

Thomas Aquinas, following the lead of Aristotle, proclaimed in his great work of systematic theology, *Summa Theologiae* (1265-1273) the doctrine that God has no potentiality, but is fully actualized. In Part One, Question 3, Article 2, he states that "God is pure act without any potentiality (*Deus est purus actus*). And in Article 4, he states "... since in God there is no potentiality ... it follows that in Him essence does not differ from being. Therefore His essence is His being." (*Essentia est suum esse*).

Aquinas' conception of God as completely actualized, with no possibility of becoming, has heavily influenced many Protestant thinkers. Fortunately, most conservative theologians have stressed *both* the unchangeability of God's nature, decrees, and Word, while at the same time resisting the seductive temptation to view God as immovable, static, and inactive on the other hand, or as doing everything that He does in the form of eternal acts on the other. To cite one example of a theologian who attempts to keep away from both extremes, Augustus Hopkins Strong, the Baptist theologian, in discussing the immutability of God, writes:

By this [immutability] we mean that the nature, attributes, and will of God are exempt from all change. Reason teaches us that no change is possible in God, whether of increase or decrease, progress or deterioration, contraction or development. All change must be to better or to worse. But God is absolute perfection, and no change to better is possible. Change to worse would be equally inconsistent with perfection. No cause for such change exists, either outside of God, or in God himself.^2

In order to balance the account, Strong adds an important corrective:

Immutability must not be confounded with immobility. This would deny all those imperative volitions of God by which he enters into history. The Scriptures assure us that creation, miracles, incarnation, regeneration, are immediate acts of God. Immutability is consistent with constant activity and perfect freedom.^3

Now, however, we come to the problem. Affirming on the one hand the unchangeability of God's nature, attributes, will, and Word (along with