

# Thomas on “First Cause”

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- “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.”

# Thomist vs. Humanist

- **(H): So, Humanism, I think, is the best expression of modern science. It's the scientific outlook, using the rigorous methods of the scientific inquiry in order to test hypotheses about nature.**
- **(C): Well, I agree...that we need to be rational; we need to be scientific. ...Now one of the fundamental, rational laws of all thought...is that every event, everything that comes to be, has a cause.**
- **(H): Well, you said that every event has a cause. You maintain that every event has a cause. Is that what you said?**
- **(C): That's exactly right. Everything that comes to be has a cause.**
- **(H): Okay. Then you say, "The universe has a cause," and I take it that you would say that God caused the universe. My question then is, "If every event has a cause, what caused God?"**
- **(C): You see, you just confused the statement. "Everything that comes to be has a cause." God didn't come to be, so He doesn't need a cause. Just as the Atheist believes...**
- **(H): You contradicted your notion that everything has a cause.**
- **(C): No I didn't. Let me finish. Just as the Atheist believes that the universe is eternal...and therefore didn't need a cause, if you can have an uncaused universe, we can have an uncaused God. What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander.**
- **Later on in the conversation:**
- **(H): You're only pushing your ignorance one step back.**
- **(C): No, no, you're missing the point. You're not listening to it.**
- **(H): I'm listening to everything.**
- **(C): Everything that comes to be has a cause...that's the principle. The universe came to be, therefore the universe has a cause. Now, if God always existed, He didn't "come to be"...**
- **(H): He did not come to be. I see...**
- **(C): ...He doesn't need a cause.**
- **(H): ...Well, you're defining the situation. You're assuming your case by definition.**
- **(C): Not at all. The rational person...**
- **(H): ...How did you know that God did not come to be? How do you know that?**

**(cont.)**

- **(C): We know that the universe came to be...**
- **(H): But how do you know that God did not come to be?**
- **(C): ...and we know that everything that comes to be had a cause.**
- **(H): But how did you know that God did not come to be?**
- **(C): Because everything that comes to be has a cause, and if He caused the universe to come to be, He couldn't have come to be.**
- **(H): By definition you're defining...you're trying to define what you want to prove. How do you know?**
- **Later on in the conversation:**
- **(H): ...And now you're leaping beyond the range of observation. You're only pushing your ignorance back one step.**
- **Then, finally:**
- **(C): Well, why is it rational for you to believe that the universe is uncaused, and irrational for me to believe that God is uncaused?**

# Bavinck on reason

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- “If Christian revelation, which presupposes the darkness and error of unspiritual humanity, *submitted in advance to the judgments of reason, it would by that token contradict itself.* It would thereby place itself before a tribunal whose jurisdiction it had first denied. And having once recognized the authority of reason on the level of first principles [principia], it could no longer oppose that authority in the articles of faith. Dualistic supernaturalism always has to lead to rationalism, inasmuch it is rationalistic in principle.”

# God's Simplicity

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- Muller: “The doctrine of divine simplicity is among the normative assumptions of theology from the time of the church fathers, to the age of the great medieval scholastic systems, to the era of Reformation and post-Reformation theology, and indeed, on into the succeeding era of late orthodoxy and rationalism.”



# Plantinga on divine simplicity

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- ① 1. If God is identical with his properties, then God is a property.
- ② 2. The Sovereignty-Aseity Intuition — SAI
  - But, says Plantinga, necessary truths cannot be up to God.

# Thomas Morris on Thomistic Simplicity

- “...if there is no multiplicity of properties really had by God, it will, I think, be very hard, if not just impossible, to make sense of standard distinctions we make about God. We believe that he is necessarily powerful, but that it is only contingently true of him that he used that power to create our world. He could have created another universe instead, or, perhaps, he could have refrained from creating any physical realm at all. We also believe that it is only contingently, not necessarily, true of God that he called Abram out of Ur, spoke through Moses, and sent the prophets he chose. ...God necessarily is a knower. God contingently has the knowledge that I have on a striped shirt. Thus, there is both necessity and contingency with respect to God. And there seems to be no other good way to capture this truth than to say that God has both necessary (essential) and contingent properties. But if that is so, then he cannot 'have' just one and only one property, a single property with which he is identical.”