

Who Made Man?

Moral Principles in Outline: Part 2. Philosophy's Answer

By Rev J. C. Houpert, S.J.

Catholic Truth Society of Ireland No.mm329 (1939)

By careful observation of man's activities we have found his nature, what man is in himself, a rational being, composed of a body and an immortal soul, the masterpiece of this earth, a world in miniature. Now we shall look higher up and ask ourselves: Whence do I come? Whither am I going? We shall consider 1. Who made man? and 2. What kind of being is the author of man?

PART 1.

THERE IS AN ALMIGHTY BEING, WHO HAS CREATED ALL THINGS.

That there exists a First Cause, an Almighty Being, must be clear to every thinking man.

The fact is clearly proved: –

(a) By the very existence of beings that have received existence and are not self-existent. – There can be nothing without a sufficient reason for its existence. Again: nothing is made or begins to exist except by a cause. Now, man, a compound of matter and spirit, of body and soul, begins to exist; he has not always been, nor will he always be. He is one of the many contingent beings in this world, that is, beings which appear, disappear and change. But an object liable to change (from within or from without) has not within itself the cause of its being or the sufficient reason for it; it does not and cannot exist by itself. If it existed by itself, it would not be defective (change itself implies defectiveness); and the same holds for each and all contingent, that is, not necessary, beings. Hence our formal argument:

Principle: No contingent being, nor any sum or series of contingent beings, can find an adequate explanation for their existence either in themselves, in another contingent being, or in any sum or series of contingent beings.

Application: The universe is a sum of contingent beings.

Conclusion: Therefore, the universe can find its adequate explanation neither in itself, in any other contingent being, nor in any sum or series of contingent beings.

The inference from this conclusion is inevitable. The action of the necessary Being, the self-existing Cause, alone can adequately explain the existence of the universe.

The following evident facts serve as basis for this argument: The existence of the inorganic world, the existence of life, the existence of each human soul.

(b) From the Laws of Motion – Matter is inert: it cannot itself change its state of rest or uniform motion. Still less can it exist of itself, for that which cannot do what is less cannot do what is more.

Therefore, matter requires an extrinsic mover, the principles of the conservation of Matter and of Energy notwithstanding, for they do not deal with origins.

But there cannot be an endless series of things both moved and moving or of intermediate motion, because such a series explains nothing. Therefore, there exists a supreme Immovable Prime Mover.

(c) From the Laws of Life – As Science has established, Life comes only from Life. But Life began on earth. Therefore, there exists a super-mundane source of Life, the first living Being. I say the first Being, because again an endless line of beings who merely receive and transmit life only prolongs the enquiry and explains nothing.

This holds for all living bodies and more especially for our soul. This spiritual, rational substance cannot be due to generation, because generation is a material process, unable to produce a super-material effect. Therefore, the spiritual soul of man is due to the Supreme Spirit, the Creator, whom we call God, or the Prime Cause.

(d) By the whole visible world with its wise arrangement which cannot be the result of mere chance. – There exists in the world a most wonderful order, or adaption of means to ends (of the eyes to see, of the ears to hear, of all the parts to the preservation of the whole). Now, such adaption, manifest all the world over, requires intelligence in its cause and an amount of intelligence proportionate to the vastness, the variety and the perfection of the order produced. Therefore, the first cause of the world must be intelligent beyond all our conception, and this can be none other than God, the supreme principle of direction, orientation or end of the Universe. As Alexander Pope has truly said (Epistle, IV): –

Order is heaven's first law, and this confessed,
One is and must be greater than the rest,
More rich, more wise;
This who denies
Denies all common sense.

Or as Joseph Addison well says: –

The spacious firmament on high,
With all the blue ethereal sky,
The spangled heavens, a shining frame,
Their great original proclaim,
For ever singing as they shine,
"The Hand that made us is Divine!"

And Voltaire has said: "I cannot imagine that a timepiece tells the hours without the aid of a clock-maker. Then why should not the universe prove the existence of a supreme Intelligence?"

(e) The voice of conscience also testifies there is a God. It points to an invisible Lawgiver, who has written his holy law in every man's soul, who sees our deeds and even our most secret thoughts and will one day award judgment to every man. – Man feels absolutely bound to do good and avoid evil. Now a command, a law, implies a Lawgiver and a subject (no one can impose a law on himself). Moreover, an absolute command, which has the note of necessity, implies a supreme and ultimate authority, which is the source and fountainhead of morality, the supreme arbiter of right and wrong. Therefore, there exists a supreme Lawgiver and Judge.

This last argument from the absoluteness of moral obligation and the perfection of moral sanction is at least a striking confirmation of the preceding proofs. The existence of Moral Law in each one's conscience is a fact. As the Philosopher (Aristotle) has said: "Those who doubt about divine worship and about love due to parents are in need of punishment, not of argument." (Topica, 1, 9). We seek for a rational explanation of this fact and we find it only in the fact of a supreme Lawgiver.

(f) Mankind and especially the best among men, explicitly affirm the existence of God. – Belief in the Divinity is universal, permanent, spontaneous, logically invincible and most salutary in its results. All nations, the most backward and the most advanced, act on the belief in a Supreme Being. The most intellectual classes of men, philosophers and scientists, affirm their belief in God.

Now, it is impossible that a thing that all men affirm unanimously should be false. An erroneous opinion comes from intellectual weakness or defect, but not from the nature of the mind itself; such error is accidental, but what is accident can never be universal. "In questions of religion and morality, a judgment which all men agree to accept as true cannot in any way be false." (Saint Thomas, Contra Gentes 2, 34).

The arguments we have now given – metaphysical (a), physical (b, c, and d) and moral (e and f) – amply prove for certain the existence of a Supreme Being. There are other arguments as well. In fact, both the imperfections and the perfections found in finite things postulate a First Cause for their very existence and for their relative degrees of goodness.

General Conclusion. That self-existing Being, that Creator and Prime Mover of the universe, that source of all life, that most intelligent Being, that supreme Law-giver – we call God. We love and worship Him as our sovereign Lord, kind Father and greatest Benefactor and we reverentially fear Him as the Judge of all mankind.

A Question. Can a sincere inquirer come to the conclusion, erroneous, of course, that there is no God?

Answer. You mean, are there sincere and convinced atheists? No doubt some people may for a time ignore God's existence (negative atheists) or be for a time misled by false arguments (positive atheists), but none can remain certain and convinced atheists if he seriously inquire into the matter. With practical atheists, the fault is not with Logic or the mind but with their free will. Atheistic Communism in particular is not the fruit of reasoning but a blind revolt against social tyranny, wrongly ascribed to religion.

(1) There cannot be, except perhaps for a short time, theoretical negative atheists, that is, men who are invincibly and inculpably ignorant of God, for the arguments for His existence, either popular or scientific, are such that they are bound to suggest themselves to a sound mind. Accordingly, we may call atheists foolish, vain, and inexcusable. And certainly, it belongs to the Providence of God to see that no one is without the aids necessary for the attainment of his end, and the knowledge of God is absolutely necessary for salvation, as a means to that end.

(2) There may be, at least for a time, men who are theoretical positive atheists, that is, men whose reason is deceived by sophisms or blinded by passion, and who in consequence doubt whether God exists. For the existence of God is not immediately evident, either to sense or to intellect, and accordingly it is possible for a depraved or diseased mind to be blind to this truth.

(3) Sad experience sufficiently teaches us that there are 'practical atheists,' namely, men who take no pains to glorify or serve God.

To this, we may add that God will give to all men who have attained the use of reason, opportunities of knowing Him at some time or other in their lives. Those who do not attain the use of reason – and some adults whose minds are diseased or clouded by sophisms or passions may well be included in this category – may be likened to infants, and therefore are not responsible.

Is there really a God?

Many people still ask this question nowadays. Communists violently deny God's Existence. But why that anger if there is no God? – Because it is hard to do away with the clear testimony of reason and the general consent of mankind, of all times. It is, however, possible for the human mind defiantly and illogically to deny even established truths, because the human will can freely and deliberately sin against the light. Hence, the modern godless militant Communism of Soviet Russia. Hence, the attempt of Freethinkers, young and old, to pick holes in the arguments that make for God's existence, and to pile up difficulties to, rather than ponder over, the cogency of the arguments. Here are a few of their objections.

Objections Answered. –

1. Causes are not always known by their effects. Answer: But the existence of a cause can be known for certain; that suffices. Even its nature can be discovered, at least to some extent.
2. There is no proportion between a contingent and a necessary being. – Answer: There is no proportion of entity, but there is one of necessary dependence.
3. Science traces physical effects only to physical not to super-mundane causes. Answer: Physical science is concerned only with proximate or physical causes; mental science or Philosophy goes to the root of things and investigates the highest causes.
4. Evolution can account for all things physical. – Answer: Evolution does not even touch on the origin of things but only on their development. For matter to begin evolving, it must first be made.
5. The universal consent of mankind springs from fear. – Answer: The fear of God presupposes the existence of God. That reverential fear is found in the greatest minds, not only in women and children.
6. Man came from uncreated matter through a series of evolutions. – Answer: Mere matter could not possibly be self-existent; it has been made, when we do not know. That the body of man has evolved from lower animals both science and philosophy hold to be possible yet most improbable. History traces the human race to one common origin, the primitive couple produced by the special intervention of God. Human souls, being spiritual, cannot originate except by being created out of nothing. Each human soul begins to exist when God creates it in the fertilized fruit of the mother's womb. Modern biology has no other answer.
7. The souls of animals are generated, why not those of men? – Answer: Because animal souls are material and merely sentient but human souls are rational, intelligent, spiritual. They cannot emanate from matter, not even from the living matter of the fertilized ovum, because they are an altogether higher order of being. They cannot emanate from the spirit, for example, from the souls of their parents, because a spirit is an essentially simple substance, without parts, a thinking principle, wholly superior to division or dispersion or emanation of any sort.
8. We are then sparks of the divinity! – Answer: Yes, by a beautiful metaphor. God has made our souls to His own image and likeness; spirits, immortal, free and destined to Heaven.

9. Do not parents bring forth children composed of body and soul? – Answer: Who denies this? But generation is a material process; it can produce the human body fit for the human soul, but God alone can make the latter, because it is spiritual.

PART 2.

WHAT IS GOD?

After demonstrating God's existence, we are anxious to know – 1. What is the Nature of this Being, so evidently real and nevertheless so mysterious? and 2. What are His perfections?

God is the Self-existent, living Being, a Spirit endowed with Intellect, Will and Personality.

Even if God never spoke to man (as in fact He has spoken), our reason could discover for certain, not His existence alone, but also the main features of His nature. This knowledge of ours is however not intuitive and direct but discursive, abstract and analogous, that is, all based on what we learn from the world and from ourselves, wherein we can see God as in a mirror. This most important point has been overlooked by the pundits who apply the notions of Being, Substance, Spirit, Life, Activity and so on in the very same sense to the Self-Existent and the contingent being. On the contrary, all our ideas about God are based only on the likeness of God impressed upon the universe.

1. The Nature of God is "To EXIST." The essence of a thing is that which makes it what it is; it is the note, or notes without which a thing can neither exist nor be conceived. Man cannot exist without body and soul, they make up his physical essence; man is thought of with the notes of animality and rationality, they form his metaphysical essence.

Now, the question: "What is God?" we have already answered as clearly as we can when in our demonstration of God's existence we came to the unavoidable conclusion that God is the Necessary Being, the uncaused Prime Cause, the Supreme Intellect, the Sovereign Lord and Judge. Each of these expressions defines God; each refers to Him and to no one else.

The Necessary Being is the Being whose nature it is to exist, or the Being that has the reason for its existence in its own nature. The uncaused Prime Cause and Immovable Mover express the same idea from an external view-point, namely, of God as the efficient cause of all things, Himself being absolute and independent, always agent, never passive. The expression "Pure Act;" calls attention to the perfection by which God never acquires or loses anything. In Him, essence and existence are identical in reality and in thought. God is "He Who Is," the subsisting act of existence.

2. God is a living Spirit. His existence is a living existence, inasmuch as life is an immanent action. His life is a spiritual life, because it is a perfectly immanent action, whereas in material beings the immanence of the action is never perfect and absolute.

(a) God is Life itself or Substantial Life. God not only has intellectual life (proved below) but He is Life by His own substance. His Knowledge and Love, and consequently His Life, are identical with Himself and not, as in creatures, exercised by faculties distinct from the substance.

(b) God is the most Perfect Spirit. Spirits are neither matter nor dependent on matter. Now God is most independent of all matter and composition. As Saint Augustine rightly asks: "If our soul is no corporeal substance, how can God, its Creator, be a corporal substance?"

3. God's Knowledge is Intellectual. The most characteristic spiritual action is knowledge. In God's knowledge, subject and object are one and the same. That knowledge is of inexhaustible depth, width and sublimity, because it is infinite in every aspect, instantaneous and all comprehensive. Since intelligence is a perfection, it must be in the First Cause in an eminent and infinite degree and manner. We see it in the wonderful order of the universe. God is also infinite Truth, because He is the author of the reality of beings, which are therefore thoroughly known to Him. God knows all things possible and actual, whether past, present or future, – even all that any free creature would do in any case. God knows all things in their highest causes; such knowledge is called vision.

4. There is in God a will, namely, one act by which He loves His own essence, the Supreme Good, and freely determines what contingent things shall be and what others shall not be, allowing meanwhile for the free choice of His intelligent creatures. God cannot but love His own perfections; all other things He loves freely, as His images, with a disinterested love of benevolence and friendship. God's knowledge of all the riches of His nature is accompanied with intense and inexpressible joy and complacency in their possession. Hence, God is supremely happy. He is His own beatitude or bliss. In Him, Being, Life, Knowledge, Love and Joy are one and the same act, an act that had no beginning and will have no end, since it is self-existent.

5. God is Personal. A person is a being endowed with intellect and free will, complete and independent and able to enter into free relations with others. Such is the First Cause. The First Cause, therefore, is a personal being.

Personality is a great perfection. Men are the most perfect beings on earth. But the just cause is all perfection in an infinite degree. Therefore, it is eminently personal.

Note:

(1) Do not mistake "personality" for limitation, nor "infinity of being" for exclusion from all finite being.

The First Cause is both personal and infinite, quite distinct from anything else (transcendent) and yet present in everything (immanent).

(2) Nor is personality the same as self-consciousness. Consciousness is an act or a habit which already supposes but does not constitute the person. A newly-born infant is a person, even if unconscious.

(3) A Person is an individual rational being that belongs to itself. God is all this in a far higher way than man. The principle of analogy helps us to understand that God has all the perfections of personality and that His relations with us may be truly personal although they entail no change or limitation in His Nature.

PART 3.

THE WONDERFUL PERFECTIONS OF GOD.

In the Supreme Being, we distinguish perfections necessarily found in God; and others, such as creator, conserver and judge, which follow only on His free actions. Another way is to speak of God's absolute and relative perfections, or of His quiescent and operative attributes.

The divine perfections, or attributes, are not so many different realities in God, but only the different viewpoints, which our finite mind adopts to mirror the wealth of perfection contained in the Supreme Reality. We group these attributes in two classes –

- (1.) the absolute or quiescent – and
- (2.) the relative or operative attributes.

1 - The Quiescent Attributes of God.

By His Nature God is One and Simple, All-perfect and Immutable, Immense and Eternal.

1. There is and can be only One First Cause. Unicity and simplicity are both expressive of unity: unicity is absolute unity in kind and number; simplicity is absolute unity in nature and constitution. Pure Being, infinite Being, exhausts all being. God is unique. If there were two (or more) First Causes, they should be distinct and therefore differ from one another in some respect. That is, one of them would have something, which the other has not. Therefore, that other cause would be limited and could not be the First Cause.

The very idea of there being two or more gods destroys the idea of absoluteness; it implies limits and supposes there is no being altogether or infinitely perfect.

2. God is Absolutely Simple.

(1) Complexity implies parts, therefore limitations. But "pure being" is incompatible with limitations.

(2) Where there are parts, whether physical, like substance and qualities, or metaphysical, like potentiality and actuality, there must be an agent to put the parts together, hold them together, put them in motion and adjust their motion. But there can be no such agent with regard to the First Cause.

Or, again, where there is potentiality and actuality, there must be an agent or a cause to change potentiality into actuality. But there is no such agent or cause with regard to the First Cause. Therefore, the First Cause is not made up of parts and does not admit of potentiality and actuality. Therefore, it is absolutely simple.

3. God is All-perfect or Infinite. By infinitude, we mean God's limitless perfection. Some perfections, like knowledge, life, goodness, are pure perfections – that is, they imply no imperfections and they are in God formally as such. Others, like reason, health, are mixed perfections, for they include some imperfections and these are in God eminently, that is, in a higher manner.

(1) If the First Cause were not infinite, but limited, there should be another agent to account for that limitation. But there is no such other agent, since we are speaking of the First Cause.

(2) A being existing by itself cannot limit itself. For that being must be "Pure Being." "Pure Being" is a wholly positive concept; "limited being" is a concept partly positive (being), partly negative (limited). Therefore, such a mixed concept cannot belong to "Pure Being" which is the First Cause.

(3) Therefore, the First Cause is without limit in every direction, as regards substance, power, perfection, and in what corresponds to our notions of time and space, namely, eternity and omnipresence.

(4) God is the cause of the goodness, beauty, truth and perfections in all that is good and perfect. Therefore, He must be so Himself eminently.

Therefore, all the perfections found in created causes must be in the First Cause really and in an eminent degree and manner, that is, without the imperfections which may be found coupled with perfection in contingent beings.

4. It follows that

(a) God is Immutable. Change means passing from one state to another; it implies potentiality and actuality. But there cannot be potentiality and actuality in the First Cause.

(b) God is a most pure act, absolute actuality and perfection, excluding all potentiality or evolution.

(c) In God, all qualities are one with the substance.

5. God is Eternal. Time is no condition of His existence.

6. God is Immense, – that is, space is no condition of divine existence. Contingent beings exist in time and space because they change; their evolution is gradual and measurable. Bodies are limited by quantity, even created spirits like our soul, are limited by space or are definitely present somewhere; whereas the infinite Being exists without limits of space. Do not, however, imagine God as extended; wherever He is (in space) and whenever He is (in time), He is whole and entire. Even if there were no world, God would have immensity and eternity of Being.

Objections Answered. –

1. Most men believe in several gods. – Answer: All admit one supreme God, even if by error they believe in so-called gods, subordinate to the supreme Being. They misconceive God's nature but not His existence.

2. God is free and, therefore, can change His mind. – Answer: Change of mind implies an imperfection. God is free and need not change His mind, because all is foreseen.

3. In prayer we ask God to change His mind on our behalf. Answer: Not exactly. God knew from eternity all future prayers and He determined in consequence what He would do in consideration of those prayers.

2. The Relative Divine Attributes.

From our knowledge of God's Existence, we have so far formed our judgment on the divine Nature and from our knowledge of God's Nature, we drew by logical deduction our conclusion about some divine Attributes, independently of the world's existence. Now we shall see God in relation with the world, – that is, how far the divine Nature is communicated to the universe and expressed in creation.

(1.) – God is the All-wise and All-powerful Creator of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible.

1. Divine Wisdom is manifest throughout the universe.

Great scientists, men most competent in this matter, openly profess it. From among this crowd of witnesses, some have given testimony of their belief in words, which will keep for ever ringing in the annals of Philosophy.

Johannes Kepler: "I render thanks to You, Creator and Lord of the heavens, for all the gladness I have enjoyed in the soul-stirring ecstasies with which the contemplation of Your works has filled me."

Isaac Newton: "The regular motions of the planets and their satellites, their direction, their orbits, are a proof of foresight, and testify to the existence of an active cause, which does not work blindly and at random, but is clearly highly skilled in mechanics and geometry."

William Herschel: "The further the field of science extends its limits the more numerous and convincing the testimonies are in favour of an Eternal Creator."

Gustave-Adolfe Hirn: "The denial of the harmonious purpose that prevails in the universe is in such evident contradiction with the most elementary dictates of sound reasoning, that it gives a death-blow to the doctrine of materialism from which it originates."

2. God's Infinite Power is revealed in four ways with reference to the existence and activity of other beings: Creation, Preservation or Conservation, Concurrence or Co-operation and Providence.

3. Creation out of Nothing. Being all perfect, God can make all that is capable of being made; He can give existence to what is possible and He can destroy what is actual. There is no other way of explaining the existence of contingent beings except by creation, that special act of divine omnipotence by which things are produced from absolutely nothing. To create is to act without any preexisting material or available instruments. It is acting absolutely with no dependence on conditions; but by the mere will to create. Such action is proper to an absolute agent, the First Cause.

In other words, either God can create (strictly so called) or there is no God. There is no middle between an Almighty Creator and a merely finite God, which really means no-God, or a mere phantom, subject to negation and dependent on others. The prerogative of infinity implies for God the power of doing all things, un-helped from outside.

It does not retract from God's omnipotence, that He cannot make things that are contradictory in themselves, as, for example, a square circle, or that He cannot commit a bad action; for there is such a contradiction between evil acts and an infinitely perfect being that the two are together incompatible. Hence, all the works of God are good and participate in His own perfections; He cannot create any being with the purpose of making it unhappy.

Creation is the free act of God's will.

1. Freedom in respect of finite objects is inseparable from intelligence;

2. If the First Cause were not free, it would be under some compulsion. But the First Cause cannot be under any compulsion (a) either from within, for that compulsion would form part of its nature and would make the First Cause depend in some way on something distinct from it; but this would be an imperfection in the First Cause; or (b) from without, for then there would be an agent outside the First Cause able to exert such compulsion; but there is none, since we are dealing with the very First Cause.

All created things are (a) totally and for ever distinct from the First Cause, since they are effects which do not belong to the life of the First Cause (that is, they are not the result of immanent action);

(b) not emanations of any sort from the First Cause, for emanations would mean there were parts, quantitative or potential, in the First Cause; that is, the First Cause would not be simple;

(c) yet dependent on the First Cause, for what cannot exist by itself cannot continue in existence by itself;

(d) therefore, contingent and finite imitations or copies of the divine perfections.

These are fundamental notions that bear on many points both of theory and practice.

Objections Answered. –

1. Out of nothing, nothing can be made – Answer: Quite so; nothingness cannot become the material out of which to make things. But an all-powerful agent can make things, without any pre-existing material.

2. But the cause must obtain the effect and God contains no matter. – Answer: God contains matter eminently and virtually and that is enough. Namely, God has all the perfections of matter without its imperfections and He can exercise all the powers found in matter; He can produce even matter itself, since He is Almighty.

3. The world is eternal and needs no Maker. – Answer: Even if it were eternal, it would be eternally dependent on God for its existence. But modern science affirms this universe was made in time; mankind had a beginning. We also know from Revelation that the world is not eternal but had a beginning.

4. The act of creating would have produced a change in God. – Answer: Yes, if this act were not eternally in God. All the change is in the world, but extrinsic to God, leaving Him as He is.

Preservation or Conservation is but creation continued. At every moment, the creature's existence remains a gift of God without whom it would return to nothingness.

Co-operation on the part of God is needed for every action by creatures because in every new effect there is something, which no finite being can alone produce. However, neither God's concurrence with our free actions, nor His certain and eternal foreknowledge of them all, interferes in any way with our freedom. Mystery surrounds both God Himself and His activity. It must be so, because our finite minds cannot measure or comprehend the Infinite. Still, our natural reason finds such solid arguments for the existence and the personal attributes of the Deity as to render doubt absurd and atheism or disbelief ridiculous.

God's Fatherly Providence is wonderfully exercised and manifested in man, the crown and glory of the universe.

Divine Providence is the will of God by which all things are ruled by right reason and all events so ordered that the purposes of creation may be realized. In particular, God provides for every human being the means of working out his destiny. This is how He expresses His relation to us as our Father and Lord, who knows our needs. This Providence is our reason and motive for prayer; it is God's hand leading us on in His service. As the poet, Edward Young (1681-1765) has said: "Prayer ardent opens heaven" (Night 8), or as Alfred Tennyson expressed it: "More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of." And another poet has truly said: "Prayer moves the Hand that moves the Universe."

(2.) – The Omnipresence of God

is the application of His immensity to the universe. God is present everywhere by His substance, His knowledge and His power. He is present as a spirit, all in all and all in every part of the universe.

(3.) – By His omniscience, God knows all things that are knowable,

even the conditional free actions of men. Just as God's infinite wisdom is clearly evident from the order of the universe, so is God's omniscience evident in as much as it is absolutely necessary for His wisdom.

Objections.- 1. If God rules all events, men need and can do nothing. – Answer: God rules all events but lets free causes act freely knowing meanwhile how to draw ultimate good from present evil.

2. Many things happen by accident, not by design. – Answer: By accident, that is, not foreseen or planned by men, but foreseen, and willed or allowed by God.

3. At least the wicked plots of murderers and thieves are not directed by the providence of God. – Answer: No, God cannot direct the free will of evildoers to evil but their physical actions (for example, theft or assault) and the effects of those actions cannot exist without the actual concurrence of God and His permissive Will.

4. A wise Providence would not tolerate so much injustice among men. – Answer: Much misery is caused by man himself, which God need not hinder for the present, but which will be atoned for in due time. Moreover, physical suffering may have good moral effects. Finally, God is not bound to give all men an equal share of His gifts.

About God's Knowledge –

1. What God knows will happen, must necessarily happen. Therefore, either God is ignorant of the future or man is not free. – Here "necessary" has two meanings. God knows infallibly, for certain, what I shall do next month, yet I shall do it freely. This is necessary in the logical order even with freedom of the physical order. If I see a man walking, he must necessarily be walking, else I could not see him walk, yet he walks quite freely.

2. Then God's knowledge depends on our own choice. – All knowledge supposes objects; there are causes of our knowledge, but only conditions for God, and in this, there lies no imperfection or real dependence.

(4.) – God is Infinite Goodness.

To be good is to be desirable and perfect. God is good in Himself and is the source of all goodness and the object of our desire. In the sense of bounty or beneficence, goodness means the earnest will to make others happy. In the sense of conduct in conformity with reason, it means Holiness. As the inclination to aid men in their misery, it is Mercy, and as the disposition to render each one his due, goodness is called Justice. Divine justice and Mercy do not always manifest themselves in our present life, yet they are divine perfections and therefore infinite and will, finally prevail.

The eternal act by which God contemplates and enjoys all the goodness of His nature constitutes His infinite beatitude.

Objections Answered. – 1. If God is all-bountiful, He should make all His creatures happy. – Answer. God seriously wishes all to be happy, we grant. That He should make them happy against

their will, we deny. The manifestation of divine goodness is limited by God's wisdom but also by man's free will.

2. If God is all-holy, why does He allow sin to exist? – Answer. God absolutely detests and forbids all sin or moral evil and He can show this in two ways: by preventing its existence or by repairing the evil done. He does not punish crime and reward virtue at once because He can do so in the next world and for eternity.

(5.) – The existence of evil does not disprove God's justice, providence and goodness, nor can it prevent the complete working out of His plans.

Note that evil is nothing positive but only a defect or privation.

Blindness and ignorance are physical evils; crimes and wrongs by free agents are moral evils. Evil is opposed to good; evil is what is missing in a being that is good; hence evil as such cannot be willed or produced by an agent.

(a) How does evil come to exist? – We find much inequality and misery on earth. (1) Much of it comes from the vices of men which God does not check for the present, but which must be atoned for in due time. (2) Often, sufferings are part of God's merciful designs on souls. He never intends directly physical evil (sickness, poverty, ignorance and death) but only as a means for a good end, for example, sufferings help man to acquire virtue. He does not make evil (since evil is no reality). He only leaves natural causes to work according to natural laws, or lets men use their freedom.

Therefore, never think of God as choosing one man for suffering and another for blessing. But think of Him as the Author of laws made for all men's blessing, the breaking of which must naturally bring pain and suffering. The Providence of God is a loving and most patient power, working to produce in man the aptitude for eternal bliss; but it works by law, because only in that way can man be educated for the glory which awaits him.

(b) God, the First Cause, abhors all sin or moral evil.

1. The First Cause has for aim only good. But moral evil or sin is opposed to the intentions of the First Cause and to the order established by it. Therefore, the First Cause, which is infinitely perfect and wise, cannot approve moral evil, but must abhor it.

2. The free responsible agent himself is a participation or an effect of the Infinite Good. Therefore, for him to turn away from the Infinite Good, his Maker, by committing moral evil, is a grievous disorder, a serious offence to that Infinite Good.

3. Conscience bears witness to this. Remorse follows actions that we know to be against the order fixed by the First Cause.

(c) God is not Bound to Stop Evil: –

Man is an intelligent, free, responsible agent, made so by the First Cause. Therefore, he must be left to his responsibility.

It would be nugatory to make an agent free and responsible, if his maker interfered whenever the free agent was about to misuse his freedom and bring evil upon himself or upon his dependents and descendants or if, after man had done so, God interfered with what he had done.

The First Cause is not bound to stop,

1. Physical evil; because it is not real evil; it is often useful; it is not necessarily bound up with moral evil, which is real evil.

2. Neither is He bound to stop moral evil. Of all the objects, which may engage a faculty, the highest and noblest is the one most worthy of the acts of that faculty and best suited to them. But perfect happiness, the possession of the supreme good (namely, the last end of man) is the highest object of man's free will; also; all our other free acts take their moral value from their connection with that perfect happiness to the last end. Therefore, it is most fitting that, with regard to these acts, man be left to his responsibility.

Again, God's intervention to deprive us of free will would turn us into mere machines incapable of either moral good or moral evil. God wants from us a higher kind of service, out of our own free choice, so that we be pleasing to Him and deserve His reward. By freely choosing what is good we become most like unto God Who loves all that is good. There is nothing more valuable than a will that freely chooses what is good.

Note Well. – The occurrence of physical evils in a person is not proof of the existence of moral guilt in the sufferer. To think otherwise is unreasonable and sometimes inhuman and unjust as in the case of lepers, the born-blind, widows or the insane.

In conclusion, we may say that God neither wishes moral evil to happen, nor does He wish to prevent its happening in fact. He only wants to let moral evil happen as a fact, never as a right; and this He can do because He is good enough and powerful enough and wise enough to derive some good even from evil. Of this, we can have no doubt; but the manner in which God proceeds sometimes remains for us a mystery. In such cases, the certainty that God is good and provident should not be overshadowed by our ignorance about God's ways. Apparent contradictions never suffice to make us give up facts well ascertained.

Objections Answered. –

1. If God is good how does He permit evil to happen and if He is almighty, why does He not prevent it from happening? – Answer: The answer has just been given. God's omnipotence and goodness are well ascertained attributes of His, even if we fail to understand their working here on earth. Besides (1) only free creatures, never God, cause moral evil or sin; (2) as to physical evil, it is often a blessing in disguise.

2. God makes men whom He knows will turn out criminals, – Answer: There are good reasons for it. In giving these men free will, God does a good thing for a good purpose, namely, His honour and their good. If they abuse His gift, He knows how to draw good out of evil, by exercising His mercy in pardoning or His justice in punishing.
