

## QUESTION 5

### The Attainment of Beatitude

Next we have to consider the attainment itself of beatitude. And on this topic there are eight questions: (1) Can a man attain beatitude? (2) Can one man be more blessed than another? (3) Can a man have beatitude in this life? (4) Can beatitude once had be lost? (5) Can a man acquire beatitude by means of his natural powers? (6) Can a man attain beatitude through the action of some higher creature? (7) Are some works required of a man in order for the man to obtain beatitude from God? (8) Does every man desire beatitude?

#### Article 1

##### Can a man acquire beatitude?

It seems that a man cannot acquire beatitude:

**Objection 1:** As is clear from Dionysius in many places in *De Divinis Nominibus*, just as a rational nature is higher than a sentient nature, so an intellectual nature is higher than a rational nature. But brute animals, which have only a sentient nature, cannot arrive at a rational nature's end. Therefore, neither can man, who is a rational nature, arrive at an intellectual nature's end, i.e., beatitude.

**Objection 2:** Genuine beatitude consists in seeing God, who is pure truth. But it is connatural to a man to see truth in material things; hence, as *De Anima* 3 says, "He understands intelligible species in phantasms." Therefore, man cannot arrive at beatitude.

**Objection 3:** Beatitude consists in acquiring the highest good. But one cannot arrive at the highest point without passing through the middle. Therefore, since in the middle between God and human nature there is angelic nature, which man cannot transcend, it seems that man cannot acquire beatitude.

**But contrary to this:** Psalm 93:12 says, "Blessed the man whom you shall instruct, O Lord."

**I respond:** 'Beatitude' names the acquisition of the perfect good. Therefore, whoever has a capacity for the perfect good (*est capax perfecti boni*) can arrive at beatitude. But it is clear that a man has a capacity for the perfect good, since it is the case both that his intellect is able to apprehend a universal and perfect good and that his will is able to desire that good. And so a man is able to acquire beatitude.

The same thing is also clear from the fact, established in the First Part (*ST* 1, q. 12, a. 1), that a man has the capacity to see God's essence, and we have explained (q. 3, a. 8) that this vision is what man's perfect beatitude consists in.

**Reply to objection 1:** A rational nature exceeds a sentient nature in a way different from that in which an intellectual nature exceeds a rational nature.

For a rational nature exceeds a sentient nature with respect to *the object of cognition*, since there is no way in which a sensory power can have a cognition of a universal, which is what reason has cognition of.

By contrast, an intellectual nature exceeds a rational nature with respect to *the way it has a cognition* of the very same intelligible truth; for as is clear from what was said in the First Part (*ST* 1, q. 58, a. 3 and q. 79, a. 8), an intellectual nature apprehends immediately the truth which a rational nature attains to [only] through reason's inquiry. And so it is through a certain movement that reason attains to what the intellect apprehends. Hence, a rational nature is able to attain beatitude, which is the perfection of an intellectual nature, but in a way different from that in which the angels attain it. For the angels attained to beatitude immediately after the beginning of their existence (*statim post principium suae conditionis*), whereas men arrive at beatitude over time (*per tempus*). By contrast, a sentient nature cannot attain this end in any way at all.

**Reply to objection 2:** The mode of knowing intelligible truth through phantasms is connatural to man within the state of the present life. But as was explained in the First Part (*ST* 1, q. 89), after the

present life, man has a different connatural mode of cognition.

**Reply to objection 3:** Man cannot transcend the angels in the level of his nature, i.e., so as to be naturally higher than they are. Nevertheless, he is able to transcend them through the operation of his intellect, when he understands that there is something beyond the angels which beatifies man and which is such that when man perfectly attains it, he will be perfectly blessed.

## Article 2

### Can one man be more blessed than another?

It seems that one man cannot be more blessed than another:

**Objection 1:** As the Philosopher says in *Ethics* 1, beatitude is “the reward for virtue.” But an equal reward is given to everyone for the works of virtue. For Matthew 20:10 says that all who worked in the vineyard “received every man a denarius,” since, as Gregory puts it, “They obtained the equal payment of eternal life.” Therefore, one will not be more blessed than another.

**Objection 2:** Beatitude is the highest good. But there cannot be anything greater (*maius*) than what is highest. Therefore, any one man’s beatitude is such that there cannot be a beatitude greater than it.

**Objection 3:** Since beatitude is a perfect and sufficient good, it puts a man’s desire to rest. But a desire is not put to rest if there is some good lacking that could be supplied. But if there is nothing lacking that could be supplied, then there could not be any other good that is greater. Therefore, either the man is not blessed or, if he is blessed, then there cannot be another greater beatitude.

**But contrary to this:** John 14:2 says, “In my Father’s house there are many mansions”—by which, as Augustine puts it, “we are to understand different values of merit (*diversae meritorum dignitates*) in eternal life.” But the value of eternal life that is given for merits is beatitude itself. Therefore, there are different levels of beatitude and not an equal beatitude for everyone.

**I respond:** As was explained above (q. 1, a. 8 and q. 2, a. 7), there are two things included in the concept of beatitude, viz., (a) the ultimate end itself, which is the highest good, and (b) the acquisition or enjoyment of that good.

Thus, as regards the good itself that is the object and the cause of beatitude, one beatitude cannot be greater than another, since there is only one highest good, viz., God, who is such that men are blessed in enjoying Him.

However, as regards the acquisition or enjoyment of this good, one man can be more blessed than another, since one is more blessed to the extent that this good is enjoyed more. Now someone is able to enjoy God more perfectly than another by the fact that he is better disposed or ordered toward enjoying Him; accordingly, the one can be more blessed than the other.

**Reply to objection 1:** The sameness of the denarius (*unitas denarii*) signifies the oneness of beatitude on the part of the object. On the other hand, the diversity of the mansions signifies the diversity of beatitude in accord with the different levels of enjoyment.

**Reply to objection 2:** Beatitude is called the highest good insofar as it is the perfect possession of or enjoyment of the highest good.

**Reply to objection 3:** No one who is blessed is lacking in any good that is to be desired, since he has the infinite good itself, which, as Augustine puts it, is “the good of every good.” But someone is said to be more blessed than another because of the diverse ways of participating in that same good.

Moreover, the addition of other goods does not increase beatitude; hence, in *Confessiones* 5 Augustine says, “He who knows you and other things as well is not more blessed because of those other things, but is blessed because of you alone.”

### Article 3

#### Can beatitude be had in this life?

It seems that beatitude can be had in this life:

**Objection 1:** Psalm 118:1 says, “Blessed are the undefiled on the way (*immaculati in via*), who walk in the law of the Lord.” But this is something that happens in the present life. Therefore, someone can be blessed in this life.

**Objection 2:** An imperfect participation in the highest good does not rule out beatitude; otherwise, it would not be the case that one man can be more blessed than another. But in this life men are able to participate in the highest good by knowing and loving God, albeit imperfectly. Therefore, a man can be blessed in this life.

**Objection 3:** What is asserted by the many (*a pluribus*) cannot be totally false; for what occurs in most cases appears to be natural, and nature does not totally fail. But there are many who claim that there is beatitude in this life, as is clear from Psalm 143:15, “They have called the people blessed who have these things,” viz, the goods of the present life. Therefore, someone can be blessed in this life.

**But contrary to this:** Job 14:1 says, “Man born of woman, living a short time, is filled with many miseries.” But beatitude excludes misery. Therefore, a man cannot be blessed in this life.

**I respond:** A sort of participation in beatitude can be had in this life, but perfect and genuine beatitude cannot be had in this life.

There are two possible ways to think about this:

The first way is derived from *the general concept of beatitude*. For since beatitude is “a perfect and sufficient good,” it excludes every evil and fulfills every desire.

But in this life it is impossible for every evil to be excluded. For as Augustine diligently discusses in detail in *De Civitate Dei* 19, the present life is subject to many evils that cannot be avoided: ignorance on the part of the intellect, disordered affection on the part of the appetite, and numerous afflictions (*multiplicibus poenalitibus*) on the part of the body.

Similarly, in this life the desire for the good cannot be fully satisfied. For a man naturally desires that the good he possesses should be permanent. But the goods of the present life are transitory, since even life itself passes away, despite the fact that we naturally desire it and want it to endure forever; for man naturally recoils from death.

Therefore, it is impossible that genuine beatitude should be had in this life.

The second way considers *what beatitude consists in specifically*, viz., seeing God’s essence, which, as was shown in the First Part (*ST* 1, q. 12, a. 2), cannot come to a man in this life.

From these considerations it is clear that no one can acquire genuine and perfect beatitude in this life.

**Reply to objection 1:** Some are called blessed in this life either (a) because of their hope of attaining beatitude in a future life—this according to Romans 8:24 (“We are saved by hope”)—or (b) because of a participation in beatitude that comes from some sort of enjoyment of the highest good.

**Reply to objection 2:** There are two ways in which a participation in beatitude can be imperfect:

In one way, on the part of the *object of beatitude*, which is not seen with respect to its essence; and this sort of participation undermines the concept of genuine beatitude.

In the second way, the participation can be imperfect on the part of *the one participating*, who indeed attains the very object of beatitude in Himself, viz. God, but does so imperfectly in comparison with the mode in which God enjoys Himself. This sort of imperfection does not destroy the true concept of beatitude. For since, as was explained above (q. 3, a. 2), beatitude is a certain operation, the true concept of beatitude is taken from the object, which gives the act its species, and not from the subject.

**Reply to objection 3:** It is because of a likeness to genuine beatitude that men think there is some sort of beatitude in this life. And so they are not completely mistaken in thinking this.

#### Article 4

##### Can beatitude be lost?

It seems that beatitude can be lost:

**Objection 1:** Beatitude is a certain perfection. But every perfection exists in the perfectible thing in accord with the mode of that thing (*secundum modum ipsius*). Therefore, since man is mutable by his nature, it seems that beatitude is participated in by a man in a mutable way. And so it seems that a man can lose beatitude.

**Objection 2:** Beatitude consists in an action of the intellect, and the intellect is subject to the will. But the will is open to opposites (*se habet ad opposita*). Therefore, it seems that the will could desist from the operation by which a man is beatified, and in this way the man would cease to be blessed.

**Objection 3:** Corresponding to a beginning (*principium*) there is an ending (*finis*). But a man's beatitude has a beginning, since the man has not always been blessed. Therefore, it seems that his beatitude has an ending.

**But contrary to this:** Matthew 25:46 says of the just that "they shall go into life everlasting"—which, as has been explained (a. 2), is the beatitude of the saints. But what is eternal does not end (*non deficit*). Therefore, beatitude cannot be lost.

**I respond:** If we are talking about imperfect beatitude of the sort that can be had in this life, then in this sense beatitude can be lost.

This is obvious in the case of *contemplative* happiness, which is lost either (a) through forgetfulness, as when one's knowledge is corrupted by an illness, or (b) because of certain occupations by which someone is totally distracted from contemplation.

The same thing is also clear in the case of *active* happiness. For a man's will can change, so that he degenerates from virtue, in the operation of which happiness principally consists, into vice. On the other hand, even if virtue remains uncorrupted (*integra*), exterior changes can disturb this sort of beatitude insofar as they pose obstacles to many acts of the virtues. However, exterior changes cannot totally destroy this sort of beatitude, since the operation of a virtue still remains as long as a man withstands these adversities in a praiseworthy way.

Moreover, it is because the beatitude of this life can be lost—something which seems contrary to the concept of beatitude—that in *Ethics* 1 the Philosopher says that in this life some are blessed, not absolutely speaking, but "as men" whose nature is subject to change.

By contrast, if we are talking about the perfect beatitude which one looks forward to after this life, then notice that Origen, following the error of certain Platonists, claimed that a man can become unhappy after having had ultimate beatitude.

But there are two ways in which to see that this is obviously false.

First, from *the general concept of beatitude (ex ipsa communi ratione beatitudinis)*. For since beatitude itself is a perfect and sufficient good, it must put a man's desire to rest and exclude all evil. But a man naturally desires to hold on to the good that he has and to have a guarantee that he will keep it (*eius retinendi obtineat securitatem*); otherwise, he will necessarily be troubled by the fear of losing it or by sadness at the certainty that he will lose it. Therefore, what is required for genuine beatitude is that a man have the fixed opinion that he will never lose the good that he has. If this opinion is true, it follows that he will never lose beatitude. On the other hand, if it is false, then this very fact is an evil, viz., to have a false opinion, since, as *Ethics* 6 says, falsehood is bad for the intellect in the same way that truth is

its good.

Second, the same point is clear from a consideration of *the specific concept of beatitude (ratio beatitudinis in speciali)*. For it was shown above (q. 3, a.8) that a man's perfect beatitude consists in seeing God's essence. But it is impossible for anyone who is seeing God's essence to will not to see it. For every good that someone wills not to have is such that either (a) it is insufficient and something more sufficient is being sought after in its place, or (b) there is something unwelcome (*incommodum*) connected with it and because of this it comes to be disliked (*propter quod in fastidium venit*). But the vision of God's essence fills the soul with every good, since it unites the soul to the font of all goodness; hence, Psalm 16:15 says, "I shall be satisfied when Your glory appears," and Wisdom 7:11 says, "All good things came to me together with her," viz., with the contemplation of wisdom. Similarly, the vision of God does not have anything unwelcome adjoined to it; for Wisdom 8:16 says of the contemplation of wisdom, "Her conversation has no bitterness, nor does her company have any tedium."

So, then, it is clear that someone who is blessed cannot give up beatitude by his own will (*propria voluntate non potest beatitudinem deserere*).

Similarly, he cannot lose it by having God take it away from him (*Deo subtrahente*). For since taking away beatitude would constitute a punishment, it could not come from God, the just judge, except for some sin; but someone who is seeing God's essence cannot fall into sin, since, as was shown above (q. 4, a. 4), rectitude of will necessarily follows upon seeing God's essence.

Again, neither could any other agent take away beatitude. For a mind conjoined to God is elevated above all other things, and so no other agent can cut it off from that union.

Hence, it is clearly absurd that a man should pass from beatitude to misery, or vice versa, over the changing course of time (*per quasdam alternationes temporum*). For there cannot be temporal changes of this sort except with respect to things that are subject to time and change (*nisi circa ea quae subiacent tempori et motui*).

**Reply to objection 1:** Beatitude is a consummate perfection which excludes every defect from the one who is blessed. And so beatitude comes without mutability to the one who has it, once it is brought about by God's power, which lifts a man up to participation in an eternity that transcends all change.

**Reply to objection 2:** The will is open to opposites in the case of those things that are ordered to an end, but it is ordered to its ultimate end by natural necessity. This is clear from the fact a man is not able not to will to be blessed (*homo not potest non velle esse beatus*).

**Reply to objection 3:** Beatitude has a beginning because of the nature (*conditio*) of the one who participates in it; but it lacks an ending because of the nature of the good which is such that participation in it makes one blessed. Hence, the beginning of beatitude derives from one thing, and that fact that it lacks an ending derives from something else.

## Article 5

### Is a man able to attain beatitude by his own natural powers?

It seems that a man able is to attain beatitude by his own natural powers (*per sua naturalia*):

**Objection 1:** Nature is not deficient when it comes to necessities. But nothing is more necessary to a man than that by means of which he attains his ultimate end. Therefore, this is not lacking to human nature. Therefore, a man is able to attain beatitude by his own natural powers.

**Objection 2:** Since man is more noble than the non-rational creatures, he seems to be more self-sufficient (*sufficiantior*). But non-rational creatures are able to attain their own ends by their own natural powers. Therefore, *a fortiori*, a man is able to attain beatitude through his own natural powers.

**Objection 3:** According to the Philosopher, beatitude is a perfect operation. But that which

initiates a thing is the same as that which brings it to perfection. Therefore, since the imperfect operation, which is, as it were, the beginning (*principium*) in the case of human operations, is subject to a man's natural power, by means of which he is the master of his own acts, it seems that he is able to attain the perfect operation, i.e., beatitude, through his own natural power.

**But contrary to this:** A man is naturally the principle of his own acts through his intellect and his will. But the ultimate beatitude prepared for the saints exceeds the human intellect and will; for 1 Corinthians 2:9 says, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man, what things God has prepared for those who love Him." Therefore, a man cannot attain beatitude by his own natural powers.

**I respond:** Through his own natural powers a man can acquire the imperfect beatitude that can be had in this life, in the sense that through his own natural powers he can likewise acquire virtue, the operation of which this beatitude consists in. This will be explained below (q. 63).

However, as was explained above (q. 3, a. 8), man's perfect beatitude consists in seeing God's essence. And as was shown in the First Part (*ST* 1, q. 12, a. 4), seeing God through His essence lies not only beyond human nature, but also beyond every creature's nature. For any creature's natural cognition is in accord with the mode of its substance (*secundum modum substantiae suae*), in the sense in which the *Liber de Causis* says of an intelligence that "it has cognition of what is above it, and of what is below it, in accord with the mode of its substance (*secundum modum substantiae suae*)." But every cognition that is in accord with the mode of a created substance falls short of seeing God's essence, which infinitely surpasses every created substance. Hence, neither man nor any other creature can attain ultimate beatitude through his own natural powers.

**Reply to objection 1:** Just as nature has not failed man when it comes to necessities even though it has not given him weapons and hides as it has to other animals—for nature has given man reason and hands, by which he is able to provide these things for himself—so, too, nature has not failed man when it comes to necessities even though it has not given him any principle by which he can attain beatitude. For this was impossible. However, it did give him free choice, by which he would be able to turn to God, who would make him blessed. For as *Ethics* 3 says, what we can do through our friends is such that we can in some sense do it through ourselves.

**Reply to objection 2:** As the Philosopher says in *De Caelo* 2, a nature that can attain the perfect good, even though it needs exterior help to do this, is more noble than a nature that cannot attain the perfect good, but instead attains some imperfect good, even though it does not need exterior help to do this. In the same way, someone who is able to attain perfect health, even though this is through the help of medicine, is better disposed toward health than is someone who is able only to attain imperfect health without the help of medicine. And so a rational creature, who is able to attain the perfect good of beatitude, though he needs God's help to do this, is more perfect than a non-rational creature, which does not have a capacity for this sort of good, but instead attains some imperfect good by the power of its own nature.

**Reply to objection 3:** When what is imperfect and what is perfect belong to the same species, they can be caused by the same power. However, this is not necessary if they belong to different species; for it is not the case that whatever can cause a given disposition in matter can confer the ultimate perfection. But the imperfect operation that is subject to man's natural power does not belong to the same species as the perfect operation that constitutes man's beatitude, since the species of the operation depends on the object. Hence, the argument does not go through (*ratio non sequitur*).

## Article 6

### Can a man be made blessed through the action of a higher creature, viz., an angel?

It seems that a man can be made blessed through the action of a higher creature, viz., an angel:

**Objection 1:** There are two orderings found among things: (a) the ordering of the parts of the universe to one another, and (b) the ordering of the universe as a whole to a good that lies outside the universe. As *Metaphysics* 12 says, the first of these orderings is itself ordered to the second as to its end, in the way that the ordering of the parts of an army to one another is for the sake of the ordering of the whole army to its leader. But as was explained in the First Part (*ST* 1, 109, a. 2), the ordering of the parts of the universe to one another involves higher creatures acting on lower creatures, whereas beatitude consists in man's being ordered to a good that lies outside the universe, viz., God. Therefore, it is through the action of a higher creature, viz., an angel, on a man that the man is made blessed.

**Objection 2:** What is such-and-such in potentiality can be brought to actuality through that which is such-and-such in actuality; for instance, what is hot in potentiality is made hot in actuality through that which is hot in actuality. But man is blessed in potentiality. Therefore, he can be made blessed in actuality by an angel who is blessed in actuality.

**Objection 3:** As was explained above (q. 3, a. 4), beatitude consists in an operation of the intellect. But as was established in the First Part (*ST* 1, q. 111, a. 1), an angel can illuminate a man's intellect. Therefore, an angel can make a man blessed.

**But contrary to this:** Psalm 83:12 says, "The Lord will give grace and glory."

**I respond:** Since every creature is subject to the laws of nature in the sense of having limited power and action, what exceeds created nature cannot be brought about by the power of any creature. And so if something that lies beyond nature (*est super naturam*) has to be brought about, this is done immediately by God—e.g., resuscitating the dead, giving sight to the blind, and other things of this sort. But it has been shown (a. 5) that beatitude is a good that exceeds created nature. Hence, it is impossible for beatitude to be conferred through the action of any creature; instead, if we are talking about perfect beatitude, a man is made blessed by God acting alone.

On the other hand, if we are talking about imperfect beatitude, then the explanation that applies to it is the same as the explanation that applies to virtue, the action of which imperfect beatitude consists in.

**Reply to objection 1:** What happens in most of the cases involving ordered active powers is that it is the highest power's role to bring a thing to its ultimate end, whereas the lower powers assist in the attainment of this ultimate end by conferring dispositions (*disponendo*); for instance, the use of a ship, for the sake of which the ship itself is made, pertains to the art of navigation, which presides over the art of shipbuilding. So, then, likewise in the case of the ordering of the universe, in attaining to beatitude a man is aided by the angels with respect to certain preliminaries by which he is disposed toward attaining to beatitude. But he attains the ultimate end itself through the first agent Himself, viz., God.

**Reply to objection 2:** When a form exists in something in actuality with perfect and natural *esse*, then it can be a principle for acting on another; for instance, a hot thing gives warmth through its heat. But if a form exists in something imperfectly and not with natural *esse*, then it cannot be a principle for communicating itself to another. For instance, the likeness of a color (*intentio coloris*) that exists in the pupil cannot make anything white. Again, not everything that is illuminated or heated can illuminate other things or make other things warm; otherwise, illuminating and heating would go on *ad infinitum*.

Now the light of glory through which God is seen exists in God perfectly with its natural *esse*, but in a creature it exists imperfectly and with assimilated or participated *esse*. Hence, no creature who is blessed can communicate his beatitude to another.

**Reply to objection 3:** As was explained in the First Part (*ST* 1, q. 106, a. 1), a beatified angel illuminates man's intellect, or even the intellect of a lower angel, with respect to certain ideas about

God's works, but not with respect to seeing God's essence. For in seeing His essence, all beatified creatures are illuminated directly by God.

### Article 7

#### Are any human works required in order to obtain beatitude from God?

It seems that no human works are required in order to obtain beatitude from God:

**Objection 1:** Since God is an agent of infinite power, neither matter nor any disposition on the part of the matter is a prerequisite for His acting; instead, He can produce the whole immediately. But since, as has been explained (a. 6), a man's works are not required as an efficient cause of his own beatitude, they cannot be required for beatitude except as dispositions. Therefore, God, who does not need any dispositions for His acting, confers beatitude without any antecedent works.

**Objection 2:** Just as God is the direct source of beatitude (*auctor beatitudinis immediate*), so too He immediately establishes nature. But in the first establishment of nature, He produced creatures in the absence of any antecedent disposition or action on the part of any creature; instead, He instantly (*statim*) made each thing perfect in its species. Therefore, it seems that He confers beatitude on a man without any antecedent operations.

**Objection 3:** In Romans 4:6 the Apostle says that beatitude belongs to the man "on whom God confers justification without works." Therefore, no human works are required in order to obtain beatitude.

**But contrary to this:** John 13:17 says, "If you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them." Therefore, one arrives at beatitude through action.

**I respond:** As was explained above (q. 4, a. 4), rectitude of will is required for beatitude. For rectitude of will is nothing other than the will's being rightly ordered toward its ultimate end, and this is required for attaining to the ultimate end in the same way that the right sort of disposition on the part of the matter is required for its attaining to a form.

However, this does not show that some human operation has to precede a man's beatitude; for God could simultaneously (a) make a will tend in the right way toward the end and (b) make it attain that end—just as He sometimes simultaneously disposes the matter and induces the form.

Nevertheless, the order of God's wisdom dictates that it not happen this way. For as *De Caelo 2* says, "Of those things that have a perfect good, some have it with no movement, some have it with a single movement, and some have it with many movements."

Now to have the perfect good without movement is something that belongs to what has that good by nature (*naturaliter*). But to have beatitude naturally belongs solely to God. Hence, it is proper to God alone not to move toward beatitude through some antecedent operation.

On the other hand, since beatitude exceeds every created nature, no mere creature attains beatitude fittingly except by means of movement via an operation through which it tends toward beatitude. Now as was explained in the First Part (*ST 1*, q. 62, a. 5), an angel, who is higher in the order of nature than a man is, attained to beatitude in the order of God's wisdom with the single movement of a meritorious operation. Men, on the other hand, attain beatitude by means of many operational movements that are called *merits*. Hence, even according to the Philosopher, beatitude is the reward for virtuous operations.

**Reply to objection 1:** A man's operation is required antecedently for obtaining beatitude not because God's power to beatify someone is not sufficient, but so that the order among things might be preserved.

**Reply to objection 2:** The reason why God immediately produced the first creatures as perfect, without any antecedent disposition or operation on the part of a creature, was that He instituted the first

individuals of the various species in such a way that their natures would be propagated through them to their descendants. Similarly, it was because beatitude was to flow through Christ, who is God and man, to others—this according to Hebrews 2:10 (“..... who had brought many children into glory”)—that His soul was made blessed immediately from the beginning of His conception without any antecedent meritorious operation.

However, this is peculiar to Christ. For His merit is what enables baptized children to obtain beatitude, even if they lack their own proper merits; for through baptism they have been made members of Christ.

**Reply to objection 3:** The Apostle is speaking here of the ‘beatitude of hope’, which is had through justifying grace and which is indeed not given because of antecedent works. For, unlike beatitude, it does not have nature of a terminus of movement, but is instead the beginning of a movement that tends toward beatitude.

## Article 8

### Does everyone desire beatitude?

It seems that not everyone desires beatitude:

**Objection 1:** No one can desire what he is ignorant of, since, as *De Anima* 3 says, it is an apprehended good that is the object of desire. But there are many who do not know what beatitude is—which, as Augustine explains in *De Trinitate* 13, is obvious from the fact that some have thought beatitude to lie in bodily pleasure, some in the mind’s virtue, and some in other things. Therefore, not everyone desires beatitude.

**Objection 2:** As has been explained (q. 3, a. 8), the essence of beatitude is seeing God’s essence. But some are of the opinion that it is impossible for God to be seen through His essence by a man, and so they do not desire it. Therefore, not all men desire beatitude.

**Objection 3:** In *De Trinitate* 13 Augustine says, “The blessed man is the one who has everything that he wills and who wills nothing badly.” But not everyone wills this very thing, since some men will certain things badly and yet will that they should will those things. Therefore, not everyone wills beatitude.

**But contrary to this:** In *De Trinitate* 13 Augustine says, “If he had said, ‘You all wish to be blessed, you do not wish to be wretched,’ then he would have said something that no one would fail to acknowledge in his own will.” Therefore, everyone desires to be blessed.

**I respond:** There are two possible ways to think of beatitude:

One way is in accord with *the general concept of beatitude (secundum communem rationem beatitudinis)*. Given this sense, it is necessary that every man should will beatitude. Now, as has been explained (aa. 3 and 4), the general concept of beatitude is that it is a perfect good. But since the good is the object of the will, someone’s perfect good is such that it totally satisfies his will. Hence, to desire beatitude is nothing other than to desire that one’s will should be satisfied—which everyone wants.

In the second way, we can speak of beatitude in accord with its *specific concept (secundum specialem rationem)*, i.e., with respect to what beatitude consists in. And given this sense, not everyone has a cognition of beatitude, since not everyone knows which thing is such that the general concept of beatitude applies to it. And, in this regard, consequently, not everyone wills beatitude.

**Reply to objection 1:** This makes clear the reply to the first objection.

**Reply to objection 2:** Since the act of will (*voluntas*) follows upon the intellect’s (i.e., reason’s) apprehension, it follows that just as it is possible for something to be the same in reality and yet diverse according to reason’s consideration of it, so too it is possible for something to be the same in reality and

yet to be desired in one way and not desired in another.

Thus, beatitude can be thought of under the concept of an ultimate and perfect good, which is the general concept of beatitude, and, as has been explained, given this sense, the will tends toward it naturally and by necessity. Beatitude can also be thought of in such a way as to include other specific considerations, either on the part of the operation itself, or on the part of the operative power, or on the part of the object. And when it is so considered, it is not necessarily the case that the will tends toward it.

**Reply to objection 3:** If the definition of beatitude that some have posited—viz., that the blessed man is he who has everything that he desires, or that the blessed man is he who is such that everything he hoped for has come true—is understood in a certain way, then it is a good and sufficient definition. But if it is understood in another way, then it is imperfect.

For if it is understood simply of all those things that a man wills *by a natural desire*, then it is true that he who has everything that he wills is blessed. For nothing except a perfect good, i.e., beatitude, satisfies a man's natural appetite.

By contrast, if the definition is understood of those things that a man wills *according to reason's apprehension*, then, in this sense, to have the things that the man wills pertains not to beatitude but more to wretchedness, to the extent that having things of this sort keeps a man from having everything that he naturally wills. In the same way, reason sometimes accepts as truths things that impede its cognition of the truth. And it is because of this consideration that Augustine adds to beatitude's perfection the idea that the man "wills nothing badly"—even though the first part of the definition, viz., that the blessed man is he who has everything that he wills, could suffice by itself if it were understood correctly,.