



5. Quaestio (Guided Objections)

- ❑ **Purpose:** To test doctrine, not replace it. Through careful inquiry, we deepen our understanding and fortify our convictions.

Having explored the nature of Divine Providence, we now turn to a critical inquiry, a 'quaestio,' to confront potential challenges and refine our doctrinal understanding.

Question

If God governs all things through Divine Providence and directs every event toward His final plan, how can human beings truly act freely, and how can evil exist without making God the author of sin?



b. Objections

These are critical questions that often arise when contemplating Divine Providence. They are not to be dismissed but engaged with, as a deeper understanding emerges from reconciling these apparent contradictions with the truth of God's governance.

Human Freedom as Illusion

If God governs everything and directs all events toward His plan, then human actions must already be predetermined. If this is true, human freedom would only be an illusion.

God as Author of Evil?

If nothing happens outside God's knowledge or allowance, then evil and suffering must ultimately come from God. Otherwise they could not occur under His governance.

Injustice and Accidents

If God directs all things toward their proper end, then the many injustices, tragedies, and apparent accidents of life seem to contradict the idea of wise and fatherly governance.



c. Response to Objections

Catholic theology resolves these profound difficulties by carefully distinguishing between God's role as the **First Cause** of all being and the **real freedom** and efficacy of **secondary causes**, including human beings.

Divine Sustenance & Creaturely Nature

God continuously sustains the existence and action of every creature. Yet, He allows creatures to act according to their own nature. Humans, endowed with intellect and will, act as genuine secondary causes with true freedom and moral responsibility.

Human Freedom & Responsibility

When a person chooses good or evil, the choice truly belongs to that individual. God does not directly cause the evil of an act. Instead, He permits it within His overarching providential plan, preserving human freedom and accountability.

Active Will vs. Permissive Will

This distinction explains how evil can exist without compromising God's goodness. God's **active will** directly brings about all good—grace, virtue, and salvation. His **permissive will** allows evil, not for its own sake, but only insofar as He can bring forth a greater good from it.

The Joseph Principle

Scripture vividly illustrates this in the story of Joseph. His brothers freely chose to sell him into slavery, committing a grave evil. Yet, God permitted this injustice and directed its consequences so that Joseph would later save many lives during a famine, declaring: *"You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good"* (Genesis 50:20).

Thus, human freedom produces real moral responsibility, while Divine Providence governs the ultimate outcome of events, always directing them towards His wise and loving purposes.



d. Determinatio: Reconciling Providence & Freedom

Having engaged with the objections, we arrive at a clear determination: God's governance and human freedom are not in conflict, but rather harmonized realities within His eternal plan.

Divine Sovereignty & Creaturely Agency

God's Providence, as the First Cause, sustains and directs all creation towards its ultimate purpose, while granting rational creatures genuine freedom to act as true secondary causes within this providential order.

Evil from Freedom, Permitted by Providence

Evil originates from the misuse of human freedom, not from the will of God. Yet, God permits these evils within His all-encompassing governance, directing their consequences to bring forth a greater good that fulfills His divine design.

Harmonized Realities

Divine Providence and human freedom are intrinsically linked. Human beings exercise their freedom, while God sovereignly orders all events—both the good and the permitted evil—toward the sanctification of souls and the perfect realization of His eternal plan.



e. One-Line Memoria

Human beings act freely and are responsible for their choices, yet God's Providence governs every event—permitting evil without causing it and directing all things toward a greater good within His eternal plan.