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*by*  
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Edited in Collaboration with  
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*Diocesan Missionary*

*With a Preface by*  
RT. REV. MSGR. FULTON J. SHEEN, D.D.

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Imprimatur: ✠ John Gregory Murray  
Archbishop of St. Paul, Minnesota  
December 27, 1941

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Originally published in 1942 by Radio Replies Press, St. Paul, Minnesota.

Library of Congress Catalog Card No.: 79-51938

ISBN: 978-0-89555-091-0

Complete and unabridged.

Printed and bound in the United States of America.

TAN Books  
An Imprint of Saint Benedict Press, LLC  
Charlotte, North Carolina  
2012

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# PREFACE



ONCE there were lost islands, but most of them have been found; once there were lost causes, but many of them have been retrieved; but there is one lost art that has not been definitely recovered, and without which no civilization can long survive, and that is the art of controversy. The hardest thing to find in the world today is an argument. Because so few are thinking, naturally there are found but few to argue. Prejudice there is in abundance and sentiment too, for these things are born of enthusiasms without the pain of labor. Thinking, on the contrary, is a difficult task; it is the hardest work a man can do—that is perhaps why so few indulge in it. Thought-saving devices have been invented that rival labor-saving devices in their ingenuity. Fine-sounding phrases like “Life is bigger than logic,” or “Progress is the spirit of the age,” go rattling by us like express trains, carrying the burden of those who are too lazy to think for themselves.

NOT even philosophers argue today; they only explain away. A book full of bad logic, advocating all manner of moral laxity, is not refuted by critics; it is merely called “bold, honest, and fearless.” Even those periodicals which pride themselves upon their open-mindedness on all questions are far from practising the lost art of controversy. Their pages contain no controversies, but only presentations of points of view; these never rise to the level of abstract thought in which argument clashes with argument like steel with steel, but rather they content themselves with the personal reflections of one who has lost his faith, writing against the sanctity of marriage, and of another who has kept his faith, writing in favor of it. Both sides are shooting off firecrackers, making all the noise of an intellectual warfare and creating the illusion of conflict, but it is only a sham battle in which there are no casualties; there are plenty of explosions, but never an exploded argument.

THE causes underlying this decline in the art of controversy are twofold: religious and philosophical. Modern religion has enunciated one great and fundamental dogma that is at the basis of all the other dogmas, and that is, that religion must be freed from dogmas. Creeds and confessions of faith are no longer the fashion; religious leaders have agreed not to disagree and those beliefs for which some of our ancestors would have died they have melted into a spineless Humanism. Like other Pilates they have turned their backs on the uniqueness of truth and have opened their arms wide to all the moods and fancies

the hour might dictate. The passing of creeds and dogmas means the passing of controversies. Creeds and dogmas are social; prejudices are private. Believers bump into one another at a thousand different angles, but bigots keep out of one another's way, because prejudice is anti-social. I can imagine an old-fashioned Calvinist who holds that the word "damn" has a tremendous dogmatic significance, coming to intellectual blows with an old-fashioned Methodist who holds that it is only a curse word; but I cannot imagine a controversy if both decide to damn damnation, like our Modernists who no longer believe in Hell.

THE second cause, which is philosophical, bases itself on that peculiar American philosophy called "Pragmatism," the aim of which is to prove that all proofs are useless. Hegel, of Germany, rationalized error; James, of America, derationalized truth. As a result, there has sprung up a disturbing indifference to truth, and a tendency to regard the useful as the true, and the impractical as the false. The man who can make up his mind when proofs are presented to him is looked upon as a bigot, and the man who ignores proofs and the search for truth is looked upon as broad-minded and tolerant.

Another evidence of this same disrespect for rational foundations is the general readiness of the modern mind to accept a statement because of the literary way in which it is couched, or because of the popularity of the one who says it, rather than for the reasons behind the statement. In this sense, it is unfortunate that some men who think poorly can write so well. Bergson has written a philosophy grounded on the assumption that the greater comes from the less, but he has so camouflaged that intellectual monstrosity with mellifluous French that he has been credited with being a great and original thinker. To some minds, of course, the startling will always appear to be the profound. It is easier to get the attention of the press when one says, as Ibsen did, that "two and two make five," than to be orthodox and say that two and two make four.

THE Catholic Church perhaps more than the other forms of Christianity notices the decline in the art of controversy. Never before, perhaps, in the whole history of Christianity has she been so intellectually impoverished for want of good, sound intellectual opposition as she is at the present time. Today there are no foe-men worthy of her steel. And if the Church today is not producing great chunks of thought, or what might be called "thinkage," it is because she has not been challenged to do so. The best in everything comes from the throwing down of a gauntlet—even the best in thought.

THE Church loves controversy, and loves it for two reasons: because intellectual conflict is informing, and because she is madly in love with rationalism. The great structure of the Catholic Church has



been built up through controversy. It was the attacks of the Docetists and the Monophysites in the early centuries of the Church that made her clear on the doctrine concerning the nature of Christ; it was the controversy with the Reformers that clarified her teaching on justification. And if today there are not nearly so many dogmas defined as in the early ages of the Church, it is because there is less controversy—and less thinking. One must think to be a heretic, even though it be wrong thinking.

Even though one did not accept the infallible authority of the Church, he would still have to admit that the Church in the course of centuries has had her finger on the pulse of the world, ever defining those dogmas which needed definition at the moment. In the light of this fact, it would be interesting to inquire if our boasted theory of intellectual progress is true. What was the Christian world thinking about in the early centuries? What doctrines had to be clarified when controversy was keen? In the early centuries, controversy centered on such lofty and delicate problems as the Trinity, the Incarnation, the union of Natures in the person of the Son of God. What was the last doctrine to be defined in 1870? It was the capability of man to use his brain and come to a knowledge of God. Now, if the world is progressing intellectually, should not the existence of God have been defined in the first century, and the nature of the Trinity have been defined in the nineteenth? In the order of mathematics this is like defining the complexities of logarithms in the year 42, and the simplification of the addition table in the year 1942. The fact is that there is now less intellectual opposition to the Church and more prejudice, which, being interpreted, means less thinking, even less bad thinking.

Not only does the Church love controversy because it helps her sharpen her wits; she loves it also for its own sake. The Church is accused of being the enemy of reason; as a matter of fact, she is the only one who believes in it. Using her reason in the Council of the Vatican, she officially went on record in favor of Rationalism, and declared, against the mock humility of the Agnostics and the sentimental faith of the Fideists, that human reason by its own power can know something besides the contents of test tubes and retorts, and that working on mere sensible phenomena it can soar even to the "hid battlements of eternity," there to discover the Timeless beyond time and the Spaceless beyond space which is God, the Alpha and Omega of all things.

THE Church asks her children to think hard and think clean. Then she asks them to do two things with their thoughts: First, she asks them to externalize them in the concrete world of economics, government, commerce, and education, and by this externalization of beautiful, clean thoughts to produce a beautiful and clean civilization.

The quality of any civilization depends upon the nature of the thoughts its great minds bequeath to it. If the thoughts that are externalized in the press, in the senate chamber, on the public platform, are base, civilization itself will take on their base character with the same readiness with which a chameleon takes on the color of the object upon which it is placed. But if the thoughts that are vocalized and articulated are high and lofty, civilization will be filled, like a crucible, with the gold of the things worth while.

THE Church asks her children not only to externalize their thoughts and thus produce culture, but also to internalize their thoughts and thus produce spirituality. The constant giving would be dissipation unless new energy was supplied from within. In fact, before a thought can be bequeathed to the outside, it must have been born on the inside. But no thought is born without silence and contemplation. It is in the stillness and quiet of one's own intellectual pastures, wherein man meditates on the purpose of life and its goal, that real and true character is developed. A character is made by the kind of thoughts a man thinks when alone, and a civilization is made by the kind of thoughts a man speaks to his neighbor.

ON the other hand, the Church discourages bad thinking, for a bad thought set loose is more dangerous than a wild man. Thinkers live; toilers die in a day. When society finds it is too late to electrocute a thought, it electrocutes the man. There was once a time when Christian society burned the thought in order to save society, and after all, something can be said in favor of this practice. To kill one bad thought may mean the salvation of ten thousand thinkers. The Roman emperors were alive to this fact; they killed the Christians not because they wanted their hearts, but because they wanted their heads, or better, their brains—brains that were thinking out the death of Paganism.

It is to this task of thinking out the death of New Paganism that these chapters of the third volume of *Radio Replies by Fathers Rumble and Carty* are published.

Monsignor Fulton J. Sheen, Ph.D., D.D., L.L.D.

# Foreword

**T**HIS third volume of questions submitted to us concerning the Catholic Church and her teachings, together with the answers to them, is intended to complete our series of RADIO REPLIES offered to the public in book form. For the sake of reference and comparison this third volume also has been made to correspond as closely as possible with the two volumes previously published so far as the division of its contents is concerned.

Our three volumes of RADIO REPLIES do not claim to have exhausted all possible problems where religion is involved. Far from it. According to their various fields of study men could go on almost forever proposing difficulties suggested by their readings in history, philosophy, theology, science, ethics, psychology, or comparative religion. Indeed the Catholic Church, for nearly two thousand years, has been listening to the difficulties proposed by all types of men through all the ages. And to every individual who comes to her today with the request that she first solve his own little collection of viewpoints which seem to militate against the truth of Catholicism she can say, "Tell me all you have against the Catholic religion, and when you have done, I will tell you ten thousand further difficulties you have neither heard of, nor could think of for yourself." It would be a vast mistake, therefore, to imagine that the Catholic Church is unaware of the difficulties which can arise in any human mind where religion is concerned. I say this because many a man has come to me with a difficulty under the impression that it is insoluble, and that no one before him has ever adverted to it. And he has found it rather disconcerting to learn that it is an old objection; one, perhaps, which has been proposed and demolished a thousand times in each recurring age.

Our three volumes, then, do not pretend to exhaust all possible problems in the field of religion. They contain but a classified selection of typical questions and answers chosen from a vast mass of material accumulated during twelve years of radio work and public lectures in which non-Catholics were invited to express their difficulties in the way of accepting Catholicism. And we maintain that these three volumes, or any one of them, will at least solve the particular difficulties listed, establish the truth of the Catholic Church, and provide the principles which will prove valid in the solution of all other possible submissions.

Of course the man who sincerely desires the truth, and is earnestly seeking it, soon learns that if he waits until all possible difficulties which could invade his mind are solved he will never attain to the true religion in this life. Life is too short

*An Inexhaustible Subject*

*Scope of RADIO REPLIES*

*The True Approach*

for that. He would arrive at his deathbed still with a host of difficulties unsolved, having ignored what is certain because of the tangle of his uncertainties. What every man needs to do is to ponder over the certainties, make them his positive conviction, and act according to them, trusting that more and more of his uncertainties will be clarified in due course. A track through a jungle to the mountaintop is not non-existent because the man entangled by difficulties in the jungle is unaware of it. And when such a man is informed that he will find the track if he but turns in another direction, he does not ignore the advice in favor of triumphing over all the difficulties along the wrong way of approach. That is, if he really does want to get to the mountaintop. The uncertainty as to whether he can get through that way he is content to leave unsolved whilst he makes use of the certain path that has been brought to his notice. So, too, the man too entangled in religious difficulties to see anything else will make no progress until he learns to abstract from them and consider the certain and positive aspects of Catholic truth. There he will find more than enough to justify unwavering confidence in the Catholic Church, and a practical way of life calculated to secure his spiritual welfare both in this world and the next.

The three volumes of **RADIO REPLIES** are not primarily intended as reference books. Their full force will be perceived only by reading each of them from cover to cover, for thus only will the logic and consistency of the Catholic position be fully apprehended. Truth is consistent; error almost infinite in its variations. Often enough, indeed, the objections to the Catholic Church, if set side by side, would cancel each other out of existence. But in dealing with everything that can be urged against her the Catholic Church never finds herself compelled to unsay anything. In answering difficulties from the most diverse points of view, even the most contradictory, she never contradicts herself, having to unsay to one opponent what she has maintained in her replies to another. And it is this consistency, the hallmark of truth, which has appealed to the intelligence of thousands of converts who, by further study, prayer, and the grace of God, have completed their journey towards the truth, and have happily sought admission to the Catholic Church. Primarily, therefore, the books are intended for such continuous and consecutive reading that their full import may thus be grasped.

*Use of  
These Books*

But after such use as above advocated, the books retain their value as works of reference, and this for Catholics and non-Catholics alike. It is for this purpose that each volume has been so thoroughly indexed. As for study-clubs, testimonies to the value of these apologetic works are being constantly received. In many study-circles the questions only are put to the members, and the replies they themselves jot down on paper are then checked with those given in the books. Converts under instruction have told me that they, too, have adopted this method, with great profit to themselves, and an immense clarification of their ideas on the subject of religion.

*As Reference  
and Study Manuals*

And now, with this third and last series of RADIO *A Personal Note* REPLIES, I would like to offer our readers a final personal remark. I was brought up as a Protestant, probably with more inherited prejudices than most non-Catholics of these days. It is some thirty years since, in God's providence, I became a Catholic. Not content with that, I have also become a priest. I cannot therefore be charged with not knowing the Catholic Church thoroughly from within. And all I can say is this: had I found the Catholic Church as evil as I had been led to believe it was, had I found out that I had made a tragic mistake in becoming a Catholic, it is perhaps conceivable that pride might keep me from admitting my error. It would be possible to adopt the attitude of desperate obstinacy which says, "I have made my bed, and will lie upon it." But I am not entirely inhuman. And I would be man enough to advise other prospective converts against making the same fatal mistake. Privately, at least, I would say to inquirers, "I have made wreckage of my own life, and I am going to continue doing so. But there's no need for two of us to do so. You are still outside the Catholic Church, and I advise you to stay outside. If you have any love for your own soul, remain as you are." Yet, did I give such advice, incalculable would be my guilt before God. For the Catholic Church is not evil. She is the one true Church of Christ in this world, the very "pillar and ground of truth." And instead of saving people from it, I am constrained to labor to bring as many people as possible to it, knowing that I am thus bringing the greatest of God's blessings into their lives. Nor is there one of the hundreds of converts I have received into the Catholic Church who has not gratefully acknowledged the fact. What can I wish to the non-Catholic reader, then, except this same great happiness and blessing? It is in this wish that Father Carty joins with me as we offer this third series of RADIO REPLIES to a public that has already shown such appreciation of the previous volumes.

—LESLIE RUMBLE, M.S.C.





## CHAPTER ONE

### GOD

#### **1. *Does not scientific opinion tend to be agnostic, and to regard the existence of a Supreme Being as incapable of verification?***

Some scientists who are proficient in certain limited experimental spheres may profess to be agnostics. But when they do so they are not speaking in virtue of any scientific knowledge they possess. They have gone outside the field in which they are proficient into a field in which they are not proficient. Often they have given so much attention to their own little field of inquiry that they have paid no attention to the rational explanation of the universe as a whole. They study the thing caused, but do not reflect upon the ultimate cause of all reality. And knowing little of the subject, they foolishly think nothing is to be known, forgetting their own limitations. Some do this. Not all. And thousands of great scientists have not been agnostic. They have devoted some thought to the subject instead of uttering hasty opinions. Thus Lord Kelvin said that science positively confirms creative power. Marconi recently spoke as follows: "It is a mistake to think that science and faith cannot exist together. There is too much atheism today. There are too many people just drifting along without any aim or ideal or belief. Faith in the Supreme Being whose rule we must obey can alone give us the courage and strength to face the great mystery of life." One cannot go through an endless stream of quotations. No one, of course, believes that the existence of the Supreme Being is capable of verification by methods proper to experimental science. But His existence is capable of verification by reason; and science does not tend to the denial of this in properly instructed and well-balanced minds.

#### **2. *People argue from the order prevailing in the universe to the existence of an intelligent God.***

They do; and rightly so.

#### **3. *How do we know that it is not in the nature of things themselves to act in an orderly way, according to a plan?***

We know that it is not in the nature of created things of themselves to act in an orderly way according to a plan, for if they are working towards the fulfillment of a plan, there is a constant adaption of means to an end, which supposes an intelligence which has both formulated the plan, and perceived the fitting relationship between given means and the given end to be attained. Now blind matter is not endowed with intelligence. Nor can mere chance produce order. Scatter indiscriminately over the ground thousands of letters written on slips of paper, they will never by mere chance fall together in such a way as to make, say, an oration of Cicero. Now the only intelligent beings in the world are men. But prior to the advent of men to this world, order prevailed. It can be accounted for only by an extra-mundane Intelligence. As surely as it needs intelligence to understand the order prevailing in the universe, it needed intelligence to produce it. Employing all the resources of his intelligence, a genius may devote the whole of his life to a study of the orderly arrangement of crystals. Will he ascribe the whole of the universe to an intelligence so much less than his own that he calls it a blind force? The moment one speaks of the laws of the universe, he speaks of a legislator. And all legislation supposes intelligence, even though human legislation indicates often

enough how badly employed human intelligence can be. If it be in the very nature of certain things to tend in an orderly way towards the realization of a plan, that tendency was implanted in their nature by the Supreme Intelligence responsible for the plan; and that Supreme Intelligence is God.

**4. *Did not humanity originally begin with polytheism, and gradually evolve towards monotheism?***

No. Humanity began with monotheism, and multitudes degenerated into polytheism. At first sight the most primitive traditions found in the Vedic books seem polytheistic; but a deeper scrutiny shows an individual Deity, and indicates that the plurality of gods is really a plurality of effects or created manifestations. This ancient tradition was a survival of the primitive convictions of our first parents. But even as the Jews were always prone to fall into polytheism despite the special protection of God, so the Gentile nations degenerated in their religious notions, and the idea of a plurality of gods became quite common among the rank and file of peoples. The great Greek philosophers, Aristotle and Plato, though in general practice conforming to popular notions, discerned, however, by reason that polytheism was absurd, and theoretically maintained that there could be but one Deity. They saw that polytheism was an error, and that error supposes a truth of which it is the corruption. They both allude to ancient traditions confirming their views. Philologically, also, no plural terms existed prior to singular terms precisely because multitude is subsequent to unity; and the notion of a plurality of gods presupposed a notion of the one God.

**5. *You do not believe that the universe can be explained in terms of the material only.***

Most certainly I do not. The mere materialist offers explanations which do not even deserve a place in the catalog of errors. They are too puerile. Of visible things materialism gives explanations one would expect from a prattling baby or from a lunatic. Of invisible things and spiritual things it gives no explanation at all. It constructs bodies with smaller bodies, like a child playing with a set of blocks, and it gets quite out of breath by the time it gets to things of the mind. It contradicts itself by speaking of laws of matter, for a law is a decree formulated by reason, and reason is not material. Materialists are inconsequent people who prove God every time they speak in order to deny Him. For at the back of every denial of God there is the idea of God. No man can believe in truth, or appreciate goodness, or seek happiness, without tending towards the Author of these things. Yet each of these ideas leads to God. Materialism is not rational; and its only real appeal lies in the fact that it makes the universe the magnificent plaything of man's pride, and gives him a free field for his passions.

**6. *Is it not reasonable to suppose a purely physical cause of which we as yet know nothing?***

I must ask you what you mean by a "purely physical" cause. God is a physical, though not a material Being. If you intend a material cause, I say that the supposition is not reasonable; for the material cannot produce the spiritual. Thought itself is in the spiritual order, and so is the soul which produces thought. You would scorn the idea that a telegraph pole spontaneously began to produce peaches. Yet the proportion between a telegraph pole and peaches is much less than that between matter and spirit.

Again, if we as yet know nothing of the cause of all things, why is it reasonable to suppose that cause to be "purely physical"—whatever you mean by that—yet not reasonable to suppose it to be the Personal God we Christians accept? As a matter of fact, I maintain that a Personal God is the only reasonable explanation.



**7. *Because we do not yet know of such a purely physical cause, is that in itself sufficient reason to assert a Divine Cause?***

Apparently, by "purely physical" cause you mean some blind force. Now I admit that because we do not know of such a purely physical cause we would not be justified in asserting a Divine Cause. But what if, instead of merely "not" knowing of a purely physical cause which could produce this universe, we "know" that no such blind force could do so? And we do know that. The order and obvious design so evident in the universe insist that the Cause be intelligent and personal. And the very supremacy of that Cause supposes Divinity, or a Cause which is itself not an effect, but uncaused, and above all created limitations. Divinity is but a term reserved for an uncreated Being outside and above the created order, and rejoicing in limitless perfections.

**8. *Despite all your arguments, I refuse to believe in a God we can't understand.***

That is unreasonable. In any case, you can understand that there is a God, even though you cannot fully understand the nature of God. God must surpass the capacity of the human mind or He would not be God at all. You must not confuse mystery with absurdity. Tell me that blind matter produced the universe, and I admit the absurdity. But mystery is the very opposite of absurdity. The absurd is false, contradictory, incoherent. But mystery is a truth whose immensity surpasses us. When we speak of God, what we say is true as far as it goes. But human ideas will never go far enough to express God completely. We must express God as best we can, though we shall never fully succeed in expressing God as He is. And I, for one, would not believe in God unless He did surpass my own limited concepts.

**9. *Since God is infinite, and the finite human mind cannot conceive the infinite, God must be thoroughly incomprehensible to us.***

God is not thoroughly incomprehensible to us. We can attain to a certain degree of knowledge concerning Him, even though we cannot form an adequate concept of Him. The finite human mind can conceive the fact that there is a Being not finite as are the things that Being has made. It can affirm perfections of God, denying the imperfections associated with limited creatures, and attributing the purified perfections to Him in an altogether higher and nobler order of being. Any perfections affirmed of God must be with the proviso that God transcends created nature and that we intend them as they must be in an order above that of nature. In other words, we intend them as they are in the supernatural order and as known to God Himself. Even as an animal can know that a human being has certain knowledge, without comprehending the precise quality of that knowledge, so human beings can know that God possesses certain perfections without fully comprehending their precise quality as they are in God.

**10. *I have heard God spoken of as Elohim, Jehovah, Yahweh, Eternal Father, the Infinite King, Divine Providence, and in many other ways. Is any one of these names capable of defining God completely?***

No one word can define the whole of the significance of God. Our concepts or thoughts are derived from created things; and there can be as many diverse thoughts in our minds as there are varying perfections in created things. The infinite plentitude of God's perfection is too great to be comprehended in any single human concept, and our small intelligence has to speak of God in partial and inadequate concepts. Thus even in the one concept of the Pope we have many implied and different aspects. The same person is Bishop of Rome, Head of the Church, Chief Shepherd, Supreme Teacher, Holy Father, etc. If I allude to him under one of these titles, all the rest is implied. And whether I speak of God as Eternal Father, or King, or Divine Providence, or Jehovah, or under any other accepted term, I

successfully call attention to the Being I intend; and all that that Being implies in Himself is included, even though I neither express nor fully grasp it.

**11. *You constantly allude to God as if God were a person. Can God be truly a personal Being?***

God is truly personal. We know that the being and vitality of man is conscious and personal, and that by life, consciousness, and personality, man is higher than inanimate things. Therefore God, infinitely higher than man in the scale of perfection, is living, conscious, and personal.

**12. *Is the term person capable of being used to define an infinite entity?***

It is capable of being applied to an infinite entity, though its significance from our point of view falls short of the reality as it is in God. For example, a stone is a being and a man is a being. The word "being" is equally true of each, though one who knew only stones would not know of its full implication in man. So, too, man is personal, and God is personal. Person is true of each. But we, who have experimental knowledge only of human persons, do not know its full implication in God. Yet, though there is not absolute identity of concept, there is a true analogy of concept; and in revealing that He is personal, God has conveyed the real truth to us in a way adapted to our lesser capacity.

**13. *When you call God "Father" do you not imply that there is sex in God, and that He is masculine?***

No. The word "Father" is used of God, not to imply that He is of the masculine gender, a quality proper to material bodies, but merely to denote our production by God; and this, not as by some blind mechanical force, but by an intelligent and loving Principle of Being. The word "Father" is the nearest human expression suitable for the proportionate truth to be declared. As directly drawn from human beings, of course, the word implies procreation by mutual cooperation between the sexes, and that supposes masculine and feminine. But when applied to God abstraction is made from the mode or process of production, and the sense is restricted to the fact of our production by God, and to the parental dispositions of God towards us. We thus express in our human way a characteristic which is really in God, though not precisely as it is in man. God is truly a Father to us.

**14. *If God's providence rules all things, is it not an insult to Him to put lightning conductors on Churches?***

No. It would be an insult and a sin of presumption to expect God to do immediately those things which we ourselves are capable of doing with such powers as He has bestowed upon us. He does not give us our natural intelligence for nothing, but expects us to use it. We are expected always to do all that we are capable of doing, and then we ask God to supply for our incapacity in things beyond our ability.

**15. *Face the dilemma. God could either prevent evils or not. If He can but will not, He is not good; if He cannot, He is not all powerful.***

That dilemma is invalid. If a dilemma is to be valid, the disjunction must be complete, exhausting all possibilities. There must be no room for the reply, "Datur tertium"—there is a third possibility. Your dilemma fails, if evil and pain and suffering be useful. What if the evils we see in this world are the necessary condition of a higher good? What if, still more, they be indispensable to the progress of man and the realization of his destiny—if some day they are to be compensated by an eternity of happiness? In any case, for a dilemma to be valid, the inference from each alternative in itself must be certain and indisputable. Neither of your alternatives is even reasonable.

### **16. *Do you say that even God cannot prevent these evils?***

Absolutely speaking, God could annihilate the whole of creation, and then, of course, there would be no problem of evils in the universe. But granted that God wants this type of world, then pain and suffering are a necessary condition; and it was certainly better to permit them than not to create a universe in which it was possible for them to occur.

As it is, your very terms involve a contradiction. In practice, the assertion that if God cannot remove all pain He is not all powerful means, where physical pain is concerned, that if God cannot have sensitive beings without their being sensitive, He is not all powerful! For, granted the power of sensation, our sensations will be pleasant and unpleasant even with the variations of the weather! Where moral evil is concerned, your assertion means, "If God cannot have free and morally responsible beings who are not really free and morally responsible, He is not all powerful." For granted freedom of will, moral evil is a necessary possibility.

### **17. *Since you cannot appeal to sin, free will, and a future life in the case of animals, why do they have to suffer pain?***

I would have to be God to give you a completely satisfactory answer to that question. To a certain extent, therefore, the problem must be left amongst the thousand and one mysteries which defy human solution. However, I can suggest certain points which may help to some understanding of the problem.

Firstly, it is better to be a vegetable than a mineral. A vegetable at least has life and growth, and is admittedly a more perfect thing than a stone.

Secondly, it is better to be a dog than a dandelion. The dog is not only living; it has sensitive life, and is able to enjoy many pleasant sensations denied to dandelions. But the price of additional sensitive perfection is pain. If a being is endowed with the power of sensation, it will endure sensations both pleasant and painful. And as even God could not create a sensitive being which would have no sensations, He must have seen that the pleasant ones would compensate for the painful ones. If you concentrate on the capacity for pain, and forget the capacity for pleasure, you might think it better not to have created such beings, and that life is not worth living for them. But no animal feels that. If a cat eats a mouse, the very protests of the mouse show how it likes being alive. You yourself would pity the mouse for being deprived of its life rather than the cat for the misery of being fed and compelled to live longer.

### **18. *But there are individual cases where the compensations seem entirely inadequate.***

There are, and they necessarily baffle us. But even so, we must beware of reading human attributes into the merely animal world, interpreting the sufferings of animals in terms of our own experiences. It would be a grave error to think that animals suffer in the way we do: for they lack our power of reflex thought. Then, too, we must not endow them with personal moral rights which they do not possess.

### **19. *That doesn't alter the fact that animals suffer.***

I agree. We cannot do more than appeal to the greater good. And it is a question of the general good as opposed to the individual good. The sum-total of pleasure in the animal world more than compensates for the sum-total of unavoidable pain. There is also the good of man to be considered. There is no violation of reason in the thought that God should permit physical pain, which does not involve moral evil, in order to procure the good of a higher order. Granted that God wished to create just such a universe as this, the unpleasant sensations of sensitive beings are absolutely necessary for the universal good. If all physical pain were eliminated, inferior beings would no longer be the means of existence to superior beings.

Many beautiful fauna would never exist. Also, if animals did not live on animals, they would multiply beyond all proportion, and then earth would be littered with rotting carcasses. The general good presupposes such physical evils in such a world as this.

**20. *It seems to me that you folk who believe in God are the most forebearing folk in the world.***

I suppose you feel that if you believed in God you would tell Him what to do. But only one who does not believe in God can think like that. Did you believe in God you would realize that He is not subject to you, but that you are subject to Him. He is not answerable to us for His conduct. We are answerable to Him for ours. Meantime, it is because we believe in God that we have a solution for the troubles of this life which makes them bearable, however serious they may seem. Dissatisfaction is proper to those who do not believe in God. Their rejection of God does not diminish their trials. It merely deprives them of the consolation which good Christians experience in the midst of them.

**21. *You should not seek your God's forgiveness; He should seek yours.***

Such a remark illustrates a great truth. As men cease to believe in and esteem God, they begin to believe in and esteem themselves. They lose the sense of sin, and become more and more unconscious of their moral failings. Thus, it is quite common for unbelievers to assert that they do not believe in religion, and at once to catalog their own virtues. Almost instinctively they add, "I don't pray, but I'm as good as those who do. I live a good clean life, owe no man anything, help my fellow men, etc." Conscious of their rectitude they feel that they deserve only the best; and naturally they resent misfortune. They smart under suffering and trial with a sense of injured innocence. And they cry out that, if there be a God, He is greatly to be blamed. Conscious only of their own virtue, they do not dream that they need any forgiveness. But believing their sufferings undeserved, they talk of God begging their pardon.

On the other hand, the more one believes in and esteems God, the less he believes in and esteems himself. Any good that is in him he attributes to God; and he is keenly conscious of his own shortcomings as being his own work. Aware of his sins, he is not astonished that suffering and trial should be his lot. Instead of thinking that he deserves only the best, he knows that he deserves only the worst. He therefore asks God to forgive him his sins: and is grateful to God for treating him so much more gently than justice would demand.

**22. *Where you define pain as something negative, millions of tortured creatures give the strongest evidence that it is something decidedly positive.***

The fact that creatures positively experience pain does not alter the fact that evil as such is not a positive entity owing its creation to God.

**23. *Do you believe literally in God as Creator of all things, visible and invisible?***

Yes. But remember that things, whether visible or invisible, are things insofar as they have positive being. Now try to follow carefully this treatment of the subject.

Evil, as such, whether physical or moral, is not a positive entity, but is a privation of due perfection. God has created every positive entity, but He does not directly produce those privations of perfection which are called evils.

Take the physical evil of a decayed tooth. God is the cause of all the positive being involved. That part of the tooth which is not yet decayed, but which is still good, owes its existence to God. The existent nerves owe their being to God, and

are good nerves. Their perfectly good registrations letting us know that the tooth is out of order are due to God's causality. But the real evil is the absence of healthy tooth and of right order in the nerves. Even the germs which consumed the tooth are quite good germs so far as their being goes. Even the process of consuming the tooth was excellent as a process.

But the evil element is reduced to absence of order and absence of healthy tooth; and absences of perfection are not caused by any positive action of God. God permits them, if you wish, insofar as He does not choose to prevent corrosive processes, or to produce good tooth as fast as it is eaten away.

In all this I do not deny that pain is a positive experience. Owing to the absence of healthy tooth, there is quite a positive vibration of the exposed nerve giving positively painful registrations. But the positive action is a good activity; the evil is merely lack of due order. And whilst God is the Creator of all positive entity, He is not the Creator of a lack of what should be there.

The same principle applies to moral evil. The will, and the action by which I choose are good in themselves. The evil is the lack of moral rectitude—again an absence of something which should normally be there. And God does not cause the absence of what should be present.

Why He permits the nonexistence or the privation of due order in created things is another question. We are dealing with the causality of God. God is not the cause of evil as such.

**24. *How can you admit that evil is positively experienced by us, yet deny its very existence?***

I do not admit that we positively experience evil. We positively experience good registrations telling us that perfection is wanting. The registrations are positive, but they tell us of an absence of perfection. Positive entities alone really exist—good thus far—which lack the full measure of goodness which they ought to have. The evil is the privation or limitation of entity, not an entity itself.

**25. *Why did not God create a different type of world, and not this one?***

That question is not yours to ask. God would not be God if He had to depend on the future approval of your judgment before He dared to act. If you reply, "Then I don't believe there is a God," you violate reason. And you will find the universe a much greater problem without God than any I have to face. If you say, "God does exist, but He is not good, or not entirely good," you contradict yourself, for once you introduce any limitation of perfection in God, then He is no longer God at all. The only reasonable position is to say, "God is a fact. Suffering is a fact. I do not fully comprehend why God should have permitted suffering, nor how He adjusts compensations which seem to me to be required if justice is to prevail. But that I do not fully comprehend these things does not surprise me, since there are thousands of lesser problems than this which I have failed to solve. Therefore, I can only conclude that, if I do not understand things, I do not understand them. But I am not going to deny what is certain, and maintain that my finite intelligence ought to be able to comprehend everything—a comprehension the possibility of which experience absolutely denies."

**26. *These difficulties have caused thousands of men to abandon religion.***

Their own dispositions have caused men to abandon religion. Some men have made this problem the excuse even as other men have advanced other excuses. But any man who would neglect those religious and moral obligations which he can clearly understand merely because he cannot understand mysteries which he cannot be expected to understand is as foolish, and more so, than a man who would rather sit in darkness than switch on the electric light on the score that he doesn't understand just what electricity is!

See also Vols. I and II