

**GOD AND HUMAN SUFFERING:
Questions and Answers
about the Problem of Evil**



Series 10

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GOD AND HUMAN SUFFERING: Questions and Answers about the Problem of Evil

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Presentation

The problem of evil is a burning and always current question of Christian theology and philosophy. Our own experience and that of others of the dramatic and overwhelming presence of evil and its painful consequences, many times extreme, prevent us from forgetting and putting aside this festering question. All the more if we are Christians, who know that God is Love and the Father of all men, which makes more incomprehensible the divine act of allowing or perhaps of absence in human sufferings, almost to the point of giving us the impression that God has abandoned His creatures to suffer left to their fate. The reader must have noticed immediately that this book is brief. Well, it is not brief by chance. Since this brevity can contribute to attaining the purpose intended in a book about this theme, that is, to enlighten the issue of evil in a more effective manner. For this reason it seems to me convenient to set aside the many controversies with other authors that may come up about many points; and this in order not to diminish the attention of the reader with respect to the central doctrine which is explained here.

Likewise, I consider it useful to dispense with the scaffolding of a scholarship that is not strictly necessary also with the purpose of not reducing the attention of the reader with regard to the exposition which constitutes the substance of the book; for the same reason, many of the few notes are for the purpose of greater clarification of the text. Many more or less

interesting digressions could also have been done, but I have preferred to present to the reader a manner of argumentation that is concise, clear, without the unnecessary elements so that the probative strength of the same can be clearly seen.

From all this it can be inferred that I have a total confidence on the light that emanates from reason and faith contained in the ideas and in the arguments themselves in order to help the reader to discover the positive motivations of the act of God in this tremendous question.

Consequently, this book is more of an idea than erudition, although efforts have been made to substantiate its points of view with the Word of God, the theological tradition and the doctrine of the II Vatican Council.

From what we have already said in this presentation, it can be deduced that my stance on the problem of evil is *optimistic*, against those people who, when considering the amount and cruelty of so much evil in the world, question and even put in doubt the goodness of the Creator in His behaviour towards humanity. Therefore, in this book it is clearly shown that the pessimistic attitude is not the only valid one with regards to the possibility of giving answers to this complicated theme. I am convinced, and I dare say, that in this work it is proven that the problem of evil has, in good measure, an answer, and that it is possible to explain to some extent, the action of God in this profound and complex issue, since we can present many ideas and arguments about the same, which can illumine the intelligence and offer tranquillity to the heart with an unquestionable benefit for Christian life.

However, this optimism is not primarily *metaphysical*, which if pushed to the limit, would annul, as we will see, the true omnipotence of God, but it is above all *soteriological*, that is, savior, and thanks precisely to the love of God in Christ. In any case (I believe the warning is proper) great care must be taken in not giving inconvenient or too superficial explanations

which, instead of justifying God, would involve Him even more in a negative form in the existence of evil.

Another important point to be noted is that in this book the attempts to explain this problem are done both from the perspective of reason and faith. There is a certain tradition in the past centuries within the Christian thought of approaching the problem of evil with respect to God from reason alone; but I think, and it seems to me that over the course of our explanation we will see with clarity, that without faith it is not possible to give an acceptable and satisfactory explanation of the same. In order to understand the behavior of the God of Christ, who is Love and who is our Father, it is necessary to resort to a revelation coming from that same Christ; and after all I think that it is logical and consistent. Therefore, it is obvious, this book is written for believers; to help them respond to themselves and to others the questions concerning our God that are inevitable in the face of the frequent and often brutal presence of the physical and moral evils in our lives and in our world. The answer to all the questions in this regard will certainly be difficult, probably impossible, but it is not a sufficient reason for us not to try to do it; that is, without doubt, the task of Christian philosophy and theology, which should never renounce faith or reason to explain the issues that are of interest to the believers. And this is certainly one of them, one of the major ones.

Finally, I must warn you, as we have already indicated, that the doctrine that is presented here is firmly connected with the traditional Christian thought. In this issue, as can be done in so many others, the teaching of St. Augustine, which later St. Thomas Aquinas will confirm, is the light that guides our steps.¹ But I have to add that we are not going to conform ourselves with just repeating his doctrine, but that, in addition to making a presentation of his ideas in a manner that, I believe, is personal, which are designed in accordance with the present situation of

¹ The reader will understand that I cite the first and I refrain from appealing to the second for the simple reason that the first wrote eight hundred years before the second.

the humanity, in this book we dare, as coherent development of his thought, to propose questions and new solutions demanded by the ever recurring questions that the present way of thinking has obliged us to propose with unavoidable urgency and different manner.

I hope that after reading this book the problem of evil would cease for the reader the “rock of atheism and the torment of the theologians, as has been said. Even more: I am confident that having grasped his arguments we may believe more in God, at least in part, for having understood God more, following the first part of the famous Augustinian circular diptych that he transcribes after pondering much about faith and Christian life: “Understand in order to believe; believe in order to understand”.²

God and the Physical Evils

With some frequency, certain natural disasters of great magnitude, with many dead and very many more sufferings, as well as very painful diseases, followed or not by deaths, raise disturbing and obscure issues to believers in God. We are dealing with what some authors call the irrationality of physical evils. On the other hand, that God may consent that human beings, his children, according to the revelation of the New Testament, suffer so much and so terrible evils that cause them so much corporal and psychological pain, affecting also the innocent and even children. If there is any human problem it is the problem of evil; so the Church cannot keep out of it either practically or theoretically on,³ because this is one of the roots of atheism.⁴ Theoretically it is the theology which, relying on what we know about man and about God through Christian revelation, allows us to shed more lights to this complicated issue that brings so much questions to our mind and so much anguish to our heart.

² St. Augustine, *Sermon* 43, 9.

³ Cfr. Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes* (from now on this will be cited as *GS*), 1.

⁴ Cfr. *ib.* 19.

God Has Created Us for Himself

As our initial response, we must make it very clear that these evils (natural catastrophes and diseases) are not God's punishment for the sins of humanity, but are phenomena, processes and natural developments that come from the peculiar composition and way of being of the world and the nature of the human being.⁵ God intervenes by keeping all things in their being and functions, but allows the so-called secondary causes to act on their own, with natural means, with the autonomy that He Himself has given them.⁶ This does not prevent God from intervening in a visible manner on very rare occasion for superior reasons (this happens in what we call miracle), but it would be arbitrary, contradictory and puerile, that He would do it frequently, for this reason He does not normally do it; the proper perfection of His being, and no other prevents it.

The explanation of this brutal discord between the fact that God is love and our Father and allows such evils to cause so much suffering to His children lies the ambiguous relationship between the most profound being of man and his status as

⁵ Neither the evils that are suffered for the improper use of freedom of others, nor those suffered because of natural causes are punishments of God. Christ made this sufficiently clear: *[Jesus] said to them in reply, "Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were greater sinners than all other Galileans? By no means! But I tell you... Or those eighteen people who were killed when the tower at Siloam fell on them—do you think they were more guilty than everyone else who lived in Jerusalem? By no means! But I tell you,* (Lk 13:2-4). Nevertheless, the most important thing that Jesus did with regards to the problem of evil is teaching us with example to bear sufferings with patience and transform them into positive realities as redemption and grace, obtaining even from what is very negative all kind of spiritual benefits. But this theme of extreme importance and about which many good books have been written, does not include ours, which deals about the explanation of the behaviour of God with respect to the evils that the humanity suffers.

⁶ Cfr. Vatican II, *GS*, 36.

inhabitant of this world. ⁷ “Although all goods of the earth must be ordered for the sake of man”⁸ physical ills are caused by the lack of full adaptation between the most essential of the human species and the reality and conditions of this temporary life on earth; between the deepest and most definitive of human purpose and temporary life on the planet. Indeed, God has created us with and in a temporal life, but not for this temporal life; He has created us in this world but not for this world, but ‘for a happy destiny situated beyond the borders of the earthly misery.’⁹ Therefore, there is only a relative and partial conformity between finite human being and the infinite purpose for which it has been created.

And there lies the most profound reason for the *physical* ills that we suffer. In short: *God has created us for Himself*, as St. Augustine brilliantly deduced from the whole of biblical revelation with his own experience as a human being¹⁰ Here lies the explanation. This all-embracing truth about the existence and destiny of man allows us to have a glimpse at why nature itself that brings many benefits to the human species is, at times, the one that punishes it, and let us say, so severely. Therefore, it is perfectly logical that the world, the planet in which we live, although it allows us to live, can also be a cause of our death. If God had created man for this world he would never encounter death due to the nature of this world. But since God has created us for Himself and nobody can see (possess) God without dying

⁷ It is due to this that the elements of the world that are more beneficial to the life of man (water, air, fire, gravity), up to the point that he could not survive without them, are those which in certain circumstances and quantities can cause him death.

Take note that the complicity and subtlety of the diverse problems that our theme poses will oblige us to put several notes with the purpose of leaving the ideas explained in the text very clear.

⁸ Vatican II, *GS*, 12.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ St. Augustine: “You have made us for yourself, Lord, and our heart is restless, until it rests in you.” (*Conf.* 1, 1, 1). Cfr. *GS*, 12.

(cf. Ex 33.20), and neither is it reasonable or worthy for the man who reaches that possession without having done some merit, it follows as a consequence that humans in general, live temporarily here doing good despite being free to do evil (that is where the merit is), and that the laws of nature more than being the cause that it may stay always in this land are occasionally the cause of what is contrary, as a step towards the sublime end for which the human species has been created. That is the reason why we talk about an ambiguous relationship between man and the world in which he lives.

We observe that this last end, the possession of God, for which human being was created, is not reached by man necessarily, but rather by properly exercising his freedom.¹¹ That is why, God has created this world in certain conditions that allow the human creature to choose without much difficulty the Highest Good who is the Creator. Human nature and the world in which we live are in a peculiar relationship with the last end who is God, because, I insist, He made us for Himself. This is what corresponds to the wisdom of God: that the creation of the universe, of human nature, both physical and psychological, and of the world in which we live and on which we depend so much, is profoundly and diversely related to the sublime plan of salvation that God has for this unique creature that we are each of us. God has created the world as it is because He has made man ultimately, not to enjoy of the goods of this world, but of the Highest Good, of the Absolute Truth and of the Infinite Beauty who is Himself, which is a cause of a happiness that incomparably is superior to everything we could imagine (1 Cor 2:9).

God, who gives Himself to the humanity up to *the limit* in Christ, has created certain natures, the human and the earthly, not precisely for the service of the natural appetites and comforts of human being, in which the greatest manifestation of God's love would be the absence of any kind of suffering and the attainment of temporal goods, even of the greatest, as would be indefinite

¹¹ Cfr. *GS*, 17.

stay in this temporal life, but that His love seeks to promote the purpose for which He handed over His Son (Rom. 8:32) and for which the Son gave Himself up (Rom 5:6-11). That is, the salvation of each of us, that it coincides with the attainment of the destiny for which He created us, which is, as we have been saying, the definitive possession of Him transformed into an everlasting reward.¹²

The creation, more specifically our planet and humanity, form a single whole designed by God in which everything is brought together (even the phenomena that are contrary to the temporal life of man) for the good of the whole human person and his definitive state in eternal life: ‘man, the only earthly creature, whom God has loved for his own sake...’¹³ This is what allows us to think as reasonable that God has established a balance of physical perfections, great and small, as well as the proportion of good and bad material things, that is appropriate for the highest, definitive and total good of human being, which is the possession of God Himself. Man has been destined by God “to adhere to Him with the total plenitude of his being in the perpetual communion of the incorruptible divine life”.¹⁴ God has directed the creation of material world towards this vocation of the human person, the image of God, the place where man achieves personal fulfilment, and for this reason it should always be worthy of appreciation for the Christian, and in this way it has become a means of acquiring the fullness of his being.¹⁵

But attention!, it is not one more means among others, but the indispensable means in and with which man has forcefully to build his personal being and reach his destination. And he does it in and with the world and human society in which he lives,

¹² Setting aside the possible questions concerning the metaphysical composition of man, this is how St. Augustine expresses this idea: “God could never have done so many and so varied things for us if, with the death of the body, the life of the soul would also come to an end.” (*Conf.* 6, 11, 19).

¹³ *GS*, 24.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 18.

¹⁵ Cfr. *Ibid.* 33-36.

otherwise he can never do it and in whatever degree.¹⁶ We should never forget this. Neither should we forget that, despite of what had been said, the world is still a means not an end for the human being, as well as the human society is an area in which he lives temporarily. That is why what we have already said about the relationship between the world and the ultimate and definitive end of the human person is correct and reasonable.

Let us consider now the different alternatives that present themselves as regards the situation of man with respect to the possibility of reaching God as his ultimate goal. We exclude, as we have already said, the direct vision of the divinity in this world because it is not possible, it would eliminate merit and would harm the dignity of the human species by making possible that this (the human species) may attain its destiny without freedom, because the vision of the infinite Goodness and Beauty of God would attract his will in such a way that free act would not be possible against it. The merit of the human being consists in that being able to do what is evil he does what is good. That is why in this world, in this life, God has established that man may know Him indirectly, through created things, and by faith.

On the basis that there should be no complete adaptation between the world and man, because the latter does not have in the former his ultimate end, the difficulty or ease that man would encounter in this life to opt for God and reach his destiny would depend in part on the number of imperfections (“evils”)¹⁷ and of

¹⁶ Cfr. *Ibid.* 57.

¹⁷ It must be remembered that we are talking about “imperfections” in relation to man because they can do harm to his physical nature, but they are not imperfections in absolute sense, since they are not with respect to the world itself of which they are mere manifestations of its powerful qualities.

The world proclaims *the glory of God* (Ps. 19:2), and from its riches man gets normally and habitually everything that he needs in order to live but, at the same time, it shows to us, in what we call its “imperfections”, that it does not totally adapt itself to the physical nature of man. Or, expressed from the reverse perspective: man is not made for this world in all his phenomena and situations.

perfections (goods) that he will encounter in it. In this respect three cases are presented:

Having in the world less perfections than now (= more evils), it would be very difficult to see the Creator and opt for Him, among other reasons, because then the problem of evil would become the absurdity of evil in a more proper and harder sense favouring greatly the denial of God.¹⁸

At the other extreme, if God had made the world with more perfections than now (= less evils), which we could have preferred, then the created things would have been very attractive to a will, that of man, such as we know it now,¹⁹ certainly driven to it by its corporality, with great difficulty to soar to higher goods and the absolute Good who is God; in which case, the free option for Him would also have been difficult, although for different reasons than in the previous situation. This is what is deduced from the experience that we have about the difficulty that modern man suffers from choosing God when, as in the first world, he enjoys material well-being that modern science and technology allow him: in the measure that the standard of living increases, the majority of human beings, attracted by the goods of this world of which they enjoy, are so absorbed in them to the point of making them their false gods, leaving behind the true God.

The actual world, our world, in the middle of these two extremes, on the basis that it is not our ultimate end but the field in and by which means we arrive at it, is created with *a suitable balance* of evils and goods so that man may opt with freedom of choice between the evil and the good, between God and the non-God, with certain ease, without excessive difficulty. The conditions of life of human person in the world are as they should be in relation to the attainment, in a manner that is not very difficult, of the highest, definitive and total Good, God.

¹⁸ Cfr. *GS*, 19.

¹⁹ Human liberty “wounded by sin” (*GS*, 17) is weak when it must choose God in the face of the strong attraction of the goods of this world.

The Theological Virtues and the Christian Fortitude as Palliatives of Suffering

Nevertheless, even admitting that pain and suffering seem to be innate to the human species in this world according to the plan of God, which in the last analysis facilitate the access to it, yet, despite of everything, we could ask ourselves if it was necessary that those sufferings should be great and numerous. Well, gathering together what is valid of the traditional teaching on this matter which comes from St. Paul and St. Augustine, it must be said that, according to the first intentions of God, even with this very world and with this very same human nature, the sufferings would have been neither hard nor frequent if man had not fallen into sin; death would not even be like as it is now, but would be a pleasant sleep in which we would pass from one stage of life to the other filled with a peaceful confidence in the goodness and power of God.

Therefore, it is sin (starting with the original sin) and the subsequent separation from God that has dreadfully intensified everything that is negative of the human life, but, be careful, it is not because God punishes sins in this world, but because each and all sins as a whole necessarily carry with them their punishment, because, basically, they imply a separation from God, who is the highest Good. This perspective which, we must not exaggerate, allows us for the present, not only to excuse God just like that, but to question the attitude which without the proper analysis, blames Him of all the intensity and frequency of the human sufferings.

But on the other hand and as a consequence, if our love for God were greater and we would desire to be with Him, the deprivation of material things and of all that are temporal, due to the evils that afflict us, would not cause us so much pain, sadness and desolation. Then the loss of the goods of this world would be seen only as something totally negative if it had an unfavourable impact on the attainment of the highest and eternal good, which must not be and should not usually be as well. On

account of this, physical evils, even if they are the same as of the present, would lose virulence because of the distinct subjective way of how they are being endured. Not only the saints, but also the good Christians see and suffer them in this way. We all know of someone, whose faith and nearness to God, even if they had their weaknesses, have given them a remarkable fortitude against the misfortunes and sufferings of life.

In this case, the events that deprive us of health, of the company of our loved ones or of whatever good, even of our mortal life, would not be considered as dramatic and sorrowful. Because the relative condition of those goods, and the possibility within our reach of recovering them, even if as divine gift, in a different form and in a qualitatively greater degree, besides it is eternal. If today there is so much suffering it is in part due to the absence or weakness of moral and religious life, which gives rise to weak and negative subjective attitudes that render humanity vulnerable against all evils. And this, I insist, is not a punishment of God, but the unavoidable consequence of the separation from Him; because God being the Light itself (Truth) and the Life itself (Love), by separating himself from Him, one necessarily enters into the darkness of error and into the coldness of mortal death, which at the same time leaves man psychologically defenceless against the physical pain and the moral suffering, as the negative impact in him seriously increases. As St. Augustine says: "Everything will go wrong with us away from God."²⁰

On the contrary, combining knowledge, love and feeling, forming a coherent psychological framework, unitary and God-centred, the person acquires a greater fortitude that makes him not so vulnerable against physical or moral evils, by which his suffering considerably decreases on account of them. The nearness to God, above all experienced as love, is the greatest consolation and the most powerful source of fortitude for the human being in whatever misfortune however great it may be. Hence, in addition to theological virtues, faith, hope and charity, the Christian virtue of *fortitude* must have, in the face of adverse

²⁰ St. Augustine, *Conf.* 13, 8, 9.

situations, a very significant role and a very special importance. This is the explanation of why the saints have no fear of death and have even desired to pass through that inevitable moment in order to be with God: “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain (St. Paul, Phil 1:21); “Oh that our hearts were in some measure aspiring after that ineffable glory! Oh that we were passing our pilgrimage in sighs, and loving not the world, and continually pushing onwards with pious minds to Him who has called us!(St. Augustine, *In Io. ev.* 40, 10); “I live without living in myself, and in such a way do I hope, that I die because I do not die. (St. Theresa of Jesus, *Poesias* (Obras Completas, Burgos, 1998, 1324). Let these three examples which could easily be multiplied suffice.

Time and Eternity in Relation to the Evils and Death

We know by faith that there is another life after this earthly one. This faith can contribute in a considerable measure to soften the sufferings of this world if we believe, as the Apocalypse says, that will God be our Consoler: “*He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there shall be no more death or mourning, wailing or pain, [for] the old order has passed away*”(Rev 21:4).

The perspective of the eternal life has objectively made relative all kinds of evils, physical and moral, and lessens the suffering caused by them. There having another life, the problem of evil must be studied and judged with a perspective that is more broad and more positive; and that life being eternal and good, then evil is reduced to its tiniest dimensions, but once it’s disturbing threat of making the entire creation absurd disappears, it becomes, in proportion, a passing although terrible anecdotes of a few scattered minutes. In this case, in order to judge God, one has to wait for the end of We will have to wait at the end of the entire duration of each human being which, according to

Christian faith, not to simple philosophical theory, includes this life and the next.²¹

This is of great importance, since it shows that the greater evils and their terrible sufferings do not have the last word. God has in His hand the final and eternal solution to all the negative things suffered by humans even if they are very hard and incomprehensible; and hence, in that way, at the end, God will not only be justified and excused, but be loved and praised. In this way, another very significant gate of light opens that diminishes the opaqueness of evil very frequently commented on by post-modern philosophy. Because of all that we have said we can speak of a certain soteriological and salvific optimism.

Sickness and death are two great natural enemies of man. The great misfortune of man is knowing that he is going to die; he is the only living being who knows that he is going to die. But worst of all, obviously, is that death is inexorable for human being. Could God not have made things in another way? Could God not have made the human nature in such a way that it would not have to die?

From the philosophical point of view, there is little that can be said in answer to these questions, except perhaps the fact that, ultimately, disease and death are the result of the finiteness and fragility of our being. This is how it is and we cannot do anything other than to confirm it. Faith tells us that the plan of God was to create man in more favorable conditions which man lost with sin. But in one way or another it can always be said that the Creator of man in a way had something to do in all this for having created this human nature so weak and imperfect. And this is so even if it is not the final data.

With regard to the diseases it can be said that, in spite of everything, the temporary human life is worth living, since the vast majority of us humans desire to hold on to it in spite of the infirmities. As regards a more excellent and transcendental meaning of human life, beyond what is human and temporal,

²¹ Cfr. *GS*, 18.

which would include even those who wish to discard their life by committing suicide, can be encountered and achieved only through faith and union with Christ who suffered on the Cross.

From this perspective, we can and must continue maintaining the *soteriological optimism*, because, in spite of everything, the diseases, even the ones that end up in death, can become something not negative but positive for man, according to the Word of God and of all the saints of the Church. The infirmities, with their inevitable pains and limitations, are like a currency of payment for the punishment that our sins deserved, which will anticipate our encounter with God in the other life of which the beatific life consists. Besides, united spiritually to Christ on the Cross, pain becomes a factor that increases the flow of grace in His Mystical Body which is the Church, for the good of the entire humanity (cfr. Col 1:24).²²

But all this, of course, can only be understood and lived with intense Christian life as a point of departure. Without this, the pain, against which it is legitimate to fight with all the means at our disposal, is presented to us as something obscure, without meaning, absurd and as if it were an effect of a malignant curse. Which confirms us that in order to respond to the questions that the problem of evil poses it is necessary to resort to faith, which allows us to discover that human nature, a part of the nature of the world and the universe, does not have end in itself but in God, as we have already commented before.

The Loving Providence of God Watches over Man in order to Lead him to His Destiny

²² The flow of grace does not only reach the members of the institutional Church, but that understanding the Church in her spiritual sense as a reality in which the Holy Spirit is at work, we already have to think of the entire humanity. Concerning the concept of Church in spiritual sense and its consequences cfr. J. A. Galindo Rodrigo, *La ponderosa fuerza salvadora de Cristo. Un guía para el cristiano ante el actual pluralism religioso*, Salamanca 2006, 151-168.

But we reiterate that the dreadful evil and beyond comparison is death.²³ Certainly some philosophers had foreseen a certain continuity of the human being or part of it in another life (the immortality of the soul), but only the word of Christ gives a total security to us Christians that the plan of God with regard to man does not end in this world but continues to another life after this. It is the theme of salvation: if we reach and receive this, the entire problem of evil is solved and at end becomes a sign of great and intense positivity; but if it is not so, then the accounts become a contrary sign.²⁴ Therefore, God, above all, provides us with what we need for salvation. And we have to be sure that God takes care of us in a very special way, even without contradicting and much less annulling our freedom, in times and circumstances in which this salvation is decided.

The circumstance of time that is more decisive in relation to the salvation of each person is one's own death. Well, as concrete example, during which the *soteriological optimism* is applied, I think that God allows the death of human being at the best moment for him for his salvation. And this does not mean in itself that all are saved, since it can happen that for a certain person no sufficiently good moment may not exist that when he leaves this world he may enter into eternal life. But I hold fast to what has been mentioned: that God in His loving Providence, as a consequence of the redemption by Christ, intervenes or ceases to intervene in a sufficient and just manner in order to optimize (forgive the expression) the possibilities of the salvation of each person.

Even if it is true that God allows the nature of the world and the bodily nature of persons to function, it is likewise true that His loving providence is watchful over the developments of one and the other nature, not in order to free us from natural and temporal evils, but to lead us toward the infinite Good who

²³ Cfr. *GS*, 18.

²⁴ Here we *don't* enter into the question whether many or few are those who are condemned, or whether, even maintaining the dogma of the existence of hell (= state of condemnation), perhaps in fact no one may be condemned.

is Himself. If He has created us for Himself, we have to be convinced that God will act accordingly and in an intelligent and effective manner.

God can intervene in the changes of natures, in a silent manner, unnoticed by man, in such a way that His grace may act in His favour in the best of manner and at the most appropriate time. Even in the developments of human organisms, which frequently amaze the doctors, there can be interventions and hidden providences of God, in one way or another: for good health, if it is not yet the proper time to leave this world or if that human being will achieve greater goodness or will perform good work for others, or permitting the progress and development of the disease, even death, when I know it is, but, be careful, respecting always the earthly and human natures. How does He do it? It is not easy to explain it. Nevertheless and in every circumstance, it seems to me that God intervenes more with His grace and other silent interventions in order that, in the measure that it is necessary and convenient, to properly prepare the persons when the hour of their death comes. For example, God can intervene in the depth of the soul and of the heart of the sick with His grace and at the same time combine a series of causes so that the sick receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation respecting all the laws established by Him. I think that all the priests who are involved in the pastoral ministry we have had experiences that confirm what had been said; and not only they.

As far as the deteriorations of health and deaths caused by factors coming from the nature of the world are concerned, the providence of God is exercised with the same care and love. And this brings with it a concretion and realization of the divine Providence in terms undoubtedly similar to what we have just described. This providential act of God happens more frequently, as we have said before, in the interior of the persons by means of grace, preparing them for the catastrophic events, intervening in these depending on the persons, although one does not exclude the other.

Normally, God leaves the events intact and influences on the interior of the heart, because these are natural most of the time with respect to salvation. However, in catastrophes and accidents, it is not fortuitous that there are people who save their lives and other have not. Indeed, none of that happens by accident, but that the loving and powerful Providence of God. I insist, without man being aware of it, at least in vast majority of times, works silently and efficaciously. It can appear to us as fortuitous (someone did not take the plane that met an accident, another found something to hold on to in a flood or in a tsunami, another unexpectedly received help from someone during a fire, another was spared from death in a road accident in a very surprising manner, etc., etc.), but in reality the wisdom and power of God control everything in the service of salvation of every person. Those who die they do it at the best moment or, at least, at a lesser evil moment of their life.²⁵

And all this is in accord with God's respect for the natural laws, and their proper changes and developments, this is, of course, for the limited human intelligence, is very difficult to see how can it be so; but we must be convinced that for God a chance does not exist, because he has everything under control for our own good. With reason does the psalmist sings: "*My life's ups and downs are in your hand, Lord.*" (Ps 31:16).

If I am asked what is my basis in affirming this last dimension of *soteriological optimism*, my answer is: *For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him.*(Jn 3:17). And another text: *He who did not spare his own Son but handed him over for us all, how will he not also give us everything else along*

²⁵ Under this perspective the cruel death either due to catastrophes or infirmities of the innocents and children must be seen as not irrational or cruel. Why should God impede the death of some and others if for them it is the best moment to leave this world and enter into the stage of life? That is why normally He does not do it. And this attitude is rational even as regards children who have died without Baptism, since the mercy of God and the love of Christ for these "allow us to hope that there is a way of salvation for children who have died without Baptism." (CCC, 1261).

with him? (Rom 8:32).²⁶ Among these things is without doubt the loving and powerful Providence of God, who uses all the elements of the reality that affect us, and of all the changes and their circumstances that happen to us so as, even respecting our freedom and the laws of nature, to lead us to our greater end, which consists in reaching our final goal for which we were created, that is, its possession in the next life, which will make us immensely happy for ever.

This which we have just said is the putting into practice, the specification and the fulfilment of the Gospel text in which Jesus tells us:

And do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul;²⁷ rather, be afraid of the one who can destroy both soul and body in Gehenna. Are not two sparrows sold for a small coin? Yet not one of them falls to the ground without your Father's knowledge. Even all the hairs of your head are counted.²⁸ So do not be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows (Matt 10:8-31).

The first part of the text contains Jesus' assessment of the eternal life, qualitatively and abysmally different, from what He makes of temporal life. Well, this assessment is basic and fundamental in order to understand God's actuation with respect to humankind in relation to the so-called problem of evil. Next, the passage contains an amazing doctrine on the Providence which, if we do not translate into our life, as we have said before, will render the words of Christ empty, totally devoid of usefulness and meaning.

²⁶ Cfr. *GS*, 22.

²⁷ Therefore, we need not fear the powerful evils which can do us so much harm even to the point of taking away our temporal life; and, in the same manner, neither should we be afraid of natural calamities or infirmities that can take away that same temporal life.

²⁸ This phrase reveals to us God's sublime care for us, obviously not to assure us of temporal good, but of eternal happiness, which is not clear but, yes, reasonable to accept by faith.

It is evident that when natural calamities happen, or we suffer from serious illness or death, this loving Providence of God does not take place in relation to the goods referring to corporal well-being and temporal life in this world; hence, if we do not wish to annul and deny the words of Jesus, we have to admit the loving and powerful Providence in relation to the spiritual well-being and the eternal life.²⁹ But, this leads to the specification and fulfilment of the divine Providence in certain terms undoubtedly similar to those which we have explained before.

And the II Vatican Council supports us by saying: "...that man, who is the only creature on earth whom God has loved for his own sake..."³⁰ God loves all other earthly things as means, and directs them and controls them for the greater good of the creature that He loves for its own sake, man. That is to say, that the world is subordinated by God to the total good of man. From which it can be deduced, not only that the planet and the sun provide us light, air, water and all the prime materials with which we nourish ourselves in order to keep our corporal body alive, but even in the unexpected phenomena, which for us are calamities, are likewise subordinated by the Creator to the service of man; and if it is for his corporal and temporal body, it has to be for his spiritual and eternal life.³¹ This implies a

²⁹ Important exegetes point out to this interpretation; cfr. for example, J. Schmid, *El evangelio según San Mateo*, Barcelona 1966, 267, who bases his arguments on J. Weiss; P. Bonnard, *Evangelio según San Mateo*, Madrid 1976, 236-237. J. McKeinzie says about this text: "God takes care of man so much, as he does with a swallow, which was one of the cheapest species in the market. God even knows when a little bird dies; He knows the death of His own and will save their life which will go on beyond death ("Evangelio según San Mateo", in *Comentario bíblico San Jerónimo*, T. III, Nuevo Testamento, I, Madrid 1972, 211).

³⁰ *GS*, 24.

³¹ The world, functioning both normally and wonderfully, supports us and makes our temporal life pleasant; but at the same time, by means of its admirable order and greatness, can bring us closer to God (that is what He desires and is convenient for us) by showing in the creation His power, goodness, wisdom and beauty.

loving and powerful divine Providence which has to manifest itself in forms and ways that are very different from those we have explained before.

When great calamities happen, there are those who question: Where is God, for example, during the seaquake of Bengala or the hurricanes Katrina and Noel or the typhoon Haiyan of the Philippines? The answer is clear: Once a calamity happens, not by divine action but the force of nature, God is there exercising His Providence, with love, wisdom and power, acting in favor of all those who are affected, getting from physical evils goods that are of higher levels, as St. Augustine has said many times, but not according to the dictate of our mental categories, but of His, more beneficial for us than that of our very own.

Taking this problem out of mere philosophical context, we have to take into account that God, Creator of universe, who controls all the events, is the same Father of goodness, whose love of unimaginable intensity and full of tenderness and gentleness for men has revealed to us His Son Jesus Christ in the Gospel. That God Father, perhaps without our being aware of it, is the very same who has under His power all the causes of the earthly and human ups and downs,³² it is sure and indubitable that He works in a manner similar to how we have described.

Schematic Overview of the Proposed Doctrine

And when nature works in an unexpected and abnormal way, and with a superhuman power (=natural catastrophes), then, even damaging, or destroying the temporal life, it reminds us that our final end is not in the world, but in God, making possible, even facilitating, another way of arriving at the knowledge and love of God, that leads us to our salvation.

In close relation with the world, and subject to similar changes, is that dimension of our being that *I have* and *I am*, which is our corporality, and which makes us an object of remarkable happiness as well as of great sufferings.

³² The separation between theology and philosophy, even if it is right, has the danger of dividing the vision of God into two distinct and even contrary perspectives.

*What should NEVER be said whenever a calamity with human victims or of an infirmity followed or not by death, occurs.*³³

That a calamity³⁴ with its consequences or with death, followed by death or not has God for its author.

God, yes, is the author of all perfections of the world and of our nature; every good that is derived from it for our good has been willed by God; however, the inevitable limitations from which evils come, properly speaking are not willed but only permitted by God: the perfections are the direct object of His will, but the limitations and their consequences no, because these are the absence of being. Nevertheless, He allows them because they are unavoidable, in greater or lesser degree, in all the creatures: only God possesses all perfections.

That it has been a punishment of God on account of the sins of the one who suffers or of humanity.

Even if God is the Author of *this* world and of *this* human nature, the specific reactions of one or the other which cause suffering at a given moment, should not be attributed to Him, since He has given them autonomy in the way the work, and they inevitably work with limitations, from which flow what we call the evils.³⁵

³³ When calamities that negatively affect many persons happen, Christians feel at a loss for answer to the obscure questions that arise concerning God among the people and on the part of the means of communication. Unfortunately, they do not always do it correctly or, at least, without committing errors.

³⁴ Accidents (for example traffic or work) could be considered as particular cases of catastrophes in which human machines usually intervene. Hence, the reader will know how to apply to accidents the appropriate form and proportion what may discuss about catastrophes.

³⁵ It must be pointed out here a difference between the nature of the world and ours: when our human nature is the cause of pain for us it is usually due to a dysfunction of the same; but this is not so in the case of the nature of the world, since in many occasions its normal functioning is the cause of our sufferings and even of our death.

We have to uproot from the religious imagination of the people the idea of God who punishes by intervening in the activities of the world and/or human natures, since with that purpose God neither intervenes nor can intervene: no evil thing can be the direct object of God's will.³⁶ However, asymmetrically, I know that the idea of a God who does well to humans is true; and not just because all the perfections of the things and of our being that are in our favour have God as their author, but because in addition, God, indeed, can intervene directly to overcome the laws of natures, causing an extraordinary physical benefit with the purpose of achieving a greater good, which we know with the term miracle.

However, as we have seen before, neither must it be affirmed that sin has nothing to do with the sufferings of the humanity that are caused by physical evils or at the time when they happen. Sin always carries with it a certain punishment already here in this world; this is given in the highest degree, for example, in the case of alcoholism and of drug-addiction.

We must not think either that immorality does not increase subjectively the sufferings coming from these physical ills, but just the opposite, as attested to by experience: frequently suffering is caused more by the negative way with which we take an illness than by illness itself. Besides, when the theological virtues and fortitude are missing, the suffering of the same objective illness is subjectively greater.

Neither should it be taught that God has allowed (much less has caused) a calamity or infirmity, in order to obtain a good of the same, greater or superior quality, as it would be to foster solidarity or another benefit.

³⁶ Many have thought that God provoked the sinking of the *Titanic in order* to punish human pride, but it is easy to see how erroneous this appreciation is if we consider how many other ships have been chartered perhaps with much and more arrogance than the *Titanic* and they have not sunk. Another thing is the correction of conducts and lives which many persons made because of that shipwreck: this one, yes, God willed, getting from what is evil a greater good.

In fact, it must never be said that God allows (much less causes) calamities or infirmities, which are evils, even if it may be to obtain benefits. The principle “the end does not justify the means” is also valid for God. That is the reason why it is valid for men.³⁷

Neither is it correct to say that *God allows calamities*, if this is understood as if, in the actual creation, God ordinarily and continually could prevent them, since if He would do it this way He would arbitrarily act by going against His wisdom and infinite perfection of His being by contradicting with that frequency the laws that He has placed in nature. Still much less can God be the cause of any misfortune.

Nevertheless, even if God cannot intervene in our nature by provoking dysfunctions in them because then an evil would be an object of God’s will, if, in principle, it seems that He could intervene by causing a particular normal function of nature which occasionally would cause us sufferings. In any case, He can neither act in the nature of the world *with the purpose* of causing us physical evil, not even with the purpose of correcting us: I insist that an evil, whatever it may be, can never be the object of God’s will.

Neither should it be taught that God cannot make any exception by doing a miracle for reasonable and superior motive. As we have already said before, the intervention of God in these

³⁷ God neither does nor allows evil things with the purpose of obtaining benefits, even if they may be superior, but He has done the entire creation in which, besides so many good things, there are also bad things with the condition that He can obtain benefits from those very same evils: when these things happen, without Him causing them, He is capable of using them to obtain benefits; even if He can obtain benefits directly without using evils as means.

Thus, some people of the Church who, when the tsunami of Bengala happened affirmed that God had allowed it and almost caused it *in order* to provoke the solidarity of the first world with that area of the third world. That affirmation is false: the goods that God obtains in similar cases are the condition why He permits them, not the purpose.

cases, in which a good is the object of His will, will always consist, therefore, of an extraordinary physical good with the purpose of granting us a higher good, that is, moral and spiritual good.

Likewise, it must not be maintained that all this is a mystery and that nothing can be said to explain the action of God in relation to the problem of evil, because we have already seen that yes, something can be explained, even enough.

But, on the contrary, it must not be affirmed either that the problem of evil can be explained completely and in an exhaustive, absolute and convincing manner, since in the background there remains always the mystery in some way of God Himself.

Neither must it be said that God has nothing to do with the human tragedies because He cannot go beyond having created the most perfect world possible, which is that which now exists, as Leibniz would say, and would not have any leeway for acting without changing the natural laws.

Consequently, it is an error to teach that God, Who did not avoid a catastrophe, was for that reason absent from it, and did not do anything to help the victims; this is not correct, but is very erroneous.

What can be said with certainty when a natural calamity occurs with human victims or an infirmity followed by death or not:

The Impact of God as Creator in the Life of Man: The Terrible Presence of Evil

God has created the human being for Himself, so the world has been planned by God as a field and as a medium in which man, by perfecting the world and the society in which he lives, builds his personal being, and freely decides his destiny; but

God has not created man for the world, nor this totally for man. This has its consequences as, for example, natural catastrophes or illnesses mortal or not.

Any specific calamity is a natural phenomenon caused by laws of the nature of the planet; something similar must be said about the infirmities and natural death because of dysfunction or failure of human nature.

That it is certain that God is the Author of the laws of nature of the whole universe and of our world, according to the general plan from which He never departs either ordinarily or arbitrarily. And this world, as such and as we know it, is good, beautiful and worthy of admiration and praise despite of its laws which can in some occasions not benefit us. What is more: it is worthy of the goodness of God for His human creatures, since it is built with a balance of what are good (perfections) and what are evil (imperfections) which make relatively easy the positive option of the will and the attainment of our final destiny who is God.

Hence, God does not stop calamities or infirmities; because it is not in conformity with His wisdom to enact laws and later abrogate them without reasonable purpose. The infinite perfection of His being forbids it, and no other. Besides, as we have just said, the world as it is constitutes the most reasonable vital context in order to make possible our final encounter with Him.

Only reasons of higher level allow Him to intervene (miracle); but He does this very rarely, not only because it would imply the negation of His wisdom, but because He can achieve this through other means which is good for every human being and in a manner that is complete and definitive.

Even if God had created our planet to be dwelt in, He has not done it to be the final dwelling place of humanity as if the goods which He had placed in it were the end in which human being would find its total fulfilment. Even if the former would

be otherwise, the corporal nature of man, which as a composite reality is logically separable, would not allow man to live indefinitely in this world. Man is inevitably mortal.

Consequently, there is no complete adaptation between the properties, phenomena and changes of the world on one side, and the bodily and temporal life of man, on the other; on account of it, the world, although normally it offers man all the means to live, even good life, it needs not necessarily be this way in all cases and at all times. In a similar way it must be said that man's physical nature does not respond at all to the desire for permanence and happiness of the human creature.

Hence, it is logical that occasionally it may happen that the attributes, changes and phenomena of the planet instead of helping maintain the corporal and temporal life of man, may make it difficult or destroy it. On the other hand, it is totally natural that physical nature may deteriorate or even disintegrate.

The suffering of humans for whatever objective cause, is likewise subjectively increased with much frequency by separation from God originated by sin. This, and not God, harms man, the sinner, because his sin separates him from Him who is the Highest Good, and makes him weak in the face of all kinds of evils which he therefore confronts with little faith or no faith at all and with little fortitude or no fortitude at all.

It must be admitted that, due to the condition of human species, in the border between what is rational and animal, (since man spends so much time of his life not acting as rational, for example, during sleep), which is the explanation why he easily falls into sin, starting from the original, and of the subsequent,³⁸ comes the fact that every human being is weak to do what is good and so inclined toward evil.

Everything, together with the conditions of life in this world and of bodily nature, such as we have described before,

³⁸ The original sin stresses the weakening of man for doing good and increases his inclination toward evil.

has as a consequence a great amount of suffering, many times terrible, that have fallen on human species in a dreadful manner. It even appears that *there is an excess of evil on human species in this world.*

The Impact of God as Savior in the Life of Man: The Soteriological Optimism.

God has created human being for Himself, in such a way that He may be the final end of his existence in which the fullness of its being is found, that in which his complete and eternal happiness consists. This has its consequences, as we will see.

As regards what affects the corporal and temporal life of man, God has placed in the world a balance of perfections that are appropriate or not appropriate for this life (= for us they are imperfections), that make the free and personal option for God easier on the part of human being, so that in this way he may attain, with His help and in accordance with his personal dignity and freedom with which he has been given, his final end, for which ultimately he has been created. With respect to human corporality we have to say that there is a balance between an admirable complexity and marvellous order of its organism, when it functions well, with fragility, vulnerability and mortality of the same.

Phenomena happen with frequency in uninhabited places of the planet of similar danger for human species as the sadly famous tsunami of Bengala was assumed to be, for example. Just as there God did not stop them because they are the laws of nature which He has wisely established. He does not stop them from happening in inhabited areas for the same reason either. He would do it only if, and only if, His presence would only be passive and from it would be derived the inevitable definitive evil of man preventing his ultimate end.

But if to avoid this He had to intervene in the natural laws, then he would have made the world in a different way so that

He would not contradict Himself. But this world and the human nature are definitively positive, and they do not impede the designs of love and salvation that their Author has for the earthly creature which He loves for its own sake, man.³⁹

In spite of all the evils and deaths caused by calamities, as well as the infirmities, God, even without stopping them, has resources to avoid the definitive evils of every human being in which the complete fulfilment of his being would be frustrated.

Hence, He does not stop either the calamities or the infirmities, deadly or not: (a) Because, definitely and ultimately, He does not free anyone from death, since He does not free the victims of catastrophes and of infirmities from evil; from death yes, He frees other human beings, since He, by constituting Himself as the ultimate end of man, logically has determined that the dwelling place of all human beings in this world be transitory;⁴⁰ (b) Because life here does not have the necessary conditions in order to make possible for man the attainment of his final end, which is the vision and the possession of the transcendental and a purely spiritual Being Who is God, for which reason He allows him to pass to another life, even through death; (c) Because the most important for God is not to take care above all of our corporal and temporal life, which sooner or later we will, with total certainty, lose, but that of taking care of our eternal and spiritual life, capable of never being lost, which is our supreme good, our ultimate and total good, which is linked to His possession, and yes is possible in another kind of superior life; (d) because this, the only thing that ultimately matters, He can get without avoiding the death of those affected by disasters and fatal diseases which, on the other hand, we insist, is to be the end of all human beings, and the means by which the possession of God is made possible;⁴¹ (e) However, God, with

³⁹ Cfr. *GS*, 24.

⁴⁰ It is not serious not to free from death those who, later, we know with complete certainty will not be freed from death.

⁴¹ St. Augustine has said it beautifully: "... God had given this grace to faith: that death, which is contrary to life, has become an instrument by which

His wisdom and power, directing, not contravening, the laws and the phenomena of nature, without stopping the catastrophes or infirmities, is capable of freeing from death the one who should not die, because it is not the best time for him/her; yes, allowing to die those whose time is. (f) Because, applying the doctrine that Jesus has taught us, once the catastrophe has occurred and/or the deadly disease, not by the divine action, but by the forces and laws of nature, on the occasion of and not because of the same, God obtains goods of higher level from evils;⁴² (g) Because He takes care of the definitive good of man with supreme attention, with His powerful and loving Providence converted into an interior grace, especially in the moment of death, so that, if his will does not oppose, he may attain the fullness of his being (total happiness) in union with Him forever in the next life, in the transcendental, divine life, the life of God Himself, in the

one passes to life” (*De civ. Dei* 13, 4).

⁴² The text of St. Augustine refers to this: “The omnipotent God..., being extremely good, would not allow in any way that an evil would exist His creatures if it were not in such a way good and powerful that He could obtain good from the same evil” (*Enchir.* 11, 3).

God is continually causing directly an immensity of goods. But, even in the case of evils (which are not caused by Him) He indirectly derives from them good. Indeed, God does not cause evils, but that, as a whole, according to His original and universal plan of creation, He created a world and a human nature with some laws and limitations that would make possible what for us are evils, only on the condition that from them, when time comes, He could obtain good. On the occasion of evils (for us) because of the reactions due to the laws of nature, God obtains goods for humans which are, without doubt, of higher rank. If this were not possible, therefore, either God could not have created anything or could have created another world and humanity in which He could always obtain good from evil.

But, since the actual world and human nature allow God to obtain those goods, we have to conclude that they are positive and are well made in spite of all evils, which are in intelligent balance with the good, allowing man to attain the highest good who is God. And this is how it is even when we conceive the universe within the parameters of indetermination with which things have evolved since this also falls under the knowledge and control of God.

house of the Father of Jesus, who is also the Father of all human beings.

This could be the summary of the set of relationships between God and man with regards to the problem of physical evil in which the dreadful and brutal force with which sufferings have an impact in his life on one hand, while, on the other hand, the action of God is characterized by a love for that creature which is so weak and needy, to the extreme, with madness, in His Son Jesus Christ. It even appears *that there is an excess of love for man on the part of God in the two stages of human life, both here and in the next.* This is the *soteriological optimism*.

God and the Human Evil

The man on the street, including the faithful Christian, asks himself why does God permit so much evil. So much evil are the natural calamities (tsunamis or seaquakes, earthquakes, hurricanes, floods, droughts, accidents, fires, volcanic eruption, etc. but, infirmities and deaths also are with all the physical pain and psychological suffering that they carry with them, above all when they affect the children and the innocent. We have already spoken about this in the first part.

But we also have the evils that come from the abuse of freedom, one that we call moral evil, that is, the human evil or sin. At present there is a strong trend widespread among believers and with certain theological support, that tends to minimize sin as an offense against God. Without entering into discussion on this problem now, what is clear is that human evil is being done with frequency and seriousness, causing innumerable sufferings both to individuals as well as to human groups or communities and even to the entire humanity.

There is no need to search and investigate much in order to discover the negative and terrible consequences of the perverse behaviour of some men. There is no need to recourse to well-known and much discussed cases like the genocide of the Nazis

against the Jews, or the Siberian Gulags organized by Stalin and his Soviet successor. Nowadays there are certain conflicts, many times military, and also terrorist acts that cause terrible and cruel suffering to humans. And there is the shameful plague of hunger in the world, a physical evil which is directly caused by some powerful persons who are near to those who suffer from hunger and indirectly by many rich people from faraway places who ignore the calamity suffered by so many millions of human beings.⁴³ That is why the man of the street, including the faithful Christian, also asks himself why does God permit and consent to so much evil, why does He not put an end to it, why does He apparently not do anything, in order to prevent them or, at least, remedy them, in this way avoid numberless and many times terrible sufferings.

God Cannot Avoid Human Evil

Although it may seem surprising, God cannot, we said, avoid physical evils (natural catastrophes, infirmities, deaths) in as much as once established by Him the laws of nature of the world and man He cannot arbitrarily change them in order to avoid their effects which, in some circumstances cause physical harm to the human being. We also said that He can only do it *in exceptional cases by reason of higher benefits*. But He cannot frequently do it and much less continually because the infinite perfection of His being hinders Him from acting arbitrarily and

⁴³ With regard to human evil it is not useless to make certain observation about the devil whose existence Christian faith affirms. The devil is a personal being; a creature of God, consequently, totally subject to the dominion of his Creator. He has become evil precisely because of his evil use of his freedom. Nevertheless, his provocation to evil, exercised with respect to human being, does not substantially alter the panorama that we have described, since the devil can be the cause, only in a limited manner, of the moral evil present in our world through the free consent of the human will, which always has at its disposition the helpful force (the grace) that comes from the victory that the redemption of Christ obtained over all the forces of evil (Cfr. CCC, 391-395; 2851-2854).

in contradiction with Himself. We considered this with some careful attention in the above-mentioned first part.

Hence, much less, can He avoid human evils once He created man free,⁴⁴ since this would imply a contradiction to His previous and fundamental decisions of His condition as Creator. Besides, man only has merit when doing what is good freely when he could freely do what is evil. When man decides to do what is evil, God would prevent him then there is no freedom in him when he does what is good and, consequently, in a normal moral level for humans, he would not have merit doing it. As to the human hunger in the world, God could remedy it, but why should He do it if we can do it ourselves? He made the planet for all, now it depends on us to use it well, because God has placed in it resources that are enough for the entire humanity.

The Epicurean Dilemma and the Answer to It

We will now explain the doctrine already pointed out by means of the commentary on the more or less rigorous and disturbing question of the problem of evil with respect to God. The philosopher Epicurus had already posed the question many centuries ago. It is an argument against God taken from the existence of evil, which is made up of three alternatives:

*Either God wants to avoid what is evil and He can't, and therefore He is not omnipotent' or He can but does not want, and therefore He is not good; or He can neither do it or wants to do it, and therefore He is not God.*⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Cfr. *GS*, 17.

⁴⁵ Cfr. O. Gigon, (edit.), *Epicurus*, Zurich, 1949; Lactantius, *De ira* 13 (PL 7, 121). These objections against the existence of God gather the more frequent way how the people ask themselves and live, though in a diffusive manner, the problem of evil in relation to God, and whose lack of solution leads many of them to atheism or agnosticism. An important author, Gesché, makes us see that this problem must be posed in a different manner, but its precious lessons will not change the manner by which, in fact, the majority of persons pose it. Cfr. A. Gesché, *Dios para pensar, I: El mal-El hombre*, Salamanca 1995, 19-47.

We answer in a short and concise manner by saying that *God, in the actual state of things of the nature of the world and of man cannot avoid physical evil or the evil that consists of human evil, but despite of it, He does not cease to be omnipotent in the true sense of the word.* We will see it.

The manner of going out of the three ironclad alternatives of Epicurus is saying that *God wants to avoid evil but He cannot.*⁴⁶ But if He wishes to avoid evil and can't, it is clear that God in spite of the evil is good, and continues being God since His goodness is not compromised. But that incapability of God does not limit His omnipotence either, as we will see immediately. And this is how the dilemma of Epicurus is answered in a concise manner.

The omnipotence of God consists in “doing what He wishes”⁴⁷; and this is due to the fact that His power and desire are identical. We are accustomed to thinking about the omnipotence as a total and arbitrary power, which is capable of doing everything imaginable however absurd it may be.

But this is not so, because what cannot be done in itself, God cannot do either; and this does not limit His power, but avoids the contradiction between the reality as reflection of His being against His power: if God would do something that cannot be done, then God as efficient cause would enter into conflict with God as an exemplary cause.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ With respect to this we see that we would be talking with more precision if we would say that *God does not want to avoid evil because He can't*, and, as we will see, this situation neither is in reality contrary to His goodness.

⁴⁷ The Scripture tells us that *our God is in heaven, and does whatever He wants* (Ps 115:3; cfr. 135:6).

⁴⁸ The reason why it cannot be done and God can't either is, for example, a square circle, because such thing is not a reflection of His being; it does not have in God its exemplary model whose imitation it would follow, as it happens in all things that are possible; if that could be done, it could happen with nothing to do with God, but with another primary being and model of other things that are ruggedly contrary to those that are possible

On the other hand, neither can He do any negative thing even if it may be possible, because the omnipotence of God is and must be subject to the perfection to the divine being, on the contrary, God would be a chaotic being.

Already St. Augustine tells us God cannot do all things that we can imagine. His omnipotence, although it could be surprising, has “limits”.⁴⁹

According to the Bishop of Hippo there are certain things of which God cannot be either a passive or active subject; that is, they cannot happen to Him and He cannot do them either, because otherwise He would not be a perfect being, He would not be God. It is about emotions or actions that are negative which, in some way, are incompatible with His infinite perfection. Therefore, this is not a sign of deficiency, but rather a clear manifestation of genuine omnipotence.⁵⁰

Some things cannot happen to God because they go against the perfection of His being: to die, to change, to be deceived, to be miserable, to be defeated, etc.⁵¹

Others, God cannot do because they go against His moral goodness: to lie, to commit injustice, to do iniquities or any kind of moral evil, etc. ⁵²

now, a being which, of course, does not exist, nor can exist, like the square circle and the like.

Having said this, the reader perfectly understands with how much reason we say that what cannot be done is perfectly logical that God cannot do it, and without it being a real limitation to His power, and thereby He continues being omnipotent.

⁴⁹ St. Augustine relies on a Pauline text in this doctrine: *..if we are not faithful, He remains faithful, because He cannot deny Himself* (2 Tim 2:13). Cfr. St. Augustine, *Sermon* 214, 4.

⁵⁰ Id. *C. Serm. Ar.* 14.

⁵¹ Id. *S.* 214, 4.

⁵² Id. *S.* 213, 2; *De symb.* 1,2, He could not even directly perform a physical evil, as we had seen before.

Neither can He say or do anything that may go against the perfection of His intelligence: absurdities, foolishness, errors, contradictions, etc.⁵³

We observe that, notwithstanding what had been said before, the concept of omnipotence, “to do what one wants” stays in God. Because, if it is true that He cannot do those things, it is also true that neither does He desire any of those nor can He desire them. Hence, the identity of His desire with His power must always be maintained⁵⁴ His genuine and true omnipotence is maintained.

The Applications and Derivations of this Doctrine

We can say, therefore, that there are, in short, two distinct fields of the “limits” of the omnipotence of God, outlined by two different kinds of reasoning.

That which the omnipotence of God cannot do because it cannot be done (for example: an infinite being distinct from Him, an all-perfect finite being, a finite being that is not imperfect, a square circle; a being that is identical with nothing, that the whole is not more than each of its parts, that something can be and not be at the same time under the same aspect, etc.).

Within this scope, making applications to our theme, we have to exclude as impossible that God could have created man without freedom, which is contradictory because he would cease to be man.

It cannot be admitted either, for being also impossible, that God could have created man as a free being but could not do evil. This cannot be accepted because a being like this would be God, which would be repugnant to the mind because it would mean

⁵³ Id. S. 214, 4. This objection with regard to God as omnipotent would be a realization of the approach of God as a problem in question of evil, as Gesché proposes; cf, besides , 170-182. But this is not to hide the problems or weigh their difficulty, even taking to God as the cause of the same, and stay there, but of exposing and trying to resolve them.

⁵⁴ St. Augustine, *De civ.Dei* 5, 10, 1; *De symb.* 1, 2; *Serm.* 214, 3-4.

the existence of two infinite beings.⁵⁵ In effect, a being created from nothing cannot be equal to God.⁵⁶ And the being created from nothing, is contrary to God who is the Good,⁵⁷ granting that he may be free, he can fail in the moral field, because not being the Good, he can separate himself from it by doing evil.⁵⁸ Therefore, it is not right the pose the possibility that God could have created man free and impeccable at the same time.

However, man in the life of happiness, prior to his free option for good being able to do evil, will receive grace, not because he is impeccable, but that in fact he never commits sin, imitating in this manner the perfection of God which we call impeccability;⁵⁹ hence it is reasonable that God may give him that gift because his temporal life fundamentally has been oriented towards the good; on the other hand, the vision of God included in the blessedness, in fact makes sin impossible.

Neither must it be admitted that God could prevent the consequences which by the proper power of the events and/or of the things are derived from the good or bad behaviour, that is, as a result of the free action of the human being: the nearness to or the alienation from God (with what good or bad that one act or the other carry with it). It prevents the perfection of His will and His being.

The truth that dictates that God does not punish the sins in this world should be reconciled with another truth, in some way opposed, that is, that the evil negatively affects the human species (and in the opposite direction, the good) on alienating him from the Good who is God, even in this world.

⁵⁵ Id. *De civ. Dei* 22, 30, 3; *C. Iul o. imp.* 5, 58.

⁵⁶ Id. *De civ. Dei* 12, 5.

⁵⁷ I think that the saying that God is “the Good” is an acceptable philosophical translation of what is said about Him in several texts of the Scripture; for example, in Mk 10:18: *No one is good but God alone* (cfr. Mt 19:17; Lk 18:19).

⁵⁸ St. Augustine, *De civ. Dei* 12, 8.

⁵⁹ *Ib.* 22, 30, 1; *Iul o. imp.* 6, 19.

In the mentioned cases, it is not that there are things that are susceptible to the action of God, but that his infinite perfection, because it truly is, prevents Him from acting in that manner. And if He cannot, here I am sticking to what St. Augustine has already said, it is not by deficiency, but precisely because of His authentic omnipotence,⁶⁰ for which reason, even if not being able to avoid moral evil or sin, He continues to be omnipotent, He continues being God. And it is illustrative that this impotence does not come to Him from no other thing or power, but from His own perfection.⁶¹

The teaching that we have to gather from all this, as synthesis, is: It is clear and obvious that effectively cannot avoid evil. For two reasons: (a) because He cannot make a perfect being, since every created being is necessarily imperfect; (b) because He cannot oblige this imperfect but free being to do good, nor can he prevent him from doing evil.⁶²

The famous dilemma of Epicurus has been answered with clear reasons and in a satisfactory manner. Consequently, despite of all form of evils, God exists, is good, better, the Good, and is truly omnipotent.

The Consequences of the Two Kinds of Impotence in God

⁶⁰ Id. *C. Serm. ar.* 14.

⁶¹ What prevent God from that action are not other beings, because then He would be dependent on something that is not Him, but His own perfection, that is, He himself, His own being is what does not allow Him. Hence, He neither does it nor wills it, He neither wills it nor does it. God is absolute. And that this is so, I do not think it is an invention of Christian philosophy, since it is not difficult to find texts in the Scripture which, with different words, may say something similar.

⁶² God cannot avoid evil for reasons that are already mentioned, but it is also certain that God is the one responsible for the existence of *this* creation and of *this* human nature from which, in one way or another, evils come. We already said before some reasons why in spite of everything that both are reasonable, good and positive. See the first part of this book, particularly the note 41. Further on we will consider again this crucial aspect of our theme.

It is easy to see *one* of the impotencies in God, that is, that God cannot do something when *it cannot be done* because it is impossible and contradictory; but it is not so easy to discern the *other*, that is, neither can He do things that are against the infinite perfection of His being, His will and intelligence.

With respect to this last the following is important: If the efficient cause ⁶³ of moral evil is the finite freedom as such, we must try to consider that God cannot avoid the action of that freedom when it does evil. ⁶⁴ And, in effect, it is true that God cannot avoid the free act of man without being guilty of arbitrariness or contradiction, which He cannot do because His very own perfection forbids it as we have already said.

And we talk about this last impotence in its proper and absolute meaning. We must forget the *ordered* impotence of which Scholasticism talked about, which was not a true impotence because at the bottom was the absolute power of God which could do everything. The distinction in God between His *absolute* power and His *ordered* power deprived the explanation of all efficacy, since it could be understood that in reality God yes could do a great mess of preventing the free bad actions of humans. In reality it happens that what God cannot do in an orderly manner He can never do, that is, that the *absolute* and *ordered* powers of God are identical, in as much as in God there is no power that is not ordered.

A non-ordered power in God is absolutely impossible in Him, so any action that may imply a minimum of disorder (a slight injustice, a peripheral contradiction, a mild arbitrariness,

⁶³ Augustine would say *deficient* since sin is a weakness in being (cfr. *De civ. Dei* 12, 7-8). However, it can be said, efficient because every sin carries with it *physical* elements that require efficient cause, even that of the mind.

⁶⁴ It is a childish fallacy to compare God with human father or mother, because these, apart from being able to contradict themselves, are not the creators of the freedom their child, while God cannot contradict Himself with respect to having given freedom to human being because He is infinitely perfect. God is Father, but He is also God, while the human parents are only that, human parents.

etc.) does not exist in God because it is incompatible with the perfection of His being. Therefore, God cannot contradict Himself, neither can He be arbitrary in any way, either with His ordered or absolute power; if He could do this He would cease to be the infinitely perfect being with all the perfections that as such belong to Him.

And another very important aspect of the theme and to which we have already alluded before: God cannot stop, nor does He will, that the act of going to Him with correct conduct (with its choices, attitudes, positive acts) may have good consequences for human being, as well as that the immoral act (with its choices, attitudes, negative acts) may have bad consequences for the human person. Because, otherwise, God would not be the highest good, the Good: if the act of going to Him or the going away from Him would not have the corresponding consequences for him who does this, it would indicate that God would not be the Good, which is the same way as saying that God would not be God.

What is said is done in absolute way and degree; because nobody, not even God, can stop being the Good; and if God cannot stop being the Good, neither can He avoid that doing good or doing evil on the part of His creatures may have for them its corresponding sign. And even if He distributes His temporal and human gifts (health, prosperity, earthly goods, gifts of human nature, such as, intelligence, physical strength or will power...) equally among the good and the bad, however, not through the act of God but as a consequence of God being the Good, the option for evil brings with it, even in this life, certain human, psychological and moral type of bad consequences, because sin, vice, involves punishment, and, on the contrary, doing good means, even in this life, certain good consequences of the same kind.

This must be reconciled with another truth which appears to be the opposite, that is, that God does not punish in this world, and that He distributes and allows, as the case may be, that His

mentioned human and temporal gifts be given to the good as well as to the bad.

The Anthropological Scope of the Realization of Evil

Even if we have resolved the dilemma of Epicurus and have understood with intellectual clarity the reason why God cannot avoid evils, these can sometimes be so terrible that once in a while more pressing questions arise from our mind and heart directed to God.

Let us consider the horrifying cases that are the consequences of human evil. History is plagued with all kind of evils, championed with frequency by personages who are powerfully and forcefully evil. This does not have an easy justification.

Cases as iniquitous as that of Jewish holocaust in gas chambers under the Nazis, or the case, becoming more frequent nowadays, of a little girl violated or assassinated by an adult, or of infants killed in the bosom of their mother, have a very difficult answer for the one who believes in the goodness and the power of God. Not only for the rational difficulty of the same but for the very strong involvement of emotion.

How has God, we said before and we say now, permitted or permits all this? Where is His power? Where is His goodness? What was God doing while the crematoria of Auschwitz were operating?, or when in our times a little girl is violated or assassinated or abortion is practiced? Why did He not intervene then and why does He not intervene now? Why did He not do anything before and why does He not do anything now?

The only thing we can say, at the moment, is that God did not intervene in those times because He could not and He does not intervene because He cannot. Because, we have already said several times, to intervene would mean contradicting Himself by destroying the freedom granted by Him before; a contradiction which is impossible in Him because His infinite

perfection prohibits it, that is, He cannot, not for lack of power, but for the fullness of His perfection.⁶⁵ Which means, that, even if not being able, He maintains His omnipotence; that He cannot because He does not want, He does not want because He cannot want a contradiction against Himself: He neither can or want, He neither want or can.

Nevertheless, this does not means that He does not do anything for the benefit of the victims of human wickedness, as He does by helping those who suffer the consequences of catastrophes and infirmities, as we have already seen. But, let us go far beyond our explanations.

Explanation from the Perspective of Faith and Theology

In a spontaneous intuition we believe that God could have avoided all these evils, especially, the most bloody and unfair. Has not the wisdom and power of God any recourse that may not exclude freedom, that may point it towards another direction, in order to avoid that those horrible crimes may be committed and may be done to innocent people, even to children? But, it can be answered, would not this be arbitrary and a not authentic and artificial “arrangement” applied to human freedom on the part of God,⁶⁶ and therefore also impossible for Him, to tame and deviate human freedom the great part of an entire nation (we are referring to Nazism), whose arrogance and idolatry of itself resulted by its very tendency and in a manner that is almost inevitable in such abominable acts?

Therefore, referring ourselves the direct methods, that is, through the direct action of His power, we have already said it, God cannot, because His absolute perfection forbids it, do violence to freedom, not even to domesticate it or orient it

⁶⁵ Cfr. St. Augustine, *C. Serm. ar.* 14.

⁶⁶ We human beings are very inclined to these small, childish and always interesting arrangements. Deep down , they are our desires to adjust God to our mental judgments, besides showing what we would be capable of doing, even if it may be immoral, as long as we avoid problems and/or involvements. Cfr. A. Geschém *o.c.*181-182.

toward different action or purpose. The direct recourse to His omnipotence is, therefore, ruled out. However, with His *grace* God can draw the human wills to what is good. But when the evildoer persists in his evil will, the moment will come in which it would be arbitrary to grant him more grace, for which reason, ultimately he commits what is evil without God being able to avoid it. On the other hand, the great human evils are committed by hard-hearted persons and hardened in wickedness, almost totally impermeable to any thought or desire that could take him to a good action.⁶⁷

What are left for God are only the *indirect* ways, which are more concrete, and more situated in the mainstream of life in which God and human being are. In those, God does not eliminate evil but He conquers it subsequently with what is good. Hence, God does not avoid the evils of which we are so afraid and we question but yes He obtains from them great good. Something that is not so noticeable but is more positive should amaze us more than if He had eliminated evils with the force of His power.

In effect, it is deserving of our greater admiration, and it can also serve as an added strength to our faith, the fact that God uses, not only His power, but also His wisdom and goodness, availing Himself of the evils that come from the inordinate use of human freedom, and which are contrary to His will, in order to obtain from them many positive results, including a good so great as the salvation of the guilty, in addition to eliminating the evil and pains that could happen in the event that his conversion would not happen.⁶⁸ In this very wise manner God obtains goods

⁶⁷ I cannot spend more time on this aspect of our theme; cfr. J.A. Galindo Rodrigo, *El mal. El optimismo soteriológico como vía intermedia entre el pesimismo agnóstico y el optimismo racionalista*, Bilbao 2001, 238-251.

⁶⁸ Cfr. St. Augustine, *S.* 214 3. Which does not mean, and we already said it before, that God provokes those evils in order to obtain the mentioned good, but that on the occasion of these evils not wanted by Him, He produces those goods.

from what are evil in order that ultimately what His goodness seeks would be fulfilled and not the evil desire of the wicked.

St. Augustine tells us in a precise and profound manner: ““ Let not the wicked believe that God is not omnipotent because they do many things against His divine will, since, even if they do what He does not want, He will do whatever He wants. In no way can they change or overpower His will: whether the man who is justly condemned or the one who is mercifully freed, the will of the Omnipotent one is always fulfilled. The only thing that the Omnipotent one cannot do is what He does not want. He even makes use of what are evil for our redemption and salvation including the wicked actions of the devil, of the Jews and of Judas the traitor; in the same way, in the hidden and mysterious depths of any creature, where neither the sharpness of our eyes or our mind can reach, God knows how to get good from evil things, in a way that the will of the All-powerful be fulfilled in all things that originate from or are done in the world.”⁶⁹

So, once those acts happen against His will, goodness, wisdom and the power of God are capable of obtaining, and in fact obtain, from those very evils, great goods of grace and salvation. Assuming that the will of God is the salvation of all created beings, He will do that what is more convenient under the perspective of that salvation in relation to those persons who are victims of human madness may happen; the consequences of that wickedness will not be imposed, but that God will know how to obtain what is good from their evil actions, in such a way that the positive results desired by His power and will may be fulfilled.

This indirect manner of proceeding is more proper to the wisdom and magnanimity of God, in addition to not going into conflict with the divine perfection, than preventing the evil actions of the will as we would have wanted.

As something drawn from the anterior, we see that the most forceful *indirect* recourse in order to establish the things

⁶⁹ St. Augustine, *S.* 214, 3.

according to what is just and reasonable and conquer evil, is above all in the other life, where besides establishing justice, He will console the innocent victims as He alone knows how to do it (Ap 21:3-7).⁷⁰ Faith tells us about the immense and endless joy that those victims of atrocities of history or of the most outrageous concrete actions are having. And we can never disregard faith if we wish to resolve in a sufficient manner the problem of evil. And if faith tells us that God will remedy the evils in the next life, as believers we must not judge God only by what He does or does not do in this life and in this world, because then we would obviously be unjust to Him.⁷¹

Therefore, if God permits the death of every human being due to natural calamities in the best moment or in the lesser evil for him, we have to think that when the death of someone happens because of the wickedness of man (even more in crimes whose victims are innocents, as in the case of the unborn) with greater reason will God not allow that the victims may suffer, within the scope of the definitive good which is the salvation, a greater evil or a lesser good if they had suffered death at another time and at another age. All this, which, in one way or another, is based on the commonly accepted theological tradition, is what allows us to talk about a *soteriological optimism*.

As regards all this subject-matter, it is convenient to take notice and always to remember that it would be a great stupidity to think that God promotes or, somehow, wants that crimes are committed, for the purpose of using them later as a motive or an occasion for doing good.

But we have to admit that these *indirect* resources do not only exclude but do not explain either the evils and sufferings of the human beings even if afterwards God may convert them into goods, or even into the fullness of joy. It does not appear necessary or reasonable that these goods and this happiness have

⁷⁰ The special recipients of this consolation have to be those who have died without any guilt, as the innocents and children.

⁷¹ It is difficult to understand, but some Christian philosophers and theologians commit this abominable injustice against God.

to be preceded by so much evil and pains in this life. Therefore, despite of what has been said, the firm resistance of the problem of evil to the already given explanations persists.

We think it probable that the *complete* solution to the problem of evil is not, therefore, in what we have already said. Despite of the arguments expressed, which no doubt give light notably to the dark sides of this tremendous question, there are still questions that need to be answered. In effect, God, in order to avoid so much evil, could have created another world that is more perfect and a human nature and freedom that are more perfect, with which many evils coming from natural calamities and infirmities could have been avoided, being thus more scarce and/or less disastrous, as well as many human evil actions, being less frequent and less perverse. However, he did not want; being able to do a better world and a better human nature, mysteriously He did not want.⁷²

We say this because Christian philosophy is, almost unanimously, against the *metaphysical optimism* of Leibniz, which affirms that God has created a more perfect possible world, and, consequently, God cannot make another world that is better. This Christian philosophy, on the contrary affirms: This world is neither the worse nor the better possible; the infinite nature of God can be the exemplary and efficient cause of countless worlds distinct from the actual,⁷³ and God does not have the need or the responsibility to make the most perfect possible

⁷² Once again let us specify the problem of evil, as sponsor Gesché, cfr. *o.c.*, 170-182. However, that God fight against evil (*Deus contra malum*) as this author proposes (*o.c.*, 179), even if it is true, would not absolve God of His responsibility with respect to evil, since He could not have created man with *this* freedom with which He created him.

⁷³ Within those worlds there are many other human natures. When nowadays when the possibility of the existence of other beings which would be substantially human, because they have reflexive intelligence and body, but different in other aspects is spoken of, what we said should not be a surprise at all. We have, therefore, to direct ourselves toward another way.

world.⁷⁴ We note as a result that the position of Leibniz calls into question the true omnipotence of God.

His power being subordinated to His will and this to His being, then there is a need to find out why did He not want to create that another world and another human being that are distinct and better and, on the contrary, He preferred the actual ones. If we are able to find this out, we would have, no doubt, a more complete solution to the problem of evil. But here comes the first difficulty, the philosophy, the mere human reason, is not capable of finding this out. A more complete explanation with regards to this aspect of the problem of evil can be given, or better, be discerned, from the perspective of faith and theology, but going beyond where we have gone until now.

We need to distinguish three levels or instances in the questions and answers about the problem of evil in relation to God: a) What God can do and not do *in the actual situation of things*, with respect to evil, be it physical or moral; b) why in that situation of things God cannot do violence to the laws of natures that are involved and/or of the human freedom; c) why did He establish those laws as derivation of *this* worldly nature and why did He give man *this* definite nature and precisely with *this* freedom.

We have already responded to the two first questions. Let us now try to answer the third, which can be presented extensively as follows: (a) Why has God placed us in *this* world whose “imperfections” are the cause of so much pains and deaths? (b) Why has He given us *this* human nature, whose infirmities and limitations make us suffer so much? (c) Why *this* freedom, that has led humanity to such incredible heights of evil with their consequences of so frightful sufferings? (d) Lastly, the perennial

⁷⁴ Professores Societatis Iesu, *Philosophiae scholasticae summa II*, Madrid 1955, 334-351; Id., *Philosophiae scholasticae summa III*, Madrid 1952, 249-255. We resort to these authors as exponents of a position which was common then which has not changed, and which is at least tacitly continues to be maintained by the majority of Catholic authors. Cfr., for example, A. Gesché, *o.c.*, 23-26; 163-182. Cfr. also CCC, 310.

one, and which affects all the previous ones: How, despite of all of it, God exists, who is good and omnipotent?

To answer these questions can probably appear as something superhuman; and it would be without any doubt, if we do not count on divine revelation. In any case, we will try to answer them, even if it may be in a manner that is relatively convincing, with the assurance that any light, even small, that may clarify a little the terrible problem of evil, in any of its dimensions, will be most welcomed and appreciated.

What we are convinced of is that, without doubt, God has had and has ample reasons for acting

how he has acted in relation to humanity without disparaging His goodness, wisdom and omnipotence. We have to be totally sure of it because it is the only correct and logical thing that we can think of God whose love for men, reaches to the extreme of giving us His Son (cfr. Rom 8:32). Perhaps our very limited intelligence will never come to perceive much less understand those reasons, but with certainty, there are. Another attitude would be an insult to the immense goodness of that God Whom His Son has revealed to us as Father in the Gospel and Who has shown Himself as Love in the New Testament.

Next we dare to propose, basing ourselves above all on the Scriptures, the *possible* motives which probably have prompted and prompt the conduct of God in response to the *last* questions on the problem of evil in relation to God. Even if we know that we are entering into the mystery, and expecting other questions and above all, other better solutions, we stop at the last questions still waiting for an answer: Why *this* nature, *this* humanity and *this* freedom?

Let us read slowly the following; perhaps we can obtain some light about this complicated question.

Why This Human Nature and This Freedom ⁷⁵

God has wanted by His most free decree to create man with such a nature that he could fall into sin, without much difficulty, with disastrous consequences for him. Despite of certain anthropological optimism in vogue today, what is certain is that actually man has a weak will and easily seducible by sin and weak for doing good, which carries with it having bad inclinations, the great possibility of doing evil sometimes committing great evils, such as acquiring abominable vices and painful dependencies with every negative thing that is derived from all of it, as we have seen. ⁷⁶ We, the believers, besides believing that God is the Creator of man, are also convinced that He had created him out of love. Hence, even if according to human thinking it could appear daring, we have to be sure that God has created man in *this* manner and has given him *this* freedom having love as the cause and love as the goal. ⁷⁷

If we look at revelation it is inevitable to see the close relationship that exists between the misery and wickedness of man and the goodness and mercy of God. The history of salvation is one uninterrupted chain of times in which man is shown as sinner and weak to do good, followed and accompanied by other times in which God forgives, helps and exercises His loving patience towards His creature. The more distressing the moral

⁷⁵ Here we are going to deal basically with moral evil since, as we had seen before, the physical evil would be justified by the practice of virtue. Besides, with a greater moral perfection of man, God could do a corporal nature and a world that are more perfect without the danger they of being idolized by the former. Having solved the problem of moral evil the physical evil also remains for the most part solved.

⁷⁶ Cfr. *GS, 10*. This is what man actually is, but revelation speaks to us about a first *fall* of humanity in moral evil (original sin), before which, and in accordance with the plan of God, man was better than now in the moral confines.

⁷⁷ Cf. *Lumen Gentium, 2. A priori* I consider that this assumption, perspective and way, in addition to being fundamentally Christian, imply an entirely positive idea about God, which could be supported by many Scriptural texts. On the contrary, some actual theories about the problem of evil are calling the goodness of God into question.

negativity of man reveals itself, the stronger does the kindness of God is manifested. The violent flood of human sins is followed by greater torrents of grace, love and forgiveness on the part of God. This is the general picture of the stories and doctrine of both Testaments.

We cannot avoid the suggestive view in which human misery would appear as “means”, so that the divine goodness would be manifested. Some texts of the Scriptures, especially from the *Letter to the Romans* seem to suggest it: *For God delivered all to disobedience, that he might have mercy upon all* (Rom 11:32). ⁷⁸ Without doubt that we are here before a text filled with Semitism in which everything that happens is attributed to God. But by stripping it of that cultural element a text remains in which *yes* we are taught about that relationship between the wickedness of man and the divine goodness that we have commented on. How far does this relationship go? We have to presume the antecedent and eternal divine knowledge of the human condition and conduct from their beginning until the end of time, as well as the answer that He will give to the same, by which that relationship is established by God from all eternity.

God cannot create a wicked man neither can He be the cause of his evil use of his freedom which He gave to him to do good, which is obvious; because even when He knew the evils that man would do, it does not follow that He desired them, since the order of knowledge is not the same as the order of desire. Nevertheless, yes, He can make man (even making him His image with everything positive that this entails) very imperfect, very fragile in the face of evil and weak in doing good. From that condition came the original sin and the subsequent sins. Well, it is clear that creation of man as he is has had a purpose in the mind of God: everything He does has a purpose. Hence, we have to think that God created *this* human species so that both His

⁷⁸ We trust in the translation of the experts of *Bible of Jerusalem*. The parallel text: “...*Scripture makes no exceptions when it says that sin is master everywhere. In this way the promise can only be given through faith in Jesus Christ*” (Gal 3:22).

ontological and personal divine perfections may be manifested. The first are shown in the being of man and his natural faculties; the second are manifested in God's goodness as a response to the human negative conduct up to the point of obtaining through His grace that man may imitate that goodness.

It seems that God has permitted the human moral weakness which probably would turn into many wicked acts with the condition of having opportunity to exercise His infinite goodness until an immeasurable degree. We are not before a groundless hypothesis if we affirm that the goodness of God "needs" in some way a creature, such as man in order to show Himself, to display Himself and to execute quickly and repeatedly in all its immensity, grace and generosity: *The law entered in - so that transgression might increase but, where sin increased, grace overflowed all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through justification for eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord* (Rom 5:20-21).

Such is the bond that Paul suggests between human evil and the divine goodness that he feels obliged to oppose what with certain logic could be deduced from there that the sensible thing to do is be bad so that the divine benevolence would be manifested more intensely. That is the reason why he says in continuation to the previous text: *What then shall we say? Shall we persist in sin that grace may abound?* His answer is unequivocal and forceful: *Of course not!* (Rom 6:1). Therefore, the Apostle does not deny that relationship that he has established between human wickedness and divine goodness even if yes, he denies that such relationship may induce us to remain in sin or may allow us to favour it.

Hence, what consequences are derived from that relationship? Paul, after teaching what would be the correct reaction of a Christian in his conduct, exposes again, and more extensively, the sinful condition of man and his weakness in the face of evil (cf. 7:1-25), as well as also, again, as regards the

previous thing, the immense benefits that God's love brings to us through Christ (cfr. 8:1-38).

In this way God obtains two things of overwhelming and positive moral magnitude as well as spiritual beauty: the expression of His being as love in a highest degree through His Son, and the good itself in a certain way also in a highest degree of His human creature elevated to a rank so sublime that it may allow him to live according to the spirit through the Spirit of Christ (vv. 5-10), which carries with it the resurrection through the Spirit (cfr. V. 11), to receive filial adoption with respect to the Father (vv. 15-16), which makes him coheir with Christ (v.17), everything having its culmination in eternal life (vv. 18-25).

In the face of all this overwhelming display of the divine goodness the Apostle intones a hymn to the love of God: *What then shall we say to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but handed him over for us all, how will he not also give us everything else along with him?* (8:31-32).⁷⁹ In the face of the divine goodness that responds this way to human evil the proper reaction of a Christian is that of imitating that goodness and of singing a hymn of praise to the love of God in Christ. Therefore, what relationship exists between the moral weakness of man and the grand diffusion and communication of the love of God through His Son? Obviously it cannot be a relationship of necessity, since, that would imply a dependence of the Creator with respect to the creature. Neither can it be a relationship that is arbitrary, at random, or by chance without being reasonable in a certain sense. It has to be a relationship of certain convenience, since if God, as we have already seen in these texts of the *Romans*, repeatedly reacts in that manner in the face of human weakness and wickedness it is, without doubt, because it is suitable.

⁷⁹ Let the reader read what follows up to v. 39, so that he may see the power and the greatness of the love of God manifested in Christ.

In the first instance, if we confine ourselves to human logic, it seems that divine goodness has to be the answer to the absence of malice on the part human being (when he receives existence from God) or to the right conduct of this (when he receives the reward as a result of his merit). These two kinds of answer are not left excluded (cfr. 1 Cor 4:7; 2 Tim 4:8) and that is logical, but what really is surprising is that in the face of so frequent and great human evil God answers with an incomprehensible goodness, even more frequent and more intense than that one. Why that so illogical or at least extremely paradoxical manner of acting, even if it may benefit us so much?

It seems that there is no other explanation than this: When God reacts thus in the face of the fragility of human nature, his weakness for doing good and his frequent and serious fall into evil, His goodness, mercy and generosity, are diffused, communicated, lavished and given in a new way and in an unmatched degree of goodness. To love one who is evil entails more love than to love one who is good, even if the latter may be loved more than the former. There is more merit in loving the enemy than a friend.⁸⁰ God loves the bad with a love of mercy and compassion, the good with a love of benevolence; and the man, who by his behavior is always evil and by his being is good, He loves with one or another form of love. In the first form His goodness shines properly while in the second it is more precisely His love that is shown; even if in the first love is not lacking or goodness in the second; because of the identity in God of all his attributes.⁸¹ Human weakness and wickedness are not causes, but are indeed more of an occasion that the divine goodness may abound. There lies the relationship, not of *necessity*, but yes of *convenience* between the so great negativity of the human conduct and the greater and also unconditional positivity of the divine action.

⁸⁰ *For if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them...* (Lk 6: 32-35).

⁸¹ Cfr. St. Augustine, *De Trin.* 15, 5, 7-8.

This humanity, simply for being what it is, with its proper being and the consequences of the same, causes, provokes, begs the compassion and mercy of God. It is *convenient, reasonable, worthy* of the God who Love to act in such a manner, up to the point that, even excluding the necessity and maintaining His freedom, that divine conduct could even be predictable (?). It seems that there is something like this, but in a form and degree that we can never determine exactly.⁸²

Well, taking all this as our basis, the following hypothesis could be proposed: Could not have God created *this* humanity and *this* liberty because they admitted to the maximum, without acting arbitrarily, a presence and expression of the goodness of God towards human creature to the maximum?

God, we follow the hypothesis, did not desire the humanity to sin, but that it may develop all kind of moral values; and if the humanity had not sinned, God could have achieved the wonder that a creature that is so imperfect and so weak (even being an image of God because it is rational) could attain the miracle of doing good continually and freely, as if it were its second nature. As a culmination of this plan He would elevate the human species to the supernatural order as a result of having created man for Himself,⁸³ that is, making him fit for Him.⁸⁴ which could have been realized with the joyful incarnation of His Son.

A very limited human nature with a freedom that is precarious was probably *the weakest and the most imperfect rational creature God can do without doing absurd things* (= man

⁸² Can it be deduced therefore that God never punishes? Neither at the end of the life of each individual or in the world or in eternity? In the actual theology, the opinion that properly speaking God does not punish in those instances even if yes he can allow that there may be human beings that may exist in the state of condemnation that they may have caused and have obtained for themselves for all eternity, is quite widespread.

⁸³ Id. "You made us, Lord, for Yourself... (*Conf.* 1,1,1).

⁸⁴ Mas has been made "capable of God": Id. *De Trin.* 14, 8, 11; 14, 4, 6. Scholasticism talks about *obediencial power* (cfr. St. Thomas Aquinas, *De virt. in comm.*, a, 10. ad 13).

is a *borderline being* between the rational and non-rational.⁸⁵). But, precisely because of this, it seems to me, the Incarnation of the Son of God is congruent,⁸⁶ the extreme expression of the divine goodness in favor of a creature.

It is also the highest degree of the love of God without this love becoming arbitrary: a love of this nature in favor of a creature which is qualitatively more perfect would have been less reasonable, perhaps something arbitrary, and without proper meaning or sufficient motive.

In any case, even if we do not know with certainty if God would have sent His Son to a more perfect creature, yes, we know that He sent Him to save this, ours, which makes it reasonable and compensates superabundantly for all the ills and suffering that had occurred because of the wickedness of the same.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ This can be proven extensively and in various aspects, suffice it for us to remember, as we already said before, that man is at the borderline of the non-rational that a great part of his life, even being a rational being, he spends by not exercising as such (during sleep). This is due to the material nature of his corporality.

⁸⁶ Already since the medieval theology it has been disputed if, in the case of the human being not having committed sin, had the Son of God been incarnated. There are reasons against (Thomas of Aquinas) and reasons in favour (John Duns Scotus).

At present the second position predominates among the theologians. I think the *substantive* is the incarnation while the *adjective* is the modality of that incarnation (joyful or sorrowful), in correspondence to the substantive which is *this* humanity with *this* freedom, while the adjective is sin. If this humanity exists as it is obvious, It also seems to me that what is substantive which is the incarnation would also exist, which makes that reasonable.

Thus it is better understood that God had decided “to divinize” man as one of the dimensions of His total giving, which also demands the incarnation as condition of that divinization.

⁸⁷ This view from a perspective in which creation and the salvation of man are linked, as the actual theology does based on the II Vatican; cfr. *Lumen Gentium*, 2-3; *Gaudium et Spes*, 2,22, etc.

Because God has wished to create a creature that may make consistent and beautiful His extreme giving of His love, He has created man with *this* nature and with *this* freedom even if he could seriously do evil in enormous quantities.

It was not necessary that God create such a creature, it was not necessary for Him to assume the nature of the same; but to this free decision of creating this human species corresponds the free decision of human incarnation of the Son of God.

The convenience between the one and the other constitutes the greatest work of art ever created. We do not have here the necessity of the necessary logic, but of the not necessary logic: the aesthetic, the art, the beauty: in relation to the *extreme* which is man with his freedom is the *extreme* of the love of God in His Son made-flesh. The first is almost absurd by reason of its deficiency; the second is also almost absurd by reason of its magnificence.

We could continue now our explanation by linking together in chain the ‘why’ of the evils, starting from its most concrete manifestation until reaching, with the help of what we explained before, to what we have just said. Because the question to which everything leads is this: why has God created a creature *like* man, which is the favorable condition that there may be so much evil and suffering in humanity?

I think that the answer to this tremendous question could be what we have just given: the will of God to manifest His love in the highest and extreme level (love is always the reason for what God does) finds then the most favorable creaturely condition and atmosphere. And God shows that highest and extreme love in the Incarnation, earthly life and death, as well as the Resurrection of His Son Jesus Christ. All of which redounds to man’s benefit.

Why Did God not Stop from Creating this Human Being on Foreseeing the Consequences of his Freedom?

Once man has been created it is obvious that God cannot, without being arbitrary, destroy human freedom, or avoid the consequences of the same. But we can further ask: Why has God created a creature like man? Why, having foreseen his abuse of his liberty and its consequences did He not desist from His plan and conceived and realized as alternative another kind of more perfect human species?

Let us Try to See the Credibility of our Answer Indicated Before

In the plans and designs of God something like this could happen: a) God decides to create man, which is a *borderline being*, but at the same time decrees the Incarnation of His Son, and expression of *extreme love* for a *borderline being*; b) God knows that man will freely himself separate from Him through an immense and horrible torrent of sins; c) but God decides, in spite of everything, to send His Son down to humanity, an *extreme* manifestation of the love of God, and in conformity with that sinful humanity.

This Son of God suffers all the servitudes and limitations of the normal human life, endures the passion and death at the hands of His human creatures, victorious over all this negative attitude for their good in His Resurrection thus carrying out the great work of Redemption.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ *He who did not spare his own Son but handed him over for us all, how will he not also give us everything else along with him?*(Rom 8:32). The horrible suffering and the shameful death of Christ on the cross, without God preventing it, even experiencing being abandoned by Him (cfr. Mk 15:34), console and encourage us, and also silence our complaints and possible protests before God in our great tribulations and worst sufferings. However, what we have to consider here first and foremost is the love of God shown in the handing over of His Son to humanity that compensates it of all the negative consequences that proceed from its concrete realization as *extreme being*. Precisely because God loves humanity up to the extreme of handing His Son over to it, He does not intervene when this dies on the cross.

With sin, the human being intensifies his condition of *borderline being* to the point of paroxysm, but with the giving up of His Son to the point of death, God intensifies even more His extreme love, lovingly conquering for his good with this last *extreme love* the last *borderline being* of man.

But it must not be forgotten that, precisely because man has degraded himself by the *free evil use* of his freedom, God has no obligation, or need to send His Son in order to save him. The way human being was in the mind of God his creation was viable and his creation was not absurd; and this is the reason why God creates the supernatural order freely and gratuitously, only out of His goodness.

But since man has been created by God with a very imperfect rational nature, close to the limit of the absurdity of being irrational and the same time rational, which implies a precarious freedom and a very diminished responsibility, inclined to do of sin as its second nature, and for that reason gives rise particularly to the compassionate love and mercy of God, which has as its consequence the creation of that supernatural order which makes man capable of God, an order which consists in the total giving of Himself in Christ to humanity, reasonable and aesthetic, and implies that the last end of man be God Himself.

God having known that humanity is going to sin abundantly and freely, He implements a magnificent and beautiful plan as a response, in which, from a vastness of evils He will derive the greatest possible of goods, through the maximum giving of Himself in Christ to the human creature.

There is no need for man to commit moral evil; neither is there any need for God to become man, and to suffer and die for man. Yet to a free but predictable wicked act of man corresponds a free and predictable and in every case reasonable giving of God Who is Love in highest degree, up to the end (cfr. Jn 13:1).

God corresponds to the imperfection of *this* human nature with *this* freedom with the Incarnation of His Son; and to the

immensity of sins of humanity with its terrible consequences God returns with the passion, death and Resurrection of this very Son for the benefit of the humanity.

Everything, even if it may have the logical sequence that we have exposed, is conceived *at the same time* by and in the mind of God. It is a whole, a unitary whole of realities and events even if they are separated by time. Seen in this way, at the same time, the whole set in a single glance, far from being something wrong, unjust, or cruel to man, as maintained by those who make the problem of evil the solid foundation of their atheism or of their agnosticism, is presented as a marvelous act of God, as a miraculous work of art which is also beneficial for all human beings.

If God had not created man as he is, He would not have expressed His love to the highest and extreme level in Christ, because this could have been something that would be at least incongruous. The wickedness of man due to the level of his imperfection that borders on the absurd, is what makes logical, although not necessary, the love of God in Christ to the point of death, which also borders on the absurd on the other extreme.

Not that He should have properly created man so that, in the second instance, He may love him in that ultimate, highest and extreme level, but that God having decided to create that model of free being which is man, and even if that being would share in His perfections and it would not be absurd to create it (since although it is a *borderline being*, it is not an absurd being), seeing the vastness of his sins because of the bad and inadequate use of his freedom caused by the exaggerated attraction that all material and temporal goods exercised over him, and not the higher goods, that is, the spiritual and eternal goods (precisely because he is a *borderline being*), rather than cancel His project (nothing of love would be contained in that cancellation as such, although it would not be unfair), He freely decides to maintain His project, but compensating for the nearness of that sinful creature to the border of negative sign with a reality that is

likewise near the border but of a positive sign, Who is Christ dead and resurrected.

God sees both things, the misery of man and His extreme love, as forming only one plan; even if temporarily one thing happens before the other, before God they have the simultaneity of His eternal vision.

Corresponding to the *border* who is man in his freedom given to sin is the *border* of the love of God in His Son, incarnated, died and resurrected: (“...*the Son of God who has loved me and given himself up for me* (Gal 2:20). The first is approaching absurdity by deficiency, even more for the misuse of his freedom, the second is also close to the absurd but by the magnificence of His goodness and even more by the Son loving us to the extreme of giving us His life in order to reconcile us with God: *God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ* (2 Cor 5:19).

If man were more perfect and his will were more strong in the face of evil, so that in this way the actual number of sins would be avoided and the consequent sufferings ⁸⁹ (which is what we basically want now and we even think that we can demand it of God), the Incarnation of the Son of God, nor His passion, death and resurrection, would not be so consistent or so reasonable, as man is constituted as he is today.

I think that it would be less reasonable, perhaps not reasonable at all, on the part of God that He would do it for such more perfect creature, so most likely, even certainly, He would never had done it. ⁹⁰

⁸⁹ It must not be forgotten that with a more perfect freedom a more perfect nature (human and earthly) would also be feasible, with the consequent decrease of physical evils.

⁹⁰ What is reasonable God can do it or not; either He can make that reasonable or something different but reasonable too; what God can do in any way is not reasonable.

It is precisely the creation of this model of rational being that exceptionally makes more consistent, logical although without necessity, and consequently more probable, the incarnation, death and resurrection of the Son of God, which is the giving of God out of love in the highest possible degree, as well as the vast goods, that come from the moral beauty and saving efficaciousness of such event.

That precarious or at least not so intense manner of love in the *stage of creation* (since this model of man does not include so much perfections as it would other superior models) makes more coherent, reasonable, resplendently aesthetical, and also more feasible, the giving by God of Himself through love in the highest possible degree which redounds to the good of man in the *post- creation stage*.

For this reason, the intelligent being the least gifted by God by nature, on making more reasonable and possible that sublime giving by God of Himself, is the most gifted, and the most benefited by grace. And this is how two human creatures, the humanity of Christ and His Mother (with them probably also the human saints) occupy the highest hierarchy in the definitive stage, in the Eternal Happiness. It is clear, therefore, that God has sublime motives for creating this model of man.

Everything what we have said in this section explains why God did not abandon His plan of creating *this* man even knowing that he would frequently opt and with seriousness, for what is evil, at times in enormous proportions. Yet despite everything, the immensity and the quality of the benefits prepared by God as response compensate superabundantly all those evils. We will see all this better with a more contrasted analysis.

The Different Options That Present Themselves to God as Creator of Man

There can be two possibilities:

(a) *To create a more perfect creature*⁹¹ This creature with a freedom that is less deficient and stronger, could have defended itself with more efficacy against the suggestions of evil and could have more strength to do what is good.

If it had not sinned, it would not have any need of redemption, so the total giving of God of Himself to the extreme of giving His own life would have been a senseless act, consequently, it could not have happened; it is obvious. But it happens, besides, that even being possible, probably the incarnation could not have happened either: this creature not being a *borderline creature* would not have involved sufficient attraction to provoke a love of God to the limit.

That is to say, God would not have considered the Incarnation of His Son a work so attractive, so reasonable, so beautiful, so worthy of the greatness of His love as to perform it in favour of that creature. The creational love of God would have been qualitatively superior, but His post-creational love would be qualitatively inferior.

And in the case in which that more perfect creature had sinned, having been for it so easy not to sin, it does not seem then that God could have been compassionate with it up to the extreme of sending His Son to give His life for its redemption.

In effect, on using that creature its greater perfection to offend God more and to separate itself more from God, its culpability and responsibility would have been of other degree qualitatively more serious than ours, and, therefore, such sinful creature would have been less susceptible to the merciful and

⁹¹ When we talk about greater or lesser perfections in the distinct and possible divine plans, we think above all of qualitative differences, accidental, even if they are great, to the perfection or deterioration of the same, they are within the reach of the actual human being, depending on his personal conduct.

However, we don't have to go out of what is being essentially human: reflexive intelligence with free will and corporality.

compassionate love of God, in which case, His love to the extreme of giving His own life in its favour would have been without doubt less reasonable, perhaps absurd, than in the case of the actual man; and I dare say, therefore, that that love to that degree would not have existed ⁹²

Hence, probably the Incarnation would not have happened in case of innocence, and, more probably, redemption would not have taken place, in case of sin. Let us not forget that God does not work with arbitrary but with reasonable freedom.

(b) *To create the human creature that in fact God created.*

In effect, God by creating a being that is so imperfect as man that is near the *border* between what is reasonable and the absurd has before Him two magnificent possibilities: (a) If such a being as the man does not sin and remains faithful to his Creator, this, as we have already said, would be something worthy of greatest admiration and of immeasurable value; the work of God would have been worthy of greatest degree of His highest wisdom and power. And a being like this would have attracted the goodness and mercy of God to the extreme of the Son of God becoming man; because to a humanity like this God feels being driven by His love up to that highest level of the Incarnation. It must carefully be borne in mind that this is the original plan and desired by God in itself. ⁹³ (b) But, if as it was feared it would, this being, man, sin, is unfaithful to God and stays away from Him by making improper use of his freedom, then the total, abysmal and extreme giving of God in His Son to humanity even to the point of giving His life for it, has reasonable (at least in sufficient degree) and therefore becomes more feasible; this also, and much more, is worthy of the greatest admiration, and

⁹² What we know happened to the angels according to the theological tradition based on the Scripture enlightens us on this.

⁹³ Even though the dynamics of the dialectics and the method of exposition do not demand the repetition of this idea, it must be stressed to the maximum: God does not wish that man may sin so that later He would give Himself up to him in a painful manner, but that God wants that man not sin in order to deliver Himself up to the extreme of a joyful manner.

of value that is qualitatively more superior to the case of other more perfect creature.

This work of God is worthy of Love who is Himself. The abysmal and extreme misery of the actual humanity calls for an extreme giving up of God: *Abyssus abyssum invocat (Deep calls to deep) (Ps 42:8)*.

Which does not mean that it would be necessary, but reasonable, possible and even probable; hence, leaving in this way, the door open to the work that God mercifully performed and which is a source of joy for us.

And let us consider with attention: It seems that his last possibility, I insist, could not have happened in the case that the human species were a creature superior in an ontological level and more perfect as we would have wanted in our ignorance. Only when God creates a creature so weak and imperfect which *freely*, but with *greatest probability*, falls into sin with its corresponding immense torrent of evils is when *freely*, but with *great probability*, the greatest possible giving up of God happens.

It pleases Him beyond measure, according to the history of salvation that we know, to go to the most perfect through what is more imperfect, to reach out to the top most level by means of the lowest, the sublime through what is ugly and rudimentary (cfr. 1 Cor 1:17-31). Because of this it seems that we can conclude the following: the most appropriate being for God to do what is more admirable is a being like the actual person.

Possibly the intelligence is not disturbed in the face of this solution because it is perceived that *it is not necessary* as condition the possibility that man were a *borderline being* so that God could give Himself up to us to the limit.

In effect, it is so; but it must be observed that every relationship of God with the creatures is over and above necessity: if God would act only in relation to the creatures in any manner whatsoever when there is a need that He should do it, then He

would never do anything, since such need would never happen; we can talk only about *reasonable convenience*.

Well, in the case of man being a *borderline being* is when the maximum of reasonable convenience of the giving up of God to the human creature through love occurs. If when that maximum convenience is given the giving up does not occur, then it will never be given.

However, in fact, even if freely, the giving of Himself exists because God is identified with His love. We are in the face of the profound, mysterious and strange coincidence in the divine love of the maximum convenience with freedom. In effect, if God were not Love itself, the theory that we are explaining would not have any meaning. If in the face of the immense misery of man up to the *limit*, God reacts with the giving up of Himself to the *limit* is due to the fact that He is Love itself. If this were not so, our approach would lack foundation.

Hence, this theory that we are proposing about the problem of evil contains a profession of faith in God as identical in His being with His love, therefore, it is in accordance with the central part of the revelation. It is an assumption that is not proven but accepted in faith on which we based ourselves; it is a Christian maxim par excellence.

In synthesis: When God creates a creature so weak and imperfect free but with a *maximum probability* falls into sin it is when the greatest possible giving up by God of Himself happens, also free but with maximum probability. The first *maximum probability* leads to the immense torrent of evils and sufferings of humanity, the second results in the giving up by God Himself in Christ to the point of giving His own life for all and each of the human beings. Thus, that man should be a *borderline being* so that God would give Himself to us to the limit is not a condition of possibility but yes of reality.

The Creation and Salvation of God Constitute a Great Work of Art the Maximum Expression of Which is the Beauty of Christ

The key to everything that we have been saying is in Christ. Through Him the mystery of man is made clear the II Vatican Council tells us. ⁹⁴ It is perfectly logical that the enigma of evil which without doubt forms part of the mystery of man can likewise be made clear through Christ. The perspective of beauty is likewise useful for the understanding of this mystery.

Beauty lies between arbitrariness and necessity (which is something logical but without necessity, that is, a non-coercive logic with respect to intelligence). If man had been a more perfect being the giving of God in Christ to the extreme of giving His life would have been an *arbitrariness*; if man by his nature and by himself had been a meaningless being, an intervention of God would have been *necessary* of whatever manner so as to stop this absurdity; in fact, such a being could never exist. Since neither one nor the other case exists, the intervention of God constitutes a work of art. Not that God wishes precisely to directly make a work of art, but that *what God wishes* is to make human species participant of His perfections and of His joy. And this also is what God would want to do if His intervention were arbitrary and necessary. But it happens that, in addition to what God wishes, the relation of God's action with Himself must be taken into consideration, that is, the framework within which His action falls, which excludes the arbitrary and the necessary actions, but for different reasons. What is arbitrary because it would make God irrational, while what is necessary would make God a being without freedom and dependent on creature. That is why in reality, divine action is always *esthetical*, a work of art, that is, logical without necessity. But in this case it is on the highest level.

If there was an actual misery of human being (coming from his weak nature and freedom fallen in fact to so many evils

⁹⁴ Cfr. *Gaudium et Spes*, 10.

and sufferings) detached from the extreme love on the part of God in Christ, we would have a more difficult problem of evil and converted into an equally brutal and just accusation against God, without a possible answer nor a minimally satisfactory explanation within the reach of human intelligence. Since they don't consider that connection, majority of the thinkers, who do not know or believe, or do not consider the total giving of God Christ to humanity, from which that response and that explanation can be gathered, see the problem of evil in this manner.

Well, given the abyss of misery of humanity today, it was possible or not that God would have responded with that abysmal love, but yes, it was reasonable that He should do it and He did so. Therefore, the same misery assumed, compensated and saved by the immensity of the extreme love of God in Christ, is what allows and makes a philosophico-theological theodicy possible. The total giving of God in Christ is the greatest of what is real and what is possible in favor of the humanity, in addition to being a marvellous work of art, as we he have indicated.

This work of art has its nucleus and culmination and greatest expression and its immeasurable and inexhaustible value in the moral beauty of Christ. I gather some texts in order to stress what we all know.

*“In North America alone, the biblical investigation has generated no less than six great images of Jesus during the past seventeen years. All this means what Han von Balthasar already would rightly demonstrate in his work *Glory*, specifically that the revelation of what God has done in Christ possesses a sweeping and permanent attraction. When we begin “to see” the inherent beauty of what He has done in Christ, His “greatest work of art” (as Gadamer would say), there would no longer be any limit or end to the imaginative representations of Christ that the believer can create or maintain. The Christian imagination will continue to generate until the end of times paradigms always renewed with*

the hope of capturing something different every time, something else of this splendour and irradiation of this ineffable mystery”⁹⁵

And St. Augustine says: “*We saw Him, and He did not have form and beauty (Is 53:2)*. If you consider in it the beauty by which He became ugly as such, you will also see that He is beautiful (...) For all of us believers Christ is presented everywhere as beautiful. Beautiful in the womb of the Virgin, beautiful in the arms of His parents, beautiful in His miracles, beautiful in His torments; beautiful in His invitation to life, beautiful in His concern for death; beautiful when He gives life; beautiful when He takes it away; beautiful on the cross, beautiful in the sepulchre and beautiful in heaven. Listen and understand the hymn, and let not His weakness remove from your eyes the splendour of His beauty”.⁹⁶

Finally, the Apostle Paul: *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavens, as he chose us in him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and without blemish before him. In love he destined us for adoption to himself through Jesus Christ, in accord with the favor of his will, for the praise of the glory of his grace that he granted us in the beloved. In him we have redemption by his blood, the forgiveness of transgressions, in accord with the riches of his grace that he lavished upon us. In all wisdom and insight, he has made known to us the mystery- of his will in accord with his favor that he set forth in him as a plan for the fullness of times, to sum up all things in Christ, in heaven and on earth. (Eph 1:3-10)*.

In this way we discover a surprising, better, paradoxical and of great beauty: Christ, who, on revealing to us that God is love, terribly aggravates the problem of evil, since it seems unjustifiable that a God-Love has allowed so much suffering, it is because with His incarnation, death and resurrection has

⁹⁵ R.G. Cote, “Cristología e imaginación pascual, en *Concilium*, 269 (1997) 118.

⁹⁶ *En, in ps.* 44, 3.

solved it for us, by making us understand the rational and positive meaning of the same.

The Conditions of God's Giving of Himself in Christ Till Death

Let us analyze with more precision and in synthesis, but with new nuances and within other parameters, the conditions, which make *free, reasonable* and therefore *possible* and *probable* the giving of God in Christ by loving until the extreme of giving His life for mankind. There are two:

That the human being be a borderline being.

If the human species would have been a more perfect being, already far from the boundary adjacent to what is irrational, the giving of God to the extreme would have been *arbitrary or little less*: In the case in which that creature continues to be good, the giving of God would be *superfluous*, and if it sinks into what is evil, it seems that it would be *improper*, since such a being would not have stirred up the merciful and compassionate love of God to the point giving up His own Son.

Perhaps with pleasure we would have done without this God's Son in order to enjoy a humanity that is naturally better, without *these* sufferings, but it would have been a stupid desire because Christ is more valuable than everything. Man is a personal being, and is labile and miserable, which makes him suitable to receive from God two classes of love possible in him: the love of benevolence or the *agape* and the love of mercy and compassion. For being a person he admits the first one; for being labile and miserable to the extreme, allows the second one also to the extreme.

If the actual human species were of a less perfect ontic level, that is, a non rational being, that is to say, beyond the limit of what is rational, God's giving of Himself would have been *impossible* for lack of receptive capacity of that being to receive

the gift of God. And if it were a being less perfect than man despite of being rational (I believe that such being is impossible, because it would be absurd), then the giving of God of Himself would be *necessary*, making it unworthy of God, but at the same time *impossible*: necessary on the part of the creature, impossible on the part of God.

That in fact, although freely that being was massively buried in sin. It is clear that if man had not sinned the Son of God would not have suffered the passion and death for the love of humanity; therefore the expression of the love of God in favor of humanity in Christ in a maximum level would not have existed. We would have wanted, in whatever way that humanity would not have suffered so much evils and sufferings, but then the greatness of the gift of God which is His Son made flesh, died and resurrected for us would not have been given to us. We would have wanted perhaps both things: humanity with much less evils and sufferings and with the extreme love of God in Christ up to the point of giving His life; but the fact of both things at the same time, even if it is possible, does not seem to be reasonable; it would lack sufficient motivation in God to cause His total giving of self. Because, we repeat, the freedom of God is not arbitrary, but reasonable.

Surely, that such an imperfect humanity but innocent, that would have caused the giving of God of Himself in His Son made man in an atmosphere of joyful peace, would have been better, but the human being freely confronted God with sin. Therefore, a massively sinful humanity, not desired by God, although, yes, permitted, is saved by Christ in a manner that is so admirable and positive for us that although the *oh felix culpa!* (*oh happy sin*) may not be pertinent, neither would it be to exclaim *oh maledicta culpa!* (*oh detestable sin*)!

Christ alone weighs on the scale of assessments more than all that is negative in creation; His worth and moral beauty is overwhelming and incomprehensible, because He compensates, saves, redeems and makes reasonable all that is

negative in creation. Moreover: in a measure that is unknown to us, He converts into positive in an axiologically superior sense everything that is negative in the lower axiological spheres.

Hence, it seems that, after everything we have been talking about, we can already respond with more confidence to the question: *Why is there moral evil?* In the first place, the answer is clear: because having God created human being free, this did and does evil use of his freedom. But this answer which is valuable does not fully satisfy because the logic, as we have said, requires us to ask more: Why has God allowed it? Why has God not avoided it? And, above all, why did God ultimately create *this* human species with *this* freedom? Why did He not desist from His project knowing as He alone knew the horrible torrents of evil and sufferings that such a creature would bring?

Well, having foreseen God all this and, particularly foreseeing that this *borderline being* which is man, had to be a sinful being in massive doses up to the point of reaching the vicinity of substantial negativity, did not desist from creating him and decided to carry it out because He saw: (a) that such a creature as man would allow Him to express Himself in a love to the extreme without this giving of self becoming unreasonable in addition to being free on His part; (b) that the plan structured and completed in this way the alternative of creating man was very superior to that of not creating him; (c) that, obviously, the human species turned out to be benefitted as against the alternative of not being created, although only in the case that it freely, even if not being totally innocent, it may correspond to this love of God; (d) because then it can enjoy the precious goods coming from Christ which it could not enjoy otherwise.

The objection arises: the benefits of this immense love for the humanity do not apply to the wicked. Without getting ourselves involved in such a mysterious and complex topic such as that of the salvation or condemnation of human beings, we have to admit that certainly it is so. But the fact that the wicked can voluntarily alienate themselves definitely from God in their

undoing, this does not mean that the power, goodness and the wisdom of God are to have impediment in giving the greatest gifts to those who would willingly wish to receive them. The intercession of the good people can “change” the will of God into something positive, but it would be absurd that the ill will of the wicked would do the same thing in the negative sense.

This indicates to us that human being must correspond to the total giving of Christ; this tends to provoke ours. Christ gives Himself so we too might give ourselves. Moreover, His giving is essentially oriented towards making possible and doable our giving. No one can attain salvation if it is not by following the path of the passion, death and resurrection of Christ. We are, therefore, at the other extreme of any kind of indication or element of passivity: God saves us in Christ with us. St. Augustine teaches it with precision: He who created you without your consent, will not save you without your consent. Therefore He made you without you knowing it, but He will not save you without your consent”⁹⁷

Nevertheless, it seems to me convenient to observe that the justification of God must not be seen, as some actual authors propose, in his fight against what is evil, nor in that it is an Anti-evil, since this noetic perspective seems to imply that what is evil is something or someone against which or against whom God disputes in bitter and endless battle. It seems as if evil had a substance of malignant origin, outside of the dominion of God, which assumes a posture, as if it were a personal being, against God, to which God responds with the same attitude. And, obviously, since the evil continues to exist all throughout the centuries then it must be concluded that the struggle, in addition to being endless, is very even, and the triumph of God uncertain.

I think that this manner of seeing this problem, even with the good intention of justifying God against evil, does not cease

⁹⁷ S. 169, 13. Since our theory does not deal about this topic, we do not insist on it and we consider as an assumption everything that the actual theology teaches on this respect.

to have Manichaeian aftertastes. The fight of God against evil is then presented as a false theatrical presentation, devoid of philosophico-theological data. Since, it must be borne in mind that evil cannot exist without the good of the things that exist,⁹⁸ to which the will of the Creator God has introduced in the field of being. Nevertheless, indeed, it is necessary to maintain and stress to the maximum that God helps us in our fight against evil that exists in us; not something existing autonomously in favor or against our own being, but as an attempt to conquer our evil inclinations and in this manner to remedy the moral shortcomings and deficiencies of this our being.⁹⁹

In any case, the justification of God in the problem of evil is not in the divine action that we are commenting on now, but in the deepest level that we are exposing in this second part of the book.

Hence, God created man as a *borderline being* because that creation would allow a salvation done through *love up to the limit without being arbitrary*. The *reason for* that creation is seen in *this* salvation; and the *reason* for this salvation is seen in *that* creation. Man cannot complain of having been created *thus* because the reason for having been loved *thus* is also seen there.

Christ Is the Determining Event that Constitutes this Plan of God as the Best for Human Being

Therefore, asking ourselves once again, why does humanity suffer so much, we have to reply that is due ultimately to the fact that God loves us to the maximum, which does not cease to be

⁹⁸ Let me say this with a metaphor: evil is the parasite of good, that is, evil cannot exist without the things, that are good in themselves, in which that evil exists (Cfr. St. Augustine, *Enchir.* 13, 14, 4).

⁹⁹ From St. Augustine and St. Thomas the concept to evil as an absence of being and good has remained established, and as a deficiency of the will. Even in the case moral evil is done with physical act, which are not evil in themselves, the immorality would consist in the absence of conformity with the eternal law, with moral good, with God. Some recent attempts of proposing other alternatives to this thesis, I think lack reasons of true worth.

a gigantic paradox and a cruel sarcasm seeing the evils that the humanity suffers.

But it is the truth, because if God had not loved us as He loved us in Christ, then seeing the evils of humanity and their consequences, whose negativity, deprived of Christ, we cannot even imagine, the whole set of what is excessively negative would have been present before Him, for which reason He might have suspended His plan and he would not have created us. However, having decided to love us as He loved us in Christ, He went ahead with His plan, (we talk like a human being), and He created and loved us just as we are, in spite of the fact that they include so much and many sufferings. But we have Christ.

In a perspective that is somewhat different and that completes the previous one, on the bases that the more profound meaning of the Scripture is formulated by means of paradoxes, to the question why humanity suffers so much it must be said, without forgetting that man is the main cause of his sufferings, and talking in a more direct manner oriented towards a deeper grasp of the truth, that it is due to the fact that God has created a weak humanity, susceptible to suffering in the highest level, that is justified and is reasonable because God has converted that fact into his purpose of loving us with highest love in Christ, His Son. And the fact that God has loved us so much is a great reason for *optimism*, the *soteriological optimism*.

Answer to Some Objections against Our Theory

Perhaps the question may come to our mind: In this theory, is not man used by God to make possible His total giving in love? To use implies to avail oneself of one thing for one's own advantage or of the other distinct from that. But God uses man to make possible His total giving in love for the benefit of man himself; by which it is made clear that there is utilization of man, at least in a negative sense.

It should be pointed out that it is dangerous in any case to project our own way of thinking and doing on that of God, and separate and isolate the immense misery of the humanity in order to categorize it as unjustifiable, since human misery, from the beginning and always, is resolved and has become reasonable by the salvation of God in Christ, even if in time some realities one after another and events one after another may be spelled out and developed (it is not possible that a temporal being can be otherwise) so that – attention!, at the end, in the eternity, in an eternal duration, fused and formed as one into a reality that constitutes a work of art such as God has planned from all eternity. And even if this approach is of general character, it affects positively, and of course, concretely and personally, each human being throughout the history.

One must be on the alert for pitfalls of the imagination: what appears to it as separated, in the mind of God it is conceived as only one project, with different elements but forming only one structure: creation and salvation constitute the two separable parts of the one the same unitary plan. God is at the same time Creator and Savior; ¹⁰⁰ He is at the same time Creator of *this* creation and Savior by means of *this* salvation. And both elements of the divine action are united up to the point that God is Creator of *this* creation because He is Savior with *this* salvation, and He is Savior with *this* salvation because He is Creator of *this* creation. The intelligence, even if with difficulty, can arrive at the understanding of the unity of this plan.

Therefore, did God have to make man so miserable in order to give Himself in an extreme manner to man? Disclosed in this manner it is difficult for us to remove the understanding of the first as means of achieving the second; and, nevertheless, it is not so. It is a unitary reality even if it may appear as a composite. The two elements present are made mutually reasonable, on the contrary, if they are separated, they cease to be and will never be

¹⁰⁰ With reason the actual theology, as we have already said before, insists in the necessity of bonding creation and salvation of God in Christ.

done by God; each one is for the other its condition of possibility or, at least, of reality.

Even if the power of God may be absolute, it must also be reasonable, so in a certain way it is also conditional because of the internal constituent element of the reality in which there can be no contradiction, and because of Himself, in whom there is no imperfection. Having created God a *borderline being* justifies for Himself the incarnation of the Son, as well as He justifies before the human beings His having created them in that limited condition.

We insist on the question: *Did God make man so imperfect in order to give Himself in love to the maximum?* What is clear is that He did not give Himself to the maximum in order to make man miserable, but that He gave in order to *save* man from his misery. Even if in the plans of God everything is simultaneous, there is a logical order among the different elements that compose them.

In my opinion, the so imperfect human nature and freedom are conceived by God at the same time that He gives Himself as His final goal and decides the incarnation of His Son so that this may be effective, all of which constitutes a bipolar plan but unitary the two elements of which are made reasonable between themselves, as we have already said. This plan has logical precedence over other two elements which are sin and humanity and the answer of God with the total giving of the Son until death in order to save man. These two new elements are also made reasonable between them and are fused with the two previous ones in order to form definitely only one plan of God.

We cannot think that God, as if He were an unconditional or perhaps absolute object, would try to give Himself above all things up to the extreme, and *for it* He made a very imperfect and miserable rational being in order to achieve that objective, but that He gives *up to the limit because* His intelligence sees as reasonable the giving in such a manner to a *borderline being*. If such a *borderline being* did not exist, He would not have given

Himself up to the *limit*, (even if the contrary is possible), but if He would not give Himself up to the limit that *borderline being* would not exist either, because then He would not have created it (even if the contrary may be possible).

The crucial point is: God does not consider man as a *borderline being* so that afterwards and in continuation would give Himself to the limit, but that He sees and considers both realities as united and inseparable: never one without the other; both as forming only one thing that is what God sees and projects as reasonable.

And contrary to what happens with what is possible, that remains true but only possible, what is reasonable is destined to be real, even if not with necessity, in order to become a reality in the soteriological optimism, which it has as a consequence that (philosophico-theological) Theodicy, may not be something impossible but something feasible.

Therefore, there is logical precedence of the imperfection and misery of man over the extreme giving of God in the incarnation of Christ. Even though, yes, there is logical precedence of the sin of human being over the giving of God of Himself in the redemption by Christ.

In the first case there is no precedence because all is a unitary plan of God; in the second case the sin of man logically comes first, foreseen but not desired by Him, in view of the divine knowledge, to which God responds with the redemption; because if man had not sinned, the incarnation would have existed, as joyful salvation, but not the redemption as a sorrowful salvation.

The Application of the Extreme Love of God in Christ to the Human Beings

The love of God in Christ up to the *extreme* of this giving of His life for the humanity indicates the mark and scope of the great and limitless extension within which God works in His Son the salvation of men. Having done *this* redemption and salvation of

the humanity, every act of love and forgiveness of God for men is not arbitrary, it is reasonable and, therefore, feasible, even if how great and underserved it may be. God, from the perspective of *this* salvation can pardon and in fact pardons even in cases which produce scandal to a concrete but human sense of justice. God goes beyond human calculations.¹⁰¹ The surprising God reaches here the highest point of His absolutely unpredictable creativity and originality in the planning of the salvation of each one of the human beings.

Nevertheless, we must not deduce from here that God therefore will *always* go out of His way with the maximum wealth of His grace,¹⁰² invariably always the same, in favor of each of the human beings making everybody equal through it. If there is something that does not agree with God, it is an act that is indifferent, impersonal, trivial, monotonous, flat, repetitive, non-esthetical, lacking in novelty, always the same. God does not want to copy anybody, not even Himself. Hence, He treats each human being differently, within certain general norms common to His conduct with us, of which we have lengthily talked about in this book. God builds with each man a different history, and because of this He begins by creating everybody different, unique and irreplaceable.

And what He does in the context of creation, let us not illogically consider that in the context of grace God will act differently as if, having exhausted His creativeness and inventiveness, His ideas had dried up. Hence, He also gives to each one the gifts of grace that are different, unique and irreplaceable.

That view is justified now less than ever, since now every theology sees creation and salvation as indissolubly united to the point of forming a whole or a unitary reality from a perspective that is also unitary, even if there may exist in it a very surprising

¹⁰¹ It is pertinent to remember here, among others passages of the Gospel, the parable of the Prodigal Son (cf. *Lk* 15:11-32).

¹⁰² It seems that He did this only in the case of the human nature of Christ and, in a merely human context, with Mary, the *full of grace* (*Lk*. 1:28).

and unlimited variety. God likes rich diversity and abundant novelty (Ap 21:1, 5; 2 Pet 3:13), and not the tasteless and poor monotony and repeated sameness. It is the quality that makes up and distinguishes the great artisans and artists (Bach, Mozart, Beethoven; Miguel Ángel, Velázquez, Goya), and God is like those artists, but in a superhuman level, because He is the All-powerful Artist.¹⁰³

God treats all and each of the human beings not only with justice, but also with splendid generosity and mercy. However, He does not treat all equally, but that, even giving to all more than they deserve, to some He gives much, and to other much more, just as to some He gives graces and to others He gives different, to some He give some gifts and charism, while to others He gives different. With each one God constructs a unique and different history (Rom 12:3, 6; 15:15; 1 Cor 3:5, 10; 12:4-11; 2 Cor 9:8; Gal 1:15; Eph 3:7-8; Jam 4:6; I Pet 4:10; 2 Pet 3:18).

Therefore, God always remains as owner of His gifts and free distributor of the same, never subject to any pre-established formula, not even by Himself. In effect, God is not dependent on something or someone, because God neither can nor must desire such thing since it would imply the imperfection of putting Him in a *status* proper to creatures on making Him relative, dependent. But He can desire it, it is obvious that He cannot do it. I believe that the whole Scripture is full of this view that we are proposing, but perhaps in a special way the *Letter to the Romans*.

Nevertheless, because God loved humanity to the extreme in Christ, the number of gifts that He has for each of the innumerable human beings until the end of times, is inexhaustible, even if they are different, because He does not give to anyone exactly the same gift which He has already given to another, as we have said. And in this way we maintain the immense goodness of God to the limit for the human species

¹⁰³ Cfr. St. Augustine, *De ver. rel.* 31, 57.

reconciled with the distinct, unique and irreplaceable history that He writes with each human being.

Summary and Conclusion: The Soteriological Optimism Founded on Christ Prevails Against Evil

Therefore, it seems that only a *borderline being* like man, and massively buried in sin, can convert to a reality the total expression of God in love up to the point of giving His life for the humanity. Can that total giving of God in love be possible only with those two coincident conditions in the case of the actual human species? What we can be totally certain of is that the conditions of the actual man are, at least, the more suitable in order for that maximum expression of the love of God to exist. It must not be forgotten, I repeat it once more, that God is free, but reasonably free.

Hence, it is perfectly logical, even good for the human species, that God had gone ahead with His project of creating humanity even if He knew about the immensity of evils and sufferings that that project entailed, because at the same time He decided to give Himself for the good of that creature by expressing to it His extreme love in Christ. This converts into something feasible the justification of God in spite of the so much evils and sufferings that so strongly affect the humanity.

This theory that we have exposed allows us to affirm and confirm, in accordance with central core of the Christian revelation, that God has created human being for love; for extreme love, totally gratuitous and absolutely unconditional, that has the last say in the face of evil and enlightens its problem.

Therefore, the (philosophico-theological) theodicy, we continue maintaining, is possible, sufficiently possible, and, consequently, we can talk about *optimism* that is *soteriological* in nature, that prevails against evil and enlightens, unveils and explains its complex and terrifying issue in relation with God through the saving light and strength of Christ who transforms

and rules the entire creation so that God may be all in all things (1 Cor 15:28).

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