

HARTS STUDENT'S CATHOLIC DOCTRINE

CHAPTER VIII

PROOFS FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

God, as we have seen, is a spirit, infinite, eternal, all-powerful, who sees all things, who knows all things, and who is everywhere present. It is God, too, as we shall see, who created everything, that is, who made everything out of nothing; heaven and earth, as well as Angels and men—in a word, everything that is outside Himself. It is He who directs all things, governs all things, and, in His wisdom disposes all things.

God's manifestation in divers ways

Now there are many ways in which God has manifested Himself both in a natural and supernatural manner; and here we propose to give a few of the many proofs of this manifestation of His existence.

1. From the visible world.

There is no effect without a cause. If we see a beautiful picture, we naturally think of the painter who produced such a work; a house naturally suggests an architect; an engine supposes an engineer; so also the visible world supposes a cause for its existence, and for that regular and perfect order which we observe in nature; for it cannot be reasonably supposed that the world made itself, or that the regularity which we observe in the heavenly bodies, or the wonderful laws of nature, are things of chance. What we see, then, in the world around us is a sensible proof of the existence of God. *"All men are vain, in whom there is not the knowledge of God: and who, by these good things that are seen, could not understand Him that is; or who, attending to the works, have not acknowledged who was the Workman"* (Wisd. xiii. 1). And St. Paul, too, in his Epistle to the Romans, says: *"For the invisible things of Him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made: His eternal power also and divinity: so that they [who refuse to believe] are inexcusable"* (i. 20). And again: *"He left not Himself without testimony, doing good from heaven, giving rains and fruitful seasons"* (Acts xiv. 16).

2. The Testimony of the Nations.

All peoples, from the beginning of the world, have believed in the existence of God, have acknowledged their dependence upon Him, and worshipped Him: *"The fool hath said in his heart: There is no God"* (Ps. xiii. 1).

3. The natural law, the voice of conscience.

Our conscience tells us that some actions are morally good, and that others are unlawful, which goes to show that deep down in man's nature is a law written by the hand of a superior, by God, a law that all are bound to obey. It is this voice of conscience which warns us to fear an Avenger of evil and to trust in a Rewarder of virtue; but this comes not from ourselves, but from God, the Supreme Legislator, who requires us to avoid evil and to do good: *"They show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness to them, and their thoughts within themselves accusing them, or else defending them"* (Rom. ii. 15).

4. By Revelation.

But it is Revelation that gives us the most complete and certain knowledge of God, a knowledge based on the veracity of God Himself. And this Divine Revelation includes whatever God at any time has revealed or made known for man's salvation, whether by the Patriarchs, or the Prophets, or by Angels, and at last by His only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ: *"God, who, at sundry times and in divers manners, spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets, last of all in these days hath spoken to us by His Son"* (Heb. i. 1, 2). And again: *"No man hath seen God at any time: the only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him"* (John i. 18). No creature can comprehend the Infinite greatness of God, none but His only-begotten Divine Son who is in the bosom of the Father by a union and unity of substance and nature, and He it is that has declared Him.