

COMPLETE IN THREE VOLUMES

RADIO REPLIES

First Volume

Given from the Catholic Broadcasting Station 2SM
Sydney, Australia

by

THE REV. DR. LESLIE RUMBLE, M.S.C.

Edited in Collaboration with

REV. CHARLES MORTIMER CARTY

Diocesan Missionary

With a Preface by

RT. REV. MSGR. FULTON J. SHEEN, D.D.

1,588 QUESTIONS and ANSWERS

on

CATHOLICISM AND PROTESTANTISM

These books are now widely used as texts and reference books in Study Clubs, High Schools, Colleges, Universities, Newman Clubs, Novitiates and Seminaries.

Invaluable for the uninformed Catholic—the educated and uneducated lapsed Catholic and Prospective Convert.

WIDE CIRCULATION AT MISSIONS AND RETREATS

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INTRODUCTION TO THE AMERICAN EDITION OF "RADIO REPLIES"

"Radio Replies" by Rev. Dr. Rumble, M.S.C., is the result of five years of answering questions during a one-hour Question Box Program over Radio Station 2SM Sydney, N.S.W. The revision of "Radio Replies" for American readers was prompted by the widespread interest the Australian edition created among Protestants and Catholics during the summer of 1937, when I was carrying on as a Catholic Campaigner for Christ, the Apostolate to the man in the street through the medium of my trailer and loud-speaking system. In the distribution of pamphlets and books on Catholicism "Radio Replies" proved the most talked of book carried in my trailer display of Catholic literature. The clergy and laymen engaged in Street Preaching agree that it is not so much what you say over the microphone in answer to questions from open air listeners but what you **GET INTO THEIR HANDS TO READ.**

My many converts of the highways and parks throughout the Archdiocese of St. Paul have embraced the faith as a result of studying this book. Whole families have come into the Church through reading the book by this renowned convert from Anglicanism. The delay in getting copies from Sydney and the prohibitive cost of the book on this side of the universe led me to petition the author to have published a **CHEAP AMERICAN EDITION** in order to get this encyclopedia of Catholic Doctrine into the hands of fellow citizens. Because of the author's genius for brevity, preciseness, fearlessness and keen logic that avoids the usually long Scriptural and Traditional arguments of the average question and answer book, which is beyond the capacity of the man in the street, this manual of 1,588 questions and replies has already attracted readers throughout Australia, New Zealand, Africa, India, England, Ireland, Canada and now the United States.

The questions he answers are the questions I had to answer before friendly and hostile audiences throughout my summer campaign. The piquant and provocative subject matter of this book makes it a fascinating assembly of 300 or more worth-while pamphlet tracts, a dictionary of doctrine for the desk of the **FAMILY**, the **STUDENT**, the **SHOP HAND**, the **OFFICE WORKER**, the **ATTORNEY**, the **DOCTOR**, the **TEACHER**, and the **PREACHER**. It is a handy standard reference book of excellence for popular questions which are more than ever being asked by restless and bewildered multitudes. It is a textbook for the Confraternities of Christian Doctrine Classes and Study Clubs.

A non-Catholic Professor after reading the book stated that, "If the Catholic Church could defend herself so logically as 'Radio Replies' demonstrates, then I do not see why you don't get more converts." Members of the Knights of Columbus, the Holy Name Societies and numerous women's societies have written in that they no longer have to apologetically say, "I can't answer that one." Catholic students in non-sectarian colleges and universities write in that they now walk the campus

with this book under their arms, ready for all challenges and that this manual of ready reference has cured their INFERIORITY COMPLEX ON EXPOSITION OF CATHOLIC CLAIMS. Lapsed Catholics have come into my trailer-office to confess that the reading of "Radio Replies" has brought them back to the Church.

I am grateful to His Excellency Archbishop John G. Murray, D.D. for his approval of this compendium of dogmatic and moral theology for readers of the American Commonwealth and I am deeply appreciative to Rt. Rev. Msgr. Fulton J. Sheen, D.D. for writing the Preface to this American edition.

From my experience on the Catholic Radio Hour, on the lecture platform, and in the pulpit, I do not hesitate to say that HERE AT LAST is the book that has something for everybody, the book for the UNINFORMED CATHOLIC, THE UNEDUCATED AND EDUCATED LAPSED CATHOLIC, and the PROSPECTIVE CONVERT.

REV. CHARLES MORTIMER CARTY

PREFACE

There are not over a hundred people in the United States who hate the Catholic Church. There are millions, however, who hate what they wrongly believe to be the Catholic Church—which is, of course, quite a different thing. These millions can hardly be blamed for hating Catholics because Catholics “adore statues”; because they “put the Blessed Mother on the same level with God”; because they say “indulgence is a permission to commit sin”; because the Pope “is a Fascist”; because the “Church is the defender of Capitalism.” If the Church taught or believed any one of these things it should be hated, but the fact is that the Church does not believe nor teach any one of them. It follows then that the hatred of the millions is directed against *error* and not against *truth*. As a matter of fact, if we Catholics believed all of the untruths and lies which were said against the Church, we probably would hate the Church a thousand times more than they do.

If I were not a Catholic, and were looking for the true Church in the world today, I would look for the one Church which did not get along well with the world; in other words, I would look for the Church which the world hates. My reason for doing this would be, that if Christ is in any one of the churches of the world today, He must still be hated as He was when He was on earth in the flesh. If you would find Christ today, then find the Church that does not get along with the world. Look for the Church that is hated by the world, as Christ was hated by the world. Look for the Church which is accused of being behind the times, as Our Lord was accused of being ignorant and never having learned. Look for the Church which men sneer at as socially inferior, as they sneered at Our Lord because He came from Nazareth. Look for the Church which is accused of having a devil, as Our Lord was accused of being possessed by Beelzebub, the Prince of Devils. Look for the Church which, in seasons of bigotry, men say must be destroyed in the name of God as men crucified Christ and thought they had done a service to God. Look for the Church which the world rejects because it claims it is infallible, as Pilate rejected Christ because He called Himself the Truth. Look for the Church which is rejected by the world as Our Lord was rejected by men. Look for the Church which amid the confusion of conflicting opinions, its members love as they love Christ, and respect its Voice as the very voice of its Founder, and the suspicion will grow, that if the Church is unpopular with the spirit of the world, then it is unworldly, and if it is unworldly, it is other-worldly. Since it is other-worldly it is infinitely loved and infinitely hated as was Christ Himself. But only that which is Divine can be infinitely hated and infinitely loved. Therefore the Church is Divine.

If then, the hatred of the Church is founded on erroneous beliefs, it follows that basic need of the day is instruction. Love depends on knowledge for we cannot aspire nor desire the unknown. Our great country is filled with what might be called *marginal Christians*, i. e., those who live on the fringe of religion and who are descendants of Christian living parents, but who now are Christians only in name. They retain a few of its ideals out of indolence and force of habit; they know the glorious history of Christianity only through certain emasculated forms of it, which

have married the spirit of the age and are now dying with it. Of Catholicism and its sacraments, its pardon, its grace, its certitude and its peace, they know nothing except a few inherited prejudices. And yet they are good people who want to do the right thing, but who have no definite philosophy concerning it. They educate their children without religion, and yet they resent the compromising morals of their children. They would be angry if you told them they were not Christian, and yet they do not believe that Christ is God. They resent being called pagans and yet they never take a practical cognizance of the existence of God. There is only one thing of which they are certain and that is that things are not right as they are. It is just that single certitude which makes them what might be called the great "potentials," for they are ready to be pulled in either of two directions. Within a short time they must take sides; they must either gather with Christ or they must scatter; they must either be with Him or against Him; they must either be on the cross as other Christs, or under it as other executioners. Which way will these *marginal Christians* tend? The answer depends upon those who have the faith. Like the multitudes who followed Our Lord into the desert, they are as sheep without a shepherd. They are waiting to be shepherded either with the sheep or goats. Only this much is certain. Being human and having hearts they want more than class struggle and economics; they want Life, they want Truth, and they want Love. In a word, they want Christ.

It is to these millions who believe wrong things about the Church and to these *marginal Christians*, that this little book is sent. It is not to prove that they are "wrong"; it is not to prove that we are "right"; it is merely to present the truth in order that the truth may conquer through the grace of God. When men are starving, one need not go to them and tell them to avoid poison; nor to eat bread because there are vitamins in bread. One need only go to them and tell them that they are starving and here is bread, and the laws of nature will do the rest. This book of "Radio Replies" with 1,588 questions and answers goes out on a similar mission. Its primary task is not to humble the erroneous; not to glorify the Catholic Church as intellectual and self-righteous, but to present the truth in a calm, clear manner in order that with the grace of God souls may come to the blessed embrace of Christ.

It is not only the point of "Radio Replies" to prove that the Church is the only completely soul-satisfying Church in existence at the present day; it is also to suggest that the Catholic Church is the only Church existing today which goes back to the time of Christ. History is so very clear on this point, it is curious how many minds miss its obviousness. When therefore you, the readers of "Radio Replies" in the twentieth century, wish to know about Christ and about His early Church, and about His mysteries, we ask you to go not only to the written records but to the living Church which began with Christ Himself. That Church or that Mystical Person which has been living all these centuries is the basis of our faith and to us Catholics it speaks this way: "I live with Christ. I saw His Mother and I know her to be a Virgin and the loveliest and purest of all women in heaven or on earth; I saw Christ at Caesarea-Philippi, when after changing Simon's name to Rock He told him he was the rock upon which the Church would be built and that it would endure unto the consummation of the world. I saw Christ hanging on a cross and I saw Him

rise from His tomb; I saw Magdalene rush to His feet; I saw the angels clad in white beside the great stone; I was in the Cenacle room when doubting Thomas put fingers into His hands; I was on Olivet when He ascended into heaven and promised to send His Spirit to the apostles to make them the foundation of His new Mystical Body on earth. I was at the stoning of Stephen, saw Saul hold the garments of those who slew him, and later I heard Saul, as Paul, preach Christ and Him crucified; I witnessed the beheading of Peter and Paul in Rome, and with my very eyes saw tens of thousands of martyrs crimson the sands with their blood, rather than deny the faith Peter and Paul had preached unto them; I was living when Boniface was sent to Germany, when Augustine when to England, Cyril and Methodius to the Poles, and Patrick to Ireland; at the beginning of the ninth century I recall seeing Charlemagne crowned as king in matters temporal as Peter's vicar was recognized as supreme in matters spiritual; in the thirteenth century I saw the great stones cry out in tribute to me, and burst into Gothic Cathedrals; in the shadows of those same walls I saw great Cathedrals of thought arise in the prose of Aquinas and Bonaventure, and in the poetry of Dante; in the sixteenth century I saw my children softened by the spirit of the world leave the Father's house and reform the faith instead of reforming discipline which would have brought them back again into my embrace; in the last century and at the beginning of this I heard the world say it could not accept me because I was behind the times. I am not behind the times, I am only behind the scenes. I have adapted myself to every form of government the world has ever known; I have lived with Caesars and kings, tyrants and dictators, parliaments and presidents, monarchies and republics. I have welcomed every advance of science, and were it not for me the great records of the pagan world would not have been preserved. It is true I have not changed my doctrine, but that is because the 'doctrine is not mine but His who sent Me.' I change my garments which belong to time, but not my Spirit which belongs to eternity. In the course of my long life I have seen so many modern ideas become unmodern, that I know I shall live to chant a requiem over the modern ideas of this day, as I chanted it over the modern ideas of the last century. I celebrated the nineteen-hundredth anniversary of the death of my Redeemer and yet I am no older now than then, for my Spirit is Eternal, and the Eternal never ages. I am the abiding Personage of the centuries. I am the contemporary of all civilizations. I am never out of date, because the dateless; never out of time, because the timeless. I have four great marks: I am One, because I have the same Soul I had in the beginning; I am Holy, because that Soul is the Spirit of Holiness; I am Catholic, because that Spirit pervades every living cell of my Body; I am Apostolic, because my origin is identical with Nazareth, Galilee and Jerusalem. I shall grow weak when my members become rich and cease to pray, but *I shall never die*. I shall be persecuted as I am persecuted now in Mexico and Russia; I shall be crucified as I was on Calvary, but I shall rise again, and finally when time shall be no more, and I shall have grown to my full stature, then shall I be taken into heaven as the bride of my Head, Christ, where the celestial nuptials shall be celebrated, and God shall be all in all, because His Spirit is Love and Love is Heaven."

AUTHOR'S FOREWORD

THE matter contained in this book is the result of a "Question and Answer" Session conducted by the writer during a continuous period of five years by Radio in Sydney, N.S.W. The Session, given from the Catholic Station 2SM on Sunday evenings, averages one hour in duration, from 7 to 8 p.m., and so great has been the interest awakened that letters have poured in from all the States of Australia, as well as from New Zealand. The work still continues with unabated appeal, apparently because, even though the same difficulties recur at times, they are proposed from so many varying aspects by different inquirers that no sense of sameness is experienced. Certainly no questions have ever had to be improvised to keep the Session fully occupied. The results of the work have more than justified the labor it has entailed. Constant expressions of gratitude are received from Catholics, who appreciate the deeper instruction in their faith the Sessions have afforded them; from careless Catholics who have returned to the fervent practice of their religion; and, above all, from non-Catholics, whether to acknowledge the dispelling of their prejudices, or to announce their actual conversion to the Catholic Church. As many as thirty notifications of conversion have been received from distant places in a month. And by no means all, of course, think to write in of God's goodness to them.

That a personal element has been unavoidable will be evident from these few typical questions and answers due to people who found it utterly incredible that anyone in his senses could become a Catholic. Such questions varied through all the grades of suspicion, grudging concession, accusation, prediction, and compassion.

Q. Are you a Catholic born, or were you converted to the Catholic Church in later life?

A. I was born of Protestant parents and brought up as a Protestant, joining the Catholic Church in later life.

Q. It is so unbelievable that one who has tasted the open, free, and sincere worship of a Protestant Church could change to the Catholic religion.

A. If it be a fact, and it is a fact, it is not unbelievable. You face so many things that are not facts, that you ought to feel no difficulty in facing things that are facts. As for the open, free, and sincere worship of a Protestant Church, I did taste it, but for me it proved in the end to be not only open, but empty; it was altogether too free from God's prescriptions; and whilst I admit that many Protestants are quite sincere, I would not have been sincere had I remained a Protestant against my convictions. So I followed the grace God gave me, and became a Catholic. In doing so, not for a moment have I lost my respect for good Protestants.

As for your finding it unbelievable that I should change to the *Catholic* religion, that is inevitable when you entertain such notions of that Catholic religion. Whilst I entertained similar notions I was as opposed to it as you are. But I can assure you that you have not a true idea of the Catholic Church, your notions being based upon lack of information, or even upon wrong information.

Q. Your answers seem to show culture and refinement.

A. That is a very candid admission. Apparently you never dreamed that a Catholic could be cultured or refined. The dispelling of this prejudice is one good result of these talks.

Q. *You are a Catholic with a Protestant broad mind, fashioned at home when your mind was plastic, before you became subservient to the Catholic Church.*

A. I am a Catholic, I hope with a broad mind, though I hope still more, not with a Protestant mind. As for the plastic period, my broad-minded Protestant teachers taught me to dislike the Catholic Church intensely, whilst my subserviency to the Church is but submission to the Will of God, Whom only "Thou shalt serve."

Q. *You have a good knowledge of the Bible, but you must have acquired it when you were a Protestant, not since you became a Catholic and a Priest.*

A. I have constantly read the Bible since the age of ten. In my Protestant days I knew the Authorized Version fairly well, and if the moment a man begins to read the Bible it leads him out of the Catholic Church, you will find it difficult to explain how this did not keep me out. Yet I can assure you that not until I did become a Catholic did my real study and understanding of the Bible begin. Before becoming a Priest I had to study Sacred Scripture daily for many years, and far from shaking my faith, this has but confirmed my decision to live and die a member of the Catholic Church.

Q. *If you really knew Catholicism, you would not advocate it.*

A. You are convinced that you have a right idea of Catholicism, and cannot see how I could accept it, if *that* be Catholicism. But *that* is not Catholicism. And since our ideas conflict as to what Catholicism really is like, the only thing to do is to ask whose ideas are more likely to be correct. I have given many years to the study of Catholicism, and am, at present, professor of theology in a Catholic Seminary. The authorities of the Catholic Church at least give me credit for knowing the Catholicism that must be taught to future Priests. How much time have you devoted to the study of Catholicism?

Q. *You can be mistaken, even though sincere.*

A. That is quite true, and I have often been mistaken, as most men at times. And it is precisely to make sure that I will not be mistaken in the supremely important matter of religion that I cling to a Church which cannot be mistaken, but must be right where I might be wrong. God knew that so many sincere men would make mistakes that He deliberately established an infallible Church to preserve them from error where it was most important that they should not go wrong.

Q. *You once quoted an Anglican clergyman, who said that ex-Catholics in Anglicanism were weeds thrown out of the Catholic Church by the Pope. Are you not a weed thrown out of Protestantism and taking root in the Catholic garden?*

A. No. I was not thrown out of Protestantism. A Priest, ex-communicated because he will not live up to Catholic ideals, can often find a home in some Protestant Church. He has gone lower, and he knows it. I was attracted by the higher ideals of the Catholic Church, and begged as a favor to be allowed to share in Catholic privileges. After twenty years of Catholic life, that is still my happiest memory, notwithstanding the fact that the Catholic Church demands a far higher standard than any other Church.

Q. *What do you hope to gain by deserting, and then publicly denouncing, the faith of your forefathers?*

A. By deserting the faith of my immediate forefathers, I went back to the faith of their forefathers, and to the true religion they should never have deserted. They

deserted truth for error; I deserted error for truth. That was what I hoped to gain, and I have gained it.

As for publicly denouncing the faith of my forefathers, that is not the object of these talks. My purpose is to explain the Catholic position to those who desire such information, for I know that a clear explanation of the truth will carry its own weight with unprejudiced people. If inquirers ask me why the Catholic Church condemns their religion, I tell them sincerely and frankly, and I presume that this is what they wish.

Q. You questioned what you were taught and changed, though you did not change entirely. You will further question the doctrines of the Catholic Church, and perhaps change your religion again.

A. It is true that I changed, and that I did not change entirely. I changed to Catholicism, but still preserve traces of my original lineaments, am still the son of the same human father and mother, and still have a tendency to some of the same faults which grew up with me from my youth.

Also I shall certainly ask further questions about Catholic teaching, since its depths are almost inexhaustible, even though I am too sure that God speaks through the Catholic Church to dream of questioning those teachings. It is one thing to ask questions about a doctrine revealed by God; quite another thing to question it.

Q. You are a Protestant tool used by the Catholic Church, but you have not been made to realize that yet.

A. I have long ago realized that I am but an instrument in God's work. I did not redeem the world. But I am not a Protestant tool, for I renounced Protestantism long ago.

Q. When you have done your all for Rome in public, you will be put into a Monastery to learn the beauty of humiliation and starvation.

A. I am already a member of a Religious Order, and live in a Monastery, although I have never been invited to starve myself. As for the beauty of humility, I hope to learn that some day, being invited to do so by the Christ who said, "Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart."

Q. Then you will be sent to the Confessional to hear secret sins of women which will appal your senses, weakened already by your so-called purifications.

A. I have been in the Confessional very, very often, and have heard thousands of confessions. You have never been there, and conclude that what you imagine to be true must be true. Also, you seem to have a shockingly low estimate of your own sex. Let me tell you a few things from experience. A Priest in the Confessional does not want material descriptions, but facts, and he is in a far happier position than the average medical man. As for being appalled, I have never heard confessions without being edified by the wonderful dispositions of sorrow in the penitents, and without a deeper sympathy for the frailties of human nature, whether through mental darkness or weakness of will.

Q. When you realize it all, mental torment will be your lot, and your soul will be plunged in gloom.

A. Not a bit of it. I do not believe in gloom-religions, and am the sworn enemy of mental torment. I fully realize everything, and am bubbling over with happi-

ness all the day long. You will at least allow me to be the judge of my own interior dispositions.

Q. I shall pray for you that you may become free, and not tied down by the doctrines of a Church.

A. If God hears your prayers, I shall become even a better Catholic. I shall be set free more and more from all error by the teachings of the Catholic Church, and liberated from my faults and defects by her wonderful Sacraments and other means of grace.

The foregoing Questions and Answers are already an indication of the spirit in which these Sessions have been conducted. But perhaps I could not do better than reproduce the general opening talk itself, setting out the objects of the undertaking. In substance, it was as follows:

"Good-evening, listeners all. For some time I have been promising to give a Session dealing with questions of religion and morality, in which the listeners themselves should decide what is of interest to them. Such a Session will commence next Sunday evening, and I invite you to send in any questions you wish on these subjects. To-night, however, let us see what I can promise you in regard to this Session.

"Will it be of interest? Why, religion has ever been one of the most interesting things under the sun. Men get excited about few other things as they do about religion. Something or other is likely to upset a man sometimes, but religion alone seems to be able to do so almost always. Dispute with him about ordinary events, he is quite undisturbed; dispute his policies, and more often than not he will laugh; but start on religion, and you find it a very different matter. This is because religion is fundamentally one of the deepest things in man. He is a religious animal. It is part of his human nature which finds a religion of some sort as natural to it as breathing.

"Now by listening-in to other people's difficulties, you will find many of your own problems solved, apart from your interest in what fellow men are actually thinking themselves. We are curious beings. We would not turn up the last pages of a novel as soon as we begin it if we were not. And we like novels because they deal with human life. We are so interested in other people's experiences that we have to invent them. But the truth that is stranger than fiction is usually a bit shy. It is in such a Session as this that you will hear it. And many of the questions will express just your own difficulties, for it is a fact that if you set twenty men thinking you can be sure that they will more or less think along much the same lines, according to the information at their disposal.

"So now I invite you, non-Catholics above all, to send in any questions you wish on religion, or morality, or the Catholic Church, and I shall explain exactly the Catholic position, and give the reasons for it. In fact, I almost demand those questions. Many hard things have been said, and are still being said, about the Catholic Church, and too often she has been condemned without a hearing. She has the right to ask a fair trial, and to be allowed to state her case. We insist that even the worst criminal should have the chance to say what he can for himself. And the Catholic Church, though no criminal, has been so abused, that she has a right to be heard. I do not ask that you give your name and address. A *nom de plume* will do. Call yourself Voltaire, Confucius, X.Y.Z., what you like, so long as you give indication enough to recognize your answer.

"My own promises are legion. Every letter sent in will be certainly acknowledged. If it is worth writing and mailing, it is worth answering. I will evade no

serious question on the subject of religion. All credit will be given for sincerity. No matter what others may think of it, I will take it for granted that it is your own personal difficulty, the result of much thought, perhaps the voice of years of distress and doubt. Or the question may be the result of a talk with others, or of things you have heard at work, or that you have read in the papers. All I ask is that you submit it for explanation. That some hard things are bound to be implied I know quite well. If I had the idea some people have of the Catholic Church, I would be far more indignant than they are, and would do all possible to force it out of the country. But I have not that idea, because I happen to know the Catholic Church as she really is. 'Oh,' you may reply, 'but you do not know any other Church.' I do. I became a Catholic only after having tried Protestantism in various forms. So at least the replies will come from one who has seen both sides.

"At times you will find yourself in complete agreement with things which you thought Catholics rejected. With all good faith, a lot of people misunderstand the Catholic Church, basing their ideas upon what other non-Catholics say of her. But there's nothing like asking a Catholic himself, and if you are shy of meeting a Priest personally, here is your opportunity. Send in your inquiry to this Session.

"At other times, even after the explanation given, you will find yourself only in partial agreement with Catholic teaching. Well, the information will be of value, and you will at least appreciate the fact that we prefer to say what we know to be true, rather than consult your feelings. To say what one believes to be false for the sake of pleasing others is sheer hypocrisy, and it appeals to no one with a spark of manhood in him.

"Finally, some Catholic doctrines will be a flat contradiction of what you have hitherto believed. Then I can but ask you to weigh the force of the reasons for the Catholic doctrine. And even if you are not convinced, it is good to know not only that other people do think differently, but in what way they differ from you. At the same time remember that one can dislike another man's doctrines without disliking the man. If a reply seems rather hard on your pet beliefs, do not regard it as being hard upon you. It is not meant to be. Not one word is intended to hurt anybody personally.

"In conclusion, then, I predict that you will all find this a fascinating Session, whether you are hearing replies to your own questions, or noticing what other listeners think on the subject, or simply listening to the actual teachings of the Catholic Church."

Since the broadcasting of that first invitation, as I have remarked, questions have never been lacking from all the Australian States and New Zealand. And from the thousands of questions sent in, a selection is given in this book, space being allotted to each subject relatively to the interest shown in it by inquirers. The replies appear just as they were given over the air, though not with any semblance of the order in which they were received. The necessity of classification in book form is evident. Each question is numbered, so that, with the help of the full index to be found at the end of the volume, readers may find the book useful as a manual of ready reference concerning the various topics with which it deals.

One final duty confronts the author which it is most pleasant to fulfill. I wish to acknowledge my great debt to the Rt. Rev. Monsignor James Meany, P.P., Director of Station 2SM. I owe very much to his sympathy and encouragement from the very inception of the Question Box Sessions. And now he has not only granted my request by contributing the preface to this work, but has generously attended to all the technical details involved in the printing and publishing of the book. Any attractive qualities in presentation and appearance are due to his taste and discernment, and I gladly express my gratitude to him for his valued co-operation in its production.



CHAPTER ONE

GOD

1. Please give me evidence that God exists. I have never had any such evidence, for I do not accept the Bible.

What do you mean by evidence? Some people think that evidence must be seen and touched, as an animal sees a patch of grass and eats it. But men are not mere animals. They have reason, and can appreciate intellectual evidence. For example, the evidence of beauty in music or in painting is perceived by man's mind, not by his senses. An animal could hear the same sounds, or see the same colors, without being impressed by their harmony and proportion. Apart from the Bible altogether, reason can detect sufficient evidence to guarantee the existence of God.

2. What is this evidence for God's existence, apart from the Bible?

There are many indications, the chief of which I shall give you very briefly:

The first is from causality. The universe, limited in all its details, could not be its own cause. It could no more come together with all its regulating laws than the San Francisco Harbor Bridge could just happen, or a clock could assemble itself and keep perfect time without a clock-maker. On the same principle, if there were no God, there would be no you to dispute His existence. A second indication is drawn from the universal reasoning, or if you wish, intuition of men. The universal judgment of mankind can no more be wrong on this vital point than the intuition of an infant that food must be conveyed to the mouth. The stamp of God's handiwork is so clearly impressed upon creation, and, above all, upon man, that all nations instinctively believe that there is a God. The truth is in possession. Men do not have to persuade themselves that there is a God. They have to try to persuade themselves that there is no God. And no one yet, who has attained to such a temporary persuasion, has been able to find a valid reason for it. Men do not grow into the idea of a God; they endeavor to grow out of it.

The sense of moral obligation confirms these reasons. In every man there is a sense of right and wrong. A man knows interiorly when he is doing wrong. Something rebukes his conduct. He knows that he is going against an inward voice. It is the voice of conscience, dictating to us a law we did not make, and which no man could have made, for this voice protests whether other men know our conduct or not. This voice is often quite against what we wish to do, warning us beforehand, condemning us after its violation. The law dictated by this voice of conscience supposes a lawgiver who has written his law in our hearts. And as God alone could do this, it is certain that He exists.

Finally, justice demands that there be a God. The very sense of justice among men, resulting in law-courts, supposes a just God. We did not give ourselves our sense of justice. It comes from whoever made us, and no one can give what he does not possess himself. Yet justice cannot always be done by men in this world. Here the good often suffer, and the wicked prosper. And, even though human justice does not always succeed in balancing the scales, they will be balanced **some** day by a just God, who most certainly must exist.

3. *You, as a Priest, argue to a clock-maker. I, as a rationalist, ask, "Who created your uncreated clock-maker?"*

That is not a rational question. I say that the universe is obviously created, and that what is created supposes a Creator who is uncreated, or the problem goes on forever, the whole endless chain of dependent beings as unable to explain itself as each of its links. It is rational to argue to an uncreated clock-maker. It is not rational to ask, "Who created this uncreated clock-maker?" God was not created. If He were, He would be a creature and would have a creator. His creator would then be God, and not He Himself. God always existed. He never began, and will never cease to be. He is eternal.

4. *You talk of universal persuasion. Men used to believe that the world was flat!*

A sufficient reason for that error is evident, *viz.*, lack of data, and the fact that men followed their senses, which seemed to say that the earth was flat. That was not a judgment of the pure reason. The senses supplied no immediate manifestations that there might be a God as they indicated that the world might be flat. The cases are not parallel, and the transition from a judgment based upon the senses to one based upon pure reason is not valid. In any case, the scientific and metaphysical proofs justify belief in God quite independently of this psychological reason. They would be valid supposing that only one man in a million believed in God's existence. This latter supposition, however, will never be verified, for the common rational judgment of the vast majority will always intuitively perceive this truth.

5. *There is no need to talk of future balancing of the Scales. Virtue is its own reward in this life, even as the wicked endure remorse.*

That will not do. Consciousness of virtue is not much good to a man about to be wrongfully hanged and who cannot live to enjoy it. Nor does vice always bring proportionate remorse. Many are too hardened to experience deep remorse. There will be a levelling-up some day, after this life, and by God.

6. *Joseph McCabe believed in God, but he renounced bigotry and became an Agnostic.*

There are many men such as Joseph McCabe who have given up their profession of a belief in God. But, they do not give up that belief because Agnosticism offers them a higher and holier life. They find Agnosticism less irksome, whether it be by emancipation from moral laws, or from the restraints of truth and logic. Nor should you talk of bigotry. Many Agnostics have a far worse bias than that which they attribute to believers, garbling facts and distorting evidence without any of the scruples which one who really believes in God would certainly experience.

7. *If I sincerely believe that there is no God, and there be a God, would not invincible ignorance save me?*

Such ignorance is not invincible. You can overcome it. You violated your reason in suppressing its spontaneous concept of God, and by persuading yourself that religion is false. If you took the pressure off your reason and let it swing back to the Supreme Cause of its very being, it would do so as the needle to the pole. Pascal rightly says that there are two types of men, those who are afraid to lose God, and those who are afraid that they might find Him.

8. *What do you mean by the term God?*

God is a spiritual, substantial, personal being, infinite in intelligence, in will, and in all perfection, absolutely simple or lacking composition, immutable, happy

in Himself and by Himself, and infinitely superior to all that is or can be conceived apart from Himself. He is incomprehensible in His infinite perfection by all lesser intelligences, although knowable as to the fact of His existence as Living Creator and Lord of heaven and earth, almighty, eternal, immense, and distinct from all that He has created. That is what I mean by God.

9. *How do you know that God is eternal, or always was, is, and will be?*

Because if God ever had a beginning, then before He began there was nothing. Now nothing, with nothing to work upon, and no faculties with which to work, could never turn its non-existent self into something. But there is obviously something, and there can never have been a time when there was nothing. God at least must always have existed, and if no one is responsible for His beginning, there is no one who could possibly bring His existence to an end. He always will be. God rightly declared Himself the eternally existent Being when He said to Moses, "I am Who am."

10. *Spinoza said that if God created the world for an object, He desires something He lacks, which denies His infinite perfection.*

Spinoza's objection is not valid. He fails to distinguish between God's essential constitution, which is necessary to His being, and His free operations resulting in created things. If God's creating operations were necessary, Spinoza would be right. But God did not create in order to acquire perfection necessary to Himself. He created to bestow perfections upon others. If I am laboring to acquire, I lack something I want. If I give to others, that proves not my lack, but my superabundance.

11. *Can men whilst earth-bound understand the working of the Divine Mind?*

The Divine Mind does not "work." God does not have to reason slowly and painfully to conclusions, as do men. His Divine Intelligence is a permanent and simultaneous act of perfect knowledge embracing all things, past, present, and future. We cannot fully understand God's being, knowledge, and plans. However, St. Paul rightly said that the pagan Romans were inexcusable for not noting the power and divinity of the true God in visible things, and for not having glorified Him, nor given Him thanks. If it were beyond the power of man to know this much of God, they would not have been inexcusable.

12. *Have we attained to a full knowledge of God, or are we advancing towards the fulness of truth?*

The fullest revelation of those things of God which man is intended to know has been made as far as this life goes. It has been given by Christ, as we shall see later on. No man yet has sounded the full depths of the truth revealed by Christ, and as we progress in the knowledge of His doctrines we get nearer and nearer to that fulness of truth which is possible on this earth. I am speaking of the knowledge to be attained by individuals. The fulness of truth is contained in the deposit of faith confided to the Catholic Church. The perfect fulness of knowledge is possible only in the heavenly vision of God.

13. *What becomes of God when you think of the misery and starvation in the world?*

We have already seen that there is a God. Inability to comprehend every detail in the universe does not prove that there is no God, but merely the limited capacity of the finite human mind. However, the human mind can propose certain principles which go a long way towards the removal of difficulties.

Firstly, evil is really the negation or privation of good, and if there is evil in the world, there is also much good which can be accounted for only by the existence of God.

Secondly, the fluctuations of this mutable life cannot affect God's existence. I mean that you cannot have God when things seem to be all right, and annihilate Him when things seem to go wrong. If God exists before things go wrong, He still exists despite the unhappiness of an individual. And note that word individual. Viewing the race as a whole, we find that life is a mixture of comfortable and uncomfortable things. When we are happy, others are suffering. When we are suffering, others are happy. And we cannot say that God is existing for the happy ones, and simultaneously not existing for the unhappy ones. We must not take local and individual views only, but a universal outlook.

Thirdly, and particularly as regards the uneven distribution of this world's goods with consequent starvation for some, God's providence has not failed. Man's administration is at fault. Whilst individuals suffer want, we know that the world has produced enough wheat, fruit, meat, and wool to feed and clothe everyone. God has not failed to provide enough to fill every mouth. But He has given this world over to the administration of men, and it is their bad management they must correct rather than blame God. At least their incapable administration should teach them the saving grace of humility.

14. *Where is the justice of God, in permitting this uneven distribution?*

A satisfactory explanation could scarcely be given, were this life all. But it is not. God permits these things only because He knows that there is a future life where He will rectify and compensate all inequalities. In the meantime He draws good out of these miseries, for they teach men not to set their hopes entirely upon this world as if there were no other, and help to expiate the sins of mankind. If we cannot be entirely happy here, let us at least make sure of being happy in the next life.

15. *If God is almighty He could prevent volcanoes, earthquakes, etc., which kill innocent and wicked people alike.*

If He were not almighty there would be no volcanoes to erupt, and no human beings to be injured or killed. These physical events happen according to natural laws established by God, with the operations of which He is not obliged to interfere because the finite minds of men are surprised by them. Nor does the death of such people terminate their real existence. The transition from earthly conditions to our future state is as normal as the transition from infancy to adolescence. Death is a natural law for all, and God permits it to come in various ways to various people.

16. *If God is loving, just, and all-powerful, why does He permit moral evil, or sin?*

Because God is Love, He asks the freely given love of man, and not a compelled love. Because He is just, He will not deprive man of the free will which is in accordance with his rational nature. Nor is this against the omnipotence of God, for even His power does not extend to contradictory things. Man cannot be free to love and serve God, without being free to reject Him and rebel against Him. We cannot have it both ways. Even God, if He wants men to be free, cannot take from them the power to choose evil. If He enforces goodness, He takes away freedom. If He leaves freedom, He must permit evil, even though He forbids it. It is man's dignity that he is master of his own destiny instead of having to develop just like a tree which necessarily obeys natural law. Men, as a matter of fact, misused their freedom, and sin and brutality resulted. But it was impossible to give

man the gift of freedom and the dignity of being master of his own destiny without risking the permission of such failures.

17. *At least, being all-powerful, just, and loving, He ought to give everyone a fair chance of obtaining the good things of this world.*

Being all-powerful, there is no reason why He ought to do our bidding as if we were all-powerful.

Being just, He is not going to give us a tin trumpet and let us think that to be our real good when it is not.

Being loving, He will not usually allow man to have those riches which may cause difficulties in the way of salvation. I do not want Him to say to me, "Amen, I say to you, you have had your reward." We are Christians, and Christians are disciples of a crucified Master. We have no right to complain if we also must tread the path of suffering.

18. *Do you tell me that a good God permits deformed children, with a lifetime of misery before them?*

God is certainly good, and if He permits evil of any kind it is only because He knows that He can draw greater good from it in the end. The human race misused its freedom, abandoned God, and found not happiness but misery. It is good to be just, and God's justice permitted this misery. Also, in His wisdom, He may permit a child to be born deformed who with health and strength would fling itself into pleasures which would end in eternal loss. Again, an imbecile is incapable of sin, and it would often seem to us a mercy had some apparently sane people been born imbeciles. Poor people, whether mentally or bodily deformed, do not spend the whole of their lives in misery and suffering. We must not judge them by our own experiences. Likewise, we must remember that what we call "the whole of their lives" is not confined to this earth. There is a continuance of existence in eternity, where all will be rectified.

We might say, "If God be good, why did He allow His Son to go through excruciating torture?" Sin is the real evil, not suffering. Christ found happiness in proving His love by suffering, a greater good than mere health. And the miseries of this world have driven thousands to God who would have been self-sufficient and independent only for the naturally insoluble problem of suffering. If only for this reason we can discern an indication of God's goodness in it.

19. *Is it, then, God's will that people should suffer from such terrible diseases as Cancer or Consumption?*

We must distinguish between God's positive will, and His permissive will. He positively wills all the good that happens. Suffering He permits to occur, and this only when he foresees that good can result from it. He positively wills that I should be holy. If He foresees that I will make use of good health to sin and to lose my soul, He may mercifully permit my health to be ruined, and thus lead me to Him where He would otherwise lose me. There would have been no diseases had men not sinned. God did not will sin, but having made men free, He permitted it and its consequences. This permission was a less serious thing than would have been the depriving us of our freedom.

20. *My poverty is due to the oppression of capitalism, not to the loving will of God.*

God has permitted it, but it has come about firstly, by mistaken conduct, with all good will, on the part of man; secondly, by faults both on the side of some capitalists and of some workers; thirdly, through mere force of circumstances. It

is not against God's positive will to try to remedy these things. But, meantime, the present state of affairs would not exist, were it not for His permissive will.

21. *Could not God at least have made life much easier, instead of making everything hard?*

Everything is not hard. Some things are. The things that are difficult are made easier by the grace of which so many people deliberately deprive themselves. *All* difficulty cannot be removed, for God has a right to ask us to overcome at personal cost our self-inflicted bad habits, sins, and other injuries. Men's complaints are often about as reasonable as those of a man who cuts his throat, and then blames the doctor because it hurts to have it stitched up again.

22. *But life seems to be becoming harder and more painful.*

There has been a succession of world depressions and world recoveries through history. In any case temporal trials do not mean that life is becoming worse. It may be a means of great good. It is easy to follow all our lower instincts; difficult to battle against them. If your policy is to do only that which is easy and pleasant in life, you will never be much of a man. Christ came to make men better, and offers His grace and assistance whenever virtue demands what is difficult and painful to our lower nature and sensitiveness. He offers His special grace to those who have the good sense to pray for it.

23. *Why does He permit those who do serve Him to live in poverty, whilst the godless have a smooth path through life?*

This is not always the case. However, when this does occur, it is not difficult to understand. The godless do not deserve to be invited to share with Christ in a life of suffering. Also, all men do some good in life sometimes. No one is entirely evil. God's justice rewards natural good, therefore, by natural prosperity, and that may be all that such men will receive. "You have had the reward of such good as you did," may be said at their judgment, "and now answer for the evil of your irreligious lives." On the other hand, those who love God are not given worthless and perishable rewards, but will receive a full return of supernatural happiness, the only kind that really matters. If Christ promised us happiness in this world, then let us murmur when we see the infidel prosper. But what did He promise? He promised what He Himself received, suffering here, and happiness hereafter. The disciple is not above his Master.

24. *In all these replies to difficulties you are postulating free will, the sinful state of man, redemption by Christ, grace, and the eternal destiny of man!*

That is so. These things are facts, and no problem can be fully solved except in the light of all the facts. I am quite prepared to justify these facts. Meantime, without them, no reasonable solution of the problems of God's providence can be found at all; with them, the solution, even though inadequate, is at least rational and intelligible. The world with its miseries may be a problem difficult to reconcile with the existence of God; but that same world without God is a far greater problem, leaving exactly the same miseries to be endured in hopeless despair. Christianity does not deny the existence of suffering, but it can give happiness in the midst of suffering, and this practical solution is the true solution God gives to men of good will.