Thomas Aquinas

INTRODUCTION

Without question, Thomas Aquinas (*c.* 1225–74) was the towering figure of thirteenth-century philosophy. A man of prodigious learning, he turned his pen with equal vigour to virtually every branch of knowledge under discussion in his time, including political theory. Born into a minor aristocratic family in the south-central Italian town of Aquino, he received an excellent education from an early age, first at the Abbey of Monte Cassino, later at the University of Naples. Over the strenuous objections of his family, Thomas entered the Dominican Order and continued his education at two of the centres of learning in Northern Europe, Paris and Cologne. His teachers, most notably the Dominican Albert the Great, furthered his introduction to the vast body of Aristotelian writings which had gradually re-entered the West during the course of the previous century. Aquinas was to emerge thereafter as the leading exponent of the idea that the teachings of the pagan Aristotle were consistent with the tenets of the Christian faith. Hence, he upheld the capacity of reason unilluminated by divine revelation to grasp truths about nature (and even some about God); yet he remained committed to the view that certain truths (indeed, the higher insights into the mysteries of divinity) were accessible only by way of direct experience of God as found in Scripture. This position placed him in conflict both with more traditional Christian thinkers (such as St Bonaventure, of whom he was an exact contemporary) and with those advocates of a more radical and thorough-going Aristotelianism who abounded at the University of Paris.

Thomas' academic career proceeded more or less according to the standard path set out for scholars trained within the newly emerged universities of thirteenth-century Europe. Between 1252 and 1256, he wrote commentaries and lectured on the Scriptures and on the standard theological textbook of the Middle Ages, Peter Lombard's *Sentences*. Thereafter, he earned the right to teach as a Master of the University of Paris, but only remained in

France until 1259. During the following decade, he taught at several Italian universities and also apparently busied himself with political activities related to his family's affairs. He returned to Paris in 1269 for a further three-year period of teaching, only to be called back to Italy on ecclesiastical business. Throughout his French and Italian sojourns, he continued to write voluminously on a vast range of topics. Controversies surrounding his ideas did not abate with his death. In 1277, the bishop of Paris condemned 219 'Aristotelian' propositions supposedly derived from Thomist writings. Thomas' canonization in 1323 brought his thought more into the mainstream of Roman Christianity, but it was not until the Counter-Reformation of the sixteenth century that he achieved his semi-official status as the pre-eminent philosopher and theologian of the Catholic Church.

Aquinas made use of several of the major medieval genres of political writing, namely, the advice-book (or 'mirror of princes'), the commentary, and the theological treatise. His *On Kingship* (sometimes also known as *On the Governance of Rulers*), supposedly written at the behest of the King of Cyprus, seems to have been the earliest of his political works. Thomas started to compose it about 1266, but abandoned the project early in Book 2; it was completed posthumously by his student, Ptolemy of Lucca. (Some scholars have lately questioned whether any part of it derives from Aquinas' hand, but the weight of evidence and tradition supports the current attribution.) *On Kingship* is in many ways a conventional 'mirror' work: drawing heavily on Aristotelian categories, it asserts the naturalness of the political community, while arguing for the superiority of monarchy over other forms of government, explaining how and why kings differ from tyrants, and setting out the duties incumbent on good rulers.

Also left unfinished was Thomas' *Commentary on the Politics of Aristotle*, which he undertook sometime during his last stay in Paris. The composition of line-by-line exegesis of scriptural and classical texts was a common literary format, derived from the method of lecturing favoured by medieval schoolmen. Between 1269 and 1272, Aquinas wrote a set of commentaries on most of Aristotle's major works. He only managed to complete his analysis of the *Politics* up to the middle of Book 3, however; the rest of the commentary was executed by another pupil, Peter of Auvergne. Although his commentary on the *Politics* adheres closely to Aristotle's text, and contains mainly simple clarifications and amplifications, it reveals a great deal about how classical political doctrines were disseminated by medieval teachers and assimilated by their students.

By far the most extensive and fruitful source for Thomas' political thought is his massive *Summary of Theology*. Written between 1266 and 1273, the *Summary* represents perhaps the single greatest monument of medieval scholasticism. Arranged in three parts (with the second part itself subdivided into two sections), the *Summary* purports to be an introductory exposition of the major problems facing the student of Christian theology. The parts are

divided into 'questions', each of which ordinarily contains several articles. The articles commence with a number of statements contrary to the doctrine Thomas wishes to uphold, followed by an extended articulation of his own position (the 'body' of the article), and concluding with a refutation of the earlier objections to it. In constructing the *Summary* in this fashion, Thomas adapts some of the standard techniques of scholastic disputation to the formalized presentation of systematic thought. There is no single section of the *Summary* which encapsulates the whole of his political ideas. Rather, he touches on various questions pertaining to politics in the midst of relevant theological discussions. Thus, Aquinas' presentation of the modes of law occurs in the context of his account of God's relation to the realm of creation, while his treatment of property arises from his review of the forms of human sinfulness. Therefore, we should look upon the *Summary* not as a cohesive statement of Thomas' political teachings but as an indication of how political theory for him could never properly be detached from its broader theological framework.

ON KINGSHIP

BOOK I

Chapter 1: That it is necessary for humans living together to be ruled diligently by someone

At the start of our undertaking here, it is necessary to set forth what is meant by the title of 'king'. In all things which are ordered towards some end, in which matters may proceed one way or another, some directive principle is necessary through which the due end is reached by the most direct route. A ship, for example, which is moved in different directions according to the impulse of opposite winds, would never reach the aim of its destination if it were not brought to port through the skill of its navigator. And now human beings have an end to which their entire life and actions are ordered, since they are acting with reference to intelligence, of which it is clearly a part to work towards an end. Humans, however, adopt different methods to proceed towards their intended end, just as the diversity of human interests and actions itself demonstrates. Therefore, humans need some directive principle to guide them towards their end. Moreover, all human beings are naturally endowed with the light of reason, by which they are directed in their actions towards an end. And indeed, if human beings were suited to living alone, as many animals do, they would require no other guide to their end, but each individual would be a king unto himself, although under God, the highest king, inasmuch as he would direct himself in his actions by the light of reason given to him by God. However, it is natural for a human to be a social and political animal, to live in a multitude, even more than all other animals, as

the necessity of his nature demonstrates. For other animals, nature has prepared food, a covering of hair, teeth, horns, and claws as a means of defence, or failing that, speed in flight. Humanity, on the other hand, was created without any such natural provisions, but instead of these it was endowed with reason, through which one could prepare these things for oneself by the service of one's hands. But one person alone is not able to prepare them all for oneself. It is, therefore, natural for human beings that they should live in the company of many others. Furthermore, other animals have an inborn, natural instinct towards everything which is useful or harmful, just as the sheep naturally regards the wolf as his enemy. Some animals even recognize, out of natural instinct, certain medicinal herbs and other things necessary for their life. But human beings have a natural knowledge of things which are necessary only in general terms for this life, inasmuch as they have the power to attain the knowledge of particular matters necessary for human life by reasoning from universal principles. But it is not possible that one human being could attain knowledge of all these things by individual reason. It is, therefore, necessary for human beings, because they should live in a multitude, that each one is to be assisted by the others, and different people may be occupied in seeking different discoveries by their reason, one, for example, in medicine, one in this and another in that. This is, further, most clearly evidenced by the fact that the use of speech is more closely related to humanity, through which one person is able to express conceptions to others. Other animals, it is true, express their feelings to one another in a general way, as when a dog expresses anger by barking, and other animals demonstrate their feelings in like fashion. So human beings communicate with their own kind at a higher level than any other animal which is known to be gregarious, such as the crane, the ant, and the bee. Therefore, Solomon says in Ecclesiastes 4:9: 'It is better to be two than one. For they have the advantages of mutual company.' If, therefore, it is natural for human beings to live in the society of many, it is necessary that there exist among them some means by which the common people may be governed. For where there are many people together, and each one is looking out for his own interests, the multitude would be scattered and broken apart unless there was also someone from its number to take care of what extends to the good of the multitude; in like manner, the body of a human being or any other animal would disintegrate unless there were some general regulating force within the body which would extend to the common good of all the members. With this in mind, Solomon says (Proverbs 11:14): 'When there is no governor, the people shall be scattered.' Indeed, it is reasonable that this happen: for what is one's own and what is common are not identical. Things differ according to their individuality, but are united according to what they have in common. For different things have different causes. Accordingly, it is proper for something to exist which promotes the common good of the many, as well as that which promotes the private good of each individual.

For this reason, also, in all things that are governed according to a single end, something is found which rules the rest. In the corporeal universe, for example, other bodies are regulated according to a certain order of divine providence by the first body, namely, a celestial body, and all bodies are controlled by a rational creature. Likewise, in the individual human being, the soul rules over the body, and among the parts of the soul, the passions and desires are ruled by reason. And thus also, among the members of the body, one is principal and moves all the others, such as the heart or head. Therefore, in every multitude it is proper to have some governing power.

However, it happens that certain matters in which we are ordered towards an end may proceed in a correct way and also in an incorrect way. And so, too, in the government of a multitude, both a right way and a wrong way may be discovered. Now, anything is properly directed when it is guided towards an appropriate end, but wrongly directed when it is guided towards an inappropriate end. Moreover, the appropriate end of a multitude of free persons is different from that of a multitude of slaves. For the free person is one who is his own cause; but the slave owes himself to another. If, therefore, a multitude of free persons is governed by their ruler for the common good, the government will be right and just, such as is proper for the free person. If, however, the government is arranged not for the common good of the multitude but for the private advantage of the ruler, then it will be an unjust and even perverse government, for which reason such rulers are threatened by the Lord, who speaking through Ezekiel (34:2) says: 'Woe to the shepherds who were feeding themselves' (as though seeking their own interests); 'should not the flocks be fed by the shepherds?' Indeed, shepherds ought to seek the good of their flocks and any ruler ought to seek the good of the multitude subject to him. If, therefore, an unjust government is exercised by only one person who seeks his own advantage from his rule, and not the good of the multitude subject to him, such a ruler is called a tyrant, a name derived from 'strength', because he clearly oppresses through power, and does not rule by justice; and thus among the ancients, all powerful men were called tyrants. If, however, the unjust government should arise not from one but through many, especially by a select few, it is called an oligarchy, that is, the rule of a few. This happens when a few – differing from the tyrant only because they are more than one – oppress the people by means of their wealth. Moreover, if bad government is conducted by the multitude itself, it is called a democracy, that is, control by the people. This occurs when the plebian populace by force of numbers oppresses the wealthy. In this way, the whole people becomes virtually a single tyrant. And similarly, we must discern between just governments. For if it is administered by some multitude, the name of the community is called a polity, as, for instance, when a group of warriors exercises lordship over a city or province. If, however, it is administered by a few people (although virtuous), this kind of government is called an aristocracy, that is, the political power of the best or rule by the

best individuals, who for this reason are called the nobility. But if a just government is extended to one person alone, he is properly called king; for this reason, the Lord says through Ezekiel (37:24): 'My servant, David, will be king over all, and all of them will have one shepherd.' From this it is clearly shown that, concerning the idea of the king, he will be one who excels and he will be a shepherd, seeking the common good of the multitude and not his own advantage. Still, since human beings must live in a multitude because, if they remain solitary, they would not in themselves be sufficient with regard to the necessities of life, it follows that the society of a multitude will be more perfect to the extent that it is more sufficient in itself with regard to the necessities of life. Of course, some sufficiency of life exists in one family of one household, namely, insofar as this relates to the natural acts of nutrition and begetting offspring and other matters of that kind; and in a single village, it pertains to those things with regard to one trade; however, it exists in a city, which is a perfect community, with regard to all the necessities of life, but still more in one province, because of the need to fight together and to help one another mutually against enemies. Thus, he who rules the perfect community, that is, a city or province, is called a king; but he who rules a home is called head of household, not king. Nevertheless, he has a certain resemblance to a king, on account of which kings are sometimes called the fathers of the people.

It is plain from what is said, therefore, that a king is one who rules the multitude of a city or province, and rules on account of the common good. For this reason, Solomon says in Ecclesiastes 5:8: 'The king rules over all the land subject to him.'

Chapter 2: That it is more useful that a multitude of human beings living together be ruled by one person rather than by many

And having set forth these issues, it is proper to enquire what is more advantageous for a province or city: whether to be ruled by one person or by many. Now, this can be considered on the basis of the very purpose of government. For the aim of any ruler should be directed so that he secures the welfare of those whose government he undertakes. The task of a pilot, for instance, is to protect his ship against the dangers of the sea, and to bring it to port safely. Now, the welfare and safety of a multitude formed into a society are that its unity, which is called peace, may be preserved, since if unity is removed, the advantage of social life is lost and moreover the multitude, disputing within itself, becomes a burden to itself. Therefore, the ruler of a multitude ought to uphold the most important concern, so that he should attend to the unity of peace. It is not legitimate that a ruler should deliberate whether or not to administer peace to a multitude subject to him, just as a physician does not deliberate whether he should cure the sick person entrusted to him. For no one should deliberate about an end which

one ought to uphold, but only about the means to attaining those ends. Therefore, the Apostle [Paul], having commended the unity of the faithful people, says (Ephesians 4:3): 'Be careful to protect the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.' Accordingly, the more effective the government is with regard to protecting the unity of peace, the more useful it will be. For that which leads better to the end we call 'useful'. And now it is clear that what is itself singular is more able to bring about unity than several things, just as the most effective cause of heat is that which is hot in itself. Therefore, the rule of one person is more useful than the rule of many.

Furthermore, it is evident that several people would by no means keep a group safe if they totally disagreed. For a certain union is required among them if they are able to rule in some fashion: for instance, many men could not pull a ship in one direction unless joined together in some manner. Now, many are said to be united by approximating oneness. One person, therefore, rules better than many who approximate one.

Once again, that which is in accord with nature is best: for all things function by nature in the best way; thus, every government by nature is by one man. Indeed, in the multitude of bodily members, there is one which moves them all, namely, the heart; and among the parts of the soul, one power commands them in chief, namely, reason. Even among bees there is one king, and in the whole universe there is one God, Creator and Ruler of all. And this is reasonable. For every multitude is derived from unity. For this reason, natural things are imitated by a work of art, and since a work of art is better insofar as it attains a closer likeness to what is in nature, it necessarily follows that in a human multitude it is best to be ruled by one person.

This is also evident from experience. For provinces or cities which are not ruled by one person are troubled with differences of opinion and waver without peace, so that the lament of the Lord, speaking through the Prophet (Jeremiah 12:10), is fulfilled: 'Many shepherds have destroyed my vineyard.' But, by contrast, provinces and cities which are ruled under one king enjoy peace, flourish in justice, and rejoice in abundance. Hence, the Lord, by his prophets, promises to his people that as a great reward he will place them under one head and that one ruler will be in the midst of them.

Chapter 3: That just as the lordship of one person is best, so its opposite is worst, and this is proved by many reasons and arguments

Just as the government of a king is best, so the government of a tyrant is worst. Now, a democracy is the opposite of a polity, for either is a government conducted by many persons, as is evident from what has been said; moreover, oligarchy is the opposite of aristocracy, because either is conducted by a few people, and kingship is the opposite of tyranny, since either is conducted by one man. And it has already been shown that monarchy is

the best government. If, therefore, the worst is opposed to the best, then it follows that tyranny is the worst kind of government. Furthermore, a unified force is more effective in producing its effect than a force scattered about or divided. For many people acting together can pull a load which could not be pulled by each one taking his part separately. Therefore, just as it is more useful for a force operating for the good to be more united, in order that it may perform the good more effectively, so it is more beneficial for a force operating for evil to be one than to be divided. Now, the strength of the unjust ruler functions to the detriment of the people, since he transforms the common good of the multitude into his own personal advantage. Therefore, for the same reason as in a just government, the government is more useful when the ruling power is one – so that monarchy is better than aristocracy, and aristocracy is better than polity – so the converse will be true in an unjust government, namely, the ruling power will be more harmful in proportion as it is more united. Accordingly, tyranny is more harmful than oligarchy, and oligarchy more harmful than democracy.

Moreover, a government becomes unjust by the fact that, rejecting the common good of the multitude, it seeks the personal advantage of the ruler. For this reason, the more the ruler departs from the common good, the more unjust the government will be; yet there is a greater departure from the common good in an oligarchy, in which the advantage of a few is sought, than in a democracy, in which the advantage of many is sought; and there is a still greater departure from the common good in a tyranny, in which the advantage of only one person is sought: for a great number is closer to the entire totality than a small number, and a small number closer than only one. Therefore, the government of a tyrant is most unjust. And a similar point is made clear to those who consider the order of divine providence, which arranges everything for the best. For in all things, good comes from one perfect cause, as if all the conditions are able to help the production of the good, while evil separately results from singular defects. For there is no beauty in a body unless all of its members have been properly disposed; but ugliness results when any member conducts itself improperly. And thus, ugliness appears in different ways from many causes, but beauty from one perfect cause in one way: and it is so with all good and evil, inasmuch as God, providing that good which arises from one cause, is stronger, while evil, arising from many causes, is weaker. It is expedient, therefore, that a just government be ruled by one man alone, so that it may be stronger. But if the government deviates into an unjust one, it is more expedient that it be a government of many, so that it may be weaker, and its parts may mutually hinder each other. Therefore, among unjust governments, democracy is more tolerable, but the worst is tyranny.

The same conclusion is most apparent if one considers the evils which come from tyrants, because, since a tyrant, despising the common good, seeks his private advantage, it follows that he would oppress his subjects in

different ways, according to what different passions sway him to acquire certain goods. For one who is held down by the passion of desire seizes the goods of his subjects, for which reason Solomon says (Proverbs 29:4): 'A just king builds up the land, a covetous man will destroy it.' If, indeed, he is swayed by the passion of anger, he sheds blood needlessly, as is said by Ezekiel 22:27: 'Her rulers in the midst of her are like wolves ravaging the prey in order to shed blood.' Therefore, this kind of government is to be avoided, just as the wise man advises, saying (Wisdom 9:18): 'Keep yourself far from the man who has the power to slay, because evidently he kills not for the sake of justice, but through his power, for the desire of his will.' Thus, there will be no safety, but everything is doubtful when there is a departure from justice, nor is anything able to be strengthened when it depends upon the will of another, much less his desire. Nor does he only oppress his subjects in corporeal matters, but he also hinders their spiritual good, since those who try to be in charge rather than to be beneficial prevent all progress of their subjects, suspecting all excellence on the part of their subjects to be prejudicial to their harmful lordship. Good people have been suspected more by tyrants than evil ones, and virtue in others is always more terrifying to them. Therefore, these tyrants attempt to prevent those among their subjects who have become virtuous from evolving a spirit of magnanimity and refusing to tolerate their harmful lordship; they attempt to prevent the establishment of a pact of friendship among their subjects and their enjoyment of peace amongst themselves, in order that, as long as no one trusts another, nothing can be attempted against their lordship. Consequently, they sow discord among them, foster disagreement, and prevent whatever tends to ally people, such as weddings, banquets, and other such events through which familiarity and confidence among men are normally produced. They also attempt to prevent them from becoming rich or powerful because, suspecting their subjects in full awareness of their own malice, they fear that the power and wealth of their subjects will be harmful to them, just as their own power and wealth is used to work harm. For this reason, Job (15:21) says of the tyrant, 'The sound of terror is always in his ears, and when there is peace', that is, when no one is attempting to harm him, 'he is always suspicious of treason'. So it follows from this that, when such rulers, who ought to lead their subjects towards virtue, are wretchedly envious of the virtue of their subjects and hinder it as much as they can, few virtuous people can be found under tyrants. For, according to the opinion of the Philosopher [Aristotle], the brave are found among those whom all the bravest people honour, and as Tully [Cicero] says, 'The things which are despised by everybody always languish and flourish but little' [*Tusculan Disputations* 1.2.4]. For it is natural that human beings brought up in fear should fall into a servile spirit and become discouraged in regard to any strenuous and virile deeds: this is clear by experience in the provinces, which have for a long time been under tyrants. For this reason, the Apostle says (Colossians 3:21): 'Fathers, do not

provoke your children to indignation, lest they be discouraged.' Likewise, considering the evil effects of tyranny, King Solomon (Proverbs 28:12) says: 'When the wicked reign, men are ruined', because, evidently, through the wickedness of tyrants, subjects fall away from the perfection of virtue; and again he says (Proverbs 29:2): 'When the wicked shall bear rule the people shall mourn, as though led into slavery'; and again (Proverbs 28:28): 'When the wicked rise up, men shall hide themselves', so that they may escape the cruelty of tyrants. This is no wonder, because a person governing without reason according to the desires of his soul differs in no way from a beast, for which reason Solomon says (Proverbs 28:15): 'As a roaring lion and a hungry bear, is a wicked ruler over the poor people'; and, since people hide from tyrants as from cruel beasts, it seems that to be subject to a tyrant is the same as to be beneath a raging beast.

Chapter 4: How the government among the Romans has varied and that among them the republic was sometimes better advanced by the lordship of the many

Because both the best and the worst are found in monarchy, that is, the government of one person, the royal dignity is rendered hateful to many people on account of the malice of tyrants. In fact, while some who desire the rule of a king fall under the cruelty of tyrants, too many rulers exercise tyranny under the pretence of royal dignity. Now, a clear example of this is found in the Roman Republic. For when the kings had been driven out by the Roman people, because they were no longer able to bear the royal – or rather, tyrannical – arrogance, they established for themselves consuls and magistrates by whom they began to be ruled and guided, wishing to change the monarchy into an aristocracy and, as Sallust relates, 'It is incredible to recall to what extent the Roman state increased in a short time, once it had gained its freedom' [Sallust, *On the Catalinean Conspiracy*, Chapter 7]. For it often happens that people living under a king seek the common good more slowly, inasmuch as they hold that what they devote to the common good they do not contribute to themselves, but to others, under whose power they see the common good to be. But when they do not see a single person in charge of the community, they do not attend to the common good as if it belonged to another, but each attends to it as his own: for this reason, it is realized from experience that one city administered by annual rulers is sometimes able to do more than some kings, if they have three or four cities: and small services extracted by kings weigh more heavily than great burdens if they are imposed by the community of citizens – a fact which has been observed about the development of the Roman Republic. For the common people were enlisted in the army, and when the common treasury was not sufficient for paying wages, private wealth came to the aid for public uses to such an extent that, except for individual gold rings and individual gold

studs, which were an insignia of dignity, even the Senate left itself with nothing made of gold. But when they were worn down by continual dissension, which grew all the way into civil wars, through which the freedom for which they had greatly striven was snatched out of their hands, they began to be under the power of emperors who were at first unwilling to be called kings because the royal name had been hateful to the Romans. Now, some of these emperors faithfully attended to the common good in a kingly manner, and by their enthusiasm the Roman Republic was increased and preserved. But most of them were in fact tyrants to their subjects, yet indolent and pacifistic towards their enemies, and brought the Roman Republic back to nothing. Likewise, a similar process occurred among the Hebrew people. For, at first, while they were ruled by judges, they were ravaged by their enemies on all sides, for each one was doing what was in his own eyes good. But on their own insistence they received the divine gift of kings, and on account of the wickedness of the kings they departed from the worship of one God and they were finally led into captivity. Therefore, danger threatens from either side: either when tyranny is feared, the best rule of a king is shunned, or when this rule is contemplated, royal power is changed into tyrannical power.

Chapter 8: Here the Learned Teacher declares what the true end of the king is, which ought to cause him to rule well

Therefore, because worldly honour and human glory are not a sufficient reward for royal responsibilities, it remains to inquire about what kind of reward is sufficient. Now, it is appropriate that a king should look to God for a reward. For a servant looks to his master for a reward for his services; a king, however, is a minister of God in governing his people, as the Apostle says (Romans 13:1, 4): 'All power is from the Lord God', and 'God's minister is an avenger to execute punishment upon whoever does evil'; and in the book of Wisdom kings are described as being ministers of God. Therefore, kings ought to look for a reward from God in return for their ruling. Now, God occasionally rewards kings for their service with temporal goods, but such rewards are common to both the good and the wicked; for this reason, the Lord says (Ezekiel 29:18): 'Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, has made his army undergo hard service against Tyre, and neither he nor his army have been rendered any reward in connection with Tyre for the service that he rendered to me against it', namely, for that service in which power, according to the Apostle, is the minister of God and the avenger to execute punishment upon whoever does evil; and afterwards, concerning the rewards, he added [Ezekiel 29:19]: 'Therefore, the Lord God says: I shall send Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, into the land of Egypt and he will ravage its spoils and it will be wages for his army.' If, therefore, wicked kings who fight against the enemies of God, although not with the intention of

serving God, but to execute their own hatred and desires, are repaid by God with such great rewards, so that He gives them victory over their enemies, subjects kingdoms and offers them spoils to ravage, what will He do for good kings, who rule the people of God and attack His enemies with a pious motive? He promises them not an earthly reward, but an everlasting one in none other than Himself, as Peter says to the shepherds of the people of God (1 Peter 5): 'Feed the flocks of God which are among you, and when the prince of pastors appears', that is, the King of kings, Christ, 'you will receive a never fading crown of glory'; concerning this Isaiah says (28:5): 'The Lord will be a wreath of exultation and a crown of glory to his people.'

This is also clearly shown by reason. For it is placed in the minds of all who have the use of reason that the reward of virtue is happiness. In fact, the virtue of anything whatsoever is described as that which makes its possessor good and renders his work good. Towards this, then, everyone strives by working well to attain what is most deeply implanted in desire, namely, to be happy, which no one is not able to will. It is appropriate, therefore, to expect as a reward for virtue that which makes human beings happy. But if to work well is a deed of virtue, then the work of a king is to rule his subjects well, and that which makes him happy will also be the reward of the king. But what that is has to be considered. Indeed, we say that happiness is the ultimate end of our desires. Now, the movement of desire does not go all the way to infinity; for natural desire would be in vain, since infinity cannot be traversed. Since, then, the desire of an intellectual nature is for the universal good, the only good which will be able to make it truly happy is that which, once attained, leaves no further good to be desired: for this reason, happiness is called the perfect good; for those who have riches desire to have more and, likewise, it is clear for other things. And if they do not seek more, still they desire that those things which they already have should last or others should follow in their place. For nothing permanent is found in earthly things and, therefore, there is nothing earthly that can quiet desire. And so nothing earthly is able to make a person happy, so that it can be an appropriate reward for a king.

Again, the final perfection and perfect good of anything depends on something higher, and even bodily entities are made better by the addition of the better things, but worse by being mixed with baser things. For if gold is mixed with silver, the silver is made better, while by an admixture of lead it is made impure. Now, it is true that all earthly things are beneath the human mind; however, happiness is the final perfection and perfect good of human beings, which all humans desire to reach: therefore, there is no earthly thing which is able to make human beings happy; nor is any earthly thing a sufficient reward for a king; for, as Augustine says, we do not call certain Christian rulers happy merely because they have ruled for a long time, or because after a peaceful death they have left their sons to rule, or because

they have conquered enemies of the republic, or because they were able to guard against and suppress citizens who stood up against them; but we call them happy if they rule justly, if they prefer to rule their passions rather than any nations, if they do all things not on account of the flame of empty glory but out of the love of eternal happiness. We say such Christian rulers are happy, now in hope, afterwards in the very fact, that what we await shall come in the future. But there is not any other created thing which would make a person happy and could be set up as the reward for a king. For the desire of each thing tends to its origin, which is the cause of its being. But the cause of the human soul is no other than God, who made it in his own image. Therefore, it is God alone who can pacify human desires and make them happy and be the fitting reward for a king.

Furthermore, the human mind knows universal good through understanding and desires it through will: but universal goods are not found except in God. Therefore, there is nothing which is able to make a person happy, satisfying his every desire, except God, of whom it is said in Psalm 103:5: 'It is Him who satisfies your desire with good things'; in this, therefore, the king ought to determine his reward. Accordingly, King David, considering this, said (Psalm 72:25): 'What have I in heaven? And besides you what do I desire on earth?' And afterwards, replying to this question he adds: 'It is good for me to adhere to my God and to put my hope in the Lord God.' For it is he who gives salvation to kings, not only temporal salvation by which he saves beasts and humans alike, but also that salvation of which he says through Isaiah 51:6: 'But my salvation shall be forever'; by which he saves human beings, bringing them to the level of angels. Therefore, it can thus be verified that the rewards of a king are honour and glory. For what worldly and frail honour can be likened to this honour, so that a person can be made a citizen and member of the household of God, numbered among the children of God, and can obtain the inheritance of the heavenly kingdom along with Christ? This is the honour of which King David said in desire and wonder (Psalms 139:17): 'Your friends, God, are exceedingly honoured.' In addition, what glory of human praise can be compared to this, which is not spoken from the deceptive tongue of flatterers nor the fallacious opinion of human beings, but is brought forth from the witness of our innermost conscience and is confirmed by the testimony of God, who promises to those who profess Him that He will profess them in the glory of the Father before the Angels of God? Yet those who seek this glory both will find it and will have arrived at the human glory which they did not seek, as in the instance of Solomon, who not only received the wisdom which he sought from God, but who was made glorious above other kings.

Chapter 10: That the king and ruler ought to be eager for good rule on account of his own good, and the utility which follows from it, the opposite of which follows from tyrannical rule

Since so great a reward in heavenly blessedness is offered to kings if they have acted well in ruling, they ought to keep careful charge over themselves not to turn to tyranny. For nothing should be more unacceptable to them than to be transferred from the royal honour, from which they are raised up on earth into the glory of the heavenly kingdom. But tyrants err when they desert justice for a few earthly advantages; for they are deprived of the great reward which they are able to obtain by ruling justly. That it is foolish, however, to squander eternal goods for trifling and temporal goods is clear to everyone except a fool or an unbeliever. It is to be added further that these temporal advantages, for which tyrants abandon justice, are provided for the greater profit of kings when they serve justice. Thus, first among all worldly things, there is nothing that would seem to be preferable to friendship. For it is precisely this which unites good men and preserves and promotes virtue. It is that which all people, regardless of the occupation in which they are engaged, need; it is that which does not advance itself inappropriately in prosperity and does not desert in adversity. It is what brings with it the greatest delights, to such an extent that all delights are changed to boredom without friends. For love makes all difficult things easy and nearly insignificant; there is no tyrant so cruel that friendship does not bring pleasure. When Dionysius, a certain tyrant of Sicily, wanted to slay one of two friends, Damon and Pythias, the one who was to be killed asked leave to go home, so that he could set his affairs in order; the other friend, indeed, surrendered himself to the tyrant as a guarantee for his return. When the appointed day was approaching, and he had not yet returned, everyone accused him of being a fool. But he proclaimed that he had no fear concerning his friend's loyalty. Now, at the very hour that he was to be put to death, his friend returned. But the tyrant, admiring the courage of both, remitted the execution on account of the loyalty of their friendship, asking in addition that they should receive him as a third member in their bond of friendship. But although tyrants desire this bond of friendship, they are nevertheless not able to obtain it. For when they do not seek the common good, but their own, there becomes little or nothing in common between them and their subjects. Yet all friendship is established through some common bond. For we notice that those who, through a common natural origin, or through a similarity of character, or who share any common alliance, unite in friendship. Therefore, there can be little, or rather no, friendship between tyrants and their subjects; and likewise, when subjects are oppressed by tyrannical injustice, and they do not feel loved but despised, they by no means love their rulers. Nor have tyrants any reason to complain of their subjects if they are not loved by them, because they do not act in such a fashion that they deserve to be loved by

them. But good kings, when they show that they love their subjects, are loved by many, being enthusiastically intent on the public good, and their subjects realize that they gain many benefits from their devoted care: for the majority of people could not be so malicious as to have hatred for their friends and return evil for good to their benefactors. And out of this love it results that the government of good kings is stable, because their subjects do not refuse to expose themselves to any dangers whatsoever on their behalf; an example of this is evident in the case of Julius Caesar, of whom Suetonius relates that he loved his soldiers to such an extent that when he heard that some of them had been murdered, he cut neither his hair nor his beard until he avenged them: by those means, he made his soldiers most loyal to him and most vigorous, so that when many of them were captured, they refused life offered to them on the condition that they would serve as soldiers and fight against Caesar. Octavius Augustus also, who had used his imperial power very moderately, was loved by his subjects so much that, when he was dying, many people ordered the sacrifices which they had saved for themselves to be burnt instead for him, so that they gave up their preservation for him.

It is not easy, therefore, to shake the government of a ruler whom the people so harmoniously love: because of this, Solomon says (Proverbs 29:14): 'The king who judges the poor in truth shall have his throne established forever.' Yet the government of tyrants is not able to last for a long time because it is hateful to the multitude. For what is against the wishes of the many cannot long be preserved. It is indeed difficult for people to pass through the present life without undergoing some adversities. However, in the time of adversity, there can be no lack of occasion to rise against the tyrant; and when this occasion is present, there will not be lacking some sort of opportunity for one or many to use it. For the people will favour the insurgent; and what is attempted with the support of the multitude will not easily be deflected from its result. Therefore, it will scarcely ever come to pass that a government of a tyrant endures for a long time.

This becomes still more clear if we consider how tyrannical government is preserved. It is not upheld by love, since there is little or no friendship between the subject multitude and the tyrant, as is clear from what we have said. For such great virtue is seldom found among human beings that they will be restrained by the virtue of fidelity from throwing off the yoke of undue servitude, if they are able to do so. According to the opinion of many people, it would perhaps not be contrary to loyalty if any means whatsoever are adopted to frustrate tyrannical wickedness. It remains, then, that the government of tyrants is sustained by fear alone, and for this reason they strive with all their effort to be feared by their subjects. Fear, however, is a frail foundation. For those who are subjected to fear will rise against their rulers – if the opportunity occurs when they can hope to do it safely – all the more passionately the more that they have been held against their will by fear alone, just as water confined under pressure flows with greater impetus

when it finds an outlet. But that very fear itself is not without danger, because many people become desperate out of excessive fear. And despair of safety precipitates human boldness to consider any solution. The government of a tyrant, therefore, cannot be of long duration.

This appears also from examples no less than from reason. For if we consider the history of antiquity and events in modern times, it is difficult to find the government of a single tyrant which has lasted for a long time. For this reason, Aristotle in his *Politics*, having described many tyrants, shows that all their governments were of short duration, although some of them reigned for a fairly long time because they were not excessively tyrannical, but in many ways they imitated the moderation of a king.

In addition, this becomes more evident upon consideration of divine judgement. For it is said in Job 34:30: 'He makes a man who is a hypocrite reign for the sins of the people.' No one, indeed, can be more truly called a hypocrite than the person who assumes the office of a king and displays himself as a tyrant. For it is said that a hypocrite is one who depicts himself as another personage, as is done on the stage. So, therefore, God permits tyrants to achieve power for the sake of punishing the sins of subjects. In the Holy Scriptures, it is customary to call such punishment the anger of God. Thus, in Hosea 13:11, the Lord says: 'I will give you a king in my anger.' But unhappy is the king who is given to the people in the anger of God. For his lordship cannot be stable, because God will not forget to show mercy and he does not confine his mercies in his anger. On the contrary, it is said in Joel 2:13 that 'he is patient and rich in mercy and ready to forgive the malice'. Therefore, God does not permit tyrants to rule for a long time, but after the storm brought upon the people through his own actions, he restores tranquility through their eviction. As is said in Ecclesiasticus 10:17: 'God has overturned the throne of proud leaders, and he has set up the meek in their stead.'

It is even more clear from experience that kings obtain greater riches through justice than tyrants do through robbery. Because the government of tyrants is displeasing to the multitude subject to it, therefore tyrants have many bodyguards who are paid to protect them against their subjects, and on whom it is necessary to spend more than they can rob from their subjects. However, the government of kings, since it is pleasing to their subjects, has all the subjects for its protection instead of bodyguards, for which they demand no pay; but occasionally, in times of need, they voluntarily give more to their kings than tyrants can steal and thus what Solomon says is fulfilled (Proverbs 11:24): 'Some' – namely kings – 'distribute their own goods to their subjects and grow richer. Others' – namely, tyrants – 'take away what is not their own and are always in want.' But in the same way it happens by the just judgement of God that those who unjustly heap up riches uselessly scatter them or are justly deprived of them. For as Solomon says (Ecclesiasticus 5:9): 'A covetous man shall not be satisfied with money, and he who loves riches shall reap no fruit from them'; and again as Proverbs

15:27 says: 'He who is greedy for gain troubles his own house.' But to kings who seek justice, God gives wealth, as he did to Solomon, who, when he sought wisdom to make judgement, received a promise of an abundance of wealth. Indeed, it seems superfluous to speak about fame. For who can doubt that good kings live not only in this life, but in a way more after their death, in the praises of human beings, and they are regarded in love; but the name of wicked kings immediately vanishes, or if they have been excessive in their wickedness, they are remembered with execration. Thus, Solomon says (Proverbs 10:7): 'The memory of the just is with praises, and the name of the wicked shall rot', either because it falls or remains with a stench.

Chapter 12: He proceeds to show the duty of a king, wherein in accordance with the path of nature, he demonstrates the king to be in the kingdom just as the soul is in the body, and in the same manner as God is in the universe

The next point to be considered is what constitutes the nature of the royal office and what sort of person the king should be. Now, because that which accords with art imitates that which accords with nature, from which we conclude that we ought to work in accordance with reason, it seems that the best royal duty to accept is formed under the guidance of nature. However, in affairs of nature, there is found both a universal and a particular government. It is universal because everything is contained under the rulership of God, who governs the universe under his providence. But the particular rulership, which is found in humans, is in fact most like the divine rulership; on account of this, the human being is called a smaller world, since in him there is found the form of universal rulership. For just as the universe of corporeal creatures and all spiritual powers are contained under the divine government, so in this way are the members of the body and other powers of the soul ruled by reason; thus, in a certain manner, reason is in human beings in just the same way as God is in the world. But because human beings are by nature social animals living in a multitude, as we have shown above, a likeness to the divine rulership is found among human beings not only insofar as one person is ruled by reason, but also inasmuch as a multitude is governed through the reason of a single person: this is what most pertains to the duty of the king, although among certain animals which live socially, a similarity to their rulership is found, just as among ants, among which it is said that there are queens – not that among them rulership is controlled by reason but through the natural instinct given to them by the great ruler, who is the originator of nature. Therefore, the king ought to recognize that such is the duty he undertakes that he exists in his kingdom in just the same way as the soul exists in the body and God exists in the world. If he carefully reflects upon this, from one side, a zeal for justice will be kindled in him, when he considers that he has been appointed to this

position in place of God to exercise judgement in his kingdom; and from another, he will acquire the gentleness of mildness and clemency, when he considers those individuals who are subject to his government to be just like his own members.

Chapter 15: That just as a king disposes his own subjects to live virtuously in order to attain their ultimate end, so he must do the same to attain the intermediate end. And here is set out that which disposes one towards a good life, and that which hinders one, and also the remedy that the king ought to apply in connection with the said hindrances

However, just as the life by which human beings live well is ordained as a means to the end of that blessed life which they hope for in heaven, so, too, whatever particular goods are administered by human beings, whether wealth, profit, health, eloquence, or education, are ordained as a means to the end of the common good. If, therefore, as it has been said, the person who has care of the ultimate end ought to be over those who have care of the things ordained towards that end, and to direct them by his rule, it clearly follows from what is said that the king, just as he should be subject to the lordship and government which is administered by the office of the priesthood, ought to preside over all human offices and to regulate them by the command of his government. However, anyone who is inclined towards something that is ordained to another thing as to its end ought to pay attention that his work is agreeable to that end. For example, the artisan fashions the sword so that it is suitable for fighting, and the architect so designs the house that it is suitable for habitation. Therefore, since the happiness of heaven is the end of that good life which we live at present, it pertains to the duty of the king to promote the good life of the multitude in line with reason, according to which it is suitable for the attainment of heavenly happiness, it is correct to say that he should command those things which lead to the happiness of heaven and, as far as possible, forbid the contrary. Yet one learns the road to true happiness, and what hinders it, from the divine law, the teaching of which pertains to the office of the priest, according to Malachi 2:7: 'The lips of the priest shall guard knowledge and they shall seek knowledge from his mouth.' And therefore in Deuteronomy 17:18–19, the Lord instructs:

> But after he is raised to the throne of his kingdom, the king shall copy out for himself the Deuteronomy of this law in a volume, following the copy of the priests of the tribe of Levi, and he shall have it with him and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, and keep his words and ceremonies, which are commanded in the law.

Therefore, the king, having been instructed in the law of God, should aim as his principal concern at the means by which the multitude subject to him may live well. This concern is divided into three: first, to establish the good life in the multitude subject to him; second, to preserve it once it is established; and third, to extend its greater perfection.

For the good of an individual, two things are necessary: the first and foremost is to operate according to virtue (for virtue is that by which one lives well); the other, which is secondary and almost instrumental, is a sufficiency of those bodily goods the use of which is necessary for any act of virtue. Nevertheless, human unity is caused by nature, while the unity of a multitude, which is called peace, must be administered through the effort of a ruler. Therefore, to establish the good life of the community, three things are necessary. First of all, the multitude must be established in the unity of peace. Second, the multitude thus united in the bond of peace is to be directed towards good deeds. For just as a human being is able to do nothing well unless a unity within his members is presupposed, so a multitude of human beings who are without the unity of peace is hindered from virtuous action, since it fights within itself. In the third place, it is necessary that there be present an adequate supply of the things required for proper living, through the efforts of the king. If, therefore, the good life is established in the multitude by the service of the king, it remains for him to direct its preservation.

Now, there are three things which do not allow for the permanence of the public good, and one of these arises from nature. For the good of the multitude should not only be established for the moment, but should be in a sense perpetual. Human beings are not, however, able to endure forever, since they are mortal. Even while they are alive they do not always have the same vigour, for human life is subject to many changes, and so humans are not always suited to accomplish the same duties throughout their entire life. However, another impediment to the preservation of the public good comes from within, consisting in the perversity of the will, inasmuch as people either are too lazy to do what the republic requires or, moreover, are harmful to the peace of the multitude, since by passing over justice they disturb the peace of others. The third hindrance to the preservation of the republic is caused from outside, when peace is destroyed through the invasion of enemies, and occasionally the kingdom or city is entirely demolished. Therefore, in respect to these three dangers, a triple charge will loom over the king. First, he must take charge of the appointment of persons to succeed or replace those in charge of the various offices, just as is provided in the case of divine rule over corruptible things, since they are not able to last forever the same, so that they are succeeded by other generations in their place; just as the integrity of the universe is preserved in this way, so the good of the multitude subject to the king will be maintained by his devotion if he diligently attends to appoint successors in the place of those who are failing.

In the second place, by his laws and orders, punishments and rewards, he should limit the wickedness of the people subject to him and should lead them to virtuous works, learning from the example of God, who gave His law to humankind and who rewards those who observe it and punishes those who transgress it. The third care of the king is to keep the multitude subject to him safe from the enemy. For there is no point in avoiding internal dangers if the multitude cannot be defended against external dangers.

So, therefore, for the proper arrangement of the multitude there remains a third matter which pertains to the duty of the king, that he be concerned with its improvement, which is achieved when, in each of the things mentioned above, he corrects what is out of order and, if anything can be done better, he tries to execute it. And for this reason, the Apostle admonishes the faithful that they should always strive after better gifts of the Holy Spirit.

These, then, are what pertains to the duty of the king, about each of which there ought to be more diligent discussion.