

The Providence of God

Chapter 22

Article One: Whether Providence Can Suitably Be Attributed to God?

I answer that: Providence is the type of the order of things towards their end as pre-existing in the divine mind. Providence is suitably identified as something ordered towards all that is good in a chain of events or experiences devised in the mind of God.

Article Two: Whether Everything Is Subject to the Providence of God?

Objection 1: Not everything is subject to divine providence. Chance, hazards, accidents and luck whether good or bad exist and could not exist if everything is subject to God's divine providence.

Objection 2: Since a good provider watches over all knowable possibilities God could not be as truly God is if He overlooks or allows some evil or defect to take place. If so, God is either not omnipotent or He just doesn't care.

On the contrary: Wisdom 8:1 tells us that Divine Wisdom reaches from end to end mightily, and orders all things sweetly.

I answer that: Since every agent acts for an end, the ordering of effects toward that end extends as far as the causality of the first agent extends...As a result it normally follows that all things participating within a set of circumstances are subject to divine providence. (PM)

Reply to Objection 1: There is a difference between a universal and a particular cause. Particular causes are found within a universal cause. "All particular causes are included under a universal cause. No effect can occur outside the universal cause. Nothing escapes the universal cause.

Reply to Objection 2: The universal good is not deterred by a particular evil. As a result corruption and defects in natural things are said to be contrary to some

particular nature; yet they are in keeping with the plan of universal nature, in so far as a defect in one particular case may lead to a good in another. "Since God, then, provides universally for all being, it belongs to His providence to permit certain defects in particular effects, that the perfect good of the universe may not be ordered, for if all evil were prevented, much good would be absent from the universe.

Article Three: Whether God Has Immediate Providence over Everything?

I answer that: The causes of God may be passed on through a creature displaying God's power and might. For example, the healing of someone prayed for in public may happen by obeying God's providential calling to obey him and pray. Without giving any power to chance God governs things inferior by superior, not in account of any defect in God's power, but by the reason of the non-measurable abundance of God's goodness to impart to open creatures.

Article Four: Whether Providence Imposes Any Necessity on Things Foreseen?

Objection 1: Since divine providence cannot be frustrated would it appear obvious that divine providence places a certain necessity upon unforeseen things? (PM)

On the contrary: "Dionysius says that to corrupt nature is not the work of providence. " (Div. Nom. Iv, 23) Divine nature does not impose any necessity upon things to be to deter or disrupt its contingency.

I answer that: "Divine providence imposes necessity upon some things, but not all, as some formerly believed. For to providence it belongs to order things towards an end. Now after the divine goodness, which is an extrinsic end to all things, the principal good in things themselves is the perfection of the universe; which would not be, except for all grades of being found in things." (PM)

Therefore, God may provide for necessary causes as well as contingent causes.

Reply to objection 1: The issue is that of things happening by necessity or by contingency. If something appears to happen infallibly God's providence ordered

it to happen infallibly and if by contingency then God ruled it to happen by contingency.

Q & A Chapter 22

The Providence of God

1. Is providence suitably attributed to God?

Providence is suitably identified as something ordered towards all that is good in a chain of events or experiences devised in the mind of God.

2. Is everything subject to the Providence of God?

All things participating within a set of circumstances are subject to divine providence since every agent acts for an end which is extending as far as the causality of the first agent extends.

3. Does God have immediate providence over everything?

God displays His power and might not governed by chance or circumstances but by reason of the non-measureable abundance of God's goodness to impart to open creatures some benefit anticipated or not.

4. Does Providence impose any necessity on things foreseen?

Divine providence imposes necessity upon some things, but not all. God may provide for necessary causes as well as contingent causes.

Of Predestination

Chapter 23

Article One: Whether We Are Predestined by God?

On the contrary: Romans 8:30 tells us that God called whom He predestined.

I answer that: "It is fitting that God should predestine men. For all things are subject to His providence, as was shown above (Q. 22, A.2) Now it belongs to providence to direct things towards their end, as was also said in (Q. 22, A. 1, 2)

Since we are unable to find eternal life on our own it follows that we must be directed. (Romans 3:23 "For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.")

We therefore must properly be as rational creatures capable of eternal life if we have fallen shown of something we once had and must be directed toward it by the one who took it away. Doesn't it make sense that the one who takes must all give back if we are to ever receive it again. It cannot be something just found or discovered. It must be given and this takes the providence of God to do just that.

Article Three: Whether God Reprobates (Damns) Any Man?

Objection 2: Hosea 13:9 tells us that Israel's destruction is only of their own doing and their help is only in God. (PM) Since God predestines one unto eternal life, therefore, it would follow that reprobation will likewise be the cause of the loss of the reprobate. But this is false since according to Hosea God does not bring Israel's destruction that they brought it on themselves and God is only there to help them if they would truly seek Him for His help.

I answer that: God allows some to fall from Him even though He predestinated them to eternal life. He does not impose His predestination upon anyone if that person refuses to receive it. We are told that eternal life is the gift of God. Ephesian 2:8 says that we are saved by grace through faith and that it is the gift of God lest anyone should boast. One can only receive the gift, it cannot be earned, but it can be refused. Not to receive the gift is to agree to damnation.

Reply to Objection 2: There is a significant difference between retribution and causality from predestination. The one predestined to eternal life receives God's grace and glory. The latter is the result of what was caused by God's predestination. However, retribution is not caused by God's predestination nor is sin caused by retribution, but sin can and will eventually leave God only one option and that is to abandon the sinful person who has rejected God's grace and gift of eternal life to a future eternal punishment.

Article Five: Whether the Foreknowledge of Merits Is the Cause of Predestination?

Objection 2: Since reason would have it that since God knows the outcome in any one's life that divine predestination would include the divine will to predestine people who will merit this predestination to experience His divine mercy. Therefore it must be the cause or reason of predestination.

On the contrary: The Apostle says in (Titus 3:5) that we are not saved by the works of justice we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us. The cause of predestination unto eternal life is not predicated upon the foreknowledge of merits in the mind of God.

I answer that: Pelagians taught that pre-existing merits in this life are the reason and cause of the effect of predestination. The beginning of doing well was supposed to come about as the result of God predestining one to life and that preparation was happening by one and not another. Therefore worthiness for eternal life was based on how well one prepared oneself by accomplishing merits for salvation.

There is a distinction from what decisions are made on the basis of free will or on the basis of whether something will be put to good use or not. One flows from grace and the other from free-will. This implies one cannot flow from both. But it was shown in (Q. 22. A. 3), that the providence of God produces effects through the operation of secondary causes. Since there is no distinction between what flows from a secondary cause and a first cause, it follows that what flows from free will, and what is also of predestination.

Reply to Objection 2: "Predestination has its foundation in the goodness of God."

Article seven: Whether the number of the Predestined is certain?

I answer that: Only God knows that answer.

Article eight: Whether Predestination Can Be Furthered by the Prayers of the Saint?

I answer that: It is not due to the prayers that anyone is predestined by God. We cannot know in this life for sure that our prayers hit its mark with God whether one should be saved unto eternal life. However, we can rely on God to do the loving thing toward any creature who seeks after Him with the desire to know and obey Him. The Apostle Peter says in 2 Peter 1:10 that for this reason we labor the more that by good works you may make sure your calling and election. That is to say that you shall know them by their works. It can only be anticipated that we know the outcome in eternal life for anyone this side of eternity. That being said, it can be expected that the prayers of the saints and by other good works; because providence, of which predestination is a part, does not do away with secondary causes but so provides effects, that the order of secondary causes falls also under providence.

Q & A Chapter 23

Of Predestination

1. Are we predestined by God?

It is fitting that God should predestine men. For all things are subject to His providence as was show in (Q. 22, A. 2). It is God who gives life. God gives eternal life as well. Now it belongs to providence to direct things towards their end, as was also said in (Q. 22, A. 1, 2)

2. Does God reprobate (damn) any man?

God allows some to fall from Him even though He predestinated them to eternal life. He does not impose His predestination upon anyone if that person refuses to receive it. We are told that eternal life is the gift of God. Ephesians 2:8 says that

we are saved; by grace through faith and that it is the gift of God lest anyone should boast. One can only receive the gift, it cannot be earned, but it can be refused. Not to receive the gift is to agree to damnation.

3. Does the foreknowledge of Merits cause predestination?

Pelagians taught that pre-existing merits in this life are the reason and cause of the effect of predestination. Worthiness for eternal life was thought to be based upon how well one prepared oneself by accomplishing merits for salvation. The foreknowledge of merits is a basis upon anticipated good works. It implies we earn our salvation by God measuring our merits. But the gift of eternal life is a gift of grace not a work of merit. God already has predestined unto life that all would come to Him. It is God's will (to predestine all unto eternal life) that none should perish, but that all should come to repentance and thus eternal life. (2 Peter 3:9)

4. Is the number of the predestined certain?

Only God knows the answer.

5. Can predestination be furthered by the prayers of the Saints?

It is not due to the prayers that anyone is predestined by God. We cannot know in this life for sure that our prayers hit its mark with God whether one should be saved unto eternal life. However, we can rely on God to do the loving thing toward any creature who seeks after Him with the desire to know and obey Him.

The Apostle Peter says in 2 Peter 1:10 that for this reason we labor the more that by good works you may make sure your calling and election. That is to say that you shall know them by their works. It can only be anticipated that we know the outcome in eternal life for anyone this side of eternity. That being said, it can be expected that the prayers of the saints and by other good works; because providence, of which predestination is a part, does not do away with secondary causes but so provides effects, that the order of secondary causes falls also under providence.

The Power of God

Chapter 25

Article One: Whether There Is Power in God?

Objection 1: It seems that power is not in God. And this is based on the idea that God is the first agent. A comparison is made between primary matter and power and God and action. But primary matter is considered devoid of act. Therefore, the first agent who is God must be devoid of power.

Reply to Objection 1: "Active power is not contrary to act, but is founded upon it." Passive power is contrary to act and since in God there is no passivity, but only pure act there must be in God the power to act.

Article Two: Whether the Power of God Is Infinite?

Objection 1: According to the Philosopher (Phys. iii. 6) everything that is infinite is imperfect. But the power of God is far from imperfect and therefore, it is not infinite.

I answer that: The active power in God should be infinite. For in every agent it is found that the more perfectly an agent has the form by which it acts the greater its power to act. For instance the hotter a thing, the greater power it has to give heat. If it could give infinite heat it would have infinite power. Since the divine essence, through which God acts, is infinite, as was shown in (I. c), it follows that His power likewise is infinite.

Article Three: Whether God is Omnipotent?

I answer that: This question has more to do with absolute power than relative power. God can do all things and this means that with God all things are possible and therefore, God is omnipotent. However, it is the "can do" which raises question as to whether God is really omnipotent. If we try to compare what God can do it can become a relativity lesson in circular reasoning. But with God, omnipotence is based upon an absolute sense and not any comparison His

strength or might. “For a thing is said to be possible or impossible absolutely, according to the relation in which the very terms stand to one another, possible if the predicate is not incompatible with subject, as that Socrates sits; and absolutely impossible when the predicate is altogether incompatible with the subject, as, for instance that a man is a donkey.”

PK indicates at the bottom of page 182 that “God is not *subject* to the laws of logic, but the laws of logic and metaphysics are the laws of being, based on God’s own absolute and unchangeable nature, and God cannot contradict His own nature.”

Article Four: Whether God Can Make the Past Not to Have Been?

I answer that: Divine power is outside of time and the events of which are bound by time. God does not create to provide for alternate past history. With God we move along in time which is not in a format to be repeated. There are not multiple histories. There is only one history. And it is His story. It does not have alternate repeat sections to it like the old adage that history repeats itself. No people may find similarities in past situations and learn thereby on how to live as a result of viewing past history, but God is not bound by history, only He chooses to respect it and accept it as His story.

Reply to Objection 1: To raise the dead we find God’s power in full force for such things are impossible. Yet this is not changing the past. It falls into the category of God’s power to bring life rather than to allow death to triumph. “For impossible things do come beneath the scope of divine power.”

Article six: Whether God Can Do Better than What He Does?

Objection 3: According to Augustine. “Each thing that God has made is good, and, taken all together they are very good; because in them all consists the wondrous beauty of the universe.” The good that was created could not be any better.

On the contrary: “Ephesians 3:20 tells us that God is able to do all things more abundantly than we desire or understand.”

I answer that: God indeed can make something better than He made for all things are possible with God. However, since goodness is both in its essence and also in the qualities of its virtues and wisdom one can see how there certainly is room for improvement within any part of His creation.

Reply to Objection 1: God could add to His creation to make it better, but God so ordered His creation to make creation better by improving their personal contributions to the world He made.

Q & A Chapter 25

The Power of God

1. Is there power in God?

“Active power is not contrary to act, but is founded upon it.” Passive power is contrary to act and since in God there is no passivity, but only pure act. There must be in God the power to act.

2. Is the power of God infinite?

The active power in God should be infinite. For in every agent it is found that the more perfectly an agent has the form by which it acts the greater is its power to act.

For instance the hotter a thing, the greater power it has to give heat. If it could give infinite heat it would have infinite power. Since the divine essence, through which God acts, is infinite, as was shown in (I. C.) it follows that His power likewise is infinite.

3. Is God Omnipotent?

This question has more to do with absolute power than relative power. God can do all things and this means that with God all things are possible. Therefore, God is omnipotent. God’s omnipotence is based upon an absolute sense and not any relative sense.

4. Can God make the past not to have been?

Divine power is outside of time and the events of which are bound by time. God does not create to provide for alternate past history. With God we move along in time which is not in a format to be repeated. There are not multiple histories. There is only one history. And it is His story. It does not have alternate repeat sections to it like the old adage that history repeats itself. No, people may find similarities in past situations and learn thereby on how to live as a result of viewing past history, but God is not bound by history, only He chooses to respect it and accept it as His story.

5. Can God do better than what He Does?

God indeed can make something better than He made for all things are possible with God. However, since goodness is both in its essence and also in the qualities of its virtues and wisdom one can see how there certainly is room for improvement in any part of God's creation.

Of the Divine Beatitude

Chapter 26

Article Four: Whether All Other Beatitude Is Included in the Beatitude of God?

On the contrary: "Beatitude is a certain perfection. But the divine perfection embraces all other perfection, as was shown above (Q.4, A. 2) Therefore, the divine beatitude embraces all other beatitudes."

I answer that: "Whatever is desirable in whatsoever beatitude, whether true or false, pre-exists wholly and in a more eminent degree in the divine beatitude."

God is complete in Himself. "He possesses joy in Himself and all things else for His delight; instead of riches He has that complete self-sufficiency, which is promised by riches; in place of power. God is omnipotent; for dignities, the government of all things, and in place of fame, He possesses the admiration of all creatures.