08066a.htm); as the arrow is shot to its mark by the archer. Therefore some [intelligent](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08066a.htm) being [exists](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05543b.htm) by whom all [natural](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10715a.htm) things are directed to their end; and this being we call [God](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608a.htm).

**Reply to Objection 1.** As [Augustine](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02084a.htm) says (Enchiridion xi): "Since [God](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608a.htm) is the [highest good](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06640a.htm), He would not allow any [evil](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05649a.htm) to [exist](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05543b.htm) in His works, unless His [omnipotence](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11251c.htm) and [goodness](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06636b.htm) were such as to bring [good](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06636b.htm) even out of [evil](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05649a.htm)." This is part of the [infinite](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08004a.htm) [goodness](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06636b.htm) of [God](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608a.htm), that He should allow [evil](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05649a.htm) to [exist](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05543b.htm), and out of it produce [good](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06636b.htm).

**Reply to Objection 2.** Since [nature](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10715a.htm) works for a determinate end under the direction of a higher agent, whatever is done by [nature](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10715a.htm) must needs be traced back to [God](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608a.htm), as to its first [cause](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03459a.htm). So also whatever is done voluntarily must also be traced back to some higher [cause](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03459a.htm) other than [human](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09580c.htm) [reason](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12673b.htm) or [will](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15624a.htm), since these can change or fail; for all things that are changeable and capable of defect must be traced back to an immovable and self-necessary first principle, as was shown in the body of the Article.