

Study Questions: St. Thomas Aquinas

- (1) Did Aquinas believe that God's existence was self-evident? Explain.
- (2) In what sense did Aquinas believe that God's existence could be demonstrated?
- (3) What was Aquinas's attitude toward the Anselmian method of trying to prove God's existence?
- (4) What are the specific starting points of each of Aquinas's five ways?
- (5) What is the generic structure of the five ways?
- (6) Aquinas ends each of the five ways with the claim: "And this everyone understands to be God." How would Aquinas respond to the criticism that the five ways do not (individually or collectively) demonstrate the existence of a being with all the traditional attributes of the God of the monotheistic religious traditions?
- (7) What is the argument from motion? On what historical source(s) does the argument principally rely?
- (8) Some of Aquinas's demonstrations of the existence of God rely on a premise that denies an infinite regress of causes. What does Aquinas mean by this? Is it compatible with an eternally existing universe? Explain.
- (9) According to Aquinas, created things are a composition of essence and existence. How does this provide a starting point for an argument for the existence of God? Hint: Sixth Way.
- (10) According to Aquinas we cannot know what God is, but only what God is not. What does Aquinas mean by this?
- (11) What does Aquinas mean by saying that God is wholly simple? How does this doctrine relate to the *via negativa*?
- (12) Did Aquinas think that there could be a demonstration of the beginning of the universe?
- (13) What are three similarities between Aquinas, Maimonides, and Avicenna with respect to their conception of God and attempts to prove the existence of God?
- (14) What is Aquinas's doctrine of analogical predication? On what principles is this doctrine based? How does it help clarify (10) above?
- (15) Aquinas distinguished between the articles of faith and preambles to the faith. Explain the distinction.

(16) In what ways does Aquinas's philosophy of God differ from Maimonides's philosophy of God? In what ways are their views similar?