

QUESTION 114

Merit

Next we have to consider merit, which is an effect of cooperating grace.

On this topic there are ten questions: (1) Can a man merit anything from God? (2) Can someone without grace merit eternal life? (3) Can someone through grace merit eternal life by his own worthiness (*ex condigno*)? (4) Is grace the principle of merit mainly by the mediation of charity? (5) Can a man merit first grace for himself? (6) Can one man merit grace for another? (7) Can someone merit his own restoration (*sibi mereri reparationem*) after a fall? (8) Can someone merit an increase of grace or of charity? (9) Can someone merit final perseverance for himself (*sibi mereri finalem perseverantiam*)? (10) Do any temporal goods fall under merit?

Article 1

Can a man merit anything from God?

It seems that a man cannot merit anything from God:

Objection 1: It seems that no one merits a reward by rendering to someone what he owes him. But we are unable, through all the good things we do, to pay God back what we owe Him in an adequate way, i.e., without always owing yet more; the Philosopher likewise points this out in *Ethics* 8. Hence, as Luke 17:10 says, “When you have done all these things that are commanded, say: ‘We are unprofitable servants; we have done what we were obliged to do’.” Therefore, a man cannot merit anything from God.

Objection 2: By the fact that a man profits himself, it seems that he merits nothing in the eyes of someone whom he does not profit in any way at all. But in acting a man profits himself, or perhaps some other man, but not God; for as Job 35:7 says, “If you act justly, what shall you be giving Him, or what will He receive from your hand?” Therefore, a man cannot merit anything from God.

Objection 3: If someone merits something in the eyes of another, he makes the latter his debtor, since one should repay a merited fee (*debitum est ut aliquis merendi mercedem rependat*). But God is a debtor to no one; hence, Romans 11:35 says, “Who has first given to Him, and recompense shall be made to him?” Therefore, no one can merit anything from God.

But contrary to this: Jeremiah 31:16 says, “There is a reward for Your work.” But a reward involves something given because of merit. Therefore, it seems that a man can merit something from God.

I respond: ‘Merit’ (*meritum*) and ‘reward’ or ‘wage’ or ‘compensation’ (*merces*) refer to the same thing, since what is called a reward or wage is paid to someone in compensation for his work or labor (*pro retributione operis vel laboris*) as a certain fee (*pretium*) for it. Hence, just as it is an act of justice to pay a just price (*iustum pretium*) for an item received from someone, so too it is act of justice to pay a reward or wage in compensation for work or labor (*recompensare mercedem operis vel laboris*).

Now as is clear from the Philosopher in *Ethics* 5, justice is a certain sort of equality. And so justice absolutely speaking exists among those who are equal absolutely speaking. On the other hand, among those who are not equal absolutely speaking, justice does not exist absolutely speaking, but there can be a certain mode of justice, in the way that one speaks of a father’s right or a master’s right (*sicut dicitur quoddam ius paternum vel dominativum*), as the Philosopher notes in the same book. Because of this, in cases in which justice exists absolutely speaking, the notions of merit and reward likewise apply absolutely speaking, whereas in cases in which justice exists in a certain respect (*secundum quid*) and not absolutely speaking, the notion of merit likewise applies in a certain respect and not absolutely speaking, to the extent that the character of justice is preserved in such a case. For it is in this sense that a son might merit something from his father and a servant from his master.

Now it is clear that there is maximal inequality between God and man, since (b) they are infinitely distant from one another and (b) the whole of the good that belongs to man comes from God. Hence, there can be justice on the part of man with respect to God only according to a certain proportion and not according to absolute equality, viz., insofar as each operates according to his own mode. But man has the mode and measure of human virtue from God. And so man's merit in the eyes of God can exist only on the presupposition of a divine ordination—so that, more specifically, through his own operations a man obtains from God as a reward that for which God has allotted him his power to operate, in the same way that through their own movements and operations natural entities likewise achieve what they have been ordered toward by God. There is a difference, however, since through his free choice a rational creature moves himself to act, and so his action has the character of merit; this is not so in the case of other creatures.

Reply to objection 1: A man merits insofar as he does what he should by his own will. Otherwise, an act of justice by which someone pays back a debt would not be meritorious.

Reply to objection 2: God seeks no profit from our good works; rather, He seeks glory, i.e., the manifestation of His own goodness, which is what He likewise seeks from His own works.

Now from the fact that we worship Him something accrues to us rather than to Him. And so we merit something from God not in the sense that something accrues to Him because of our works, but rather in the sense that we work for the sake of His glory.

Reply to objection 3: From the fact that our action has the character of merit only on the presupposition of a divine ordination, it does not follow that God becomes a debtor to us absolutely speaking. Rather, He becomes a debtor to Himself insofar as it ought to be the case that His ordination is fulfilled.

Article 2

Can someone merit eternal life without grace?

It seems that someone can merit eternal life without grace:

Objection 1: As has been explained (a. 1), a man merits from God that toward which he is divinely ordered. But by his nature a man is ordered toward beatitude as his end, and so he likewise naturally desires to be beatified. Therefore, a man by his own power (*per sua naturalia*) can merit beatitude—that is to say, eternal life.

Objection 2: The less obligatory a given work is, the more meritorious it is (*quanto est minus debitum, tanto est magis meritorium*). But a good that is less obligatory is one that is done by someone who has been given smaller benefits. Therefore, since someone who has only natural goods (*habet solum bona naturalia*) has received smaller benefits from God than someone who has the goods of grace (*bona gratuita*) along with the natural goods, it seems that the former's works are more meritorious in the eyes of God. And so, if someone who has grace can in some way merit eternal life, then *a fortiori* someone who does not have grace can merit eternal life.

Objection 3: God's mercy and generosity infinitely exceed human mercy and generosity. But one man can merit in the eyes of another man even if he has never been in that man's good graces beforehand (*etiam si nunquam suam gratiam ante habuerit*). Therefore, it seems that, *a fortiori*, a man without grace can merit eternal life from God.

But contrary to this: In Romans 6:23 the Apostle says, "The grace of God, life eternal."

I respond: As was explained above (q. 109, a. 2), it is possible to think of two states belonging to a man without grace (*hominis sine gratia duplex status considerari potest*): (a) the state of *integral nature* (*status naturae integrae*), such as existed in Adam before the sin, and (b) the state of corrupted nature (*status naturae corruptae*), such as exists in us before the restoration effected by grace (*ante*

reparationem gratiae).

Thus, if we are speaking of a man with respect to the first state, then there is a single reason why he cannot merit eternal life without grace through his natural powers—viz., that a man’s merit depends on God’s preordination. Now every entity’s act is such that it is not divinely ordered to anything that exceeds the measure of the power that is the principle of the act (*excedens proportionem virtutis quae est principium actus*), since it is by the institution of God’s providence that nothing acts beyond its own power. But eternal life is a good that exceeds the measure of any created nature, since it likewise exceeds that nature’s cognition and desire—this according to 1 Corinthians 2:9 (“Eye has not seen, nor has ear heard, nor has it entered into man’s heart ...”). And so it is that no created nature is a sufficient principle of an act that merits eternal life, unless a supernatural gift, which is called ‘grace’, is added to it.

On the other hand, if we are speaking of a man who exists under sin, then to this is added a second reason in light of the impediment of sin. For since, as is clear from what was said above (q. 113, a. 2), sin is a certain offense against God that excludes one from eternal life, no one who exists in a state of sin can merit eternal life unless he is first reconciled with God by his sin’s being forgiven (*nisi prius Deo reconcilietur dimisso peccato*)—something that is effected by grace. For a sinner is owed death and not life—this according to Romans 6:23 (“The wages of sin is death”).

Reply to objection 1: God ordered human nature toward attaining the end of eternal life not by its own power, but through the assistance of grace. And it is in this way that its act can merit eternal life.

Reply to objection 2: A man without grace cannot have a work equal to a work that proceeds from grace, since the more perfect the principle of an action, the more perfect the action. However, the argument would go through if an equality of operation were assumed in the two cases.

Reply to objection 3: As regards the first reason set forth above, there is a dissimilarity between God and man. For a man has all his power of doing good from God and not from any man. And so a man cannot merit anything from God except through God’s gift. The Apostle makes this point explicitly when he says, “Who has first given to Him, and recompense will be made to him?”

But as regards the second reason, taken from the impediment of sin, there is a similarity between man and God, since one man cannot merit from another whom he has previously offended unless he is reconciled to him by making satisfaction.

Article 3

Can a man who is in the state of grace merit eternal life by his own worthiness?

It seems that a man who is in the state of grace (*homo in gratia constitutus*) cannot merit eternal life by his own worthiness (*non possit mereri vitam aeternam ex condigno*):

Objection 1: In Romans 8:18 the Apostle says, “The sufferings of this time are not worthy (*non sint condignae*) to be compared with the glory to come that shall be revealed in us.” But among all meritorious works, the sufferings of the holy ones seem to be the most meritorious. Therefore, none of men’s works merit eternal life by their own worthiness (*ex condigno*).

Objection 2: The Gloss on Romans 6:23 (“The grace of God, life eternal”) says, “One could correctly say, ‘The wages of justice is eternal life’, but it would be preferable to say, ‘The grace of God is eternal life’, so that we might understand that God leads us to eternal life for the sake of His own mercy (*pro sua miseratione*) and not because of our merits (*non meritis nostris*).” But what someone merits because of his own worthiness (*ex condigno*) is received because of his merit and not out of mercy. Therefore, it seems that a man cannot through grace merit eternal life by his own worthiness (*non possit per gratiam mereri vitam aeternam ex condigno*).

Objection 3: Merit seems to be worthy (*condignum*) when it equals the reward. But no act in this

life can equal eternal life, which exceeds our cognition and desire. It also exceeds the charity or love present in this life (*excedit caritatem vel dilectionem viae*), in the same way that it exceeds nature. Therefore, a man cannot through grace merit eternal life by his own worthiness.

But contrary to this: What is rendered in accord with a just judgment seems to be a reward that one is worthy of (*videtur esse merces condigna*). But eternal life is granted by God in accord with a just judgment—this according to 2 Timothy 4:8 (“As to the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of justice, which the Lord, the just judge, will render to me in that day”). Therefore, a man merits eternal life by his own worthiness (*meretur vitam aeternam ex condigno*).

I respond: A man’s meritorious work can be thought of in two ways: (a) insofar as it proceeds from free choice, and (b) insofar as it proceeds from the grace of the Holy Spirit.

If we think of the substance of the work and the fact that it proceeds from free choice, then there cannot be any *worthiness* (*non potest ibi esse condignitas*) there, and this because of a maximal inequality. But there can be a *fittingness* (*congruitas*) there because of a certain equality of proportion, since it seems fitting (*videtur congruum*) that when a man operates in accord with his own virtue, God should repay him according to the excellence of his virtue.

On the other hand, if we are speaking of a meritorious act insofar as it proceeds from the grace of the Holy Spirit, then it merits eternal life by its worthiness (*ex condigno*). For the value of the merit is attendant upon the power of the Holy Spirit as He moves us toward eternal life—this according to John 4:14 (“There shall come to be in him a fount of water springing up unto life everlasting”). Again, the reward for the work is attendant upon the worthiness of the grace through which a man, now made to share in God’s nature (*consors factus divinae naturae*), is adopted as a son of God to whom the inheritance is owed by right of adoption—this according to Romans 8:17 (“If sons, heirs also”).

Reply to objection 1: The Apostle is talking about the sufferings of the holy ones as regards the substance of those sufferings.

Reply to objection 2: The Gloss should be understood to be talking about the first cause of attaining eternal life, which is God’s mercy. By contrast, our merit is a subsequent cause (*causa subsequens*).

Reply to objection 3: Even if the grace of the Holy Spirit that we have in this life is not actually equal to the grace of glory, it is nonetheless virtually equal to it (*aequalis in virtute*), like the seed of a tree that virtually contains the whole tree (*in quo est virtus ad totam arborem*). Similarly, the Holy Spirit, who is the sufficient cause of eternal life, inhabits a man through grace, and this is why He is said to be “the pledge of our inheritance” in 2 Corinthians 1:22.

Article 4

Is grace the principle of merit mainly through charity rather than through the other virtues?

It seems not to be the case that grace is the principle of merit mainly through charity rather than through the other virtues:

Objection 1: Compensation (*merces*) is due for work—this according to Matthew 20:8 (“Call the laborers and pay them their wages (*mercedem*)”). But every virtue is the principle of some work, since, as was established above (q. 55, a. 2), a virtue is a habit of operation (*habitus operativus*). Therefore, every virtue is equally a principle of meriting.

Objection 2: In 1 Corinthians 3:8 the Apostle says, “Every man shall receive his own reward according to his labor.” But charity diminishes labor rather than increasing it, since, as Augustine says in *De Verbis Domini*, “Love makes every hard and repulsive task easy and next to nothing.” Therefore, charity is not a principle of meriting more principally than any other virtue is.

Objection 3: The virtue that seems to be the main principle of meriting is the one whose acts are

the most meritorious. But it is acts of faith and patience, i.e., fortitude, that seem to be the most meritorious, as is clear in the case of the martyrs, who patiently and courageously contended for the faith up to the point of death. Therefore, virtues other than charity are more principally a principle of meriting.

But contrary to this: In John 14:21 our Lord says, “If anyone loves me, he will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and make myself manifest to him.” But eternal life consists in a manifest cognition of God—this according to John 17:3 (“This is eternal life, that they should know you, the only living and true God”). Therefore, the meriting of eternal life lies especially in charity.

I respond: As can be gathered from what has been said (a. 1), a human act has the character of meriting from two things: first, and principally, from divine ordination, according to which an act is said to merit that good toward which a man is ordered by God; and, second, from free choice, viz., insofar as it belongs to a man, in preference to other creatures, that he acts *per se* by acting voluntarily. And with respect to both of these, merit rests mainly on charity (*principalitas meriti penes caritatem consistit*).

The first thing to note is that eternal life consists in the enjoyment of God. But the movement of the human mind toward the enjoyment of the divine good is the proper act of charity, through which all the acts of the other virtues are ordered toward this end, insofar as the other virtues are commanded by charity. And so meriting eternal life pertains in the first place to charity and secondarily to the other virtues, insofar as their acts are commanded by charity.

Similarly, it is also clear that what we do out of love, we do in a way that is maximally voluntary. Hence, to the extent that what is required for the character of merit is that the act be voluntary, merit is attributed principally to charity.

Reply to objection 1: Insofar as charity has the ultimate end as its object, it moves the other virtues to operate. For, as is clear from what was said above (q. 9, a. 1) it is always the case that the habit to which the end pertains commands the habits to which the means to the end pertain.

Reply to objection 2: There are two ways in which a work can be laborious and difficult:

The first is because of the magnitude of the work, and in this way the magnitude of the work involves an increase of merit. In this sense, charity does not diminish the labor; indeed, it makes one pursue the greatest works. For as Gregory says in one of his homilies, “It does great things if it exists.”

In the second way, it is because of a weakness in the one who is working (*ex defectu ipsius operantis*). For what is laborious and difficult for each individual is what he does not do with a prompt will. This is the sort of toil (*labor*) that diminishes merit and is removed by charity.

Reply to objection 3: As Galatians 5:6 puts it, an act of faith is meritorious only if “faith is operating through love.” Similarly, even acts of patience and fortitude are meritorious only if one does them out of charity—this according to 1 Corinthians 13:3 (“If I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profits me nothing”).

Article 5

Can a man merit first grace for himself?

It seems that a man can merit first grace for himself:

Objection 1: As Augustine says, “Faith merits justification.” But a man is justified through first grace. Therefore, a man can merit first grace for himself.

Objection 2: God does not give grace except to those who are worthy (*nisi dignis*). But one is said to be worthy of a gift only when he merits the gift by his worthiness (*ex condigno*). Therefore, one can merit first grace by his worthiness.

Objection 3: Among men it is possible for someone to merit a gift that has already been received; for instance, someone who receives a horse from his master merits it by making good use of it in the

service of his master. But God is more generous than a man. Therefore, *a fortiori*, it is possible for a man, through his subsequent works, to merit first grace that has already been received.

But contrary to this: The character of grace is incompatible with its being a reward for works—this according to Romans 4:4 (“To him that works, the reward is credited not as grace but as a debt”). But a man merits that which is credited to him as a reward for his work. Therefore, a man cannot merit first grace.

I respond: There are two possible ways to think of the gift of grace (*donum gratiae*):

In one way, as a gratuitous gift. And in this sense it is clear that any sort of merit is incompatible with grace; for as the Apostle says in Romans 11:6, “If by grace, it is already not by works.”

In the second way, grace can be thought of with respect to the nature of the very thing that is given. And in this sense it likewise cannot fall under the merit of anyone who does not have grace, both because it exceeds the measure of nature (*excedit proportionem naturae*), and also because before grace, in the state of sin, a man has an impediment to meriting grace, viz., sin itself.

Moreover, once someone already has grace, the grace that is already had cannot fall under merit, since the reward is the terminus of the work, whereas grace is the principle of any good work in us, as was explained above (q. 109). On the other hand, if someone merits another gratuitous gift by virtue of his previous grace, then this later gift will no longer be first grace.

Hence, it is clear that no one can merit first grace for himself.

Reply to objection 1: As Augustine relates in *Retractationes*, he was at one time deceived into believing that the beginnings of faith are from us, but that the consummation of faith is given to us by God. He retracts this belief in this same place. And it is this belief that seems to be involved in the claim that faith merits justification.

By contrast, if we suppose, as the truth of the Faith holds, that the beginnings of faith are in us from God, then even the act of faith itself follows upon first grace, and so it cannot merit first grace.

Therefore, a man is justified through faith not in the sense that, by having faith, the man merits justification, but rather because he has faith while he is being justified (*dum iustificatur credit*). For as was explained above (q. 113, a. 4), a movement of faith is required for justification.

Reply to objection 2: God gives grace only to those who are worthy of it—not in the sense that they were worthy beforehand, but in the sense that through grace He Himself makes them worthy. For He alone “can make clean what is conceived of unclean seed” (Job 14:4).

Reply to objection 3: Every good work that belongs to a man proceeds from first grace as its principle. By contrast, it is not the case that every good work proceeds from any human gift. And so there is no parallel between the gift of grace and a human gift.

Article 6

Can one man merit first grace for another man?

It seems that one man can merit first grace for another man:

Objection 1: The Gloss on Matthew 9:2 (“When Jesus saw their faith ...”) says, “How much is one’s own faith worth in the eyes of God, in whose eyes the faith of the others (*aliena*) was of such value that he healed the man both interiorly and exteriorly.” But a man’s interior healing comes through first grace. Therefore, one man can merit first grace for another.

Objection 2: The prayers of the just are efficacious and not empty—this according to James 5:16 (“The continual prayer of the just man is very powerful”). But in the same place, just before this, it says, “Pray for one another, that you might be saved.” Therefore, since a man’s salvation can exist only through grace, it seems that one man can merit first grace for another man.

Objection 3: Luke 16:9 says, “Make yourselves friends of the mammon of iniquity, so that when

you fail, they may receive you in the eternal dwellings.” But no one is received into the eternal dwellings except through grace, through which alone, as has been explained (a. 2), one may merit eternal life. Therefore, one man can, by meriting, acquire first grace for another man.

But contrary to this: Jeremiah 15:1 says, “Even if Moses and Samuel should stand before me, my soul is not turned toward this people”—and yet Moses and Samuel had the greatest merit in the eyes of God. Therefore, it seems that no one can merit first grace for another.

I respond: As is clear from what has been said above (aa. 1 and 3 and 4), our work has the character of merit from two sources:

The first is the force of God’s motion, and on this score someone may merit by his worthiness (*meretur aliquis ex condigno*).

Second, our work has the character of merit because it proceeds from free choice, insofar as we do something voluntarily. And on this score there is the merit of fittingness (*ex hac parte est meritum congrui*), since it is fitting that when a man uses his power well (*dum homo bene utitur sua virtute*), God should operate in a more excellent way that corresponds with the excellent power.

From this it is clear that no one except Christ can merit first grace for another by a merit of worthiness. For each of us is moved by God through the gift of grace in order that he himself might come to eternal life, and so the merit of worthiness does not extend beyond this motion. By contrast, Christ’s soul is moved by God through grace not only in order that Christ himself might come to the glory of eternal life, but also in order that He lead others to this glory insofar as He is head of the Church and the author of salvation—this according to Hebrews 2:10 (“He has brought many children into glory, the author of salvation”).

On the other hand, one man can merit first grace for another by a merit of fittingness. For given that a man in the state of grace fulfills God’s will, it is fitting, by the measure of friendship, that God should fulfill the man’s will in the matter of another’s salvation. Still, there can sometimes be an impediment on the part of the one whose justification a holy man desires; it is this sort of case that the passage quoted in the last place above from Jeremiah is talking about.

Reply to objection 1: The strength of others strengthens one for salvation by a merit of fittingness, not by a merit of worthiness (*merito congrui, non merito condigni*).

Reply to objection 2: The appeal made by prayer (*impetratio orationis*) relies on mercy, whereas the merit of worthiness relies on justice. And in praying for many things a man appeals to God’s mercy, even though he does not merit them in justice—this according to Daniel 9:18 (“For it is not in light of our justifications that we present our prayers before your face, but in light of your many mercies”).

Reply to objection 3: The poor who receive alms are said to “receive others into the eternal dwellings” either by appealing in their prayer for them to be forgiven (*impetrando eis veniam orando*), or by meriting for them by a merit of fittingness through other good works. Or they might even receive them materially speaking, since through the works of mercy that one exercises for the poor, he merits to be received into the eternal dwellings.

Article 7

Can someone merit restoration for himself after a fall?

It seems that someone can merit restoration for himself after a fall (*possit mereri sibi reparationem post lapsum*):

Objection 1: It seems that it is possible for a man to merit what is justly sought from God. But as Augustine says, nothing is more justly sought from God than to be restored after a fall—this according to Psalm 70:9 (“When my strength fails, do not abandon me, O Lord”). Therefore, a man can merit his being restored after a fall.

Objection 2: A man's own works profit him much more than do the works of another. But a man is able in some way to merit restoration for another after a fall, just as he is able to merit first grace for him. Therefore, *a fortiori*, he is able to merit restoration for himself after a fall.

Objection 3: As is clear from what was said above (a. 2), a man who at one time was in a state of grace merited eternal life by the works that he did. But no one is able to arrive at eternal life unless he is restored by grace (*nisi reparatur per gratiam*). Therefore, it seems that one can merit restoration for himself by grace.

But contrary to this: Ezechiel 18:24 says, "If a just man turns himself away from his justice and does iniquity, then all his justices which he has done shall not be remembered." Therefore, his previous merits will avail him nothing toward his recovering. Therefore, it is not the case that one can merit restoration for himself after a future fall.

I respond: No one can merit restoration for himself after a future fall, either by the merit of worthiness or by the merit of fittingness.

The reason why he cannot merit this for himself by the merit of worthiness is that the character of this sort of merit depends on the motion of God's grace, and this motion is interrupted by a subsequent sin. Hence, none of the benefits which one later acquires from God and by which he is restored fall under merit, since the motion of his prior grace does not reach this far.

Moreover, the merit of fittingness by which someone merits first grace for another man is impeded from attaining its effect by the impediment of sin in the one for whom it is merited. Therefore, *a fortiori*, the efficacy of this sort of merit is impeded by an impediment of sin that exists both in the one who is meriting and in the one for whom it is merited, since in this case both of them are joined in a single person (*hic utrumque in unam personam concurrat*).

And so there is no way in which someone can merit restoration for himself after a fall.

Reply to objection 1: The desire by which one desires restoration after a fall is called 'just'—and the same holds for the prayer—because it tends toward justice, and yet in such a way that it relies solely on mercy and not on justice in the manner of merit.

Reply to objection 2: One can merit first grace for another by fittingness, since in such a case there is at least no impediment on the part of the one who merits. But such an impediment is present when someone withdraws from justice after the merit of grace.

Reply to objection 3: Some have claimed that no one merits eternal life absolutely speaking except through an act of final grace; rather, one merits eternal life only under the condition that he perseveres.

But this is an unreasonable claim, since sometimes the act of final grace is less meritorious, and not more meritorious, than the preceding act, and this because of the stress caused by illness (*propter aegritudinis oppressionem*).

Hence, one should claim that every act of charity merits eternal life absolutely speaking, but that an impediment to previous merit is posed by subsequent sin, so that the effect is not attained—in just the way that natural causes likewise fail of their effects because of a supervening impediment.

Article 8

Can a man merit an increase of grace or charity?

It seems that a man cannot merit an increase of grace or charity:

Objection 1: When someone receives a reward he has merited, no other reward is owed to him—as is said of certain men in Matthew 6:2 ("They have received their reward"). Therefore, if someone merited an increase of charity or grace, it would follow that, when the grace is increased, he would not be able to look forward to any further reward. But this is absurd.

Objection 2: Nothing acts beyond its own species. But as is clear from what was said above (aa. 2 and 4), the principle of merit is grace or charity. Therefore, no one can merit more grace or charity than he has.

Objection 3: A man merits what falls under merit through any act that proceeds from grace or charity; for instance, through any act of this sort a man merits eternal life. Therefore, if an increase of grace or charity fell under merit, it seems that one would merit an increase of charity through any act informed by charity. But what a man merits is received infallibly from God if it is not impeded by a subsequent sin; for 2 Timothy 1:12 says, “I know whom I have believed, and I am certain that He is able to preserve what I have deposited with Him.” So, then, it would follow that grace or charity is increased through every meritorious act. But this seems absurd, since meritorious acts are sometimes not fervent enough for an increase of charity. Therefore, an increase of charity does not fall under merit.

But contrary to this: In *Super Epistolas Ioannis* Augustine says, “Charity merits being increased, and what is increased merits being perfected.” Therefore, an increase of charity or grace falls under merit.

I respond: As has been explained (aa. 6 and 7), the motion of grace extends to whatever falls under the merit of worthiness. But a mover’s motion extends not only to the movement’s ultimate terminus, but also to the all of the progress contained in the movement (*ad totum progressum in motu*).

Now the terminus of the movement of grace is eternal life, whereas the progress contained in this movement involves an increase of charity or grace—this according to Proverbs 4:18 (“The path of the just proceeds as a shining light and increases unto perfect daylight,” i.e., the daylight of glory).

So, then, an increase of grace falls under the merit of worthiness.

Reply to objection 1: The reward is the terminus of merit. But a movement has two sorts of termini, viz., (a) an ultimate terminus and (b) a mediate terminus, which is both a beginning and a terminus. And the reward of an increase [of grace] is this latter sort of terminus.

Now the reward of human favor is like an ultimate terminus for those who set up their end in that reward. Hence, such men receive no other reward.

Reply to objection 2: An increase of grace does not exceed the *power* of the preexisting grace, even though it does exceed its *quantity*. In the same way, even though the tree exceeds the quantity of the seed, it nonetheless does not exceed its power.

Reply to objection 3: A man merits an increase of grace by any meritorious act, just as he merits the consummation of grace, i.e., eternal life. But eternal life is given in its own time and not immediately. So, too, grace is increased not immediately, but in its own time, viz., when one is sufficiently disposed for the increase of grace.

Article 9

Can someone merit [final] perseverance?

It seems that someone can merit [final] perseverance (*possit perseverantiam mereri*):

Objection 1: What a man obtains by petitioning can fall under merit for one who has grace. But by petitioning men obtain perseverance from God; otherwise, as Augustine explains in *De Dono Perseverantiae*, perseverance would be sought from God in vain in the petitions of the Lord’s prayer. Therefore, perseverance can fall under merit for one who has grace.

Objection 2: Not being able to sin is greater than being able to sin. But not being able to sin falls under merit, since one merits eternal life, part of the nature of which is the inability to sin (*de cuius ratione est impeccabilitas*). Therefore, *a fortiori*, someone can merit not sinning, i.e., persevering.

Objection 3: An increase of grace is greater than perseverance in the grace that one already has. But as was explained above (a. 8), a man can merit an increase of grace. Therefore, *a fortiori*, he can

merit perseverance in the grace that he has.

But contrary to this: One obtains from God everything that he merits, unless he is impeded by sin. But there are many who have meritorious works and yet do not receive perseverance. Nor can one claim that this happens because of an impediment of sin, since it is sinning itself that is opposed to perseverance, so that if someone merited perseverance, then God would not permit him to fall into sin. Therefore, it is not the case that perseverance falls under merit.

I respond: Since a man naturally has free choice that is open to both good and bad, there are two possible ways in which someone can obtain from God perseverance in the good.

In one way, through free choice's being determined to the good through final grace (*per gratiam consummatam*); this will occur in the state of glory (*quod erit in gloria*).

In the second way, on the part of God's motion, which inclines a man toward the good right up to the end (*inclinat ad bonum usque in finem*). However, as is clear from what has been said (aa. 6 and 7 and 8), what falls under human merit is what is related as a *terminus* to the movement of free choice insofar as free choice is directed by God, and not what is related to this movement as a *principle*.

Hence, it is clear that the perseverance associated with the state of glory, which is the terminus of the movement just mentioned, falls under merit, whereas perseverance in this life (*perseverantia viae*) does not fall under merit, since it depends solely on God's motion, which is the principle of all merit. Still, God graciously (*gratis*) grants the good of perseverance to whomever it is granted.

Reply to objection 1: We seek through our prayer even what we do not merit. For God listens to sinners who seek the forgiveness of their sins, as is clear from Augustine's commentary on John 11:31 ("We know that God does not hear sinners"). Otherwise, it would have been useless for the publican to say, "O God, be merciful to me, a sinner" (Luke 18:13). Similarly, by petitioning one seeks the gift of perseverance from God either for himself or for another, even though it does not fall under merit.

Reply to objection 2: The perseverance that will exist in the state of glory is related to the movement of free choice as a terminus, but not the perseverance that exists in this life, for the reason explained.

Reply to objection 3: Something similar should be said in reply to the third objection, the one that concerns an increase of grace; this is clear from what has been said (a. 8).

Article 10

Do temporal goods fall under merit?

It seems that temporal goods fall under merit:

Objection 1: What falls under merit is that which is promised to someone as a reward of justice (*ut praemium iustitiae*). But as is clear from Deuteronomy 28, in the Old Law temporal goods were promised as a reward of justice. Therefore, it seems that temporal goods fall under merit.

Objection 2: It seems that what God gives someone in compensation for service he has rendered falls under merit. But sometimes God gives temporal goods to men in compensation for service done to Him. For instance, Exodus 1:21 says, "Because the midwives feared God, He built them houses," where Gregory's Gloss says, "The reward given in return for their kindness could have been in eternal life, but because of their sin of lying, they received an earthly compensation instead." Again, Ezechiel 29:18 says, "The king of Babylon has made his army undergo hard service against Tyre, and no reward was given it." And later it is added, "There will be a reward for his army, and I have given him the land of Egypt in return for what he has done for me." Therefore, temporal goods fall under merit.

Objection 3: Evil is related to demerit as good is related to merit. But as is clear from the Sodomites in Genesis 19, because of the demerit of sin some are punished by God with temporal punishments. Therefore, temporal goods fall under merit.

But contrary to this: The things that fall under merit are not related in the same way to everyone. By contrast, temporal goods and temporal evils are related in the same way to good and bad men—this according to Ecclesiastes 9:2 (“All things equally happen to the just and the wicked, to the good and to the evil, to the clean and to the unclean, to him that offers victims and to him that despises sacrifices”).

I respond: What falls under merit is a reward or wage (*praemium vel merces*), which has the character of a certain sort of good. Now there are two sorts of goods that belong to a man: one sort is good absolutely speaking (*simpliciter*), and the other is good relatively speaking (*secundum quid*).

The good for a man absolutely speaking is (a) his ultimate end—this according to Psalm 72:27 (“It is good for me to adhere to God”)—and, as a result, (b) all the things that are ordered in such a way as to lead to the ultimate end. And things of this sort fall under merit absolutely speaking.

By contrast, the good that belongs to a man relatively speaking and not absolutely speaking is what is good for him right now or what is good for him in some respect. Goods of this sort fall under merit relatively speaking and not absolutely speaking.

Accordingly, one should reply that if temporal goods are thought of insofar as they are *useful for the works of the virtues*, by which we are led to eternal life, then in this sense they fall directly and simply under merit, in the same way that an increase of grace does, along with everything else by which a man is assisted after first grace in arriving at beatitude. For God gives just men as much of temporal goods—and temporal evils, too—as expedites their arriving at eternal life. And to that extent temporal goods of this sort are good absolutely speaking. Hence, the Psalm [33:10] says, “Those who fear the Lord are not lacking in any good,” and, again, in another place [Psalm 36:25], “I have not seen a just man forsaken.”

On the other hand, if temporal goods of this sort are thought of *in their own right (secundum se)*, then they are human goods relatively speaking and not absolutely speaking. And in this sense they fall under merit not absolutely speaking but relatively speaking, viz., insofar men are moved by God to do certain things temporally in which their goals are attained with God’s favor. Just as eternal life is, as was explained above (aa. 3 and 6), the reward absolutely speaking of works of justice because of their relation to God’s motion, so temporal goods thought of in their own right have the character of a reward, as long as they have a relation to the divine motion by which men’s wills are moved to pursue them—even though sometimes in these cases the men do not have an upright intention (*non habeant rectam intentionem*).

Reply to objection 1: As Augustine says in *Contra Faustum* 4, “In these temporal promises there were figures of spiritual things to come. For the carnal people were adhering to the promises of the present life, and not only was their speech prophetic, but also their life.”

Reply to objection 2: The compensations in question are said to be rendered by God by way of comparison to God’s motion, but with respect to the badness of the will. This applies mainly to the king of Babylon, who attacked Tyre not because he wished to serve God, but rather in order to usurp dominion for himself. Similarly, even though the midwives had a good will as regards the liberation of the children, their will was not upright as regards the fact that they told a lie (*quantum ad hoc quod mendacium confinxerunt*).

Reply to objection 3: Temporal evils are inflicted as punishment on bad men (*infliguntur in poenam impiis*) in the sense that through them those men are not assisted in attaining eternal life. For just men, on the other hand, who are assisted by evils of this sort, they are not punishments but are instead medicines, as was also explained above (q. 87, a. 8).

Reply to the argument for the contrary: All things happen equally to good men and bad men as far as the *substance* of temporal goods and evils is concerned, but not as far as their *end* is concerned. For good men are led to beatitude by goods and evils of this sort, whereas bad men are not.

What has been said is sufficient concerning morals in general.