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Ave Maria University

**Righteous in All His Ways:  
Divine Causality and Permission in Man's Moral Acts**

A Thesis Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts in Theology

Director: Dr. Roger Nutt

submitted by  
Sr. Mary David Klocek, O.P.  
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## I. Introduction

In what way does God cause man's moral acts? God is all-good, all-knowing, all-powerful and provident. He is the first cause of all being and the efficacious cause of all of man's good acts. By efficacious cause, we mean that God not only makes it possible for man to do good, but he also moves man actually to do it, in a given situation. At the same time, God does not will or cause man's evil acts, either directly or indirectly. (Neither does God cause ontological evils. For the purposes of this paper, however, we refer primarily to the moral evil of guilt, or sin, when we speak of evil. ) Evil, though, is permitted within the order of divine providence. What purpose might it have in God's creation? Ultimately, the answer to the problem of the permission of evil can only be found in the mystery of God's wisdom, which man can probe and come to see in some degree, but which he can never comprehensively understand. God upholds some in good while permitting others to fall away from good. Only in the beatific vision will man be able to see, with a vision given by God, the glorious goodness and wisdom of God's providence.

We will argue that God causes man's good moral acts, while permitting his evil ones, and that in either case, all of man's moral (or immoral) acts fall within divine providence, although each in different ways. We will show that evil acts are permitted only for the sake of a greater good, which God brings about.

Some of the most penetrating and rich examinations of these questions come to us from the tradition anchored in the work of St. Thomas Aquinas, who drew upon St. Augustine's thought. We will make use of the work of St. Thomas as it is traditionally interpreted, especially by Père Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange. Occasionally, we will incorporate the thought of Jacques

Maritain and Charles Cardinal Journet, when their observations, either by emphasis or contrast, help to illumine the classical interpretation of St. Thomas in these matters.

We will begin by treating of God as the omnipotent, all-knowing cause of all being and of all man's acts. In particular, we shall see that God *efficaciously* causes all man's good acts. We will necessarily include a brief treatment of divine motion, human free will, and grace. Then, we will examine the privative nature of moral evil. Here we will set forth the traditional Thomistic explanation of God's permission of evil, which he in no way causes. Finally, we will call to mind the truth that God allows evil for the sake of a greater good, and we shall admit that this answer, though unsatisfying to our limited intellects, is indeed the truth upon which our reason must rely. We shall end by echoing Charles Journet's recognition that only in accepting the mystery of God are we able to confront "the mystery of evil as a whole."<sup>1</sup>

## II. God as Cause of Being

If we are to see in what way God causes man's moral acts, it is first necessary to examine in what way God is a cause, generally speaking. As Thomas Aquinas explains in the *Prima Pars* of the *Summa Theologica*, God is the first, efficient, and final cause of all being.<sup>2</sup> This coincides with the logical fact that without a cause, there is no effect. For anything to *be*, then, something must be causing its *be-ing*. Taking this a step further, we shall see also that, in order for anything to move, there must be something causing its moving. To understand God as the cause of being, of moving (and further, of man's moral acting), it might be helpful to recall four of Thomas's five proofs for the existence of God which are particularly pertinent to our discussion of God's causality in general.

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<sup>1</sup>Charles Journet, *The Meaning of Evil*, trans. Michael Barry (New York: P.J. Kenedy & Sons, 1963), 24.

<sup>2</sup>St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (1948; reprint, Notre Dame, IN: Christian Classics, 1981), I, q. 2, a. 3. (Hereafter, *ST*.)

Thomas's "first way" is the argument from motion. "Motion" will serve as the foundation for a more thorough discussion later, but for now it is important to emphasize that motion is understood as the reduction of something from potency to act.<sup>3</sup> If all creatures are not necessarily in being, then they are not simply act, as is God. In God there is no potency, but for creatures each successive moment of existence and each act is *in potency* until it is *in act*. So, although I am in the act of being as I am typing each single letter of this paper, the being that I need to have as I type each successive letter is in potency. I am not yet in the act of being in the next moment, and since I am not yet, I cannot give it to myself to be. I cannot reduce my own potency to act, since only what is already and always *in act*, can reduce any creature's *potency* to be to the *act* of be-ing. It is God, who is intimately present to each creature, making it to be.

A similar line of reasoning is taken up in the "second way," which is the argument from efficient causality. Looking at the created world, Thomas observes, "In the world of sense we find there is an order of efficient causes. There is no case known (neither is it, indeed, possible) in which a thing is found to be the efficient cause of itself; for so it would be prior to itself, which is impossible."<sup>4</sup> Since the order of causes cannot go on infinitely, Thomas points out that there must be a first efficient cause: God.

Rosemary Lauer explains the dependence of all secondary causes on a first cause, in the order of efficient causality. She takes pains to show that only God, the first cause, can cause *esse* as such, but that creatures, as causes, moved by and participating in the first cause, can cause *esse* not substantially, but accidentally. In this way they are secondary, or instrumental, efficient causes. What is meant here is that they are efficient causes by causing a thing to become a

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

particular type of thing, whereas only the first cause can cause a thing to be simply.<sup>5</sup> Thus, a miller can truly make wheat into flour, and I can incorporate the same into a cake I truly make, but we only do this in so far as a first cause makes the grain of wheat to be and us, as secondary causes, both to be and to be able to effect accidental changes on the wheat.

Relying on the work of Thomas, Lauer explains that, “whenever there is an order of efficient causes, the second operates in virtue of the first,” which is to say that instrumental causes act “by way of motion, for it is of the very nature of an instrumental cause that it should be a moved mover.”<sup>6</sup> Simply put, “no corporeal thing is the cause of another being except inasmuch as it is itself moved.”<sup>7</sup> It is moved by a first incorporeal principle, and if the act of this principle “should cease . . . then the very *esse* of the creature would cease.”<sup>8</sup> Movement and being would cease. The order of created efficient causes, which the *Secunda Via* treats, is an order that relies on a first uncreated efficient cause, and yet this first cause and all secondary causes (we may think of a series of causes—the farmer, the miller, the baker—in our example of the wheat) are all true causes.

As a result, the final effect is not to be attributed partly to one member of the series and partly to another but entirely to each member of the series, just as that which is accomplished by means of an instrumental cause is to be attributed entirely to the instrument and entirely to the principle agent, but, of course, *secundum alium modum*.<sup>9</sup>

Man’s free will, as shall be discussed later, is one of these secondary, instrumental, efficient causes, which truly causes, but which relies entirely on the first efficient cause.

Turning to the “third way,” we note the utter contingency of man and his reliance upon God that he may *be*. In this third way, that of “possibility and necessity,” Thomas shows that,

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<sup>5</sup>Rosemary Lauer, “The Notion of Efficient Cause in the *Secunda Via*,” *The Thomist* 38 (1974): 757.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 761.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, 762.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, drawing upon Thomas’s *De Potentia*, q. 4, a. 1.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 765, drawing upon Thomas’s *III Contra Gentes*, c. 70.

“We find in nature things that are possible to be and not to be. . . [and] for that which is possible not to be at some time is not.”<sup>10</sup> As, for example, sixty years ago, I did not exist, and eighty years ago my parents did not exist, and so on. I am contingent; it is possible for me not to be; at one time, I was not. The very contingency of creation points to God’s causing it to be, since if there was a time when *nothing* existed, even now there would be nothing. Since things do exist, we can deduce that something, or better, *Someone*, does necessarily exist, and causes the existence of all other beings.

Bypassing the fourth way, we turn to the “fifth way,” which looks toward the final end of creatures. Thomas’s fifth way considers “the governance of the world,” in which creatures “not fortuitously, but designedly . . . achieve their end.”<sup>11</sup> Thomas’s argument here is in terms of beings who lack intelligence and are unable to move themselves to their end unless they be moved by an intelligent mover. God’s governance, though, does not exclude those who can move themselves, for as Thomas also says, “[W]hatever is done voluntarily must also be traced back to some higher cause other than human reason or will, since these can change and fail.”<sup>12</sup> Later, in his treatise on the divine government, Thomas excludes nothing from the government of divine providence. Thus, not only irrational creatures, but also rational ones, are led to their end by God.<sup>13</sup>

At this point, it is important to note that Thomas claims that God causes all being by his knowledge.<sup>14</sup> Mere knowledge is not enough to cause being, though, since God knows of other possible creatures that he could, but does not, create. When God causes, he does so by knowing *and willing*. Thomas draws upon Augustine here: “*Not because they are, does God know all*

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<sup>10</sup>ST I, q. 2, a. 3.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>ST I, q. 2, a. 3, ad 2.

<sup>13</sup>ST I, q. 103, a. 1.

<sup>14</sup>ST, I, q. 14, a. 8.

*creatures . . . but because He knows them, therefore they are.*"<sup>15</sup> To explain this truth, Thomas uses the example of a human artificer, who has in his intellect the form of what he makes. The form is the principle of his act of making, if it is also joined by the movement of the will. God, then, "causes all things by His intellect, since His being is His act of understanding; and hence His knowledge must be the cause of things, in so far as His will is joined to it."<sup>16</sup> All that *is*, then, is caused by the knowledge of God, along with his all-powerful will.

According to Thomas, if God causes things, they can only be so caused if they are first (in the order of being) in the mind of God. In the human artificer, a thing can be in one's intellect without ever coming into being in the order of that which is actually made. If, however, the form in the intellect is joined by "the inclination to an effect, which inclination is through the will,"<sup>17</sup> then the effect may actually be produced.

Garrigou-Lagrance explains how this is analogously true in God's knowing and causing. Unlike the human artificer, God knows all things and his will is infallibly efficacious. Thus, when we say that God's will is joined to his knowledge,<sup>18</sup> we can speak of the effects of his knowing and willing as "determined" to be; there is no question as to whether a given effect will be or will not be. If God knows and wills it, it *will be*, or *is*. To describe this efficacious willing by God, Thomists frequently use the term, the "determining divine decree."<sup>19</sup>

The divine determining decree is similar to a human decree. For either kind, two things are required: "(1) a judgment of the intellect directing the free choice of the will; (2) the choice itself by the will. Then there is command of the intellect directing one to make use of the means

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<sup>15</sup>ST I, q. 14, a. 8, sed contra, citing Augustine's *De Trinitate*, xv.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>ST, I, q. 14, a. 8.

<sup>18</sup>ST I, q. 14, a. 9, ad 3.

<sup>19</sup>Rev. Reginald Garrigou-Lagrance, O.P., *The One God: A Commentary on the First Part of St. Thomas' Theological Summa*, trans. Dom. Bede Rose, O.S.B. (St. Louis, MO: B. Herder Book Co., 1954), 440.

willed.”<sup>20</sup> Unlike human choice, a choice made by God is perfectly efficacious. Within this context, Garrigou-Lagrange explains how God’s “vision” or knowledge is thus efficacious. He writes that God’s knowledge produces “the effect it sees, and by seeing produces the effect, which means that it extends to things either as actually present or as belonging entirely to the future, not precisely as it is knowledge of vision, but as the will joined to it.”<sup>21</sup> The knowledge of vision, then, “which follows the efficacious choice, is the effective cause of things. This commanded act is efficacious, inasmuch as it presupposes a determining choice, and this latter is often called the . . . efficacious decree of the divine will.”<sup>22</sup> Because he is eternal, God knows or sees from all eternity that which, for man, lies in the future. This is true not only for necessary, but also for contingent things, which God knows, “not only as they are in their causes, but also as each one of them is actually in itself.”<sup>23</sup> For now, though, we may conclude simply with Thomas that the “knowledge of God, joined to His will is the cause of things.”<sup>24</sup>

God causes all things to be, and all that is, is good. We speak here of metaphysical, not moral, goodness. Considered metaphysically, the devil’s existence as an existing angel is good, while his state of being separated from the beatific vision and as guilty of moral evil is not good. Thomas explains, “Since God is very being everything is, in so far as it participates in the likeness of God.”<sup>25</sup> Participating in him whose *Essence* is his *Esse*, and who “alone is good essentially,”<sup>26</sup> any creature, in so far as it exists, is also good.

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<sup>20</sup>Garrigou-Lagrange, *The One God*, 440.

<sup>21</sup>Garrigou-Lagrange, *The One God*, 441.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>*ST I*, q. 14, a. 13.

<sup>24</sup>*ST I*, q. 14, a. 9, ad 3.

<sup>25</sup>*ST I*, q. 14, a. 9, ad 2.

<sup>26</sup>*ST I*, q. 6, a. 3.

Thomas speaks of goodness as *being, with the aspect of desirableness*.<sup>27</sup> He writes, “Now it is clear that a thing is desirable only in so far as it is perfect; for all desire their own perfection.”<sup>28</sup> As “perfect,” a being *is* what it ought to be. The perfection of an orange tree consists in its growing to fruition. If its growth is stunted as a tiny sprout, it, as orange tree, is lacking its fullness of perfection. Thomas continues, “But everything is perfect in so far as it is actual. Therefore it is clear that a thing is perfect so far as it exists; for it is existence that makes all things actual.”<sup>29</sup> Even the stunted orange tree’s sprout is good insofar as it exists and it is what it is, i.e., a sprout. In another place, he explains that, “whatever is numbered among the things that are has an inclination and desire for something befitting itself,” and “whatever has the nature of desirable has the nature of good.”<sup>30</sup>

If nothing else, something that is desires to preserve itself in being.<sup>31</sup> By way of natural (as opposed to voluntary) activity, the sprout reaches up to the sun, drinks in water and draws in other nutrients, all to the end of preserving itself in being. This very desire is an indication of the goodness of being. All being, then, is good, that is, *being* inasmuch as it is desirable is good.<sup>32</sup> Thus, in so far as a thing is, it is perfect and therefore also desirable, and this latter aspect is the definition of goodness. To eliminate the middle term, then, it can be said that, in so far as a thing is, it is good.

### III. The Divine Decrees and God’s Will

Although some later Thomists (such as Maritain) take issue with discussing God’s knowledge and permission in terms of “divine decrees,” Garrigou-Lagrange’s employment of

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<sup>27</sup>*ST I*, q. 5, a. 1.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup>St. Thomas Aquinas, *On Evil*, trans. John A. Oesterle and Jean T. Oesterle (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), q. 1, a. 1. (Hereafter, *De malo*.)

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*

the term can help us understand the divine and human causality in moral acts, and how they fall within divine providence. By “divine predetermining decree,” he means, “God’s knowledge joined to his will.”<sup>33</sup> He uses the term to explain that God is the cause of things when he writes that, the decree “is not only directive but also the effective cause of things.”<sup>34</sup> God not only knows, but wills things to be and to happen. Garrigou-Lagrange quotes St. Thomas: “Determined effects proceed from His own infinite perfection according to the determination of His will and intellect.”<sup>35</sup> Nothing that *is* falls outside of the divine decrees. Included within this divine causality are the free acts of man.<sup>36</sup> The predetermining divine decree is, however, non-necessitating.

Although acts of secondary causes are performed in accord with the predetermining decree, free agents retain the power to act freely. Within the decree, all things act in accord with their natures. Thus, man, as rational and free, is a unique kind of secondary cause. Unlike purely natural causes which are moved by another, the free will both *is moved* and *moves* itself.<sup>37</sup> Man’s will is moved by the intellect, which apprehends the good and presents it to the will, which inclines to the good as desirable.<sup>38</sup> Most pre-eminently, the will is moved by God, who gives to each thing that moves to be reduced from potency to act. Yet, the will truly moves itself. Thus Thomas can write, “It is essential to the voluntary act that its principle be within the agent: but it is not necessary that this inward principle be the first principle unmoved by another.”<sup>39</sup> Natural or necessary causes are determined to move towards their ends according to particular means. The human free will, however, can choose a variety of means to an end, can

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<sup>33</sup>Garrigou-Lagrange, *The One God*, 439.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

<sup>35</sup>*ST I*, q. 19, a. 4 as quoted in Garrigou-Lagrange, *The One God*, 441.

<sup>36</sup>Garrigou-Lagrange, *The One God*, 441.

<sup>37</sup>*ST I-II*, q. 9, a. 3.

<sup>38</sup>*ST I-II*, q. 9, a. 3, resp. and ad 3.

<sup>39</sup>*ST I-II*, q. 9, a. 4, ad 1.

choose to pursue an end more or less intensely, and can even turn from striving towards one end for the sake of another. While necessary effects are caused necessarily, contingent effects (in this case, those brought about by human free will) are caused contingently. It will be clear later that God's moving of free secondary causes (man) is both efficacious and non-necessitating.

We can also note another kind of divine decree, the permissive decree. Thomas points out that it is not necessary that everything that God knows actually comes to be, but only those things which he both knows and wills.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, everything that he wills (outside of himself) is ordered to himself as its end.<sup>41</sup> Thus, it could never be that he wills evil, which is a falling away from that end. That is why it is correct to say that evil is "outside the formal object of the divine will."<sup>42</sup> God never wills evil, but we shall see that he does will to permit it.<sup>43</sup> Without this permission, there would be no sin, for if God willed sin not to be, it would not be. Only by his permission may evil acts occur. God, in his divine will, which includes both the predetermining and permissive decrees, is all-wise. Unlike men who will a particular means to a particular end, God "wills the means to be for the end," and he "wills most wisely whatever He wills."<sup>44</sup> Thus, Thomas would have us understand that God wills that the persecutor's malice may bring about the martyr's glory, but he also emphasizes that God does not will the persecutor's malice. This permissive decree is that whereby God permits, but does not cause, a free agent to fall away from the good.

At this point, let us distinguish between the antecedent and consequent will of God. There is only one will in God and it is identical with his being. We know that God wills all men to be saved. We know too that God's will imposes a kind of necessity on things: whatever he

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<sup>40</sup>Garrigou-Lagrange, *The One God*, 445.

<sup>41</sup>*ST I*, q. 19, a. 2.

<sup>42</sup>Steven Long, "Freedom, Providence, and Natural Law," *Nova et Vetera* English Edition 4 (2006): 573.

<sup>43</sup>*ST I*, q. 19, a. 9, ad 3 as quoted in Garrigou-Lagrange, *The One God*, 445.

<sup>44</sup>Garrigou-Lagrange, *The One God*, 524.

wills must be. On the other hand, God does not will all possibilities to be. Thus, we can speak of God's antecedent will, in which he absolutely wills that all men be saved and whereby he gives them sufficient grace by which they may choose to do the good.<sup>45</sup> This divine help, though, is not of a kind to actually carry man to the willing and the doing of good. Such grace is called efficacious. By God's consequent will, he moves man to actually do the good by means of efficacious grace.<sup>46</sup> Further, Eleanore Stump claims that even in the face of sin, God by his consequent will brings about good, bringing the sinner "to as much goodness as he is capable of (given the state of his will)."<sup>47</sup> We speak of God's antecedent will as more general and universal than his consequent will, in which a particular person in a particular situation is moved efficaciously by God freely to will and to do a particular good.<sup>48</sup> We do not want, however, to posit two wills in God nor even two orders of God's willing. God has one will by which he wills that all men be saved, and when he actually moves men to freely move towards that end, this is a movement of his will in which he bestows efficacious grace, which flows from sufficient grace.

At the same time, God's will and his decrees do not change depending on whether or not man cooperates with his grace. "It is a constant teaching of tradition," Fr. Lagrange explains, "that the determinations of God's will are unchangeable, that His decrees, which are measured by eternity . . . are unchangeable."<sup>49</sup> Jacques Maritain tries to explain man's defection of sin as part of what he calls the "consequent permissive decree," which he explains follows upon man's shattering of the divine motion by not considering the rule of reason or the divine law which

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<sup>45</sup>Rev. Reginald Garrigou-Lagrance, O.P. *Predestination*, trans. Dom Bede Rose, O.S.B. (1939; reprint, Rockford, IL: TAN Books and Publishers, 1998), 80.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid.

<sup>47</sup>Eleanore Stump, *Aquinas*, Arguments of the Philosophers Series (New York: Routledge, 2003), 458.

<sup>48</sup>Stump would prefer to refer to God's antecedent will as an "inclination" rather than a will properly speaking. She affirms that, "What God actually wills . . . are acts of consequent will; and . . . are fulfilled." (Ibid.) It is important to affirm the perfect efficaciousness of God's will (here, his consequent will), but it is unclear how an inclination on God's part can be anything other than his will, if we understand the will to naturally *incline* to the good, which in this case is an inclination "toward" the divine Goodness itself.

<sup>49</sup>Garrigou-Lagrance, *The One God*, 558.

ought to govern his moral acts.<sup>50</sup> He willed to manifest his goodness, sparing by his mercy and punishing by his justice.<sup>51</sup> Steven Long, on the other hand, shows that if God is omnipotent, then no evil could occur unless God antecedently permitted it.<sup>52</sup> He then explains that this permission consists “in not causing the contrary of that which is permitted.”<sup>53</sup> Stump also explains Thomas’ position that “it is not part of God’s will to exclude from his creatures entirely the power of falling away from the good or the exercise of that power.”<sup>54</sup> In other words, God wills to permit man to fall away.

Thomists, then, traditionally recognize that God efficaciously causes man’s good acts by his predetermining but non-necessitating divine decree. By his consequent will, God efficaciously moves man to the good. On the other hand, by God’s antecedent permissive decree, God wills to permit evil by not causing man to be upheld in good.

#### **IV. God as Efficacious Cause of Man’s Good Acts**

Let us begin by defining a morally good act as one in which man rationally and freely acts in accord with the rule of reason or divine law, in pursuit of his end or perfection. When a man’s act is measured or governed in this way, his choice and his proceeding to act is good. In order to do good, man must be free and he must be moved by God’s bestowal of efficacious divine assistance.

##### **a) Man as Free**

In every human act, that is, in every *rational act* of man, both God and man act as causes, but each as a cause in a different order of being. As God is the transcendent cause of all being

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<sup>50</sup>Jacques Maritain, *God and the Permission of Evil*, trans. Joseph W. Evans (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1966), 42.

<sup>51</sup>Garrigou-Lagrange, *The One God*, 546.

<sup>52</sup>Long, “Providence, Freedom, and Natural Law”: 582.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid.

<sup>54</sup>Stump, *Aquinas*, 459.

and moving, he causes free creatures to exist and to move themselves by intellect and will. The creature could never move to act if he were not so moved by God. All that was said previously about God's moving of secondary causes can be applied to his moving man to do the good freely. Man's free acts are one type of movement, and thus, in order for man to act, there must also be something causing its acting. As a contingent being, man exists and moves only as caused and moved by God; so too, man only acts as moved by God.

A few points should be noted concerning the nature of man's will. First, the human will has the power to move itself. Thomas writes, "The will is mistress of its own act, and to it belongs to will and not to will."<sup>55</sup> At the same time, we recall that the human will is not solely a mover, but it is also *moved*. "It is essential to the voluntary act that its principle be within the agent: but it is not necessary that this inward principle be the first principle unmoved by another."<sup>56</sup> Not only does the will receive its movement from God to move itself as its own interior principle, but other things also move the will, as we shall see.

Second, the will is ordered toward the good, and ultimately toward the universal good, which is God himself, and this is the perfection of its nature.<sup>57</sup> It seems best to let Thomas describe the will's inclination toward the good:

The will is a rational appetite. Now every appetite is only of something good. The reason of this is that the appetite is nothing else than an inclination of a person desirous of a thing towards that thing. Now every inclination is to something like and suitable to the thing inclined. Since, therefore, everything, inasmuch as it is being and substance is a good, it must needs be that every inclination is to something good. And hence it is that the Philosopher says (*Ethic.* i. 1) that *the good is that which all desire*.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>55</sup>ST I-II, q. 8, a. 3, sed contra.

<sup>56</sup>ST I-II, q. 9, a. 4, ad 1.

<sup>57</sup>ST I-II, q. 9, a. 6.

<sup>58</sup>ST I-II, q. 8, a. 1.

It is important to keep in mind that, “since good is the object of the will, the perfect good of a man is that which entirely satisfies his will.”<sup>59</sup> According to Thomas, the perfect good in which the will of man rests is the good of happiness, and this happiness is nothing else than the beatific vision, which is the universal and greatest good, and the end for which man exists.<sup>60</sup>

Third, the will does not move itself blindly, but is informed by reason, which is the power of the intellect. Only when man wills in accord with reason or divine law can his act be good. The will, then, “is moved by the intellect, otherwise than by itself.”<sup>61</sup> Thus, the will can be called a *rational* appetite.<sup>62</sup>

Finally, man’s will, which has the power to move itself in accord with reason toward the good, receives this power from God, but is also truly free. For Thomas, man’s will is free because he is a rational being.<sup>63</sup> As such, “man acts from judgment,” and a judgment based upon “some act of comparison in the reason,” concerning what should be sought or avoided.<sup>64</sup> Putting it simply, Thomas defines free will as “the principle of the act by which man judges freely,”<sup>65</sup> and presuming the role of the intellect, he says even more simply, free will is “the power of choice.”<sup>66</sup>

As discussed above, no being can proceed to its act of being, much less an act of doing, without being moved from potency to act by another who is *in act*, and who, as Pure Act, has the power to give act to others. God so moves the creature to be and to act. This reduction from potency to act is necessary even to man’s free acts. Steven Long draws upon St. Thomas to

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<sup>59</sup>ST I-II, q. 5, a. 8.

<sup>60</sup>ST I-II, q. 5, a. 1 and 8.

<sup>61</sup>ST I-II, q. 9, a. 3, ad 3.

<sup>62</sup>ST I-II, q. 8, a. 1.

<sup>63</sup>ST I, q. 83, a. 1.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid.

<sup>65</sup>ST I, q. 83, a. 2.

<sup>66</sup>ST I, q. 83, a. 4.

show that “God is the cause of the natural motion of the will, constituting it as what it is.”<sup>67</sup> More explicitly, he writes that, “Indeed, apart from God the natural motion of the will could neither be—it is not self-existent—nor be applied to action, since the act of the will represents a surplus of actuality that itself must be reducible to the first cause.”<sup>68</sup> This dependence on God in no way denigrates the actual power of man’s free will. On the contrary, man has free will and its exercise, and this power is given to him by God. On this point, Long turns to St. Thomas himself:

Free-will is the cause of its own movement, because by his free-will man moves himself to act. But it does not of necessity belong to liberty that what is free should be the first cause of itself, as neither for one thing to be cause of another need it be the first cause. God, therefore, is the first cause, Who moves causes both natural and voluntary. And just as by moving natural causes He does not prevent their acts being natural, so by moving voluntary causes He does not deprive their acts being voluntary: but rather is He the cause of this very thing in them; for He operates in each according to its own nature.<sup>69</sup>

This last point, namely, *that God operates in each according to its own nature*, is key to understanding how God can move man to act, and in a way in which man’s freedom truly bears on his own acting. Garrigou-Lagrange explains that not only does God move man’s will by being the perfect universal good to which the will is naturally inclined, but also by interiorly inclining the will.<sup>70</sup> In this movement, God does not force the human will; rather, he moves the free agent to act in accord with its mode of acting, which is to say that God moves man to act freely and in accord with his inclination to the universal good.

Thomas uses examples from nature to show that each creature acts according to its nature. Natural, non-intelligent things act in accord with their nature, and as moved by another.

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<sup>67</sup>Long, “Providence, Freedom, and Natural Law”: 560.

<sup>68</sup>Long, “Providence, Freedom, and Natural Law”: 561.

<sup>69</sup>ST I, q. 83, a. 1, ad 3.

<sup>70</sup>Garrigou-Lagrange, *Predestination*, 263.

He uses the example of the stone which, by its nature, moves downward.<sup>71</sup> Living animals do use judgment, but Thomas argues that this judgment is natural to them by instinct rather than by reason. So, acting out of a natural judgment, the mouse seeing the eagle judges the latter to be a threat and runs from it, while the eagle, acting from *its* nature, judges the mouse to be a good and pursues it. The non-rational eagle, for instance, is not free to say to himself, “I think it would be better if all the little critters were not scared of me. I shall amend my ways, and become a vegetarian.” There may be other things that impede his attaining the mouse as his meal—he suffers from a broken wing; the mouse hides; he sees a squirrel, which attracts his senses more strongly; or perhaps he just ate the mouse’s mother and so, since he is not hungry, the mouse presented to him does not draw him as an appetible good. All of these are *natural* impediments. A rational impediment or a decision not to pursue the mouse is simply not an option for the eagle, since he lacks the powers necessary for such an act.

Man is different, however. His judgments and choices are founded upon reason. By his intellect, he apprehends the good or goods presented to him, but he is free to choose between them. The choice of particular goods by the rational agent is of such a nature that he has the power either to choose a thing or not. He is not *determined* to one particular good over another, as is the non-rational animal. True, man is *inclined* to certain goods, but he is not determined to them in such a way that he cannot choose otherwise. He is free to sample a taste of *Hasenpfeffer* or to forego such an experience. The eagle, though, is determined to seek field mice, and the rock is determined to move downward. It is because man is free to judge and to choose that God gives him “counsels, exhortations, commands, prohibitions, rewards and punishments.”<sup>72</sup> It would make no sense for God to instruct the eagle, “Thou shalt not chase field mice,” for he has

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<sup>71</sup>ST I, q. 83, a. 1.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid.

given it to the nature of the eagle to eat them. It *does*, however, make sense for God to tell man, “Thou shalt not steal,” since man has an *inclination* to use and to have material things, but is not *determined* to take all that is presented to him. Long makes clear that no finite good can compel the will of a free creature.<sup>73</sup> In this sense, man’s will is undetermined.<sup>74</sup> When man chooses, he rationally and freely determines himself to one or another particular good. He has the power freely to choose to obtain things justly or unjustly, and so it is reasonable that God should direct him to the former, in accord with God’s own justice, in which man participates and in accord with man’s own rational nature.

If each thing acts according to its nature, and the nature of man’s will is to be free, even if this freedom is received from God as its Creator, this does not eliminate the fact that God himself efficaciously moves man’s will in the performance of good acts. Curiously, we call this *predetermination* and in fact, *premotion*. This premotion is that “motion bestowed by God without which the rational creature cannot proceed to its act of self-determination.”<sup>75</sup> It is predetermined in the sense that, if any good act is to be done, God directs the human will in such a way that it freely moves to act in the infallible accomplishment of the good. Garrigou-Lagrange writes,

The divine will predetermines that a certain salutary act, for instance, Mary’s fiat, St. Paul’s conversion, Magdalene’s or the good thief’s, shall be accomplished in time, on a certain day, at a certain hour, and that it shall be accomplished freely; then Omnipotence interiorly moves the human will without in the least forcing it, so as to assure the execution of the decree.<sup>76</sup>

Thomists hold further that not only *can* God efficaciously move man to do good, but, if any man is actually to do good, God *must* so move him. This adherence by the creature to the

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<sup>73</sup>Long, “Freedom, Providence, and Natural Law”: 564.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., 566.

<sup>76</sup>Garrigou-Lagrange, *Predestination*, 268.

good is not however one of strict necessity. Man is ordered to the good, but he does not by his nature adhere to it. Given his rational and free nature, he can fall away from it. As Charles Journet writes, “God is able not to create free beings, but if he does create them, they will be able to fall away.”<sup>77</sup> In fact, since man’s will is free and rational and yet belongs to a finite creature, it is naturally defectible.<sup>78</sup>

The creature *of itself* is operationally deficient as its operative power is proportioned to its ontological finitude. A free, rational creature that *as created, of itself does not exist*—and which hence *is not its own law or rule of operation*—is likewise *of itself defectible in act* unless upheld in act by an extrinsic power, namely, by God.<sup>79</sup>

So it is that Charles Journet can say, “If a creature has the privilege of not being able to sin, it owes this to a gift of grace, not to the condition of its own nature.”<sup>80</sup> By nature, man has free will, but free will itself “is the subject of grace, by the help of which it chooses what is good.”<sup>81</sup>

### b) Grace

We turn, now, to that grace<sup>82</sup> by which man is made able not to sin. Augustine, Thomas and the Christian tradition agree that grace is necessary for man to do good. While we are dealing primarily with man after the Fall, Thomas affirms that, even before the Fall, man needed “the help of God the First Mover, to do or wish any good whatsoever.”<sup>83</sup> Though capable of avoiding sin, he “could not have done it without God’s help to uphold him in good, since if this had been withdrawn, even his nature would have fallen back into nothingness.”<sup>84</sup> Since man is made *ex nihilo* and is contingent, his being needs to be sustained by God. Moreover, any human

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<sup>77</sup>Charles Journet, *The Meaning of Evil*, 149.

<sup>78</sup>Long, “Providence, Freedom, and Natural Law”: 596.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid.

<sup>80</sup>Charles Journet, *The Meaning of Evil*, 152–53, commenting on *ST I*, q. 63, a. 1.

<sup>81</sup>*ST I*, q. 83, a. 2, *sed contra*.

<sup>82</sup>For the purposes of this paper, we bypass a discussion of the nature of and man’s need for habitual grace. It is important to note, however, that habitual grace serves as the ground out of which operate other types of grace, some of which will be discussed.

<sup>83</sup>*ST I-II*, q. 109, a. 2.

<sup>84</sup>*ST I-II*, q. 109, a. 8.

act or doing (which is a quality superadded to being)<sup>85</sup> can only come to be and be carried to completion if God moves man to act and upholds the human will in its ability to move itself freely. If God did not sustain contingent man, he would not only cease to act, he would even cease to be. We can say that man has a tendency *not to be*—he would fall back into nothingness—except in so far as God makes him to be; we can also speak this way in reference to man’s acting, and especially to his acting well. Man could not act, and much less act well, unless God moved him to act. Moreover, the good to which man is ultimately ordered is a supernatural good, the beatific vision. As *supernatural*, it lies beyond man’s natural power to attain it. He requires God’s help “in order to carry out works of supernatural virtue, which are meritorious.”<sup>86</sup> Thus, man needs God’s help to do good, especially as it is meritorious for eternal life.

If this is true of man prior to the Fall, it is obvious, then, that fallen man needs God’s help. He is in a state more deprived than that of Adam, and thus is in greater need. He requires, “first, a habitual gift whereby corrupted human nature is healed, and . . . is lifted up so as to work deeds meritorious of everlasting life, which exceed the capability of nature,” and he secondly, needs “the help of grace in order to be moved by God to act.”<sup>87</sup> While the latter kind of grace is our primary interest, it presupposes habitual, sanctifying grace.

What kind of help, then, does God give to man that he may do good? The grace of which we speak is a divine aid given to man, beyond the habitual grace whereby he is justified. A creature living in grace continues to need God’s help, “for every creature needs to be preserved in the good received from Him.”<sup>88</sup> Besides the grace of perseverance *per se*, we can also speak

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<sup>85</sup>Long, “Providence, Freedom, and Natural Law”: 561.

<sup>86</sup>*ST* I-II, q. 109, a. 2.

<sup>87</sup>*ST* I-II, q. 109, a. 9.

<sup>88</sup>*ST* I-II, q. 109, a.9, ad 1.

of a grace “whereby God moves us to will and to act.”<sup>89</sup> When God moves man to will and to act, he does not do so without man’s cooperation. Thomas thus speaks of co-operating grace. Both God and man act in the effect (namely, the exercise of man’s free will) which is both moved by God and which moves itself.<sup>90</sup> So it can be that “there is a double act in us,” in which the will is moved interiorly by God and is moved to its exterior act by its own command.<sup>91</sup> God is not removed from either aspect of this act, though. He “assists us . . . both by strengthening our will interiorly so as to attain to the act, and by granting outwardly the capability of operating.”<sup>92</sup>

Although God aids man in performing his good acts and attaining his end, not every grace given by God is completed by the cooperation of man. Garrigou-Lagrance explains the difference between sufficient and efficacious grace. *Sufficient graces* are often understood as the “actual graces granted by God which do not produce the effect . . . . They give the power . . . to perform a good act, though they do not effectively bring one to perform this very act.”<sup>93</sup> *Efficacious graces*, on the other hand, not only give the power to perform a good act, but do bring man actually to perform the act. Although it is lengthy, the following citation clarifies the differences between the two kinds of grace, and especially shows how man’s cooperation or resistance with these graces fall under God’s will.

[T]he distinction between efficacious grace and sufficient grace has its ultimate foundation in the distinction between God’s consequent will (which concerns good infallibly to be realized at the present moment) and his antecedent will (which concerns good taken in the absolute sense and not as considered in certain determined circumstances), such as, for instance, the salvation of all men in so far as it is good for all to be saved. [See *ST*, I, 1. 19, a. 6, ad 1] From this antecedent or universal will to save come the sufficient graces that make it really possible for

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<sup>89</sup>*ST* I-II, q. 111, a. 2.

<sup>90</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>93</sup>Garrigou-Lagrance, *Predestination*, 233.

us to keep the commandments, without causing anyone, however, effectively to do so. God's consequent will in its relation to our salutary acts is the cause, on the contrary, of our effectively fulfilling our duty.<sup>94</sup>

Thomists agree that, "if a man did not resist sufficient grace, he would receive the efficacious grace required to enable him to do his duty."<sup>95</sup> There is disagreement, however, as to how to understand God's efficacious movement of man's will.

### c) Divine Motion

In the twentieth century, Jacques Maritain proposed a unique reading of St. Thomas. Unlike the traditional interpretation of Thomas, to which we shall attend shortly, Maritain proposed that God's movement of man towards the good is a *shatterable motion*. By this term, he refers to "a divine motion or activation which causes the free agent to tend to a morally good act, but which includes of itself, by nature, the possibility of being shattered . . . [b]y a *first initiative* of the creature."<sup>96</sup> This first initiative is, as Maritain calls it, a nihilation, or a "non-act," that is, a non-considering of the rule of reason.<sup>97</sup> Thus, Maritain carefully tries to avoid making man the first cause of any act (as act). He summarizes God's causality in terms of man's doing good: "If I do the good, it is because God has moved my will from end to end, without my having taken any initiative of nothingness which would have shattered His motion at the stage where it was shatterable."<sup>98</sup> At this point, the divine motion becomes "unshatterable," and man is efficaciously moved by God to do the good. This movement can take place because man has not negated God's action. It is in this way that, "All the good that I do comes from God."<sup>99</sup> Steven Long and others argue against Maritain's position. Thomists agree that all the good done

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<sup>94</sup>Ibid., 238.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid., 238–39.

<sup>96</sup>Maritain, *God and the Permission of Evil*, 38.

<sup>97</sup>Ibid.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid., 41.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid.

by man comes from God, but Long objects that, “One cannot consider the rule of reason without being efficaciously moved to do so by God, and only if one is not efficaciously moved by God to consider the rule of reason does negation occur.”<sup>100</sup> He goes on to say that,

God cannot condition the bestowal of efficacious help upon *non-being*, and thus the absence of negation here must be the presence of something else, caused by God . . . the creature can only avoid non-consideration of the rule . . . insofar as it is efficaciously moved by God *actually to consider the rule*.<sup>101</sup>

Long even goes so far as to say that man “is always negating consideration of the rule *unless* God causes the contrary.”<sup>102</sup> Although a discussion of Maritain’s position could constitute a paper in itself, we mention it here in order to emphasize (in agreement with Long) that God must move man if he is efficaciously to consider the rule and to act accordingly. Not even Maritain’s alternative interpretation can avoid the truth that man only considers the rule of reason because God moves him to do so:

Hence the claim that God conditions the giving of an *unshatterable* or *efficacious motion* toward the salutary act upon the creature’s non-negation is tantamount to saying that God conditions the giving of efficacious aid toward the good act upon his giving of efficacious aid to advert to the rule of reason.<sup>103</sup>

We turn now to the classical interpretation of St. Thomas, which attempts to show how God efficaciously causes man to consider the rule.

Garrigou-Lagrange employs the idea of “divine premotion” or “physical premotion,” in his attempt to explain the Thomistic understanding of divine motion in causing man’s good acts. It is referred to as *premotion* to indicate a priority of “reason and causality,” but not a temporal priority.<sup>104</sup> Essentially, by the divine premotion, God makes man’s will able to will, reducing it

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<sup>100</sup>Long, “Providence, Freedom, and Natural Law”: 587.

<sup>101</sup>Ibid., 587–88.

<sup>102</sup>Ibid., 589.

<sup>103</sup>Ibid., 588.

<sup>104</sup>Garrigou-Lagrange, *Predestination*, 262.

from “the potency of willing to the act of willing.”<sup>105</sup> “Physical” does not mean “material” or “exterior” motion. The expression is used, rather, to differentiate it from moral premotion, whereby the will is attracted by a good.<sup>106</sup> Drawing upon Thomas, Garrigou-Lagrange explains that, in physical premotion, God moves the will to the “exercise of its act which is derived from the agent.”<sup>107</sup> In man’s free acts, it must be remembered, there are two agents—God and man. In any free act, “God moves every secondary cause” (of which free will is one) in two ways: as final end and as “first Agent from whom every subordinated agent receives its power to act.”<sup>108</sup> God draws man towards himself as the ultimate good, and he makes man able to act towards that end.

It must be remembered that man acts towards this end according to his mode of acting, that is, rationally and freely. Garrigou-Lagrange writes, “[F]or St. Thomas the divine causality extends even to the free mode of our determinations, so that everything real and good in them depends upon God as the first Cause, and upon us as secondary cause. In this sense the divine motion is predetermining and not necessitating.”<sup>109</sup> Although man may in fact be doing good, he retains the *power* to do otherwise. His performing of a good act, though, is carried to its completion under the action of grace, so “it is impossible for the will, under the influence of the divine efficacious motion, actually to omit the performance of the act efficaciously willed by God, or actually to perform the contrary act.”<sup>110</sup>

Let us look at how God moves and predetermines man to do good. We need first to eliminate the picture of God as the Master Puppeteer, who has all the movements of man (the

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<sup>105</sup>Zigliara, *Summa phil., Theol.nat.*, Bk. III, chap. 4, a. 4, nos. 3–5 as quoted in Garrigou-Lagrange, *Predestination*, 259.

<sup>106</sup>Garrigou-Lagrange, *Predestination*, 263.

<sup>107</sup>Ibid.

<sup>108</sup>Ibid.

<sup>109</sup>Ibid., 272.

<sup>110</sup>Ibid., 262.

puppet) pre-planned and which man has only to “perform” by being moved to and fro by the Puppeteer. The reason we want to dismiss this idea is that man is *not* a puppet. No matter what one might think of Pinocchio, puppets do not have the use of reason and therefore, no free will. Man, on the other hand, has both, and so God moves man in accord with the nature he has given man. Since man is rational and free, God moves him to act rationally and freely.

Yet, man himself must act. Moved by God, man must also move his will. This fact might be illustrated by the example of a physical act. As you read this paper, for instance, you are presumably not singing. Your vocal abilities are ordered to speaking and to singing, yet, of themselves, they fall away from exercising themselves. They are *not acting* unless they are moved to act. If God efficaciously moves you to sing, you *will* sing, but only because you also will to sing. Singing could never occur without some consent on your part, and at the same time, you could never consent to sing unless God moved you to do so.

In discussing man’s moral acting, it is crucial to keep in mind that two agents cooperate, but that each operates in its own way. This means that (1) if God has given man free will, and (2) if God moves man’s free will, and (3) if God’s will is always efficacious, then God’s movement of man’s will must efficaciously effect a free movement on the part of man. One of the most central texts in Thomas which supports this truth is to be found in Question 19 of the *Prima Pars*. Garrigou-Lagrange frequently revisits it, and we do well to bear it in mind:

Since the divine will is perfectly efficacious, it follows not only that things are done, which God wills to be done, but also that they are done in the way that He wills. Now God wills some things to be done necessarily, some contingently, to the right ordering of things, for the building up of the universe. Therefore to some effects He has attached necessary causes that cannot fail; but to others defectible and contingent causes, from which arise contingent effects.”<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>111</sup>STI, q. 19, a. 8.

Thus, Thomas can say that, “what God produces by necessary causes is necessary and what He produces by contingent causes contingent.”<sup>112</sup> What Thomas is saying is that contingent things are caused contingently, but because they are caused efficaciously by God, they unfailingly *do occur*, but still contingently. The exercise of man’s free will is such a contingent cause. When we say that free will is numbered among contingent causes, we mean free will is not *necessarily* determined to one rather than another particular finite good.

Perhaps an example of a morally indifferent act will be helpful. A glance at the porch tells me that it needs to be swept. I do not pick up the broom and begin the task at hand because of a determined instinct. I am free to look at the dirty porch and to leave it as it is. Yet, as has already been noted, if I do move, any movement that I make—including the rational judgment of what should be done, the interior movement of the will, and the physical movement of taking the broom and beginning to sweep—is entirely dependent on God’s moving me both to will and to do the sweeping. Yet, the sweeping of the porch is only accomplished by my action as a free agent. It was not determined by a kind of natural necessity that I would unfailingly perform the particular good of sweeping the porch. God moves me to act freely, though, and because of this, I freely do the acting, which in this case pertains to the sweeping.

Garrigou-Lagrange is careful to show, however, that the divine predetermination of man’s free acts is non-necessitating.<sup>113</sup> Here it is important to remember what we have already observed—that God moves things according to their nature.<sup>114</sup> The nature of man’s will is contingent and it is free. So,

our elections or free acts are submitted to the determination of Providence, but not as though imposing necessity on them. In other words, this predetermination is non-necessitating, for it extends even to the free mode of our acts, which

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<sup>112</sup>Ibid.

<sup>113</sup>Garrigou-Lagrange, *Predestination*, 269.

<sup>114</sup>Ibid., 280.

pertaining to being, comes under the adequate object of Omnipotence and what is not so included is only evil, since it comes from the deficient cause.<sup>115</sup>

How are we to understand, though, that in relation to our good acts, the “divine motion received in the secondary cause is predetermining in so far as it gives infallible assurance of the execution of a divine decree?”<sup>116</sup> The fact that “the free act already determined remains free”<sup>117</sup> might be understood by the traditional example of Socrates sitting. As long as he sits, *although actually sitting*, he retains the power to stand, although it is impossible for him not to be sitting, in so far as he *is in fact sitting*. Similarly, although George is determined to help the little old lady to cross the street, it remains within his *power* not to do so, while at the same time being impossible for him not to be helping her in so far as he *is actually helping her*.<sup>118</sup> His will, and its power, remain free. We still, say, however, that this good act is predetermined, in that it is determined, or ordered, by God to its proper end (God himself), and he moves man freely to act towards this end.

Man does not have the power to prevent God’s will from being carried out when God is efficaciously moving man to a good act. Without God’s help, man would neither advert to the rule, nor be inclined to the good, nor act in accord with these. When God moves man, he moves him to will and to act in accord with his (man’s) own nature, and it is of his nature to move towards the Universal Good, and to act freely. So, God moves man to will freely to do the good.

Since God’s causality is outside the order of created causes, and since He is the Creator of all created causes, the question is not, “How, if God moves man, is man truly free?” More precisely, we want to ask, “How is man efficaciously moved freely to do the good?” Although there is a certain instantaneity in God’s movement of man and in man’s free acts, we can still

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<sup>115</sup>Ibid., 270.

<sup>116</sup>Ibid., 264.

<sup>117</sup>Ibid., 268.

<sup>118</sup>Ibid., 262.

parse three distinct acts in terms of divine and human motion. Garrigou-Lagrange explains that there is first, the active motion in God, second, the passive motion received by the created agent, whereby he “is passively moved by God” from being in potency (to act) “to becom[ing] actually in act,” and third, the free act of the creature itself.<sup>119</sup> He uses an example of a fire to make the distinction between these movements more clear: “In this case we have (1) the action of the fire: actual heating of water; (2) the effect of this action upon the water: it is heated; (3) the action of the heated water upon surrounding objects.”<sup>120</sup>

Problems arise, he says, when these different actions are conflated.<sup>121</sup> The action of the fire cannot be equated with the action of the water receiving the fire’s heat. The mode of action differs: one cause gives, the other receives. The receiving one, though, is not purely passive. It too gives—and it gives what it has received. Thus it is that God gives “the dignity of causality . . . to creatures,” by which “He governs things inferior by superior.”<sup>122</sup> Thomas can then go on to say that, “there is no distinction between what flows from a secondary cause and from a first cause,” since “the providence of God produces effects through the operation of secondary causes.”<sup>123</sup> To return to the example of the fire—if there were no fire, there would be no heated water, and if there were no heated water, the water would be unable to heat other things. Similarly with God’s movement of man’s free will, God’s action is not the same thing as man’s being moved to act, nor is it identical with man’s external act. Without God’s act, which is passively received by man, man is not able to act freely, nor can he actually do so. Something of the fire’s heat is present in the very heating of the objects heated by the water, and so also is God

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<sup>119</sup>Ibid., 258.

<sup>120</sup>Ibid.

<sup>121</sup>Ibid., 259.

<sup>122</sup>ST I, q. 22, a. 3.

<sup>123</sup>ST I, q. 23, a. 5.

action present in man's acting freely. The acts of the secondary causes are dependent on the first cause, but the mode of acting differs in each.

We have seen, then, that man, though ordered to the good, cannot adhere to it without divine aid. In doing good, man is efficaciously moved by God to act in accord with his rational and free created nature. For Thomas, this divine efficacious grace is necessary because man as finite and naturally defectible cannot act, much less act well, without God's movement to do so, any more than he can continue in being without God so sustaining him. If God does not efficaciously cause man to do the good, man cannot do it. If a man were to perform a moral act without being efficaciously moved to act well, he would perform an incomplete or deficient act. His act would be deprived of the governance of the rule of reason or divine law, which is proper to any good moral act. In short, he would commit evil. Let us consider now the nature of evil acts, which consideration is necessary if we are to understand that God cannot be implicated in our sins.

### **V. Evil as a Privation**

Evil, as Thomas and Augustine understand it, is not a certain kind of being, nor even a part of being. Rather, it is a privation or lack of something which properly belongs to the perfection of a being. Unlike a mere negation, in which something is not or has not something (that a cow does not have a marsupial's pouch is negation), a privation is a particular kind of negation of some thing which *ought* to be (the kangaroo without the pouch suffers from a privation). Evil is not a simple negation, but is properly an accidental privation. Thomas succinctly states that, "I say that evil is not a thing, but that to which evil happens is a thing, inasmuch as evil deprives of some particular good."<sup>124</sup> As an illustration, Thomas shows how

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<sup>124</sup>*De malo*, q. 1, a. 1.

darkness is not a “thing,” but rather is the absence—the lack or privation—of light.<sup>125</sup> He also explains that good and evil are opposed in the sense that good is the possession of a quality, while evil is the privation of one.<sup>126</sup> A key observation to be made is that evil is *accidental* to being. As with all types of privation, evil cannot subsist in itself; it “exists” only as the absence of what ought to be inhering in something else.

Thomas discusses various types of evil. If we speak of moral evil, as we shall do shortly, it must be affirmed that, “God in no way wills the evil of sin, which is the privation of right order towards the divine good,” and God wills nothing more than he wills this.<sup>127</sup> On the other hand, God does cause ontological evil, as in the “evil of natural defect, or of punishment . . . by willing the good to which such evils are attached. Thus in willing justice He wills punishment; and in willing the preservation of the natural order, He wills some things to be naturally corrupted.”<sup>128</sup> Before moving to an examination of the privation of moral evil, it is helpful to give a brief look at Thomas’s general understanding of evil as privative.

If we speak of evil *simply*, or in itself, we refer to something that “is deprived of some particular good that pertains to its due or proper perfection.”<sup>129</sup> If a man lacks a hand, this amounts to an evil, since it belongs to the perfection of man to have two hands. Such evil is ontological rather than moral. It must always be remembered that, according to Thomas, something can be evil, but evil is not something. It is not a lack *per se* that amounts to “evil,” but rather the lack of a good that belongs to the fullness of a thing. So, a man who does not have wings is not an evil. True, he lacks wings, but wings do not belong to the perfection of man. This is an instance of a mere *negation*. Joseph Bobik comments that, “privations cannot be

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<sup>125</sup>Ibid., q. 1, a. 1, ad 5.

<sup>126</sup>Ibid., q. 1, a. 1, ad 2.

<sup>127</sup>ST I, q. 19, a. 9.

<sup>128</sup>Ibid.

<sup>129</sup>*De malo*, q. 1, a. 1, ad 1.

predicated except of things which, for some reason or other, do not have some capacity or perfection, which they are meant by nature to have.”<sup>130</sup> Something can be evil in another way, that is, it can be “evil in some respect,” rather than simply. By this, Thomas means that something can be evil in reference to something else: “[I]t is not deprived of some good that belongs to its own due perfection but that belongs to the due perfection of another, as in fire there is a privation of water’s form . . . hence fire is not of itself evil but is evil to water.”<sup>131</sup> In another place, where Thomas speaks of natural evils, he cites the instance of a lion killing a stag in order to obtain the stag as food.<sup>132</sup> God here wills the corruption or the privation of life of the stage in order that the life of the lion may be sustained. In these cases, we can see how one thing can act to corrupt the good of another.

In relation to being, evil is corruptive, but it is corruptive as a privation. Thomas explains the corruption of evil in a two of ways. Abstractly, evil corrupts formally but not actively.<sup>133</sup> As an example, Thomas discusses blindness, which is the corruption of the good of sight.<sup>134</sup> Something is indeed lacking to sight, namely, its proper power or perfection. Evil is also corruptive in ways other than abstractly. Thomas writes,

But that which is evil, if it is evil simply, i.e., in itself, so corrupts or actively and effectively makes the thing corrupt not by acting but by dis-acting, i.e., by failing to act, by reason of a deficiency of active power, as for example defective seed generates defectively and produces a monstrosity, which is a corruption of the natural order.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>130</sup>Joseph Bobik, *Aquinas on Matter and Form and the Elements: A Translation and Interpretation of the “De Principiis Naturae” and the “De Mixtione Elementorum” of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 20.

<sup>131</sup>*De malo*, q. 1, a. 1, ad 1.

<sup>132</sup>*ST I*, q. 19, a. 9.

<sup>133</sup>*Ibid.*, q.1, a. 1, ad 8.

<sup>134</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>135</sup>*Ibid.*

All that has been said thus far concerning evil refers to ontological evil—privations within the metaphysical order. Evil understood as a privation, however, applies also to moral evil, for in morally evil acts, we find that there is lack of something which ought to be.

Long points out Thomas's use of the metaphysics of *esse* in the latter's examination of moral evil, for "just as the creature will fall into non-existence apart from divine conservation in being, so it will fail of good apart from divine conservation in the good."<sup>136</sup> Rather, we hold that moral evil is "the deprivation of what is owed to a being . . . deprivation of that which is owing to the subject,"<sup>137</sup> and for which the created subject, as a secondary cause, is responsible. If we look closely at the nature of moral evil, we can see that sin is evil in itself and that as such, man commits evil by a "failing to act." Some active power has proven deficient and thus has produced something that lacks the fullness or perfection that belongs to a given act. The deficiency inherent in an evil act is a failure on man's part to advert to the rule of reason or the divine law. If man is a rational animal, the acts which he performs which are truly human (i.e., differentiating him from the other animals) are those in which he exercises his *rational powers*. By this, we mean that a human act is one in which a man uses his intellect and free will. A morally good human act is governed according to reason. The active power which, in sin, proves itself deficient must be the will, which even moves the intellect to its act of apprehending the good.

An act can be in accord with reason when a man knows the action itself to be reasonable. It can also be in accord with reason even when he, although not fully understanding its reasonableness, knows the divine law and recognizes that it is reasonable to adhere to it since the Lawgiver is the source of all reason and order in creation. As Thomas explains, "in all things of

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<sup>136</sup>Long, "Providence, Freedom, and Natural Law": 563.

<sup>137</sup>Ibid., 572.

which one ought to be the rule and measure of the other, good in the thing ruled and measured results from this that it is ruled and conformed to the rule and measure,” and in the case of free human acts, they “ought to be measured and ruled according to the rule of reason and divine law.”<sup>138</sup>

When a man acts without using the rule of reason or divine law, moral evil occurs.<sup>139</sup> Thomas is careful to say that the “non-use” of the rule by the human free will is the cause of evil.<sup>140</sup> In short, we are saying with Thomas that something is missing or lacking from the act, i.e., there is a privation in the act. The fullness of the being of a human act includes the use of the rule of reason or the divine law. In the case of sin, this is missing. To illustrate this privation, we might use the example found in *De malo*, that of a craftsman. The craftsman “ought to cut a piece of wood straight according to some rule and measure, if he does not cut it straight, which is to cut badly, this faulty cutting will be caused from this defect, that the craftsman was working without a rule and measure.”<sup>141</sup> Similarly, when man sins, the will proceeds to act “working without the rule and measure” of reason or the divine law.

We have seen that the human will, as created and finite, is naturally defective. It is not always advertent to the rule, nor can it ever do so in a single instance unless it is moved by God to do so. This “non-use of the rule of reason and divine law is presupposed in the will before its disordered choice.”<sup>142</sup> Thomas explains, however, that the will does nothing wrong in merely not giving heed to the rule or law, for a person cannot always be thinking about every aspect of the rule of reason or of divine law. The will errs however, when it moves to act without considering them when the act in question requires the use of the rule or law. Sin, then, is a free

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<sup>138</sup>*De malo*, q. 1, a. 3.

<sup>139</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>140</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>141</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>142</sup>*Ibid.*

moral choice deprived of something it ought to have, namely, the will's use of the rule of reason or the divine law. Therefore, sin is an evil of privation.<sup>143</sup>

We can conclude that Thomas understands evil as a privation. Ontologically, it is a privation of being as such. Morally, there is some defect in the free creature's act, which is rooted in a deficient will. Essentially, moral evil appears when a rational and free being's act is deprived of some thing which is due to the act, namely, man's free use of the rule of reason or the divine law.

Thomas's discussion of the cause of sin only makes sense if evil is understood as a privation. He explains that evil has no *per se* cause, and he provides three reasons for this.<sup>144</sup> First, when one commits evil, he intends or desires some good, for only that which is good is desirable. He desires some good for himself, but which is in some way not in accord with the rule of reason or the divine law. We can call it an "apparent good." Evil, as a privation, is not desired in itself. He wills evil only "accidentally, so far as it accompanies a good, as appears in each of the appetites."<sup>145</sup> So the adulterer desires the good of pleasure, but he does not desire the attendant disorder *in itself* which necessarily accompanies the act of adultery. Still, he chooses to proceed to the act which, in this case, cannot be performed in any way except as "including" the disorder or deprivation. He commits what can be called an intrinsically evil act, which is of a kind that is necessarily deformed or deprived of right order. This disorder in the act is still a pursuit of good, however. Thomas even claims that, "Never therefore would evil be sought after, not even accidentally, unless the good that accompanies the evil were more desired than the good

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<sup>143</sup>Thomas distinguishes between sins of transgression and sins of omission. Absolutely speaking, he says that a sin of transgression is not a sin of privation, but he goes on to claim that it is "an act deprived of due order, as for instance theft or adultery." (*De malo*, q. 2, a. 1, ad 4.) In this way, the act suffers from a *privation* of an order which ought to be. In some respect, then, Thomas admits that sins of transgressions are privations, but he further claims that, not only in some respect, but absolutely speaking, a sin of omission is a privation.

<sup>144</sup>*De malo*, q. 1, a. 3.

<sup>145</sup>ST I, q. 19, a. 9.

of which the evil is the privation.”<sup>146</sup> Goods are still sought, but not according to their proper order. Second, “every *per se* cause has a fixed and determined order to its effect,” but “evil occurs when order is neglected.”<sup>147</sup> Finally, and most to the point, if something does not belong to a thing naturally, there must be something causing it. We might say that it does not belong to a girl naturally to have fins, so if a girl has fins, there must be some cause of them, from outside of her nature. Analogously, even though God must move man efficaciously to do the good, an authentically human act includes its being governed by the rule of reason or the divine law. If this governance is missing, then something must be causing this lack. We will see that the cause of the deprivation is nothing other than man’s free will. All of this is to say that, “every evil has some cause, but accidentally, since it cannot have a *per se* cause.”<sup>148</sup> Evil, then, is a privative *accident* of a good, and in the case of moral evil, it is a privation in the good of man’s free will.

## V. God’s Innocence and the Cause of Evil

### a) Maritain and the Thomistic Tradition

Before turning to the traditional reading of St. Thomas, let us look first at Maritain’s treatment of man as the cause of moral evil. For Maritain as for all Thomists, God is the first cause of good. This includes the good of human free will, by which man truly acts freely. As Maritain puts it, “[T]he free act is wholly from God as first cause and wholly from us as second cause . . . Our liberty has the initiative of our acts, but this is a second initiative; it is God who has the first initiative.”<sup>149</sup> According to Maritain, it is man who has the *first initiative* in evil acts. As Thomas and Augustine say, man’s “will is the cause of sin inasmuch as it is

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<sup>146</sup>Ibid.

<sup>147</sup>*De malo*, q. 1, a. 3.

<sup>148</sup>Ibid.

<sup>149</sup>Maritain, *God and the Permission of Evil*, 10.

deficient.”<sup>150</sup> Maritain puts it more bluntly, when he writes, “[I]n the line of evil . . . God is absolutely not the cause of the evil of our free acts; it is man who is the *first cause* . . . of moral evil.”<sup>151</sup> Maritain is not saying that man is the cause of the act, for only God can move a creature to act. Rather, he proposes that man’s “non-act” (his not adverting to the rule), which is the result of a deficient will, is the first cause of evil. How we can talk about the *first cause* of a non-act is not, however, clear. We can note, though, that, according to Thomas, God is the cause of our free acts (a good in itself), but not the cause of the *evil* of our free acts. In fact, God could not will moral evil. As the cause of all free creatures, he is also their last end and by his nature draws them to himself. It is a logical impossibility that God could will that man falls away from him.

By explaining the difference between God’s knowledge of good and of evil, Maritain highlights the *dissymmetry* between the two. “In the line of good: all that which God knows in created existence, He knows because He causes it. His ‘science of vision’ is the cause of things.”<sup>152</sup> This holds for all morally good acts performed by creatures. Moral evil, though, is not a “thing,” and yet it is “in the world,” and God knows it, but “without [its] having been caused by Him.”<sup>153</sup> Metaphysically speaking, Thomas claims that God knows evil through the good, that is, he knows the evil as a lack *per accidens* in the good:

Whoever knows a thing perfectly, must know all that can be accidental to it. Now there are some good things to which corruption by evil may be accidental. Hence God would not know good things perfectly, unless He also knew evil things. Now a thing is knowable in the degree in which it is; hence since this is the essence of evil that it is the privation of good, by the very fact that God knows good things, He knows evil things also; as by light is known darkness.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>150</sup>*De malo*, q. 1, a. 3. Steven Long argues, “While there is no per se initiative of evil (for properly speaking initiative pertains to act, not to defect), the radical root of evil lies within the creature’s nothingness, from which if it is not upheld both in being and in operation by the extrinsic causality of God, it will fail.” (“Providence, Freedom, and Natural Law”: 594.)

<sup>151</sup>Maritain, *God and the Permission of Evil*, 10.

<sup>152</sup>Ibid.

<sup>153</sup>Ibid.

<sup>154</sup>ST I, q. 14, a. 10.

In terms of moral evil, Maritain and also Journet emphasize God's knowledge of good and evil as being eternally known (since God only knows eternally) in the instant of an act's being performed.<sup>155</sup> Both emphasize the eternal knowledge of God, but neither wants to admit that God must antecedently permit any evil that occurs.<sup>156</sup> Traditional Thomists do not deny the eternal knowledge of God, but they hold that God's knowledge of sin is necessarily connected to his being first cause of all man's acts. As cause of the acts, he permits that they be done defectively. Gilles Emery quotes Garrigou-Lagrange to this effect:

God knows future sins in a *twofold decree*, namely, *permissive and effective*; for there is a *positive element* in sin, that is, the act or effect, which can be produced only with the concurrence of the First Cause; and there is a *privative element*, and this comes, however, solely from a defectible and deficient cause.<sup>157</sup>

God knows good as being, but evil only as accidental to being and accidental as a privation. Something is missing from the good of the being that should be there. In moral evil, something is lacking to the good of the will, which manifests itself also in an act deprived of the fullness of goodness and governance by reason.

Maritain's discussion of God's knowledge in reference to the evil of sin—a discussion taken up also by Charles Journet—offers a unique reading of St. Thomas, in which God's eternal knowledge and the way in which he can be said to permit evil, differs from that of many in the Thomistic tradition. Both schools of thought aim to preserve God's causality and omniscience, while also affirming his innocence in regards to man's sin. The newer interpretation, though,

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<sup>155</sup>Gilles Emery, OP, "The Question of Evil and the Mystery of God in Charles Journet," *Nova et Vetera* English Edition 4 (2006): 536.

<sup>156</sup>Ibid.

<sup>157</sup>Garrigou-Lagrange, *The One God*, 587 as quoted in note 36 in Emery, "The Question of Evil": 535.

fails to see that since nothing occurs outside divine governance, evil, as accidental to being, can only occur if God permits it.<sup>158</sup> This must be held while affirming God's innocence.

### **b) God's Innocence and Man's Guilt**

Since God is all-good, it is important also to affirm his absolute innocence in relation to evil. All that *is* shares in his goodness. Rational creatures, in particular, having received from God the good of a free will, have as their final end, Goodness itself, that is, God. As Being itself and as the first cause of all other beings, who participate in him, he could never will the destruction or corruption of being. This is precisely what happens, through the agency of a defective secondary cause, in the appearance of evil. We will go a step further, too, and recall that Thomas is careful to show that all acts, as beings, are caused by God, and as such are good. He writes that, "No being can be spoken of as evil, formally as being, but only in so far as it lacks being. Thus a man is said to be evil, because he lacks some virtue; and an eye is said to be evil, because it lacks the power to see well."<sup>159</sup> So, an act *as act* is good, although there can be some kind of privation which renders it morally evil. Thus it is good that I move both my hands, but the fact that I am putting them around someone's throat in an attempt to strangle him renders my act morally evil. The movement as movement is good, but the strangling is evil. Every act, as "a being or a thing, i.e., something real . . . has some nature of good, but not of . . . moral good" unless it is in conformity with reason.<sup>160</sup> The more fully that my act, in all its aspects, is in accord with reason and the divine will, the more morally good it is. Conversely, the less so,

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<sup>158</sup>Long writes in "Providence, Freedom and Natural Law": 583, "One grants that the creature is defectible, but any actual defection presupposes the divine permission, since nothing pertinent to being in any way can occur unless it is at least permitted by God." Later, he also writes, "Divine permission of evil—non-sustenance in the good—thus is a necessary condition for the creature falling back upon its own defectibility." *op. cit.*, 588.

<sup>159</sup>*ST I*, q. 5, a. 3, ad 2.

<sup>160</sup>*De malo*, q. 2, a. 4.

the less good my act is; it may even be morally evil. Ontologically speaking, though, the mere movement of my hands, or of any act *qua* act, is good.

We should not fail to give attention to the good of man's free will, which he receives from God. This is an actual share in God's goodness, which he *freely* communicates to man, even in simply creating him. As Journet writes,

If a world is created, it will be an act of sovereign liberty. But there will be a metaphysical necessity that this world should be turned towards God according to the way in which the divine perfection can be participated in by each of its creatures; and . . . that this world should be good.<sup>161</sup>

Furthermore, by giving his rational creatures free will, God gives them a participation in his own causality, which is ordered toward the good. Man by his nature is "turned towards God," but by his free will, he has also the sad but real ability to turn away from him. God's causality is effective in the free acts of man, but he does not cause the defect of man's turning away in sin. Given the natural defectibility of man's free will, it of itself falls away from the good, unless God moves and conserves him in the good.<sup>162</sup> This conservation is not effected when man sins.

God is not only all-good, but he is also all-powerful. Since we are presuming God's goodness and the goodness of creation, the question of evil seems to center on God's will. Is he not powerful enough to prevent it? Does he will it? The former question is rebuked simply by Scripture: "God . . . does whatever he pleases." (Ps 115: 3 RSV CE) Thomas uses this verse to show that God's will is always fulfilled, which is an affirmation of God's power and might.<sup>163</sup> If he "pleases" to prevent evil, he can do so. Judging from the presence of evil in the world, we can conclude that it does *not* please him to prevent it. Does he then will it? Considering that God is all-good and that all that he causes is good and is ordered toward himself, Goodness

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<sup>161</sup>Charles Journet, *The Meaning of Evil*, 122.

<sup>162</sup>Long, "Providence, Freedom, and Natural Law": 584.

<sup>163</sup>STI, a. 19, a. 6.

itself, it would be a contradiction to say that God wills evil. Thus, as St. Thomas is careful to observe, if God willed evil *not to be*, it would not be. The only thing that can be said then is that “God therefore neither wills evil to be done, nor wills it not to be done, but wills to permit evil to be done; and this is a good.”<sup>164</sup> As we shall see, both Augustine and Thomas affirm that God permits evil in order that he may draw some greater good from it. We should also observe, though, that the permission of evil is in accord with God’s will that creatures act according to their natures. So, although God has the power to prevent man from sinning, and on occasion seems to intervene in such a way as to prevent him from doing so, he does not normally act in this way. He allows man to act freely and rationally, according to his nature, even though this includes the radical possibility of sin. With these considerations in mind, two things remain to be seen: (1) how God’s permission of evil cannot be considered a cause of evil (even indirectly), and (2) how the permission of evil falls within God’s providence.

We have seen that God’s knowledge and will *cause* all that is. This means he also causes those things which are secondary causes. When God causes man to be a free creature, he causes him to be a *contingent* secondary cause. Thomas differentiates between necessary and contingent causes in creation.<sup>165</sup> God’s will is always effective not only through necessary causes, but also in relation to contingent causes. Thomas emphasizes that God’s will is always fulfilled,<sup>166</sup> that he effectively wills all the effects that are brought about in the world, and that he wills the way in which they are brought about. He wills that some effects be brought about by necessary causes and others by contingent causes, but his willing of the effect is efficacious in either case. Thus, in relation to free will, it is safe to affirm that which can be affirmed of all contingent causes: “[I]t is not because the proximate causes are contingent that the effects willed

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<sup>164</sup>STI, q. 19, a. 9, ad 3.

<sup>165</sup>STI, q. 19, a. 8.

<sup>166</sup>STI, q. 19, a. 6.

by God happen contingently, but because God has prepared contingent causes for them, it being His will that they should happen contingently.”<sup>167</sup>

### **b) Man’s Defective Will**

If God could never will a moral evil, which is arguably an effect of a contingent cause, how does he will man to be able to bring about such an effect? Let us look at how man’s free will “interacts” with God’s causality when man performs a morally evil act. We have already noted that an evil act, in its nature *as act* is good. A morally evil act is an act which is deprived of the order which ought to accompany it, namely, the agent’s advertence to the rule of reason or the divine law. The fact that the agent, in his acting, does not advert to this in his acting leaves us with the question—why not? Whose fault is it? If God efficaciously moves man to the performance of good acts, would not his failure to move man result in a kind of guilt, perhaps by omission, on God’s part?

Both Augustine and St. Thomas agree that the defect of sin lies in the will of the secondary, free agent. Augustine eloquently writes, “I asked, ‘What is iniquity?’ and I found that it is not a substance. It is a perversity of the will, twisted away from the supreme substance, yourself, O God, and towards lower things, and casting away its own bowels, and swelling beyond itself.”<sup>168</sup> Thomas explains further what is meant by this deformity of the will. First, he agrees with Augustine that, “the will is the cause of sin inasmuch as it is deficient,” in that it proceeds “to choose without employing the rule or measure.”<sup>169</sup> Thomas says that the evil of sin has a “deficient cause, or an accidental efficient cause.”<sup>170</sup> This deficient cause is the finite human will. The human will, as a secondary, instrumental cause, operates only as caused by the

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<sup>167</sup>ST I, q. 19, a. 8.

<sup>168</sup>Augustine of Hippo, *The Confessions*, trans. John K. Ryan (New York: Image Books, 1960), Bk. VII, Ch. 16.

<sup>169</sup>*De malo*, q. 1, a. 3.

<sup>170</sup>ST I-II, q. 75, a. 1.

first efficient cause, God. God, as perfect and all-good, does not cause the evil in a sinful act, though. While God causes the act, it is the human will, as created and finite, and therefore also defective, that introduces evil into an act, and can turn away from man's last end. Thomas concludes,

Accordingly then, the will lacking the direction of the rule of reason and of the Divine law, and intent on some mutable good, causes the act of sin directly, and the inordinateness of the act indirectly, and beside the intention: for the lack of order in the act results from the lack of direction in the will.<sup>171</sup>

If the will proceeds to choose without considering the rule of reason, which is an exercise proper to the intellect, we can conclude that, in addition to the appetible good, there is a two-fold interior and proximate cause of sin: the human intellect and will.<sup>172</sup> The will, however, informed by the intellect, is the power which sins. Acting without the necessary in-forming by the intellect, man, by his will, chooses sin.

Second, Thomas points out that the “defect of the will is itself a fault.”<sup>173</sup> He can say this because any moral choice made by man ought by its very nature to be governed by the rule, and thus requires that man use his intellect and will in considering the rule and governing his act by it. Simply not considering the rule is not itself a fault. Thomas calls it a “pure negation.”<sup>174</sup> When the will proceeds to act while still negating this consideration, this negation becomes one of moral culpability or fault, since, “by reason of the very application to a work it incurs responsibility for that good which it lacks, namely actually heeding the rule of reason and divine law.”<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>171</sup>Ibid.

<sup>172</sup>*ST I-II*, q. 75, a. 2.

<sup>173</sup>*De malo*, q. 1, a. 3, ad 12.

<sup>174</sup>Ibid., q. 1, a. 3, ad 13.

<sup>175</sup>Ibid.

The cause of a man's failure to use the rule is "the liberty of the will itself, thanks to which it can act or not act."<sup>176</sup> Steven Long explains that the defect in the will belongs to the creature because "of itself it is deficient with respect either to actuating itself toward, or sustaining itself in, the good proper to nature."<sup>177</sup> In other words, man's will is "operationally deficient"; though not ordered to evil, it falls away "of itself" and can only move towards the good with God's help.<sup>178</sup> If God moves man to act, why does he not move him to act well at just such a vital moment as that in which he falls away?

God, in making man to be free, allows that he be able to defect, or fall away from both particular and universal goods. Man can only attain to his end with God's efficacious help, but God does not owe it either to man or to himself to provide this help. Garrigou-Lagrange explains that God, by the fact that he does not prevent sin, when in fact he *could* do so, is not even indirectly the cause of sin.

Undoubtedly it happens that God does not grant certain persons the help that would keep them from sin; but that is in accordance with the established order of His wisdom and justice. He is not bound to do so. He does not owe it to Himself to keep creatures that are by nature defectible from ever failing to do their duty.<sup>179</sup>

Ought we to look at our human existence, then, as a kind of divine cruel joke, in which some are upheld in goodness, while others are not—and all at the whim of God? Not at all. It is true, that if "God did not permit it . . . there would be no sin."<sup>180</sup> Yet, it is also true that the responsibility of sin lies solely in man's will. By his defective will, he fails to respond to the divine aid of sufficient grace which is offered him. God is in no way responsible or culpable for man's failing

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<sup>176</sup>Ibid., q. 1, a. 3.

<sup>177</sup>Long, "Providence, Freedom, and Natural Law": 596.

<sup>178</sup>Ibid.

<sup>179</sup>Garrigou-Lagrange, *Predestination*, 324.

<sup>180</sup>Ibid.

in this way; neither is he responsible for his sin. It is man who culpably falls away from the order to which he ought to adhere, and he does so with God's permission. Steven Long writes,

God bestows sufficient aid to the creature, which is a determinate effect constituting a potential for a further good (the salutary act in question). When free defect on the part of the creature—proceeding from its own will—is permitted (and in no way caused) by God, this defect will condition the act of the creature such that it falls away of itself from the potential for good constituted by the prior sufficient motion which the creature is said to resist.<sup>181</sup>

We seem to find here a drastically different reading than what we find in Maritain's idea of a shatterable motion. Here, God antecedently permits man—as a free, secondary cause—freely to defect, and this defect conditions *man's* act, but does not do anything (such as shatter) in affecting a divine motion. It is true that God withdraws the grace whereby man is moved efficaciously to do the good. This, however, is only in accord with the disorder, the falling away, of which man is first guilty. It would be just as illogical for God to make an ice cube to be a source of heat as it would be for him to make our will which has fallen away from good actually to do the good.

Garrigou-Lagrange notes that the will is by its nature inclined to good. He heightens man's responsibility for sin when he writes that the will “could not be inclined toward apparent good which is an evil, without being previously turned away, at least virtually from the good, causing us not to consider this latter when the need of doing so presents itself.”<sup>182</sup> What man is resisting is a sufficient grace offered to him by God. The sufficient grace is not efficacious; sufficient grace does not move us infallibly to do the good. It is, however, “sufficient in its own way.”<sup>183</sup> Garrigou-Lagrange explains that, “efficacious grace is offered to us in the sufficient; but we must be careful not to resist the latter, a resistance that would come solely from us . . .

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<sup>181</sup>Long, “Providence, Freedom, and Natural Law”:595–96.

<sup>182</sup>Garrigou-Lagrange, *Predestination*, 328.

<sup>183</sup>*Ibid.*, 331.

and that could deprive us of the proffered efficacious grace.”<sup>184</sup> Man resists a gift from God. “On account of this resistance, God can freely deprive us of efficacious grace, a privation that is a punishment.”<sup>185</sup> Punishment, though, is actually the restoration of the order of God’s justice and wisdom, in which the disorder of sin is corrected in keeping with the order of the universe.<sup>186</sup>

Garrigou-Lagrange addresses what might seem to be the strongest objection to such an argument, namely, that man resists because God did not give him the efficacious grace necessary to consent.<sup>187</sup> Such an argument, he explains, holds good when there is only one cause for an effect. In this case, we can say that, “if affirmation is the cause of affirmation, negation is the cause of negation. Sunrise is the cause of day, and sunset is the cause of night.”<sup>188</sup> The sun causes a given situation either by its presence or by its absence.<sup>189</sup> In the case of man’s free acts, though, there are two agents or causes, although one is a first cause and the other a secondary cause. Still, they are both real causes, and if the secondary depends on the first, it is also true that the secondary truly causes. It is this secondary cause that, though ordered to the good, is naturally defectible. The secondary cause of man’s free will is capable of going “outside the order of the first cause,” and in this case, the effect (sin) “is not reduced to that first cause.”<sup>190</sup> Thomas uses the example of the disobedient servant, who in acting contrary to the orders of his master, does something for which the master cannot be blamed.

The first cause, in order to truly cause, is not required to make the secondary cause accord with it. Man “resists by his own defectibility, which God is not bound to remedy. God is

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<sup>184</sup>Ibid.

<sup>185</sup>Ibid., 329.

<sup>186</sup>ST I, q. 49, a. 2.

<sup>187</sup>Garrigou-Lagrange, *Predestination*, 332–33.

<sup>188</sup>Ibid., 332.

<sup>189</sup>Ibid.

<sup>190</sup>ST I-II, q. 79, a. 1, ad 3.

not bound to cause a defectible creature never to fail.”<sup>191</sup> If God were so bound, only *then* could it be said that he indirectly caused sin. Thus, it is necessary to say that, “man is deprived of efficacious grace because he resisted sufficient grace, whereas it is not true to say that man resists or sins because he is deprived of efficacious grace.”<sup>192</sup> God offers, but does not force, his gift of grace on free men.

If it is true that, “the divine decrees relative to our salutary acts are efficacious of themselves and not because of our consent foreseen by God,”<sup>193</sup> it is also true that the *act* of sin is efficaciously brought about by the divine decree. However, the privation in the act whereby the free agent falls “away from the order of the first Agent, God . . . is not reduced to God as its cause, but to the free will” of the defectible creature.<sup>194</sup> The failure to consider the rule is the result of the human will falling away from the proper order by which it ought to be governed. God does not cause this falling away.<sup>195</sup> As first cause, he causes the secondary agent to be a type of cause which can, but need not, fall away, but God does not cause the actual falling away. The lack of consideration of the rule does not itself bring about the sin, but rather the actual motion of the will towards the apparent and defective good, that is, the “evil.” Yet, the actual motion of sin—even though it is defective in terms of being the type of act it ought to be—cannot occur without God’s physically moving man’s will to the act, and he does so move it.

It is only after this [the lack of consideration of the rule in reference to an act which requires it], according to a priority of nature if not of time, that the divine influence intervenes to incline the will to the physical act of sin, an influence which, as in the case of a good act, causes the will to choose freely and in no way compels it.<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>191</sup>Garrigou-Lagrange, *Predestination*, 333.

<sup>192</sup>Ibid.

<sup>193</sup>Ibid., 329.

<sup>194</sup>Ibid., 326.

<sup>195</sup>Ibid., 327.

<sup>196</sup>Ibid., 327–28.

Although the motion of the will and the *act* of sin are dependent upon God, the sin, or that which is inordinate in the act, comes from a defect in man.

Since God is not bound to move or preserve man in good, any instance of his doing so is a divine gift to man. It is a gift, though, in which he moves man to act in accord with his own nature.

But He does all this according to the order of His wisdom and justice, since He Himself is Wisdom and Justice: so that if someone sin it is not imputable to Him as though He were the cause of that sin; even as a pilot is not said to cause the wrecking of the ship, through not steering the ship, unless he cease to steer while able and bound to steer.<sup>197</sup>

While able to keep man from sin, God is not bound to do so, and thus he cannot be called—even indirectly—the cause of sin.

At this point, in order to penetrate more deeply into Thomas's understanding of defectible secondary causes, we can draw upon his discussion of the cause of spiritual blindness and hardness of heart. He compares God's grace to the sun, which enlightens all bodies provided there is no obstacle to the receiving of light. In such a case the body is left "in darkness, as happens to a house whose window-shutters are closed."<sup>198</sup> The darkness of the house is reduced to the fault of the one who closed the shutters. The sun, neither directly nor indirectly, causes the darkness. We do not want to say that God is at the mercy of man's acts, though. In a real sense, we can say also that "God, of His own accord, withholds His grace from those in whom He finds an obstacle: so that the cause of grace being withheld is not only man who raises an obstacle to grace; but God, Who, of His own accord, withholds His grace."<sup>199</sup> What God does of his own accord is in keeping with his divine justice and wisdom, the understanding of which exceeds our natural capacity to know.

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<sup>197</sup>ST I-II, q. 79, a. 1.

<sup>198</sup>ST I-II, q. 79, a. 3.

<sup>199</sup>Ibid.

It is clear that man bears the responsibility for his own sins. God, even in withdrawing grace from man, is absolutely innocent of moral evil. He does not cause sin, and yet he permits it. We turn now to consider why God permits such a disorder of sin.

## VII. Providence and the Permission of Evil

Augustine's answer as to why God permits evil has been taken up by Thomas and by the Christian tradition in general. As we find in the *Summa*, some have argued that the existence of evil proves that God does not exist, since, when we speak of God, we refer to infinite goodness, which excludes the existence of its contrary, namely, evil.<sup>200</sup> Thomas uses Augustine to show that such an argument does not hold. In his *Enchiridion*, Augustine writes that God "could not permit anything evil in his works, were He not so all-powerful and good as to be able to bring good even out of evil."<sup>201</sup> After citing this passage, Thomas further comments that it "is part of the infinite goodness of God, that He should allow evil to exist, and out of it produce good."<sup>202</sup> Moreover, since we have observed that all that God does, he does most wisely, the permission of evil must somehow be a manifestation of the wisdom of God. Augustine can then go on to say that God "deemed it better to bring good out of evil than not to permit any evil to exist at all."<sup>203</sup> Although God does not will evil, evil could never occur if he did not permit it. Evil, then, does not negate the existence of God, but it leaves creatures to ask what good God brings from it, and how this good can be better than a world without evil.

Not even sin, an offense against God himself, removes the secondary causes who are guilty of evil from the divine causality. On the contrary, all is either caused (by the divine consequent will) or permitted (by the antecedent permissive will) by God. All is governed by his

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<sup>200</sup>*STI*, q. 2, a. 3, obj. 1.

<sup>201</sup>St. Augustine of Hippo, *Faith Hope and Charity*, trans. Very Rev. Louis A. Arand, Ancient Christian Writers 3 (New York, NY: Newman Press, 1947), n. 11.

<sup>202</sup>*STI*, q. 1, a. 3, ad 1.

<sup>203</sup>Augustine, *Faith Hope and Charity*, n. 27.

providence. Thomas understands providence as “the type of things ordered to their end,” pre-existing in the mind of God.<sup>204</sup> He further explains that since all things that are, are ordered to their proper end, and since the type of things ordered to their end is in God’s mind, *all things* are subject to divine providence.<sup>205</sup> As we have shown that evil is not a being, but is a privation accidental to a being, it might seem that evil, and especially the evil of sin, falls outside of divine providence. After all, the characteristic of sin is that it is an act, which itself lacks the fullness of being and in which man falls away from his end.

If God’s causality and man’s causality were of the same order, it would be true that, by sin, man acts outside of divine providence. If, on the other hand, God’s causality transcends that of man and in fact makes man able to be and to act, then no act of man can fall outside of divine providence. Thomas explains that a “thing can escape the order of a particular cause; but not the order of a universal cause.”<sup>206</sup> On the level of particular causes alone, one particular cause can frustrate the effect of another particular cause. For example, one particular cause, the striking of a match, lights a flame, while another particular cause, such as wind blowing, snuffs out the flame. If we speak of the order of the universal cause, though, it is different. Within the universal cause, each thing is given its being and its nature and each acts accordingly. The particular causes depend on the universal cause for its being and acting. The match operates in its way and the wind in its way because of the natures given to them by the universal cause. Within the order of the universal cause, particular causes can negate each other. However, a particular cause can never ultimately negate the universal cause. If there is an effect which

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<sup>204</sup>ST I, q. 22, a. 1.

<sup>205</sup>Ibid.

<sup>206</sup>Ibid.

*seems to be* outside the order of the universal cause, “it is said to be foreseen,” for nothing can happen outside of the universal cause.<sup>207</sup>

God’s providential plan is carried out through his divine governance.<sup>208</sup> Thomas explains that God’s knowledge is of the minutest details of individuals, and thereby “has the design of government of all things, even of the very least.”<sup>209</sup> He says further that government is most perfect when it brings to perfection the things governed.<sup>210</sup> His governing, which is the execution of divine providence, is active, but it is received passively in the things governed.<sup>211</sup> Since we know both that God’s will is necessarily done and that man commits evil acts, are we to conclude that God’s government and providence are thus faulty? Again, we return to the fact that nothing occurs outside the divine causality and thus nothing can occur outside the divine government. However, it may appear to us that something occurs outside of God’s government. For example, how could God’s government include the murder of an innocent child? Without causing the sin, God permits the murderer to murder, and he moves him (the murderer) freely to exercise his will and to move himself physically to commit the act. God’s governance is not thereby abdicated, however. What we are witnessing is the falling away of the secondary cause from the order to which it should adhere. Similarly, we do not want to say that anything can resist God’s governance. Even the sinner’s falling away, though not caused by God, is permitted within his providence, for some greater good.

Thomas explains that, in sinning, the sinner desires a particular good, while rejecting another particular good.<sup>212</sup> In this case, the murderer prefers some good to the good of another’s

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<sup>207</sup>*STI*, q. 22, a. 2, ad 1.

<sup>208</sup>*STI*, q. 103, a. 6.

<sup>209</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>210</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>211</sup>*STI*, q. 23, a. 2.

<sup>212</sup>*STI*, q. 103, a. 8, ad 1.

life. His choice, however, is disordered in the truest sense, that is, it is not ordered towards his or his victim's true good, and least of all towards the universal good. His act is measured neither by the rule of reason nor by the divine law. His act is still within the providence of God, or it would not be at all. The disorder or rebellion of the sinner is not such that it disrupts God's government, but rather that, within God's government, particular causes can interfere with each other and fail to attain their ends. "From the fact that one thing opposes another, it follows that some one thing can resist the order of a particular cause; but not that order which depends on the universal cause of all things."<sup>213</sup>

God's providence, Thomas is careful to show, covers not only all things generally, but also individuals in their particulars. He explains 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."<sup>214</sup> God's causality extends to all effects, in general and in particular. While secondary causes can fail to achieve the ends to which they are ordered, they are still included under the universal causality which cannot fail.

In the beatific vision, man will see how the permission of evil benefitted not only the good of the universal order, but also the good of individuals.<sup>215</sup> Since God causes man's free will, every free act performed by man, even if it is deficient (i.e., evil), "must be subject to divine providence."<sup>216</sup> Thomas recognizes, however, a certain excellence in the providence that God exercises over the just (whom he preserves in justice), which is superior to the providence which he exercises over the wicked (since he allows them to fall away). If we were to say that God withdraws his providence from the wicked, the sinner would indeed cease to sin, but he would

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<sup>213</sup>STI, q. 103, a. 8, ad 3.

<sup>214</sup>STI, q. 22, a. 2.

<sup>215</sup>Long, "Providence, Freedom, and the Natural Law": 597.

<sup>216</sup>STI, q. 22, a. 2, ad 4.

also cease to exist.<sup>217</sup> Let us return, though, to Augustine’s claim that God permits evil only that he may draw a greater good from it. If we follow this teaching, it is logical to inquire what good can come from the permitted evil of wicked men.

What good can possibly be attained by allowing the evil of sin to appear within a universe entirely subject to God’s providence? Charles Journet provides a succinct answer, “Primarily, and as regards the evil in nature,” evil is permitted “for that universal good which is more precious than that of which particular creatures are deprived by evil.”<sup>218</sup> God moves the universe towards an ultimately good end, in which all is ordered according to his wisdom and justice. As he provides universally, he “allows some little defect to remain, lest the good of the whole should be hindered.”<sup>219</sup> This is easy to see when discussing “natural” evils. God permits the fire to be doused by water, in order that both fire and water may exist according to their natures. What about the murdered child, though? Is this act only “some little defect?” Is it to be reduced merely to a sad part of a story which will ultimately have a happy ending?

Let us ponder more closely how man’s free acts, including his defective ones, relate to the good of the entire universe. Thomas reasons in a similar way as he did when dealing with natural evils:

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 hindered, for if all evil were prevented, much good would be absent from the universe . . . there would be not patience of martyrs if there were no tyrannical persecution.<sup>220</sup>

Although God provides universally, he also provides for individuals. Thomas explains that “one who has care of a particular thing . . . excludes all defects from what is subject to his care as far

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<sup>217</sup>Ibid.

<sup>218</sup>Journet, *The Meaning of Evil*, 86.

<sup>219</sup>ST I, q. 22, a. 2, ad 2.

<sup>220</sup>Ibid.

as he can.”<sup>221</sup> For Thomas, though, God is not *only* a particular provider, but is above all a universal one. Everything must work towards the universal good, and it is towards this end that evil is permitted. God providentially “uses” the murder of the child (though it is hardly a mere tool!) towards the ultimate triumph of good in the universe. Yet, he does not will the murder, nor is he pleased by it. Just as man may not do evil that good may result, neither does God (nor ever could he) will evil that he may bring good out of it. Given that God has made man to be free, man does act freely and is capable even of acting evilly, contrary to God. No evil, though, prevents the ultimate triumph of good.

We would never want to say that evil is necessary to the occurrence of good. We *can* say that evil provides an occasion for good. “The permission of evil is not of itself ordered to the obtaining of this good as its *raison d’être*.”<sup>222</sup> It seems to us that only that which is good can be actually *ordered* to good. The tyranny of the persecutor is in itself disordered, but the good of the martyr’s patience is ordered toward the good of God’s glory and toward his own salvation. Furthermore, as Charles Journet argues, we do not want to say that “all these evils ‘contribute to the good of the universe’. . . This would be to make them a part of the universe and to see in them the *causes* of the good things to which they are attached.”<sup>223</sup> On the other hand, God may make the evil of sin “the occasion for showing forth either the holiness of the creation against which the sinner freely rebels, or the wonderful ways in which he shows his mercy.”<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>221</sup>Ibid.

<sup>222</sup>Gilles Emery, OP, “The Question of Evil and the Mystery of God in Charles Journet,” *Nova et Vetera* English Edition 4 (2006): 542. This citation is part of Emery’s explanation of Jean-Hervé Nicolas’ argument. Emery explains his position in this way: For Nicolas, “sin is the occasion of a greater good, with God turning the evil that happens to the best advantage, but evil is not allowed only for the good things that God can draw from it.” In the attached footnote n. 71, he writes that, “According to J.-H. Nicolas, we cannot say that sin is permitted for the sake of a greater good, but we have to say: God wills this good because sin has taken place.” This would seem, though, to make evil to be a cause of God’s action, which simply cannot be.

<sup>223</sup>Journet, *The Meaning of Evil*, 80.

<sup>224</sup>Ibid.

Charles Journet gives a strong reading to the reason for which God permits evil. Not only does he affirm that God permits evil for a greater universal good, but he identifies that greater good as Christ himself. He claims that, “the glory of Christ is thus God’s *first aim*, the *very reason for the universe* and its *crowning*, the *highest cause* for which everything has been arranged.”<sup>225</sup> Included in this “arrangement,” or providence, is the permission of evil. Journet discusses Adam’s sin as “‘preordained to Christ,’ not, to be sure, as a means, but insofar as sin, once allowed, will be repaired by Christ. In the unique design of God, ‘all things are ordered to the glory of Christ the Redeemer.’”<sup>226</sup> Augustine says that God “deemed it better to bring good out of evil than not to permit any evil to exist at all.”<sup>227</sup> Journet heartily agrees with this by affirming that the fallen, sinful world, redeemed by Christ, is *better* than it would have been if man had never sinned.<sup>228</sup>

One further question might still be asked. Given that God permits evil, why does he permit such horrific evils? If he, as “master of second causes,” has the power to prevent a chosen evil action “from taking place, or to cause that it deviated more or less from the intention of the one who commits it,”<sup>229</sup> why does he permit something as terrible as, for example, the Holocaust? Why could he not have caused Hitler to trip and take a fatal fall, thus averting the destruction of millions of Jews and others? God could have put a halt to it, so why did he not do so?

Journet’s answer to this question is most enlightening. In the order of creation, God causes things to act as they are, in accord with their natures. Ordinarily, he moves things in such

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<sup>225</sup>Emery, “The Question of Evil”: 541.

<sup>226</sup>Emery, “The Question of Evil”: 541, quoting Charles Journet, « De la condition initiale privilégiée de l’homme », 213–16.

<sup>227</sup>Augustine, *Faith Hope and Charity*, n. 27.

<sup>228</sup>Emery, “The Question of Evil”: 543.

<sup>229</sup>Maritain, *God and the Permission of Evil*, 61.

a way that the effects of causes are achieved. *Sometimes*, he intervenes to prevent this from happening, and so we are pressed to ask, “Why not prevent a particular excessive evil in this instance?” Related to this question, Stump explains that, “God sometimes gives his consent to moral evil because to do otherwise would require undermining the nature he created, and the loss of being and hence of goodness entailed by doing so is a greater loss of being than whatever loss may be incurred by the evil God permits.”<sup>230</sup> Journet’s basic argument, though, takes a slightly different angle. He claims that God is not bound to prevent any (no matter how excessive) evil, and that his not doing so does not in any way diminish his divine wisdom, power, or goodness. If he did intervene in such things, “[w]ould the world as a whole be better? Perhaps it would. But if God creates, what is he bound to do in virtue of his justice, wisdom and infinite goodness? He is bound to make a good world in which evil cannot ultimately prevail over good.”<sup>231</sup> God, as the universal good and cause of all that is, continually upholds in being and goodness all that is. The final victory will be won by good.

In between the good of God and creation, though, there is a gap between the infinite and the finite. No finite world could ever be as good or as perfect as God. If it were, it would *be* God. So, where could we draw the line? Could we finite beings ever justly point to a degree of goodness which God “ought” to give to his creation?<sup>232</sup> No matter how “much” goodness might be found in the world, there would always be the infinite chasm between God’s *infinite* goodness and the *finite* goodness of creation. Furthermore, Journet asks, “Can we demand God to cause *even one single exception* to the ordinary rule of his subordinated power?”<sup>233</sup> Indeed, God is not bound to uphold any single free creature in good. We could even argue that he could permit all

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<sup>230</sup>Stump, *Aquinas*, 459.

<sup>231</sup>Journet, *The Meaning of Evil*, 115.

<sup>232</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>233</sup>*Ibid.*, 169.

free creatures to fall away, as long as good is still universally triumphant. The remarkable thing is that God *does* uphold free creatures in goodness, helping them persevere in willing and doing good. At times, God extraordinarily intervenes directly or indirectly, thwarting the carrying out of man's evil intentions. When we demand *more* of such lavish care, we are ungratefully forgetting that any upholding in goodness is the result of superabundant graces gratuitously given by God. "*In the ordinary exercise [sic] of his power God does incomparably more than he is bound to do.*"<sup>234</sup>

Finally, then, it must be admitted with Thomas and Journet that the mystery of the permission of evil lies ultimately in the mystery of God's knowledge, wisdom, justice, and mercy. These things are known in their fullness by God alone. His knowledge of all singulars<sup>235</sup> includes all the defects attendant in evil acts, even that of the details of the murder of a child. In knowing the reasons for the allowance of evil, we recall that God's knowledge does not simply cause. God causes only when his knowledge is joined to his will, and this never occurs in the case of moral evil.<sup>236</sup> All things, whether caused or permitted, are included in God's plan of goodness. As Journet puts it, "only the mystery of God allows us to confront the mystery of evil as a whole."<sup>237</sup> Steven Long points to the beatific vision as the occasion for the unveiling of this mystery. Then, finite man will be brought more deeply into the wisdom of God. Bowing humbly before God's wisdom, man, while living on earth, should express his gratitude for all the gifts given, and should pray for the grace to do good perseveringly, but may not demand of God a world in which evil shows itself differently—in degree or kind— than it does.

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<sup>234</sup>Ibid., 170.

<sup>235</sup>ST I, q. 14, a. 11.

<sup>236</sup>Harm Goris, after citing Thomas's commentary on the *Sentences*, writes that "God's noncausal knowledge of evil specifies again that the concept of 'knowledge' itself does not include causality" in "Divine Foreknowledge, Providence, Predestination, and Human Freedom," in *The Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Rik Van Nieuwenhove and Joseph Wawrykow (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 103.

<sup>237</sup>Journet, *The Meaning of Evil*, 24.

### VIII. Conclusion

We have seen that in man's moral acts, two agents operate. Although operating in different orders and according to their different natures, each is wholly operative. If one agent were not to act, the act would not occur. The secondary agent or cause, man, depends upon the first agent (or cause), God, not only for his ability to act freely in each particular case, but even to continue in his very act of being. The two agents, far from being competitive, operate in different orders: the first agent operates in an all-encompassing transcendent order while all secondary agents operate in an order that is brought into being and encompassed in all its particulars by the first transcendent agent.

While each agent is a complete cause, the way each operates in a good act differs from the way it operates in an evil one. In a good act, God efficaciously moves man to do the good, and he moves him in accord with man's nature. By his nature, man acts rationally and freely. Thus, man, a moved mover, is moved by God *and* actually moves himself to act rationally and freely in the performing of a good act. In an evil act, man fails to accept the sufficient grace offered him by God, which if accepted would have provided the efficacious grace necessary to do the good. As a finite defectible agent, man does not unfailingly adhere to the good without God's help. In an evil act, man, through the fault of his free will, falls away from the good, by proceeding to a moral choice while failing to advert to the rule of reason or divine law. Yet, man only carries out the act of willing and doing as an agent moved by God. God causes the act, but only permits the evil, for which the creature alone is responsible.

The Christian tradition is firm in holding to the truth that God permits evil for the sake of some greater good. For Journet, Christ is himself this greater good: "*The glory of Christ the Redeemer is the end that, in and of themselves, all things willed or permitted by God are ordered*

to.”<sup>238</sup> Long describes the greater good as the “beatific good,” and here we must be content with faith in the mystery of God’s wisdom and goodness. Here on earth, evil will always have an element of incomprehensibility when considered by a finite intellect. Yet, God is omnipotent, all-good, and provident. Nothing happens outside his divine universal causality and providence, which is intelligible in its fullness to him alone. Only in the beatific vision will man see truly how indeed, the “Lord is righteous in all his ways, and kind in all his deeds.” (Ps 145:17 NAS)

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<sup>238</sup>Emery, “The Question of Evil”: 543, referring to Journet’s “Dieu et le mal: Aspect métaphysique du problème,” 268 ; idem *Meaning of Evil*, 86 and 256–59.

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