

A Catholic Catechism
“Ye Shall Know the Truth”
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Lesson 5

CD 3, TRACK 1
(21:49)

Good and Evil

Peace be to you.

Free Universe:

This universe of ours is a *free universe*. It is a universe of **character making**, of **soul making**. Almighty God has placed into our hands – think of it – the power to make ourselves saints or devils. **It is up to us.**

Moral Universe:

There are some laws that we cannot disobey; for example, the law of gravitation, certain biological laws like circulation of blood. But in a **moral universe**, we are **free** either to **obey the laws of God** or to **disobey them**, just as we are perfectly free, for example, to obey the laws of health, or to disobey them. *What then makes a thing good – what makes a thing bad? What makes a thing good? A thing is good when it attains the purpose for which it was made.*

I have before me now a stopwatch. I’m talking to you without any notes that are written out, merely developing ideas that have been given to those who are interested in these ideas for many, many years. Therefore, I have to have a watch before me in order to decide when I should stop. *Is it a good watch? How will I know whether it is good?* By asking, **what is the purpose of a watch?** The purpose of a watch is to keep time. Does it keep time? Yes. Therefore, it is a good watch.

Now let us apply that to our *ultimate end*. *Why were we made? What is the purpose of living?* **The purpose of living is to be supremely happy.** *How do we become supremely happy?* By attaining *life, truth and love, which is God*. Anything I do, therefore, that helps me to attain that goal and **purpose is good**.

Alongside of me is an organ. It is not in a church, it is in my office, rather in my home. As I talk to you, I am looking at the notes on that organ. *Which note is good, which note is bad; which note is right and which note is wrong?* One cannot say that any particular note is right and any particular note is wrong. *What makes any note right or wrong?* **Its correspondence to a standard.** Once I have a piece of music before me, I know what **I ought to do**, what note I should hit, what note **I ought not to hit**. So, too we have a **moral standard** within us which is the **conscience** and what is good and bad is in **relationship to that standard**, which is not of our own making. We do not draw our own maps and decide that the distance between Chicago and New York will be so and so. We do not arbitrarily set our own watches. We set them by a **standard outside of us**. When we buy any material, we do not decide that a yard, for example, will be 24 inches instead of 36. So a good, therefore, is that which **helps us in relationship to the attainment of purposes, goals and destinies which are in accord with right reason**.

What makes a thing bad? :

Well, here is a pencil. *Is it a good pencil?* Yes, it writes. That is why it was made. *Is it a good can opener?* It certainly is not. Suppose I use it as a can opener. What happens? First of all, I do not open the can. **I do not attain the purpose** for which I use the pencil, and **secondly, I destroy** the pencil. Now if I, for example, decide to do certain things which I ought not to do, I do not attain the purpose that I hope to attain. For example, becoming an alcoholic does not make me happy. Furthermore, I destroy myself, just as I destroy the pencil in using it to open the can.

When I disobey God, I do not make myself very happy on the inside, and I certainly destroy any **peace of soul** that I ought to have. **Evil, you see, is not positive.** *Evil is either an excess or a defect of what is good.* An excess or a defect. Food is good. Too little of it is bad; too much of it is bad. Drink is good. Too little of it is bad; too much of it is bad. Sleep is good. When, however, sleep interferes with duty, it is not good.

Evil is very much like darkness; it is the *absence of light*. It has no purpose inside of itself. Rather, it has no substance of its own is a better way to put it. *All badness is spoiled goodness.* A bad apple is a good apple that became rotten. Because evil has no capital of its own, it is a *parasite on goodness.*

Looking back then on our reason and will in this universe, we can see, as we said before, this universe is a vale of *soul-making*. **We were made to be good**, we were made to attain the truth. But, oh, how weak we are.

Look at the limitations of our reason and look at the limitations of our will:

Weak Reason:

First of all, **our reason**. How poor it is. Even those that had very good reason admitted that in the end they had captured just a little of what was true.

Isaac Newton, the great scientist, said “...*that he felt he was standing on the seashore of infinite truth with vast waters of knowledge stretched endlessly before him.*” Socrates, one of the wisest of the Greeks, said “...*there was only one thing that I know, and that is that I know nothing.*” Thomas Aquinas, who was the greatest mind that ever lived, said at the end of his life that all he had written seemed to him “*so much straw, in comparison to a dim vision that he received of heaven.*”

And, too, quite apart from these learned men, look at the **weak reason of people today**, their confusion of mind, their failure even to recognize any such thing as *truth or goodness*. They will read one book on Monday and they will say, “*Oh, I’m a materialist.*” Then they’ll read another book on Tuesday and they’re Communists. Then they read another book later on in the week and they reject both of those systems. They are laying down tracks one day, tearing them up the next. They’re planting seed one week, tearing up the seed the next. **They’re never, never working toward one goal.** It’s no wonder there are so many psychotics and neurotics in our world. **They’re just rehashing a lot of old errors and giving them new labels**, calling some of the old errors very novel. That’s only because they do not know it is ancient.

Weak Will:

Not only is **our reason weak** but also **our will**. Even when we know it is right, how hard it is sometimes to do it. We are besieged by temptations. We often feel like Goethe, who said that “... *he often wondered why he was one man because he felt there was enough evil in him and goodness to make both a rogue and a gentleman.*” [St. Augustine](#) said – we may have occasion to quote this again - : “*Whatever I am, I am not what I ought to be.*”

Looking back, therefore, on what we are we have to admit our **reason is weak, our will is feeble, our mind is dark, our will is lame.** *We need help!* We need more truth for our mind. We need more love and goodness for our will. *Where are we going to get it? Will God give it to us?* O, certainly, God would give it to us, not because we are worthy, because rather it seems that it would be in keeping with **His Goodness**, to tell us something and give us added power. And furthermore, we are teachable, we have minds, God could certainly give us new truths. Our nature is constantly receiving *invisible forces*.

We would not have flowers and trees if there were no sun communicating light that we do not see. It is only that by which we see. So God might send either a visible or an invisible force to illumine us. And then, also, He could strengthen our will, and that certainly we need. We cannot lift ourselves by the lobes of our ears! Our aspirations are too weak. Look at the resolutions we take on New Year’s and break. **We need power, and that power has got to come from the outside.**

An electric light bulb is useless unless power is supplied from without. We have a stomach but we need food from the outside. We have ears but we need sound from the outside. Very well, then, God might indeed illumine our reason, but *how would we know it?* Suppose there was such a thing as **revelation**. Could we tell? Certainly there are many who make claims to be **messengers** from God. **Reason has to set up certain standards.** Even before there is any **revelation**. We just simply cannot allow some man to come up on the stage of history and say, “*Listen to me, I am from God,*” or, “*I had a revelation.*”

I once received a telegram from someone and the telegram read, “*Report to Port 53, New York Harbor, to receive illumination from the Holy Spirit.*” Well, I am very sure that individual who sent it, whoever he was, believed that he had a revelation. But we cannot accept the revelation of any individual who claims merely that he has one. We cannot accept, for example, someone who says, “*I’ve got a book here, an angel wrote it for me.*” Then this world of ours would be filled with crackpots. If a skycap came to this country from Mars, we would say, “*Show me your passport. How do I know you’re from Mars?*” So, too, if anyone is coming from God with a revelation to our reason and strength for our will, **reason is going to impose certain tests, and these tests are three, and they are tests that can be verified by reason and by history.**

3 Test – Standards:

First, whoever comes should be *preannounced*.

Two, he should **work miracles** in attestation of the fact that he is a messenger.

Third, nothing that he ever teaches or reveals to us should **be contrary to human reason**, though it may be above it.

Those are three tests. That's the standard, that's the measuring rod.

First we say that anyone who comes should be **preannounced**. After all, brides preannounce their wedding; automobile manufacturers tell us when a new model will appear, and if God is going to send someone to this earth, certainly the least that God can do is let us know ***"I'm sending someone."*** That will do away with this idea of any individual suddenly appearing upon the stage of history saying, ***"I am God," or "I have a message from God."*** A preannouncement test will therefore be the **test of prophecy**.

Then, secondly, there will be another test, ***namely of miracles***. He who comes ought to be able to do marvels, signs, to authenticate his message, not so much, you see, in order to do things that would excite our wonder and make us say "Oh!" **Rather, miracles that would prove that God was with him.**

And then, thirdly, certainly anyone who comes to this earth must never in his teaching ***contradict human reason***. We may, indeed, have mysteries revealed to us that are above our reason, but they can never be contrary. For example, if anyone comes and teaches immorality or that the soul is not immortal, well, we would know that such a person could not come from God because statements of this kind are **contrary to reason**.

Looking back, then, we have three measuring rods or tests, design by reason, applicable to history. Now, line up all the claimants who come from God according to their words. March them out, line them up, stand there one by one. Let us say to them;

*"We are going to judge you. [Buddha](#), [Confucius](#), [Laotze](#), [Mohammed](#), [Marx](#), [Rama](#), witch doctors, Hindu philosophers, university professors, Hede, [Heidegger](#), anyone you please, from the founder of the latest cult in New York to Los Angeles. Stand there. We want to ask you questions. First, and we are just going to use one test in this lesson, **were you ever preannounced, any one of you?***

Answer. Buddha, did anyone ever know that you were coming to this earth? Confucius, was the place of your birth prophesied? Socrates, did anyone foretell that you would die of hemlock juice? Mohammed, was there ever an ancient tradition that you would be born among a certain people, was there ever a description as to how you would die? Did any one of your mothers know that you were coming? Is there a single one of you that can point to a historical record in which it was foretold where you would live, where you would die, how you would die, what would be your character, the manner of your teaching, the kind of enemies that you would provoke and evoke by the dignity of teaching? Answer me. Is there no one that can step out? "

Up to this moment, you see, we have not regarded Christ as any different from any other messenger from God.

Now one steps out of the ranks. *What is your name? "My name is Jesus Christ." Were you ever preannounced? Are there any historical records long before your coming describing the details of your existence? Are there documents attesting to the work that you would do and the purpose of your coming?"*

He is the only one that can answer, **"Yes"**, and say to the others, ***"Step back. You may be interesting, but you do not satisfy my first test. You were not preannounced, and that's the least that God could do! You have only your own word, but we are interested in the person of Christ."*** He says he was preannounced, and in that case, we will have to **study the documents**. That will be the subject of the next lesson. ***God love you.***

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

To view the context, please visit <https://www.kofc.org/en/catechism/index.html> or

http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_INDEX.HTM

GOOD and EVIL

284. "The great interest accorded to these studies is strongly stimulated by a question of another order, which goes beyond the proper domain of the natural sciences. It is not only a question of knowing when **AND** how the universe arose physically, or when man appeared, but rather of discovering the meaning of such an origin: is the universe governed by chance, blind fate, anonymous necessity, or by a transcendent, intelligent **AND GOOD** Being called 'God'? **AND** if the world does come from God's wisdom **AND** goodness, why is there **EVIL**? Where does it come from? Who is responsible for it? Is there any liberation from it?"

285. "Since the beginning the Christian faith has been challenged by responses to the question of origins that differ from its own. Ancient religions **AND** cultures produced many myths concerning origins. Some philosophers have said that everything is God, that the world is God, or that the development of the world is the development of God (Pantheism). Others have said that the world is a necessary emanation arising from God **AND** returning to him. Still others have affirmed the existence of two eternal principles, **GOOD AND EVIL**, Light **AND** Darkness, locked, in permanent conflict (Dualism, Manichaeism). According to some of these conceptions, the world (at least the physical world) is **EVIL**, the product of a fall, **AND** is thus to be rejected or left behind (Gnosticism). Some admit that the world was made by God, but as by a watch-maker who, once he has made a watch, abandons it to itself (Deism). Finally, others reject any transcendent origin for the world, but see it as merely the interplay of matter that has always existed (Materialism). All these attempts bear witness to the permanence **AND** universality of the question of origins. This inquiry is distinctively human. "

309. "If God the Father almighty, the Creator of the ordered **AND GOOD** world, cares for all his creatures, why does **EVIL** exist? To this question, as pressing as it is unavoidable **AND** as painful as it is mysterious, no quick answer will suffice. Only Christian faith as a whole constitutes the answer to this question: the goodness of creation, the drama of sin **AND** the patient love of God who comes to meet man by his covenants, the redemptive Incarnation of his Son, his gift of the Spirit, his gathering of the Church, the power of the sacraments **AND** his call to a blessed life to which free creatures are invited to consent in advance, but from which, by a terrible mystery, they can also turn away in advance. There is not a single aspect of the Christian message that is not in part an answer to the question of **EVIL**. "

REASON:

1. "God, infinitely perfect and blessed in himself, in a plan of sheer goodness freely created man to make him share in his own blessed life. For this **REASON**, at every time and in every place, God draws close to man. He calls man to seek him, to know him, to love him with all his strength. He calls together all men, scattered and divided by sin, into the unity of his family, the Church. To accomplish this, when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son as Redeemer and Saviour. In his Son and through him, he invites men to become, in the Holy Spirit, his adopted children and thus heirs of his blessed life. "

35. "Man's faculties make him capable of coming to a knowledge of the existence of a personal God. But for man to be able to enter into real intimacy with him, God willed both to reveal himself to man, and to give him the grace of being able to welcome this revelation in faith.(so) The proofs of God's existence, however, can predispose one to faith and help one to see that faith is not opposed to **REASON**. "

36. "'Our holy mother, the Church, holds and teaches that God, the first principle and last end of all things, can be known with certainty from the created world by the natural light of human **REASON**.[Vatican Council I, Dei Filius 2: DS 3004 cf. 3026; Vatican Council II, Dei Verbum 6.] Without this capacity, man would not be able to welcome God's revelation. Man has this capacity because he is created 'in the image of God'.[Cf. [Gen 1:27](#) .]"

37. "In the historical conditions in which he finds himself, however, man experiences many difficulties in coming to know God by the light of **REASON** alone: Though human **REASON** is, strictly speaking, truly capable by its own natural power and light of attaining to a true and certain knowledge of the one personal God, who watches over and controls the world by his providence, and of the natural law written in our hearts by the Creator; yet there are many obstacles which prevent **REASON** from the effective and fruitful use of this inborn faculty. For the truths that concern the relations between God and man wholly transcend the visible order of things, and, if they are translated into human action and influence it, they call for self-surrender and abnegation. The human mind, in its turn, is hampered in the attaining of such truths, not only by the impact of the senses and the imagination, but also by disordered appetites which are the consequences of original sin. So it happens that men in such matters easily persuade themselves that what they would not like to be true is false or at least doubtful.[Pius XII, Humani generis 561: DS 3875.] "

38. "This is why man stands in need of being enlightened by God's revelation, not only about those things that exceed his understanding, but also 'about those religious and moral truths which of themselves are not beyond the grasp of human **REASON**, so that even in the present condition of the human race, they can be known by all men with ease, with firm certainty and with no admixture of error'. [Pius XII, Humani generis 561: DS 3876; cf. Dei Filius 2: DS 3005; DV 6; St. Thomas Aquinas, S Th I, I, I.]"

39. "In defending the ability of human **REASON** to know God, the Church is expressing her confidence in the possibility of speaking about him to all men and with all men, and therefore of dialogue with other religions, with philosophy and science, as well as with unbelievers and atheists. "

47. "The Church teaches that the one true God, our Creator and Lord, can be known with certainty from his works, by the natural light of human **REASON** [cf. Vatican Council I, can. 2 # 1: DS 3026.]."

50. "By natural **REASON** man can know God with certainty, on the basis of his works. But there is another order of knowledge, which man cannot possibly arrive at by his own powers: the order of divine Revelation.[Cf. Dei Filius DS 3015.] Through an utterly free decision, God has revealed himself and given himself to man. This he does by revealing the mystery, his plan of loving goodness, formed from all eternity in Christ, for the benefit of all men. God has fully revealed this plan by sending us his beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. "