

**Objection 1.** It seems that everything is not subject to divine providence. For nothing foreseen can happen by chance. If then everything was foreseen by God, nothing would happen by chance. And thus hazard and luck would disappear; which is against common opinion.

**Objection 2.** Further, a wise provider excludes any defect or evil, as far as he can, from those over whom he has a care. But we see many evils existing. Either, then, God cannot hinder these, and thus is not omnipotent; or else He does not have care for everything.

**Objection 3.** Further, whatever happens of necessity does not require providence or prudence. Hence, according to the Philosopher (*Ethic.* vi, 5,9, 10,11): “Prudence is the right reason of things contingent concerning which there is counsel and choice.” Since, then, many things happen from necessity, everything cannot be subject to providence.

**Objection 4.** Further, whatsoever is left to itself cannot be subject to the providence of a governor. But men are left to themselves by God in accordance with the words: “God made man from the beginning, and left him in the hand of his own counsel” (*Ecclus.* 15:14). And particularly in reference to the wicked: “I let them go according to the desires of their heart” (*Ps.* 80:13). Everything, therefore, cannot be subject to divine providence.

**Objection 5.** Further, the Apostle says (*1 Cor.* 9:9): “God doth not care for oxen\*”: and we may say the same of other irrational creatures. Thus everything cannot be under the care of divine providence.

**On the contrary,** It is said of Divine Wisdom: “She reacheth from end to end mightily, and ordereth all things sweetly” (*Wis.* 8:1).

**Answer that,** Certain persons totally denied the existence of providence, as Democritus and the Epicureans, maintaining that the world was made by chance. Others taught that incorruptible things only were subject to providence and corruptible things not in their individual selves, but only according to their species; for in this respect they are incorruptible. They are represented as saying (*Job* 22:14): “The clouds are His covert; and He doth not consider our things; and He walketh about the poles of heaven.” Rabbi Moses, however, excluded men from the generality of things corruptible, on account of the excellence of the intellect which they possess, but in reference to all else that suffers corruption he adhered to the opinion of the others.

We must say, however, that all things are subject to divine providence, not only in general, but even in their own individual selves. This is mad evident thus. For since every agent acts for an end, the ordering of effects towards that end extends as far as the causality

of the first agent extends. Whence it happens that in the effects of an agent something takes place which has no reference towards the end, because the effect comes from a cause other than, and outside the intention of the agent. But the causality of God, Who is the first agent, extends to all being, not only as to constituent principles of species, but also as to the individualizing principles; not only of things incorruptible, but also of things corruptible. Hence all things that exist in whatsoever manner are necessarily directed by God towards some end; as the Apostle says: “Those things that are of God are well ordered†” (*Rom.* 13:1). Since, therefore, as the providence of God is nothing less than the type of the order of things towards an end, as we have said; it necessarily follows that all things, inasmuch as they participate in existence, must likewise be subject to divine providence. It has also been shown (q. 14, Aa. 6,11) that God knows all things, both universal and particular. And since His knowledge may be compared to the things themselves, as the knowledge of art to the objects of art, all things must of necessity come under His ordering; as all things wrought by art are subject to the ordering of that art.

**Reply to Objection 1.** There is a difference between universal and particular causes. A thing can escape the order of a particular cause; but not the order of a universal cause. For nothing escapes the order of a particular cause, except through the intervention and hindrance of some other particular cause; as, for instance, wood may be prevented from burning, by the action of water. Since then, all particular causes are included under the universal cause, it could not be that any effect should take place outside the range of that universal cause. So far then as an effect escapes the order of a particular cause, it is said to be casual or fortuitous in respect to that cause; but if we regard the universal cause, outside whose range no effect can happen, it is said to be foreseen. Thus, for instance, the meeting of two servants, although to them it appears a chance circumstance, has been fully foreseen by their master, who has purposely sent to meet at the one place, in such a way that the one knows not about the other.

**Reply to Objection 2.** It is otherwise with one who has care of a particular thing, and one whose providence is universal, because a particular provider excludes all defects from what is subject to his care as far as he can; whereas, one who provides universally allows some little defect to remain, lest the good of the whole should be hindered. Hence, corruption and defects in natural things are said to be contrary to some particular nature; yet they are in keeping with the plan of universal nature; inasmuch as the defect in one thing yields to the good of another, or even to the universal good: for the cor-

\* Vulg. ‘Doth God take care for oxen?’ † Vulg. ‘Those powers that are, are ordained of God’: ‘Quae autem sunt, a Deo ordinatae sunt.’ St. Thomas often quotes this passage, and invariably reads: ‘Quae a Deo sunt, ordinatae sunt.’

ruption of one is the generation of another, and through this it is that a species is kept in existence. 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. A lion would cease to live, if there were no slaying of animals; and there would be no patience of martyrs if there were no tyrannical persecution. Thus Augustine says (*Enchiridion* 2): “Almighty God would in no wise permit evil to exist in His works, unless He were so almighty and so good as to produce good even from evil.” It would appear that it was on account of these two arguments to which we have just replied, that some were persuaded to consider corruptible things—e.g. casual and evil things—as removed from the care of divine providence.

**Reply to Objection 3.** Man is not the author of nature; but he uses natural things in applying art and virtue to his own use. Hence human providence does not reach to that which takes place in nature from necessity; but divine providence extends thus far, since God is the author of nature. Apparently it was this argument that moved those who withdrew the course of nature from the care of divine providence, attributing it rather to the necessity of matter, as Democritus, and others of the ancients.

**Reply to Objection 4.** When it is said that God left man to himself, this does not mean that man is exempt from divine providence; but merely that he has not a prefixed operating force determined to only the one effect; as in the case of natural things, which are only acted upon as though directed by another towards

an end; and do not act of themselves, as if they directed themselves towards an end, like rational creatures, through the possession of free will, by which these are able to take counsel and make a choice. Hence it is significantly said: “In the hand of his own counsel.” But since the very act of free will is traced to God as to a cause, it necessarily follows that everything happening from the exercise of free will must be subject to divine providence. For human providence is included under the providence of God, as a particular under a universal cause. God, however, extends His providence over the just in a certain more excellent way than over the wicked; inasmuch as He prevents anything happening which would impede their final salvation. For “to them that love God, all things work together unto good” (*Rom.* 8:28). But from the fact that He does not restrain the wicked from the evil of sin, He is said to abandon them: not that He altogether withdraws His providence from them; otherwise they would return to nothing, if they were not preserved in existence by His providence. This was the reason that had weight with Tully, who withdrew from the care of divine providence human affairs concerning which we take counsel.

**Reply to Objection 5.** Since a rational creature has, through its free will, control over its actions, as was said above (q. 19, a. 10), it is subject to divine providence in an especial manner, so that something is imputed to it as a fault, or as a merit; and there is given it accordingly something by way of punishment or reward. In this way, the Apostle withdraws oxen from the care of God: not, however, that individual irrational creatures escape the care of divine providence; as was the opinion of the Rabbi Moses.