

QUESTION 20

God's Love

Next we have to consider those things that pertain to God's will absolutely speaking. Now in the appetitive part of our soul we find both (a) the passions of the soul, e.g., joy, love, etc., and also (b) the habits of the moral virtues, e.g., justice, fortitude, etc. Hence, we will first consider God's love (question 20) and, second, God's justice and His mercy (question 21).

On the topic of God's love there are four questions: (1) Is there love in God? (2) Does God love all things? (3) Does God love one thing more than another? (4) Does God love better things more?

Article 1

Is there love in God?

It seems that there is no love (*amor*) in God:

Objection 1: There are no passions in God. Love is a passion. Therefore, there is no love in God.

Objection 2: Love, anger, sadness, etc., fall under the same classification. But sadness and anger are not predicated of God except metaphorically. Therefore, neither is love predicated of God except metaphorically.

Objection 3: In *De Divinis Nominibus*, chap. 4, Dionysius says, "Love is a unitive and coalescent force." But there cannot be any place for this in God, since He is simple. Therefore, there is no love in God.

But contrary to this: 1 John 4:16 says, "God is love (*Deus caritas est*)."

I respond: Love must be posited in God. For love is the first movement of the will and of any appetitive power, since an act of will (or of any appetitive power) tends toward good and evil as its proper objects. Since the good is the more principal and *per se* object of will and appetite, whereas evil is the secondary and *per aliud* object, insofar as it is opposed to the good, it follows that acts of will and appetite that have to do with the good must be naturally prior to those that have to do with evil. For instance, joy is prior to sadness, and love is prior to hate. For it is always the case that what is *per se* is prior to what is *per aliud*.

Again, what is more common is naturally prior; hence, it is also the case that the intellect is ordered toward truth in general prior to being ordered to certain particular truths. Now there are some acts of will and appetite that have to do with the good under some special condition; for instance, joy and pleasure have to do with a good that is present and possessed, whereas desire and hope have to do with a good that is not yet possessed. Love, on the other hand, has to do with the good in general (*bonum in communi*), whether or not it is possessed.

Hence, love is by nature the first act of will and appetite. Because of this, all other appetitive movements presuppose love as their primary root. For no one desires anything except a good that is loved, and no one takes joy in anything except a good that is loved. Hate, too, is directed only toward what is contrary to something that is loved. Similarly, it is clear that sadness and the other passions are traced back to love as their first source. Hence, there must be love in any being that has will or appetite. For when what is first is removed, everything else is removed as well.

Now it was shown above (q. 19, a. 1) that there is a will in God. Hence, it is necessary to posit love in Him.

Reply to objection 1: A cognitive power effects a movement only by the mediation of an appetitive power. And just as, according to *De Anima* 3, a universal notion effects movement in us by the mediation of a particular notion, so too the intellectual appetite, which is called the will, effects

movement in us by the mediation of the sentient appetite. Hence, the sentient appetite is the proximate mover of the body in us. Thus, it is always the case that an act of the sentient appetite is accompanied by some bodily change—especially near the heart, which is the first principle of movement in an animal. So, then, insofar as they have a bodily change conjoined to them, acts of the sentient appetite are called passions, but not acts of willing.

Therefore, love, joy, and pleasure are passions insofar as these terms signify acts of the sentient appetite—but not insofar as they signify acts of the intellective appetite. And it is as acts of the intellective appetite that they are posited in God. Hence, in *Ethics 7* the Philosopher says, “God rejoices by a single and simple operation.” And, for the same reason, He loves in the absence of any passion.

Reply to objection 2: In the passions of the sentient appetite there is, as it were, something *material* to consider, viz., the bodily change, and also, as it were, something *formal*, i.e., something on the part of the appetite. For instance, as *De Anima 1* says, in the case of anger the material element is the heating of the blood around the heart or something of that sort, whereas the formal element is the desire for vindication.

Then again, some of the passions involve an imperfection on the part of the formal element. For instance, desire has to do with a good that is not yet possessed, and sadness has to do with an evil that is already possessed. And the same holds for anger, which presupposes sadness. On the other hand, some of them, e.g., love and joy, involve no imperfection.

As has been said, none of them belongs to God with respect to what is material in them. Again, as was explained above (q. 3, a. 2 and q. 19, a. 11), those which also imply an imperfection in their formal element cannot belong to God except metaphorically, because of a likeness in their effects. However, those that do not imply an imperfection, e.g., love and joy, can be properly predicated of God—though, as has been explained, without any passion.

Reply to objection 3: An act of love always tends toward two things, viz., (a) *the good* that one wills for someone and (b) *the one to whom* he wills this good. For to love someone, properly speaking, is to will the good for him.

Hence, for someone to love himself is for him to will a good for himself, and thus he seeks to unite that good to himself as far he is able to. It is for this reason that love is called a *unitive* force even in the case of God—yet without composition. For the good that He wills for Himself is none other than Himself, who is good through His essence, as was shown above (q. 6, a. 3).

Now for someone to love another is for him to will a good for that other. And in this sense he treats the other as himself, rendering good to the other as to himself. And it is for this reason that love is called a *coalescing* force. For he gathers the other to himself, rendering to the other as he renders to himself. And it is also in this sense that God’s love is a coalescent force, existing in God without composition, insofar as He wills goods to others.

Article 2

Does God love all things?

It seems that God does not love all things:

Objection 1: According to Dionysius in *De Divinis Nominibus*, chap. 4, love places the lover outside of himself and in a sense transports him into what he loves. But it is absurd to claim that God is placed outside of Himself and transported into other things. Therefore, it is absurd to claim that God loves things distinct from Himself.

Objection 2: God’s love is eternal. But things distinct from God do not exist from eternity except

within God. Therefore, God does not love them except within Himself. But insofar as they exist within Him, they are not distinct from Him. Therefore, God does not love things distinct from Himself.

Objection 3: There are two kinds of love, love of concupiscence (*amor concupiscentiae*) and love of friendship (*amor amicitiae*). But God does not love non-rational creatures with a love of concupiscence, since He does not need anything besides Himself. Nor does He love them with a love of friendship, since, as is clear from the Philosopher in *Ethics* 8, such love cannot be had for non-rational beings. Therefore, God does not love all things.

Objection 4: Psalm 5:7 says, “You hate all the workers of iniquity.” But nothing can be both hated and loved at the same time. Therefore, God does not love all things.

But contrary to this: Wisdom 11:25 says, “For You love all things that are, and hate none of the things which You have made.”

I respond: God loves all the things that exist. For all existing things are good insofar as they exist, since the very *esse* of each thing is a certain good, as are each of its perfections. Now it was shown above (q. 19, a. 4) that God’s will is a cause of all things, and so to the extent that a thing is willed by God, it must have some sort of *esse* or some sort of goodness. Therefore, God wills some good to each thing that exists. Thus, since to love is nothing other than to will some good to some existing thing, it is clear that God loves all the things that exist.

However, He does not love them in the same way that we ourselves do. For since our own will is not a cause of the goodness of things, but is instead moved by their goodness as by an object, it follows that the love by which we will some good to a thing is not a cause of its very goodness. To the contrary, the thing’s goodness, whether real or apparent (*vel vera vel aestimata*), induces the love by which we will that the good had by the thing should be preserved and that the good lacked by it should be added to it—and we act accordingly. God’s love, by contrast, is a love that pours out and creates the goodness in things.

Reply to objection 1: A lover is transported outside of himself into the thing that is loved in the sense that he wills the good for the thing loved and by his providence cares for that thing as for himself. Hence, in *De Divinis Nominibus*, chap. 4, Dionysius says, “One should dare to say—and take as the truth—that even He who is the cause of all things, through the abundance of His loving goodness, goes outside of Himself in exercising His providence over all the things that exist.”

Reply to objection 2: Even though creatures did not exist from eternity except within God, nonetheless, by the fact that things existed from eternity in God, God knew them from eternity in their proper natures and loved them in the same way. Similarly, it is through the likenesses of things existing in us that we ourselves likewise know the things that exist in themselves.

Reply to objection 3: Friendship can be had only with rational creatures, who are able to return love and to share in the works of life, and for whom things can turn out well or badly with respect to fortune and happiness. In the same way, it is to such creatures that benevolence, properly speaking, is directed.

Non-rational creatures, on the other hand, cannot attain to loving God or to sharing the intellectual and happy life that God lives. So, then, God does not, properly speaking, love non-rational creatures with a love of friendship. Rather, He loves them with something like a love of concupiscence to the extent that He orders them toward rational creatures as well as toward Himself—not in the sense that He needs them, but for the sake of His own goodness and for our advantage. For we ourselves desire (*concupiscimus*) things for others as well as for ourselves.

Reply to objection 4: Nothing prevents one and the same thing from being loved in one respect and hated in another. Now God loves sinners insofar as they are certain natures; for as such they exist and are from Himself. On the other hand, insofar as they are sinners, they do not exist but instead are

deficient in *esse*—a condition that is not in them because of God. Hence, in this respect He hates them.

Article 3

Does God love one thing more than another?

It seems that God loves all things equally:

Objection 1: Wisdom 6:8 says, “He cares equally for all things.” But the providence that God has for things stems from the love by which He loves them. Therefore, God loves all things equally.

Objection 2: God’s love is His essence. But God’s essence does not admit of *more* and *less*. Therefore, neither does His love. Therefore, it is not the case that He loves some things more than others.

Objection 3: God’s love reaches out to created things in the same way that His knowledge and will do. But God is not said to know or to will some things more than others. Therefore, neither does He love some things more than others.

But contrary to this: In *Super Ioannem* Augustine says, “God loves all the things that He has made; and among these things He loves rational creatures more; and among rational creatures He loves more fully those who are members of His only-begotten; and He loves His only-begotten much more.”

I respond: Since to love is to will a good for something, there are two ways in which a thing can be loved to a greater or lesser degree:

First, on the part of the very *act of the will*, which can be more or less intense. And in this sense God does not love some things more than others, since He loves all things by the single and simple act of His will, which always remains the same (*semper eodem modo se habente*).

Second, on the part of the *good that one wills* for the thing loved. Thus, we are said to love someone more than another because we will him a greater good—even if we do not love him with a more intense act of will. And in this sense one must claim that God loves some things more than others. For since, as has been explained (a. 2), God’s love is the cause of goodness in things, one thing would not be better than another if God did not will a greater good to the one than to the other.

Reply to objection 1: God is said to care equally for all things not because He gives equal goods to all things in exercising His care for them, but because He administers all things with equal wisdom and goodness.

Reply to objection 2: This argument has to do with the intensity of love on the part of the act of will, which is God’s essence. However, the good that God wills for a creature is not the divine essence. Hence, nothing prevents that good from being greater or less.

Reply to objection 3: ‘To understand’ and ‘to will’ signify only the acts and do not include in their signification any objects in virtue of whose differences God might be said to know them or to will them to a greater or lesser degree. By contrast, as has been explained, this is indeed the case with love.

Article 4

Does God love better things more?

It seems that God does not always love better things more:

Objection 1: It is clear that Christ is better than the whole human race, since He is God and man. But God loves the human race more than Christ; for Romans 8:32 says, “He spared not even His own

Son, but delivered Him up for us all.” Therefore, God does not always love better things more.

Objection 2: An angel is better than a man; thus, Psalm 8:6 says, “You have made him a little less than the angels.” But God loves men more than angels; for Hebrews 2:16 says, “Nowhere does He take hold of the angels, but of the seed of Abraham He takes hold.” Therefore, God does not always love better things more.

Objection 3: Peter was better than John, since he loved Christ more. Hence, the Lord, knowing that this was true, asked Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?” (John 21:15). Yet Christ loved John more than Peter; for as Augustine says in commenting on John 21:15 (“Simon, son of John, do you love me?”), “John was set off from the other disciples not because Christ loved him alone, but because he loved him more than the others.” Therefore, it is not the case that God always loves better things more.

Objection 4: Someone who is blameless is better than someone who repents (*melior est innocens poenitente*); for, as Jerome says, “Repentance is the second plank, after the shipwreck.” But God loves the one who repents more than the blameless, since He rejoices more over him; for as Luke 15:7 says, “I say to you that even so there shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner that repents, more than upon ninety-nine just who need not repentance.” Therefore, God does not always love better things more.

Objection 5: A just man who is such that it is foreknown that he will be damned (*praescitus*) is now better than a sinner who is predestined to glory (*praedestinatus*). But God loves the predestined sinner more, since He wills him a greater good, viz., eternal life. Therefore, God does not always love better things more.

But contrary to this: Each thing loves what is similar to itself; for as Ecclesiasticus 13:19 says, “Every beast loves its like.” But the more similar a thing is to God, the better it is. Therefore, better things are loved more by God.

I respond: On the basis of what was said above (a. 3), one must claim that God loves better things more. For it was explained that for God to love a thing more is nothing other than for Him to will that thing a greater good, since God’s will is the cause of goodness in things. And so the reason why some things are better is that God wills a greater good for them. And from this it follows that He loves them more.

Reply to objection 1: God loves Christ not only more than the whole human race, but even more than the whole universe of creatures. For He willed him a greater good, since He gave him the name that is above every name, so that he was true God. Nor does it diminish his excellence that God gave him over to death for the salvation of the human race. To the contrary, by this very fact he became a glorious victor. For as Isaiah 9:6 says, “The government is upon his shoulder.”

Reply to objection 2: According to what has been said, God loves the human nature assumed by the Word of God in the person of Christ more than all the angels, and that human nature is better than all the angels, especially because of its union with God.

However, if we are talking about human nature in general and comparing it to the nature of an angel, then they are equal in the order of grace and glory, since, as Apocalypse 21:17 says, the measure of man is the same as the measure of an angel—though in such a way that some angels are better than some men and some men are better than some angels.

On the other hand, as far as the status of the natures is concerned, an angel is better than a man. For God assumed a human nature not because He loved man more, absolutely speaking, but because man needed it more. In the same way, a good father of a household might give something very costly to a sick servant that he does not give to his healthy son.

Reply to objection 3: This question about Peter and John has been answered in many ways. Augustine calls it a mystery. He claims that the active life, signified by Peter, loves God more than

the contemplative life, signified by John, since the active life is more aware of the tribulations of the present life and desires more ardently to be liberated from them and to go to God. However, God loves the contemplative life more, since He conserves it for a longer time; for it does not end with the end of our bodily life in the way that the active life does.

On the other hand, there are those who claim that Peter loved Christ more in His members, and in this regard he was also loved more by Christ, who for this reason entrusted the Church to him. By contrast, John loved Christ more in Himself, and in this regard he was also loved more by Christ, who for this reason entrusted His mother to him.

Others claim that (a) it is uncertain which of the two loved Christ more with the love of charity and, similarly, that (b) it is uncertain which one God loved more as regards a greater degree of the glory of eternal life. However, Peter is said to have loved Christ more because of his promptitude or fervor, whereas John is said to have been loved more because of the signs of familiarity that Christ showed to him in virtue of his youthfulness and purity.

Still others claim that Christ loved Peter more because of his more excellent gift of charity, but that He loved John more because of his more excellent gift of understanding. Hence, Peter was better and more loved absolutely speaking, whereas John was better and more loved in a certain respect.

However, it seems presumptuous to adjudicate this matter, since, as Proverbs 16:2 says, the Lord, and no other, is the weigher of spirits.

Reply to objection 4: The penitents and the blameless are related as that which exceeds and that which is exceeded. For the ones who are better and more loved are those who have more grace, regardless of whether they are righteous or repentant. However, all other things being equal, blamelessness is more worthy and more loved.

Yet God is said to rejoice more over the one who repents than the one who is blameless because oftentimes when those who repent come back, they are more circumspect, more humble, and more fervent. Hence, in commenting on this passage, Gregory says, “In battle the commander has a greater love for the soldier who turned back after fleeing and bravely fought the enemy than for the soldier who never fled but also never acted courageously.”

An alternative explanation is that an equal gift of grace counts for more in relation to the penitent, who deserved punishment, than in relation to the blameless, who did not merit punishment—just as a hundred pieces of gold constitute a greater gift when given to a poor man than when given to a king.

Reply to objection 5: Since God’s will is the cause of the goodness in things, one has to measure the goodness of someone loved by God with reference to the time at which a relevant good is to be given to him by God’s goodness. Therefore, at the time at which the predestined sinner is to be given a greater good by God’s will, he is better, even though he might be worse at some other time. For there is also a time at which he is neither good nor bad.