

ABSTRACT

Aquinas' Theology of the God Who Is: *The Significance of *Ipsum Esse Subsistens* in the *Summa Theologiae**

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For various contemporary theologians Aquinas' claim that 'God has no real relation to the world' is taken to mean that God is wholly remote and indifferent to it, a misunderstanding that serves as sufficient justification for overlooking his treatment of God in the *Summa theologiae*. Yet Aquinas' theology of God, a working out of the implications that God is the pure Act of subsistent existence itself (*ipsum esse subsistens*), leads to an understanding of all created reality as profoundly related to God. In its first section this paper presents how Aquinas, by a consistent application of a double theological hermeneutic of God as absolute simplicity and the fullness of perfection, excludes any possibility of change in God or a mutual relationship with the world. The second section shows how divine absolute transcendence allows for a real relation of the world to God in which God is supremely immanent and active. The world is understood as immersed in and interpenetrated by the God who is *Act*, a relation of participation which gives proper respect for the integrity of the created order, but not at the cost of the theological dimension of all reality.