

# Making the Case for God in terms of his Justice which is Reconciled with the rest of his Perfections and with all his Actions

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[Brackets] enclose editorial explanations. Small ·dots· enclose material that has been added, but can be read as though it were part of the original text. Occasional •bullets, and also indenting of passages that are not quotations, are meant as aids to grasping the structure of a sentence or a thought.—This Latin work was meant as a more rigorous version of the over-all argument of the vastly longer but more informal *Theodicy*, written in French.

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**1.** Constructing a defence in the case of God is doing something not only for *his* glory but also for *our* advantage, in that it may move us to •honour his greatness, i.e. his power and wisdom, as well as to •love his goodness and the justice and holiness that stem from it, and to •imitate these as best we can. This defence will have two parts—a preparatory one and then the principal one. The first part studies the •greatness and the •goodness of God separately. The second part concerns these two perfections taken together, including the providence that God extends to all created things and the control that he exercises over creatures endowed with intelligence, particularly in all matters concerning piety and salvation. ·The first part will occupy sections 2–39, the second part sections 40–144·.

## God's greatness and goodness considered separately

**2.** Stiff-necked theologians attended to God's •greatness at the expense of his •goodness, while more relaxed ones have done the opposite. True orthodoxy consists in paying equal respect to both these perfections. Neglecting God's greatness amounts to likening him to a human being; neglecting his goodness amounts to likening him to a despot.

**3.** The greatness of God has to be resolutely defended, particularly against the Socinians and some semi-Socinians [whom Leibniz names. The Socinians denied the doctrine of the Trinity, the divinity of Jesus, God's foreknowledge of future contingent truths, etc.] This greatness can be brought under two main headings, God's •omnipotence and his •omniscience.

**4.** God's omnipotence implies that he does not depend on anything else, and also that everything else depends on him.

**5.** God is independent ·of everything else in two different ways·: in his •existence and also in his •actions. He is independent in his existence in that he is a necessary and eternal being, and is what is called an *Ens a se*—Latin for 'a being to himself', meaning something that exists without in any way depending on anything else. Because he exists necessarily, nothing was needed to cause him to come into existence; which is why he doesn't depend on anything for his existence·. A consequence of this is that he is immense.

**6.** In his actions he is independent both •naturally and •morally. He is naturally independent in that he is absolutely free, and isn't *made* to act by anything but himself. He is morally independent since he. . . .has no superior.

**7.** *Everything* depends on God—not just every •actual thing but also everything that is •possible, i.e. that doesn't imply contradiction.

**8.** The possibility of things—even the ones that have no actual existence—has a reality based on God's existence. For if God didn't *exist* nothing would be *possible*. The ideas in his intellect contain everything that is possible, and have done so from eternity.

**9.** Actual things depend on God for their •existence as well as for their •actions, and depend not only on his intellect but also on his will. Their existence depends on God because as well as having been freely created by him they are *kept in existence* by him. There is a sound doctrine according to which this divine keeping-in-existence is a continual *creation*, comparable to the rays continually produced by the sun. The persistence of created things •doesn't come from God's essence, ·but rather from his will·, and it •isn't necessary, ·because the relevant acts of God's will are contingent·. [In sections 10–12, 26–7, and in about half the sections from 61 to 76, Leibniz will write about God's 'concurring in' things that happen (Latin *concurrere*). Understood literally, this is his *going along with* the events. But as used by Leibniz and his contemporaries the Latin word has a wider meaning than that: they would say that God 'concurr in' events that he actively causes as well as ones that he goes along with, i.e. *allows* to happen, i.e. could have prevented but didn't.]

**10.** Things depend on God in their actions, because he concurs in their actions to the extent that these actions have some something in the nature of a perfection about them; and any such perfection must have flowed from God.

**11.** God's concurrence is *immediate* in this sense: if God causes x which causes y, this involves him in concurring in y's production just as much, and just as directly, as he concurs in the production of x.

**12.** God's concurrence is also *specific* in this sense: it is directed not merely to the thing's *existing* and to its *acting* thus and so, but also to its having such-and-such specific states and qualities—all its states and qualities insofar as they have something perfect about them. Any such perfection—like the perfection in the thing's actions—always flows from God, the father of light and giver of everything good. (What I have said about the immediacy and specificity of God's concurrence applies not only to his miracles, but even to his ordinary, non-miraculous concurrence.)

**13.** Having dealt with God's power, I turn now to his wisdom—which is called 'omniscience' because it is so vast. This wisdom is the most perfect possible (just as is God's omnipotence), and so it holds within itself every idea and every truth—that is, everything (simple or complex) that can be an object of the understanding. It includes equally everything possible as well as everything actual.

**14.** God's knowledge of the possibles constitutes what is called *knowledge by simple intelligence*. Its objects are the things as well as their relationships, necessary and contingent.

**15.** Contingent possibles can be looked at in either of two ways: either separately or as correlated in an infinity of complete possible worlds. Each possible world is perfectly known to God, though only one of them has been brought into existence. There's no question of there being more than one *actual* world, because our single universe includes *all* the created things there ever were or are or will be, anywhere; and that is what I here call 'one world'.

**16.** God's knowledge of actual things—i.e. of the world that has been brought into existence and of all its past, present, and future states—is called *knowledge by vision*. Knowledge by simple intelligence can also be focussed on this same

one and only *actual* world, viewing it merely as *possible*; what knowledge by vision adds to that is just something God knows about himself, namely his decree to bring this world into actual existence. Because the decree is absolutely specific, ordaining the existence not just of *some world* or of *a world that is of this or that general kind* but of *just precisely THIS world, in all its detail*, knowledge of this decree is all that is needed as a basis for divine foreknowledge.

**17.** Knowledge by simple intelligence, taken in the way I have expounded it, includes what is commonly called *middle knowledge*.

[This phrase was coined by Luis de Molina to name knowledge of counterfactual conditional truths. It is included in knowledge by simple intelligence, as defined in section 14, because knowledge of counterfactual truths is one kind of knowledge about connections between *possibilities*. Leibniz is here taking 'middle knowledge' in its common meaning to be restricted to conditionals about possible futures—what would happen if at some *later* time such-and-such were to be the case. He now goes on to propose a broader definition for 'middle knowledge' that removes that restriction; and he proposes a narrower definition of 'knowledge by simple intelligence' so that it no longer includes simple knowledge.]

However, there is a different way of drawing the lines between kinds of knowledge. We could restrict knowledge by simple intelligence to knowledge of what truths are possible and what are necessary, leaving out knowledge of contingent relations between possibilities. Then we could take 'middle knowledge' in a broader sense in which it covers not only knowledge of conditional future events but generally knowledge of *all* contingent possibles—including truths to the effect that if such-and-such *had been* the case in the past then so-and-so would also have been the case. In this revised classification, 'knowledge by vision' is untouched, and still deals with contingent truths about what is actual. Now we have middle knowledge genuinely *in the middle*,

sharing •one feature with knowledge by simple intelligence (namely, dealing only with truths about possibilities), and •a different feature with knowledge by vision (namely, dealing only with contingent truths).

[Just to make sure this proposed new classification is clear, think about these propositions (supposing them all to be true):

1. It is impossible for something to be smaller than a part of itself.
2. If the oceans had been warmer, there would have been more rain.
3. If the sun were to go cold tomorrow, all life on earth would cease within a month.
4. The earth will become steadily warmer through the next two decades.

What Leibniz sees himself as doing is moving 2 out of knowledge by simple intelligence and into middle knowledge along with 3; while 4 remains in knowledge by vision, as before.]

**18.** Having considered God's greatness; I now turn to his goodness. Just as •wisdom (= knowledge of truth) is a perfection of the •understanding, so •goodness (= trying to do what is good) is a perfection of the •will. Indeed *all* will, •even that of creatures•, aims at the good, or anyway of the apparent good; but •we need't add 'or apparent' in the case of God, because• his will has no object that isn't •actually• both good and true.

**19.** So I shall be looking at both the will and its object—i.e. what it takes account of and is moved by —namely good and evil, which give •to the will• reasons for willing and rejecting respectively. As to the will, I shall consider both the nature of will and the different kinds of will.

**20.** The nature of the will requires *freedom*, which consists in the voluntary action's being spontaneous and deliberate. So freedom rules out the kind of *necessity* that suppresses •deliberation. [One might think that this illustrates Leibniz's point: when you are falling from a great height, you can't •try to decide whether

to go on falling or rather to stay where you are. But we see in the next section that his primary topic is *God's* freedom, to which such examples are irrelevant.]

**21.** Something is •metaphysically necessary if its opposite is •absolutely• impossible, i.e. implies a contradiction. If it is •morally necessary, its opposite is •not contradictory but merely• *unfitting*. God's freedom rules out the former of these kinds of necessity, but not the latter. For although God can't fall into error in choosing, and therefore always chooses what is most fitting, this •inability to make worse choices• is not an obstacle to his freedom; indeed, it serves only to make his freedom even more perfect. If there were only one possibility for his will to aim at—i.e. if only one total state of affairs were possible—that *would* be incompatible with his freedom; for then there would nothing for him to choose, and no basis for praising him for the wisdom and goodness of his actions.

**22.** Some •theologians• have maintained that only the actual—only what God has chosen—is possible. They are wrong, or at least they have expressed themselves clumsily. Diodorus the Stoic made this mistake, according to Cicero, and Christians who have made it include Abelard, Wycliff, and Hobbes. I shall deal with freedom more fully later on, when human freedom will have to be defended. [Human freedom will come up in sections 97–8 and 101–6.]

**23.** That was about the nature of •God's• will. Now I turn to the varieties of it. For my present purpose two distinctions are the most important: the distinction of •antecedent will from •consequent will, and the distinction of •productive will from •permissive will.

**24.** The former distinguishes  
 •acts of will that are antecedent or prior from •those that are consequent or final;

which is the same as distinguishing

- will that inclines from •will that decrees ·or lays down the law·.

This is tantamount to distinguishing

- will that is incomplete from •will that is complete or absolute.

The antecedent will is directed toward some particular good considered in terms of how good it is in itself, ·but without reference to how it would fit in with the rest of what would be the case·; so that this is only a will *secundum quid* [Latin, meaning ‘a will according to something’]. The consequent will on the other hand takes account of the whole ·world-wide state of affairs· and contains a final decision; so it is absolute and issues in a decree ·such as ‘Let there be light’·. Since it is *God’s* will that is in question here, the decree always obtains its full effect. –Some authors, however, have a different understanding of this distinction (especially of the ‘antecedent’ side of it). They hold that the ‘antecedent’ will of God (e.g. that all men be saved) comes *before* men’s actions are taken into account, and that the ‘consequent’ will (e.g. that some men be damned) comes *after* the facts about men’s actions are taken into account. But that distinction ·doesn’t have any *special* bearing on God’s will concerning salvation, because it· applies also to other acts of God’s will: certain acts of the divine will involve the concept of *actions of creatures*, and actions of creatures couldn’t occur without certain acts of the divine will. That is why St. Thomas, Duns Scotus, and others understand this distinction in the way I do ·rather than in terms of the difference between ‘before the act’ and ‘after the act’·. For the rest, if you reject my way of drawing the line, I won’t quarrel with you about words; and you may if you like substitute the terms ‘prior’ and ‘final’ for ‘antecedent’ and ‘consequent’ respectively.

**25.** ·God’s· antecedent will is entirely serious ·or weighty·, and pure ·or unmixed with qualifications or afterthoughts·. It shouldn’t be confused with mere *velleity* (as expressed in ‘I would do x if I could, and I wish I could’), which doesn’t exist in God; nor should it be confused with *conditional will*, which is not in question here. God’s antecedent will tends toward bringing about all good and repelling all evil, ·the tendency being strong· in proportion to *how* good or evil the good and evil are. God himself confirmed how serious—·how unhesitant and unmixed·—this will is when he so firmly asserted that he did not want the death of the sinner, wanted all men to be saved, and was opposed to sin, ·all of which were examples of antecedent will·.

**26.** A consequent act of will arises from all antecedent acts of will taken together. When they can’t all be carried out together, the maximum effect that can be obtained by wisdom and power will be obtained. This ·consequent act of will is also commonly called a ‘decree’.

**27.** It is clear from this that even the antecedent acts of will are not altogether in vain; they have their own efficacy. They *do* produce effects; but such an act of will doesn’t always produce the full effect it aims at, because it is restricted by the influence of other antecedent acts of will. However, the decisive ·or consequent· act of will, which results from all the inclining ·or antecedent· ones, always produces its full effect—provided that the required *power* isn’t lacking, which of course in God’s case it never is. This maxim :

*He who has the power and the will does what he wills* holds only for this decisive ·or consequent· act of will. (·Its not holding for antecedent acts of will is obvious. The reason why it *does* hold for consequent acts of will is that· this *power* is supposed to imply also the knowledge required for

action, so that nothing intrinsic or extrinsic is lacking for action.) The fact that not all God's acts of will produce their full effects doesn't detract from the felicity and perfection of his will; for he wills what is good only according to *how* good it is, and the better the result obtained the more satisfied his will is.

**28.** The second distinction that I introduced in section 23 divides the will into •productive and •permissive. The former is aimed at the actions of the agent himself, the latter at actions by others. Sometimes it is all right to *permit* (that is, not prevent) actions which it is not all right to *commit*, as for instance acts of sin (more about this soon). The proper object of permissive will is not •the permitted action but •the permission itself—when I permit you to do x, what I immediately/directly/properly will is not •your doing x but •my permitting you to do x.

**29.** So far I have dealt with the will; now I shall study the reasons for willing, namely good and evil. Each of these is of three kinds: metaphysical, physical, and moral. [As Leibniz uses it here, 'physical' (Latin *physicus*) means something like 'pertaining to what exists and what happens in the real world'—it *tends* to mean about the same as 'contingent'. Its meaning is emphatically not confined to the realm of *matter*.]

**30.** Metaphysical good or evil consists in the perfection or imperfection of all created things, including those not endowed with intelligence. Christ said that the heavenly father cares for the lilies of the field and for the sparrows; and Jonah said that God watches over the lower animals.

**31.** Physical good or evil is understood as applying especially to what is helpful or hurtful to thinking substances. The evil of punishment falls into this category.

**32.** Moral good or evil is attributed to the virtuous or vicious actions of thinking substances, for example the evil of guilt

[this refers to *being* guilty, not *feeling* guilty]. In this sense physical evil is usually an effect of moral evil, though not always in the same subjects. [That is, *my* moral evil may cause *you* to suffer a physical evil.] This may seem to be unfair, but eventually the balance will swing the other way so that even the innocents won't wish not to have suffered. See section 55 below.

**33.** If something is good in itself then God wills it, at least antecedently [see sections 24–5]. He wills the perfection of all things, quite universally, and more specifically he wills the felicity and virtue of all thinking substances; and (I repeat) he wills each good according to its degree of goodness.

**34.** God's antecedent will doesn't have evils in its view except in his willing that evils be suppressed. But they do in an indirect way come into his consequent will. For sometimes greater goods couldn't be obtained if certain evils were eliminated, and in such a case removing the evil wouldn't produce the effect aimed at in God's consequent will. Thus, though suppressing the evil in question is at home in the antecedent will, it doesn't push its way into the consequent will. That is why Thomas Aquinas was right in saying, following St. Augustine, that God permits certain evils to occur lest many goods be prevented.

**35.** Sometimes •metaphysical and •physical evils (such as •imperfections in things and the •evils of punishment in persons) become subsidiary goods in their role as means to greater goods—that is, to things that are good enough to more than outweigh the evils.

**36.** Moral evil or the evil of guilt, however, never functions as a legitimate means. For (as the apostle says) evil ought not to be done so that good may ensue [*Romans* 3:8]. But sometimes moral evil functions as an indispensable and concomitant condition of something good—what they call a condition *sine qua non* [= 'a condition **without which not**'], in

this case a condition **without which** the desired good could **not** be obtained. . . . What lets evil into the world is not the principle of •absolute necessity but rather the principle of •fitness. There must, indeed, be a reason for God to permit an evil rather than not to permit it; but no reason except *the good* can determine the divine will.

**37.** A further point: the evil of guilt is never the object of God's •productive will, but only sometimes of his •permissive will, for he himself never commits a sin though in some cases he permits a sin to be committed.

**38.** As regards permitting sin, there is a general rule that holds for God and man, namely: nobody ought to *permit* someone else to sin unless by stopping him he would himself

be *doing* something evil. In a nutshell: it is your duty to prevent someone else from sinning unless it is your duty not to. I'll say more about this in section 66.

**39.** Thus, what God wills as his ultimate goal includes *the best*; but any good—one that isn't part of the best—may be a subordinate goal; and he may often aim at things that are neither good nor bad, such as the evil of punishment, as means •to some goal that he has•. But the evil of guilt is •something God aims at as• an end only when it is a necessary condition for something that for other reasons ought to exist or happen. In this sense, as Christ has said, 'It is impossible but that offences will come' [Matthew 18:7; Luke 17:1].

## God's greatness and goodness considered together

**40.** Up to here I have dealt with the greatness and the goodness •of God• •separately, presenting them in preparation for •the main part of• this treatise. Now I come to what concerns those two perfections •taken together. The territory that they share involves everything that comes from *both* •God's• goodness *and* •his• greatness (that is, •his• wisdom and power); •they work together jointly• because greatness makes it possible for goodness to attain its •intended• effect. •This joint work falls into two categories, corresponding to the two ranges across which God's goodness extends. His• goodness is directed either **(1)** generally to all created things or **(2)** specifically to thinking things. When combined with •his• greatness, •God's• goodness brings about **(1)** providence in

the creation and government of the universe, and **(2)** justice in ruling, specifically, the substances that are endowed with reason.

**41.** God's wisdom (•which is an aspect of his power•) directs his goodness across the totality of things he has created. It follows that divine providence shows itself in the total series of •things and events that constitute• the universe, and that from out of the infinity of possible series God has selected the best—so that that best universe is the one that actually exists. All things in the universe are in mutual harmony, and someone who is truly wise will therefore never form a judgment about it without taking them all into consideration and applying his judgment to the universe as a whole. God's

volitions regarding the parts taken separately can belong to antecedent will; but his volition with regard to the whole must be understood as a decree, .i.e. as an exercise of consequent will.

**42.** Strictly speaking there was no need for a succession of divine decrees; we can say that there was just one decree of God—the decree that *this* series of items should exist—made after all the elements of the series had been considered and compared with the items in other .possible. series.

**43.** And that is why God’s decree can’t be changed—because all the reasons that might count against it have already been considered. But the only *necessity* that arises out of this is the **necessity of the consequence** (also called hypothetical necessity)—.meaning that it follows necessarily from something true, but not that it is in itself necessary. This is the kind of necessity that arises from the God’s knowing and ordaining things in advance. It isn’t absolute necessity, i.e. the **necessity of the consequent**—.something that doesn’t merely follow necessarily but is itself necessary. That is because some other series of things .and events. was equally possible—possible in its parts and possible as a whole. By choosing the contingent series that he did, God didn’t change its status as contingent.

**44.** Despite the certainty of the events in this universe, it is not a waste of time for us to pray and work to obtain the future goods that we desire. For when God looked at this actual series in his mind, before deciding to create it, what he saw also contained the .prayers that the series would include if it were chosen to become actual, just as it contained all the other .causes of all the effects that the series would include. So these prayers and other causes have contributed to the choice of this series and of the events figuring in it. And the reasons that .now move God to *do this* or *permit that* moved

him .back then to decide what he would do and what he would permit.

**45.** I repeat: although events are *settled* by divine foreknowledge and providence, they are not settled in the manner of .something that is absolutely necessary. In the case of .the latter, we can say that *it will be so, no matter what we do*; but this doesn’t hold for events that are settled only by their causes, .which may include prayers and hard work. To say that .because the future is settled. prayers and hard work are useless is to commit what the ancients called ‘the lazy man’s fallacy’. See also sections 106–7 below.

**46.** Thus the infinite wisdom of the almighty, allied with his boundless goodness, has brought it about that nothing better could have been created, all things considered, than what God has created. As a consequence all things are in complete harmony and collaborate in the most beautiful way:

.formal causes or souls collaborating with .material causes or bodies, .efficient or natural causes collaborating with .final or moral causes, and the realm of grace collaborating with the realm of nature.

[An example to illustrate those Aristotelian technical terms: the .formal cause of a coin is its design or plan, its .material cause is the metal it is made of, its .efficient cause is the action of the die that stamps it out, and its .final cause is commerce, the purpose for which it was made.]

**47.** So whenever some detail in God’s work appears open to criticism, the right thing to think is that .we don’t know enough about it to make a judgment, and that .someone who was wise enough would judge that God could not have made a better choice.

**48.** From this it also follows that there is no greater happiness than to serve such a good master, and that we should therefore love God above everything else and trust him without reservation.



**49.** The strongest reason for the choice of the best series of events (namely, this world of ours) was Christ, God become man [Leibniz gives that in Greek], who was the most perfect of creatures and had to be contained in that series as a part of the created universe—indeed as the head of it. That is why it had to be the noblest of all possible series. •To him all power in heaven and on earth has been given, •in him all the peoples were to be blessed, and •through him every creature will be freed from slavery of corruption to enjoy the freedom and glory of the children of God.

**50.** So far I have dealt with providence, which is •God’s goodness as expressed in a •general •way•. Now we come to his goodness •specifically towards thinking creatures. God’s goodness towards thinking creatures, combined with his wisdom, constitutes *justice*, the highest degree of which is holiness. Justice, in the broad sense of the word, covers not only •strict law but also •fairness and therefore also laudable mercy. [See section 40 above for (1) this distinction between the general and the specific ranges of God’s goodness, and (2) the thesis that God’s justice is a combination of his goodness towards thinking creatures and his greatness (one component of which is his wisdom).]

**51.** Justice taken in a general sense can be divided into •justice in a more special sense and •holiness. Justice in the special sense has to do with •physical good and evil as applied to thinking beings; holiness has to do with •moral good and evil.

**52.** Physical good and evil occur both in this life and in the life to come. There is much complaint that in this life human nature is exposed to many evils. Those who feel this way overlook the fact that a large part of these evils is the effect of human guilt. Indeed they are ungrateful, not sufficiently recognizing the divine goods of which we are the beneficiaries, and focussing more on our sufferings than on

our blessings.

**53.** Others are particularly displeased that physical good and evil are not distributed in proportion to moral good and evil—i.e. that frequently good people are miserable while bad ones prosper.

**54.** To these complaints there are two answers. The first was given by the apostle •Paul•: The afflictions of this life are not worthy of •comparison with• the future glory that will be revealed to us [2 Corinthians 4:17]. The second was suggested by Christ himself in an elegant comparison: If the grain falling to the soil didn’t die, it wouldn’t bear fruit [John 12:24].

**55.** Thus not only will our afflictions be abundantly compensated for, but they will serve to increase our happiness. These evils are not only profitable, but also indispensable. See section 32.

**56.** A still greater difficulty arises with regard to the life to come. For there too (it is objected) evil by far prevails over good, since few are elected •for salvation•. Well, Origen flatly denied eternal damnation. Some of the ancient authors—Prudentius among them—thought that only a few would be damned for eternity. Others have thought that eventually all Christians would be saved, and Jerome seems sometimes to have leaned this way.

**57.** But these paradoxical views should be rejected, and we don’t need any of them to resolve the difficulty. The true answer is that the whole sweep of the celestial realm must not be evaluated according to *our* knowledge. For the divine vision can give to the blessed such a glory that the sufferings of all the damned can’t be compared to such a good. Furthermore, scripture acknowledges an incredible multitude of blessed angels. Also, nature itself shows us through new inventions—the telescope and the microscope—a great variety of created things, so that it is easier for us than

it was for St. Augustine and other ancients to defend the predominance of good over evil.

**58.** Our earth is merely a satellite of one sun; for obvious reasons there are as many suns as there are fixed stars; and for all we know there is an immense space beyond all the fixed stars. Well, then, nothing prevents those suns and particularly the region beyond all suns from being inhabited by blessed creatures. The planets themselves may be or become happy paradises. In the father's house are many mansions, as Christ himself has rightly said of the heaven of the blessed [John 14:2]. Some theologians call that region the 'Empyreum' and place it beyond the stars (i.e. the suns), but we can't say anything for sure about the region of the blessed. Still, we can think it *likely* that even in the visible world there are many habitations for rational creatures, with no limits to how happy they may be.

**59.** Thus the argument whose premise concerns how many of the damned there are is based on nothing but our ignorance, and, as I indicated earlier, can be destroyed by a single answer: if everything was made clear to us, we would see that a better world than the one God has made couldn't have been chosen. As to the punishment of the damned, it continues because the wickedness of the damned continues. In his excellent book *On the State of the Damned* the eminent theologian Johann Fechtius has thoroughly refuted those who deny that sins earn punishment in the after-life, as though the justice essential to God could ever cease!

**60.** The most serious difficulties, however, are those that concern God's holiness—the one of his perfections that has to do with the moral good and evil of others. [The term 'holiness' is introduced and explained in section 50 above.] This perfection makes him love virtue and hate vice in others, and keep them as far as possible from the stain and contagion of sin.

And yet scattered across the middle of the kingdom of God almighty there are rogues triumphant! Serious as it is, this difficulty can be overcome with the help of the divine light, even in *this* life, so that the pious who love God can be satisfied about it as much as need be.

**61.** The objection, then, alleges that God concurs too much in sin and man not enough: God concurs too much, both physically and morally, in moral evil, through productively and permissively willing sins. [(1) The distinction between productive and permissive will is introduced in section 28 above. It now appears that it is equated with the distinction between physical and moral concurrence in an outcome. On this, see section 68 below. (2) By the puzzling phrase 'and man not enough' Leibniz means that not enough of the responsibility for sin is laid at man's door (because too much of it is laid at God's). See section 74 below.]

**62.** Those who take this view observe that moral concurrence would occur even if God didn't actively contribute to sin, because he permits it—i.e. could prevent it and doesn't.

**63.** But, they add, God in fact doesn't merely permit (or not prevent) the sinners, but positively helps them in a certain manner—morally and physically—by providing forces and occasions for them. Hence the passages in the sacred scriptures that say that God hardens the hearts of the evildoers and incites them.

**64.** That is why certain authors even go so far as to conclude that God is morally or physically (or both) an accomplice in sin, even an author of sin. By this means they destroy God's holiness as well as his justice and goodness.

**65.** Others prefer to tear down his omniscience and omnipotence or, in one word, his greatness [see section 3 above]. According to them, God either doesn't foresee the evil, or doesn't care about it, or can't hold back its flood. This was the opinion of the Epicureans and of the Manichaeans. Some-

thing similar is taught, less crudely, by the Socinians, who rightly want to protect the divine •holiness from pollution, but wrongly abandon God's •other perfections.

**66.** To respond first to the point about *moral concurrence through permission*, I need only to return to something that I launched before, namely that permitting sin is legitimate when it turns out to be obligatory; that is, it is morally possible when it is morally necessary. This is the case whenever you can't prevent someone else's sin except by committing an offence yourself. . . . A soldier on guard duty, for instance, particularly in a time of danger, ought not to desert his post in order to prevent two friends from fighting the duel for which they are preparing. See also section 36. When I speak something as being obligatory on God, I don't mean 'obligatory' in its human sense; I mean it in the sense appropriate to God, namely as meaning that if he didn't do the thing in question he would be derogating his perfections. [The word 'derogate', which seems unavoidable as a translation for the Latin *derogo*, means 'take something away from' or 'impair the force of or 'disparage' or, *almost*, 'insult'.]

**67.** Next point: if God hadn't selected for creation the best series of events (in which sin does occur), he would have admitted something worse than all creaturely sin; for he would have derogated his own perfections and (in consequence of that) all other perfections as well. For divine perfection can never fail to select the most perfect, since choosing what is •less good has the nature of choosing some •evil. If God lacked power or erred in his thinking or failed in his will, that would be the end of God, and therefore of everything.

**68.** Some people—especially and objectionably the Epicureans and Manichaeans—have held that God's •physical concurrence in sin makes him the cause and the author of

sin, which •if it were right• would make the evil of guilt be something aimed at by God's •productive will. [For the equation of •physical concurrence in x with •productively making x happen rather than merely permissively allowing x to happen, see sections 61–2 above.] But here again God himself, enlightening the mind, is his own defender vis-à-vis pious souls who eagerly search for truth. So I shall explain how God concurs in the *matter* of sin (i.e. in the part of evil that is good) but does not concur in its *form*. [Leibniz seems to mean that God concurs in some happening that is in fact a sin, but doesn't concur in it *as a sin* or *because it is sinful*.]

**69.** So here is the right reply: In creatures every perfection—every purely positive reality—is due to God. This holds also for their good *and evil* actions; but an imperfection in an act consists in a privation—a lack, the agent's *not* having something—and it comes from the basic limitedness that all created things have. Every created thing is 'limited' in the sense that its greatness, power, knowledge, and all its other perfections are limited or restricted. •I need to explain carefully what the *status* is of this limitedness of created things•.

This limitedness is *essential* to created things. •It's not that they are limited because they were created. On the contrary•, their limitedness was already inherent in their essence considered as mere possibilities, i.e. considered as belonging to the region of eternal truth, the domain of the ideas that present themselves to the divine intellect. Indeed, a being that was in no way limited wouldn't be a created thing; it would be God.

Thus the foundation of evil is necessary, but its coming into existence is contingent. In other words, it is necessary that evil be possible, but contingent that it be actual. What is not contingent is its passing from potentiality to actuality by

virtue of the harmony of all things because of its fitness to be part of the best series of things and events. [Leibniz presumably means: If some evil act *x* actually occurs, then it was *necessary* that it was part of the best series; and the truth about *which* series is the best is also necessary. This still allows that the existence of *x* is contingent, because it wasn't absolutely necessary that God chose to actualize the best series.]

**70.** What I have said about the privative [= 'negative'] nature of evil—following St. Augustine, St. Thomas, ·our contemporary· Lubinus, and many other ancient and modern writers—is often considered futile or anyway very obscure. So I shall spell it out in terms of the very nature of things, so as to make it look as plain and solid as possible. I'll do this through an analogy with something sensible and material that also consists in a privation. I am talking about something that the noted scientist Kepler has called the 'natural inertia' of bodies.

**71.** Take the case (to use an easy example) of a river carrying boats and applying its own velocity to them, but with their velocity limited by their own inertia so that, other things being equal, the more heavily loaded boats will be carried more slowly. Thus the •speed of each boat comes from the river, and its •slowness comes from the loads; the •positive from the force of the propelling agent, the •privative from the inertia of the thing that is propelled.

**72.** It is in just this way that God must be said to give a created thing its perfection, which is limited by the thing's holding back. Thus goods come from the divine force, and evils from creaturely sluggishness.

**73.** This is why the understanding often errs through lack of attention, and the will often weakens through lack of zeal. When this happens the mind, which should stretch up towards God as its supreme good, slumps down through its

inertia to the imperfect state of a created thing.

**74.** I have answered those who believe that God concurs too much in evil; now I shall satisfy those who say that man doesn't concur enough, meaning that not enough of the guilt for sin falls on him (so that, once again, it is made to fall on God). The opposition try to prove this on the basis of •the weakness of human nature combined with •the failure of divine grace to give our nature the help it needs. Let us then look at the nature of man—taking in both •its spoiled state (·spoiled by sin·) and •the vestiges of God's likeness that are left over from its state of innocence. [The phrase 'spoiled state' translates the Latin *corruptio*, which is sometimes translated by 'corruption', but does not have to be.]

**75.** I shall consider what caused man to be spoiled, and what his spoiled state consists in. It has its origin in the fall of our first parents, and the hereditary transmission of the contagion ·of that fall·. Then what *was* the fall, and what *caused* it?

**76.** The cause of the fall: Why did man fall, with God knowing about this fall, permitting it, concurring in it? The answer isn't to be sought in some despotic power of God, as though his attributes didn't include justice and holiness—as they *wouldn't* if God weren't concerned with right and equity.

**77.** Nor should we try to explain the fall in this way:

God is indifferent as between good and evil, justice and injustice. It is he who settles what is good and what evil, what is just and what unjust, by simply *deciding*. ·Rather than God willing something because it is good, the thing is good because God wills it·.

For if this were so, ·as Descartes thought it was·, it would follow that God could have made *anything* good (or evil), and with equal justice and reason—i.e. with *no* justice or reason! And that would reduce all the glory of his justice and his

wisdom to nothing, since he could find in his actions no joy and no basis for joy.

**78.** Third and last: The fall is not to be explained by supposing that God created miserable creatures because of a cruel desire to have someone to feel sorry for, and created sinners so as to have creatures to punish. On this view, God's will is neither holy nor worthy of being loved; he lacks goodness, and cares only about his greatness and glory. All this is tyrannical and completely alien to true glory and perfection—qualities that receive their splendour not only from God's greatness but just as much from his goodness.

**79.** The true root of the fall is not one of those three but rather the inherent imperfection and weakness of created things, which is why sin belongs in the best possible series of events (discussed above). That is why it was right for sin to be permitted, despite the divine power and wisdom; indeed, it *had to* be permitted if these perfections were to be given their due.

**80.** The nature of the fall mustn't be conceived of, as it is by Bayle, in this way:

God punished Adam's sin by condemning Adam and his posterity to continue to sin, and infused into Adam an ongoing inclination to sin because that was needed for carrying out this sentence.

In fact, this inclination follows from the first fall, as though by a natural causal connection, in the way that many other sins follow from intoxication.

**81.** Now let us turn to the hereditary transmission of the contagion, which started with the fall of our first parents and was passed on into the souls of their posterity. There seems to be no more suitable explanation for this than the supposition that the souls of Adam's posterity were already infected *in him*. To understand this properly you

need to know about some recent observations and theories indicating that animals and plants are not formed out of some amorphous mass but come from a body that is already somewhat formed and has for a long time been lurking, already animate, in the seed. We conclude from this that by virtue of God's primeval 'Let there be . . .', some organized rudiments of all living beings and even (in a certain way) of their souls already existed in the first specimen of every genus, and that they evolved—broke free, came into the open—in the course of time. (In the case of animals, these organic rudiments included their *animal forms*, however imperfect.) The seminal animalcules [= 'tiny animals'] that aren't destined to become human bodies remain at the level of sensitive nature; so for a while do the souls and principles of life in the seeds that are destined to become human bodies, but eventually the final *conception* singles them out from the others; at that time the organized body receives the shape of the human body and its soul is raised to the level of being rational. (I'm not saying here whether this happens through an ordinary or an extraordinary operation on God's part.)

**82.** So you can see that I don't say that men are rational before they are born. Still, it is credible that divine grace has already prepared and pre-established in the pre-existing germs everything that will later emerge from them—not only the human organism, but also rationality itself, contained (so to speak) in a sealed blueprint to be put into action later. It is also credible that the fall of Adam spoils the soul that isn't yet a human one, and that when the soul rises to the level of rationality its spoiled state comes to have the force of the original inclination—Adam's inclination—to sin. From recent discoveries it appears, moreover, that life and the soul come from the father alone, while the mother in the act of conception contributes only a sort of envelope (it is thought to be the ovum) and the food necessary for the full

development of the new organic body.

**83.** This lets us overcome the philosophical difficulties •concerning the origin of forms and souls; and •concerning the soul's immateriality and thus its indivisibility, which •creates a problem about where souls come from because it implies that a soul cannot give birth to a soul.

**84.** At the same time we overcome the theological difficulties about the corruption of souls. For it can no longer be maintained that a pure rational soul—whether pre-existing or newly created—is corrupted by being introduced by God into a mass that is already corrupted.

**85.** Though we must thus admit some kind of transmission •of sin from generation to generation•, it can be a little easier to swallow than the one taught by St. Augustine and other eminent men. It won't be transmission •from soul to soul (which had already been rejected by the ancients, as is evident from Prudentius, and anyway is contrary to the nature of things), but •from living thing to living thing. [In Latin the contrast is between •*animae ex anima* and •*animati ex animato*.]

**86.** That was about the *cause* of our corruption; now let us come to its *nature and constitution*. This corruption consists in •original sin and •derivative sin. Original sin has such force that it renders men fragile in body, and dead in spirit until they are born again [*ante regenerationem*; all later occurrences of 'born again' translate Latin that could be translated as 'regenerated']. It turns one's thoughts towards sensible things, and one's will towards things of the flesh. Hence we are 'by nature children of wrath' [Ephesians 2:3].

**87.** Pierre Bayle and other adversaries who attack the thesis that God is benevolent, or at least obscure it by some of their objections, have •made at least one good point. They have affirmed that those who die corrupted only by original sin,

before any opportunity for a sufficient use of reason and thus before committing any actual sin (e.g. infants dying before baptism and those dying outside the Church), ought not to be necessarily damned to eternal hellfire; and that it would be better if in such cases these souls were committed to divine mercy.

**88.** On this matter I approve the moderation of . . . various theologians of the Confession of Augsburg, who eventually have become inclined to accept this same doctrine. [He names them.]

**89.** Furthermore, the sparks of the divine image (which I shall discuss soon) are not entirely extinguished. They can be stimulated again, by God's intervening grace, to strive for spiritual things, but in such a way that the change is solely the work of grace.

**90.** Original sin hasn't entirely estranged the corrupt mass of mankind from God's universal benevolence. For God so loved the world—this world steeped in evil—that he gave his only begotten Son for mankind [John 3:16].

**91.** The workings of corruption show up in •individual sinful acts and in •habits of sin. Corruption presents various degrees and kinds, and contaminates our actions in a variety of ways. •Some of the variety is exhibited in three dichotomies which I now present•.

**91.** A sinful act may be •purely internal or •a composite of internal and external. It may be •a sin of commission or •a sin of omission. It may be come from •the infirmity of our natures or from •perversity caused by the wickedness of our souls.

**93.** A habit of sin come from sinful actions—being created either by •the sheer number of a series of •similar• sinful actions or •the strong impression made by •a perhaps-smaller number of •intensely sinful actions. In either of these ways,

wickedness can become a habit, increasing the depravity that comes from original sin.

**94.** Though this bondage of sin spreads through the whole life of the person who isn't born again, don't think of it as going so far that all his actions will always be. . . .sinful, rather than some of them being genuinely virtuous, and even innocent.

**95.** Even someone who hasn't been born again may sometimes act in civic life through love of virtue and of the public welfare, motivated by good reasons and even by respect for God, without any low aims involving ambition, private profit, or lust.

**96.** Yet the actions of such a person always proceed from an infected source and have an element of depravity mixed into them (though in some cases it is only habitual).

**97.** It might be thought that if a man is sufficiently corrupt and depraved, he acts with too little freedom and spontaneity ·to be blameworthy for what he does·, and so is excusable, cleared of guilt. But it is not so. There always remain ·at least· some vestiges of the divine image in a man, and they are the reason why God can punish sinners without prejudice to his justice.

**98.** The vestiges of the divine image consist in •the innate light of reason as well as in •innate freedom of the will. Both are needed if our actions are to be vicious (or, for that matter, virtuous; ·but I shall focus on vice·). For us to be culpable for a sin we are committing, we must •know what we are doing and must •will to do it; and it must be possible for us to pull back, even in mid-act, if we try hard enough.

**99.** The innate light consists in simple ideas as well as in the complex notions into which the simple ones enter. Thus God and the eternal divine law are engraved in our hearts,

obscured though they often are by human negligence and man's sensual appetites.

**100.** Contrary to what is said by certain writers—·notably Locke·—this innate light can be proved ·to exist· both •by reference to the sacred scripture that testifies that the law of God is engraved in our hearts, and •by a rational argument ·which goes as follows·:

- It is never possible to infer universal necessity by induction from particulars; so
- necessary truths can't be demonstrated by induction from empirical data; so
- necessary truths must be demonstrated by principles inherent in the mind.

**101.** ·Not only •the innate light, but· •freedom also remains intact, however great human corruption is; so that man, though beyond doubt he *is* going to sin, is never constrained by *necessity* to commit the sinful action that he is committing.

**102.** Freedom is exempt from both necessity and constraint. Our actions are not made necessary by •the fact that how we shall act in the future is already settled, or by •God's knowing and deciding in advance how we shall act, or by •the ·present· arrangement of things ·that will cause us to act as we shall act. I shall give these three factors a section each·.

**103.** The fact that how we shall act in the future is already settled doesn't make our actions necessary, for although the truth of future contingents is •infallibly determined and thus objectively certain, that should not be confused with •necessity.

**104.** God's knowing and deciding in advance are also infallible, but *they* don't make our actions necessary either. God contemplated the ideal series of possible events, and

saw that as they actually occurred they would include a certain man *freely* sinning in a certain way. But in decreeing the existence of this series God didn't change the nature of that act—he didn't make something contingent become necessary!

**105.** Third and last: The set-up of the world—the series of causes—doesn't detract from the freedom ·involved in actions that are caused to happen. If you think it does, you must be assuming that freedom requires the absence of anything pushing one way or the other; but in that you are wrong. For nothing ever happens for which a reason couldn't be given; there are no cases of *indifference of equilibrium*—i.e. cases where a free substance confronts a choice between two options and *nothing* (inside the substance or outside it) counts for one course of action without being *exactly* balanced by something favouring the other. On the contrary, in the efficient cause and in the concurring causes there are always certain pointers ·to what is to come·; some call them 'predeterminations'. But it must be said that these 'determinations' only ·incline, and don't ·necessitate, so that a certain indifference or contingency always remains intact. Our passion or appetite is never so strong that our action follows from it with necessity. However strongly a man is driven by anger, thirst, or similar causes, as long as he hasn't lost his mind he can always find some reason for stopping the impulse. Sometimes he needs nothing more than to *remind himself* to exercise his freedom and his power over his passions.

**106.** Predetermination, that is, predisposition by causes, is thus very far from introducing the ·kind of· necessity that I have explained—the necessity that is contrary to contingency, freedom, and morality. Indeed, it is on this very point that the ·Moslem idea of fate is distinguished from the ·Christian,

the ·absurd from the ·reasonable: the Turks don't care about causes, whereas Christians and anyone ·else· who knows what's true deduce effects from their causes.

**107.** Although I don't believe that they can all be so lacking in good sense, the Turks are *said* to think that it is useless to try to avoid the plague and similar evils, because they are convinced that the future events that have been decreed will occur, *whatever you do or don't do*. But that is false. Reason teaches us that someone who is going unavoidably to die of ·the plague is going just as unavoidably to encounter some ·cause of the plague. . . . The same is true for all other events. See also section 45 above.

**108.** Voluntary actions are not *constrained*. Representations of things around us can do all kinds of things in our minds, but our voluntary actions are nonetheless spontaneous: their moving force always lies in the person who acts, ·not in external things·. The thesis that God instituted from the beginning a pre-established harmony between body and mind can explain this more clearly than had hitherto been possible.

**109.** Having dealt with the weakness of human nature, I turn now to the help that divine grace gives. My opponents deny that there is such help, thereby throwing blame from man back onto God. There are two ways of thinking about grace: **(1)** as something that is sufficient for someone who ·of his own accord· wills ·to be born again·, and **(2)** as something that *produces* such an act of the will. ·The disagreement between myself and my opponents concerns **(2)**·.

**110.** It has to be granted that *no-one* denies that there is grace that is sufficient for someone who wills of his own accord. There's an old adage that grace is never lacking for someone who *does what he can*; some of the ancient authors, and then St. Augustine, have said that God abandons only



those who abandon him. This exercise of grace is either •ordinary, i.e. dispensed through the bible and the sacraments; or else it is •extraordinary, offered at God's discretion, as he offered it to St. Paul. The other role that grace may play—in which it *produces* the will to be saved—will be the topic of the next four sections, though it will be perceptible in the background throughout the remainder of this work.

**111.** Many peoples have never yet received Christ's doctrine of salvation, but we can't believe that his message will *never* have any effect on those whom it hasn't reached, Christ himself having asserted the contrary concerning Sodom [Matthew 11:23-4]. But that doesn't make it *necessary* that

•Someone can be saved without Christ,

or •at the other extreme• that

•Someone will be damned even though he has done all that is naturally in his power.

For we don't know all God's ways. For all we know, he may for special reasons come to someone's rescue at the very moment of death. Anyway, we have to take it as certain. . . .that those who have made good use of the light they *have* received will also be given the light they need but *haven't*.

**112.** The theologians of the Augsburg confession recognize that believers' children who have been purified by baptism are endowed with a certain faith, even if no trace of it is seen. And there is nothing to rule out the view that when the non-Christians mentioned in section 111 are at the point of death, God will by extraordinary means given them the necessary light that they have lacked throughout their lives.

**113.** Thus, too, those outside the Church to whom only the external message—the physical preaching—has been denied must be committed to the clemency and justice of the creator, though we can't know whom he will save or why.

**114.** But not everybody is given that *grace to will*, let alone getting it with a happy outcome; that is certainly so, and the enemies of truth use this fact to accuse God of •hatred of mankind or at least of •favouritism. God is the cause of human misery, they contend, and he doesn't save everyone though he could, or anyway he doesn't elect those who are worthy of it.

**115.** It is true indeed that if God had created the majority of mankind only to make the glory of his justice triumph over their eternal wickedness and misery, he wouldn't be praiseworthy for his goodness, his wisdom, or even his true justice. I shall discuss one defensive move against this in sections 116 and 121-2, and a second in 117-9.

**116.** It's no use replying that in relation to him we are *nothing*—as little as a maggot is in relation to us. This excuse wouldn't diminish God's cruelty; it would *increase* it. Indeed, if God cared no more for men than we do for maggots (which we can't care for and don't want to), there would be nothing left of his love for mankind. And the proposed defence is based on a false theology anyway. In fact, nothing escapes God's providence by being too small, or confuses him by being too numerous. He feeds the sparrows, he loves man, providing food for the former and preparing happiness for the latter as far as man's happiness depends on him (i.e. on God).

**117.** Some might go so far as to contend that God's power is so limitless, his government so exempt from rules, that he is entitled to damn even an innocent person. [This is aimed at, among others, Descartes, who held that God's will is what *makes* things good or bad, right or wrong, and that there is no independent moral standard by which God or his conduct could be evaluated.] But this would make it hard to attribute any meaning to divine justice, or to see how this sort of ruler of the universe would

differ from an all-dominating force for evil. We could certainly attribute to it tyranny and hatred of mankind.

**118.** It is evident that one would still have to fear such a God because of his power, but not to love him because of his goodness. For the actions of a tyrant certainly inspire not love but hatred, however great his power. Indeed, the more power he has the greater the hatred, though one may be terrified into not *showing* one's hatred.

**119.** Men who flattered such a God by imitating him would be driven away from charity towards hardness and cruelty. Hence some authors have nastily attributed to God, on the pretext that his right is absolute rather than being subject to some independent moral standard, actions that they would have to recognize as appalling if committed by a man. Certain authors, to their discredit, have said that things that would be ignoble if done by others would not be so if done by God because he is not bound by any law.

**120.** Reason, piety, and God himself command us to believe something *very* different about God. The combination of his supreme wisdom and utter goodness brings it about that •he fully observes the laws of justice, equity, and virtue, that •he cares about all his creatures, especially the thinking ones, whom he has made in his image, and that •he produces as much happiness and virtue as the model for the best world contains, and allows no vice or misery except what belongs to the best possible series of things and events.

**121.** Returning briefly to the matter discussed in section 116: Although it is true that as compared with the infinite God we appear as *nothing*, his infinite wisdom has the privilege of being able to care *utterly* for things that are infinitely below him. There is no assignable proportion between the created things and God, but his *care* has something to work on, because created things keep certain

proportions *among themselves* and tend toward the order that God has instituted.

**122.** In this respect the geometricians imitate God, in a way, through the new infinitesimal analysis: from the relations that infinitely small and unassignable magnitudes have *among themselves* they draw surprisingly important and useful conclusions concerning assignable magnitudes.

**123.** Let us then reject that odious attribution to God of •callousness towards mankind and rightly support his supreme •love for mankind. [Leibniz uses the terms •*misanthropy* and •*philanthropy*.] He ardently wanted all men to achieve the knowledge of truth, and to turn away from sin towards virtue, and he has shown this by how often he has helped us by his grace. If what he has wanted hasn't always happened, the responsibility for this rests with stubborn human wickedness.

**124.** All the same (you might object), it wouldn't have been beyond his supreme power to overcome this stubbornness. I agree, but I add that no law obliged him to do so, and there was no other reason for him to do so.

**125.** Yet (you will insist) the great benevolence that we rightly attribute to God might have gone beyond what he was bound to provide; indeed, the supremely good God was bound, by the very goodness of his nature, to provide the best possible.

**126.** At this point we must resort, with St. Paul, to the treasures of supreme wisdom [Colossians 2:3], which has *not* allowed that God should •do violence to the order and nature of the universe, disregarding law and measure, •or disturb the universal harmony, •or select any but the *best* possible series of events to become actual. Now, in this series it was included that all men are left with their freedom, and some among them are therefore left with their depravity. We are confirmed in accepting this theological theory by the fact

that this is what has actually happened. See also section 142.

**127.** Anyway, God's love for all mankind—his wish to save them all—is shown by his acts of help in the form of grace. This help is enough for anyone, even the reprobate, and indeed it is very often granted in abundance, although grace doesn't win out in everyone.

**128.** Moreover, in the cases where grace attains its full effect I don't see why it must do this by virtue of its own nature, i.e. must do it unaided. It may well be that when a certain measure of grace *doesn't* obtain its effect in one man, because of his stubbornness or for other reasons, that very same measure of grace *does* obtain it in another man. And I don't see either how it could be proved, by reason or from revelation, that whenever grace is victorious it is present with a strength that is great enough so that it could have overcome any resistance, however strong, and the most unfavourable circumstances. There is nothing wise about applying superfluous forces.

**129.** I don't deny that God sometimes makes his grace triumph over the greatest obstacles and the most intense obstinacy; this is to persuade us never to despair of anyone. But this should not be construed as a rule.

**130.** Much graver is the error of those who restrict to *the elect* the privileges of grace, faith, justification, and rebirth, as though *\*all the rest* were hypocrites—which is contrary to experience—and could receive no spiritual help from baptism, from the eucharist, or from any other word or sacraments. This erroneous doctrine implies that an elect person, once he is truly justified, cannot relapse into crime or deliberate sin; or—a version of the doctrine that some prefer—he *can* plunge into crime without losing the grace of his born-again status. These same theologians divide people into *•the*

faithful or elect and *•the* condemned. They require of a *•faithful* person the firmest conviction that faith will stay with *him* until death, while they say that a *•condemned* person will never be taken over by faith and is doomed to have false beliefs. [The phrase *\*all the rest*' is an evasion of Leibniz's *proskaroi* (Greek), a biblical word for things that are temporary, or not durably rooted, or (perhaps) not eternal. (Matthew 13:21, 2 Corinthians 4:18). It is not clear why Leibniz uses this term here; but the doctrine he is expounding and attacking does clearly divide all mankind into just two groups—the elect and all the rest.]

**131.** This doctrine is purely arbitrary, has no foundation, and is entirely alien to the beliefs of the early church and of St. Augustine himself; but if understood strictly it could have practical effects. On the one hand, wicked people might draw from it an impudent confidence that they will be saved, while it might make pious folk doubtful and anxious about their actual state of grace. Hence, a double danger: too much security for the wicked, too much despair for the pious. That is why my zeal against this kind of 'particularism' is second only to my opposition to despotism. [By 'despotism' Leibniz presumably means the view that God is a 'despot' in the sense of not being subject to any value judgments or moral rules because he is the source of all value; see sections 76 (for the word 'despot') and 77 (for the doctrine). 'Particularism' is a standard label for the view that some people are selected for salvation while the rest are damned.]

**132.** Fortunately it turns out that a majority of these theologians soften the strictness of this new and paradoxical and dangerous doctrine, and that its other partisans confine themselves to defending it merely as a theoretical position in theology, and don't carry into practice its odious consequences. The most pious among them *work* on their own salvation, with filial respect and loving confidence, inspired by a better Christian doctrine.

**133.** As to ourselves, we can be assured of our faith, grace, and justification because we are aware of what goes on in our consciousness. We also have good hope for ourselves in the after-life, though tempered with anxiety because the Apostle himself has warned us: 'Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall' [1 Corinthians 10:12]. Our confidence that we are elected should never induce us to slacken in our pious zeal, or to rely on future repentance ·to enable us to live badly in this life without being punished in the next·.

**134.** That is enough against the accusation that God is callous towards mankind. Now it must be shown that it is equally wrong to accuse God of favouritism, implying that there were no reasons for his deciding what he did about who is elected. The foundation of election is Jesus Christ; but those whose share in Christ is less ·than others· owe this to their own eventual wickedness; God foresaw that they would be like this, and reproved it.

**135.** Why is divine aid—internal and especially external aid—distributed so differently among different people, triumphing over wickedness in one person and defeated by it in another? This question leads to doctrinal splits. •Some think that God grants greater help to those who are less evil or at least to those who will resist grace less obstinately. •Others maintain that the same help ·is given to everyone but· is more efficient in those who are less evil. •Others again won't have it that individual people are distinguished before God by the privilege of having better (or anyway less bad) natures.

**136.** *Among* the reasons for someone's being elected are, no doubt, his qualities as measured by the standard of God's wisdom; but the ·ultimate· reason for an election is not always the person's qualities considered in themselves. There will often be more weight given to how suitable the person is for a certain purpose given a certain set of conditions.

**137.** Analogously, in building or decorating something one won't always select the most beautiful or the most precious stone, preferring to use the one that fits best into the empty space.

**138.** The safest thing to say about this topic is that all men, being spiritually dead, are equally evil but in different ways. They differ in *what* their depraved inclinations are, and it may come about that preference is given to those •whom the series of things has given more favourable conditions, those •who (at the end of their lives, anyway) find less opportunity to manifest their particular vices and more to receive grace that answers to their needs.

**139.** Our theologians have also acknowledged, on the basis of experience, that men in the same state of •inner grace may differ greatly in what •external helps to salvation they get. This leads them, confronted by the arrangements of external circumstances that affect our lives, to take refuge in the •'depth' of St. Paul. [This refers to Romans 11:33, a favourite passage of Leibniz's (he will allude to it again in section 142). Paul, having written of apparent unfairnesses in how grace and salvation are distributed, writes: 'O the •depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!'] For men are frequently either perverted or improved by what comes to them in the way of birth, education, social contacts, ways of life, and chance events.

**140.** So we don't *know* any basis for election or for the gift of faith other than Christ, and the believer's ultimate perseverance in the state of salvation through which he sticks to Christ (a perseverance which God foresees). We shouldn't set up any rule ·purporting to draw the line between elect and non-elect·: we wouldn't know how to apply it, and ·its only effect would be to· make people complacent about their own situation and mocking about others'.

**141.** God does indeed sometimes vanquish the worst wickedness and the stubbornest resistance, in order that no-one should despair of his mercy, as St. Paul has pointed out regarding his own case. Sometimes even men of long-standing goodness lapse midway, so that we shouldn't be too self-confident. Most of what happens, however, lies well away from those two extremes: mostly those who resist with less wickedness and put in more effort to achieve truth and goodness experience more completely the effect of divine grace; it is just not believable that a person's conduct has no influence on his salvation. See also section 112.

**142.** But in the depths of the treasure-house of divine wisdom, i.e. in the hidden God and (which comes to the same) in the universal harmony of things, lie the reasons why the actual event-series of the universe, comprehending the events we admire and the judgments we worship, has been chosen by God as the best and as preferable to all

others. See also section 126.

**143.** The theatre of the material world reveals to us more and more of its beauty, even in this life and through the light of nature, since the systems of the macrocosm and the microcosm have begun to be revealed by the recent inventions of the telescope and the microscope.

**144.** But the most magnificent part of all this, the City of God, is a sight to which we shall at last be admitted some day, shining in the light of the divine glory, and then we shall be able to know its beauty. For in our present state here below this City is accessible only to the eyes of faith, i.e. through absolute trust in the divine perfections. The better we understand that the City of God expresses not only the power and wisdom but also the goodness of the supreme spirit, the more ardently will we love God and burn to imitate his goodness and justice as far as we can.