

QUESTION 62

The Perfection of Angels in the *Esse* of Grace and Glory

Next we have to investigate how the angels were brought into the *esse* of grace and glory. On this topic there are nine questions: (1) Were the angels beatified at their creation? (2) Did the angels need grace in order to turn toward God? (3) Were the angels created in grace? (4) Did the angels merit their beatitude? (5) Did the angels attain beatitude immediately upon meriting it? (6) Did the angels receive grace and glory in proportion to their natural gifts? (7) Did natural love and natural cognition remain in the angels after they attained glory? (8) Were the angels able to sin after attaining glory? (9) Were the angels able to make progress in beatitude after attaining glory?

Article 1

Were the angels created in beatitude?

It seems that the angels were created in beatitude:

Objection 1: *De Ecclesiasticis Dogmatibus* says, “The angels who persevered in the beatitude in which they were created do not by nature possess the good which they have.” Therefore, the angels were created in beatitude.

Objection 2: Angelic nature is more noble than a corporeal creature. But the corporeal creature was created as formed and perfect from the very beginning of its creation and, as Augustine says in *Super Genesim ad Litteram* 1, its being unformed was only naturally, and not temporally, prior to its being formed. Therefore, God did not create the angels as unformed and imperfect, either. But an angel is formed and perfect to the extent that he enjoys God through beatitude. Therefore, the angels were created in beatitude.

Objection 3: According to Augustine in *Super Genesim ad Litteram*, the things made in the work of the six days of creation were made all at once, and so all six of those days must have existed immediately at the very beginning of creation. But according to Augustine’s interpretation, the morning knowledge of the angels existed in those six days insofar as they knew the Word and knew all things in the Word. But the angels are beatified by the very fact that they see the Word. Therefore, the angels were beatified at the very beginning of their creation.

But contrary to this: Stability in the good—i.e., being confirmed in the good—is part of the nature of beatitude. But as the fall of some of the angels demonstrates, the angels were not confirmed in the good immediately upon being created. Therefore, the angels were not beatified at their creation.

I respond: By the name ‘beatitude’ we mean the ultimate perfection of a rational or intellectual nature. Thus, beatitude is what such a nature naturally desires, since each thing naturally desires its own ultimate perfection.

Now there are two sorts of perfection for a rational or intellectual nature.

One of them is the perfection that it can attain by the power of its own nature, and this is called beatitude or happiness in a certain sense. Hence, Aristotle says that ultimate human happiness is the most perfect type of human contemplation by which a man is able in this life to contemplate the best intelligible object, viz., God.

However, beyond this happiness there is another sort of happiness, which we ourselves look forward to in the future and by which we will see God as He is. As was explained above (q. 12, a. 4), this sort of happiness lies beyond the nature of any created intellect.

So, then, one should claim that as regards the first sort of beatitude, which an angel was able to attain by the power of his own nature, he was created in beatitude. For an angel did not acquire this sort

of perfection by any kind of discursive movement, in the way that a man does; instead, as was explained above (q. 12, a. 4), this sort of beatitude was immediately present to him because of the dignity of his nature.

However, at the very beginning of their creation the angels did not have ultimate beatitude, which exceeds the power of their nature. For this sort of beatitude is not part of their nature, but is instead the end of their nature. And so it was not right for them to have it immediately at the very beginning.

Reply to objection 1: In this passage ‘beatitude’ is being used for the sort of natural perfection that the angels had in the state of innocence.

Reply to objection 2: A corporeal creature could not at the very beginning of its creation have the perfection that it is led to by its own operation. Hence, according to Augustine, the germination of plants from the earth did not occur immediately at the time of the first works, when only the power to germinate plants was given to the earth. Similarly, the angelic creature had the perfection of his own nature at the beginning of his creation, but he did not have the perfection at which he was supposed to arrive through his own operation.

Reply to objection 3: An angel has two types of knowledge of the Word, one a natural knowledge and the other a glorified knowledge. The natural knowledge is the knowledge by which he knows the Word through the likeness of the Word that shines forth in the angel’s own nature. The glorified knowledge, on the other hand, is the knowledge by which an angel knows the Word through the Word’s own essence.

Furthermore, it is in both of these ways that an angel knows created things in the Word. He knows them imperfectly through his natural cognition and perfectly through his glorified cognition. Therefore, the first sort of cognition of created things in the Word was present to the angel at the very beginning of his creation, whereas the second sort of cognition was not. Instead, the second sort of cognition became present to him when he was beatified through his turning toward the good; and it is this cognition that is properly called ‘morning knowledge’.

Article 2

Did an angel need grace in order to turn toward God?

It seems that an angel did not need grace in order to turn toward God (*ad hoc quod converteretur in Deum*):

Objection 1: We do not need grace for what we are naturally able to do. But an angel is naturally turned toward God, since, as is clear from what was said above (q. 60, a. 5), he loves God with natural love. Therefore, an angel did not need grace in order to turn toward God.

Objection 2: We ourselves seem to need assistance only for things that are difficult. But it was not difficult for an angel to turn toward God, since there was nothing in him that would militate against such a conversion. Therefore, an angel did not need the assistance of grace in order to turn toward God.

Objection 3: To turn toward God is to prepare oneself for grace. Hence, Zachariah 1:3 says, “Turn toward me, and I will turn toward you.” But we ourselves do not need grace in order to prepare for grace, since otherwise there would be an infinite regress. Therefore, an angel did not need grace in order to turn toward God.

But contrary to this: It is through turning toward God that an angel arrives at beatitude. Therefore, if he did not need grace in order to turn toward God, it would follow that he does not need grace in order to have eternal life. But this is contrary to what the Apostle says at Romans 6:23 (“The

grace of God is eternal life”).

I respond: The angels needed grace to turn toward God insofar as He is the object of beatitude. For as was explained above (q. 60, a. 2), the will’s natural movement is the source (*principium*) of all the things we will. But the will’s natural inclination is toward what is naturally fitting for it. And so if something is beyond its nature, then the will cannot be moved toward it without the assistance of some other principle that lies beyond its nature (*ab aliquo alio principio supernaturali*). For instance, it is clear that fire has a natural inclination to produce heat and to generate fire; however, it lies beyond fire’s natural power to generate flesh, and so fire does not have an inclination toward generating flesh except insofar as it is moved as an instrument by the nutritive soul.

Now it was shown above, in the discussion of our knowledge of God (q. 12, a. 4), that to see God through His essence—which is what the ultimate beatitude of a rational creature consists in—lies beyond the nature of any created intellect. Hence, no rational creature can have a movement of will that is ordered to this sort of beatitude unless he is moved by a supernatural agent; this is what we call the assistance of grace. And so one has to claim that an angel could not have turned with his will toward this sort of beatitude except through the assistance of grace.

Reply to objection 1: An angel has natural love for God insofar as God is the source of his natural *esse*. But here we are talking about the angel’s turning toward God insofar as God beatifies him through the vision of His essence.

Reply to objection 2: The difficult is that which exceeds a given power. But this can happen in two ways.

In one way, a thing is difficult because it exceeds the relevant power with respect to the power’s own natural ordering. And in such a case, if the power can attain that thing with some sort of assistance, then the thing is called ‘difficult’, whereas if it cannot be attained in any way at all, then it is called ‘impossible’ in the sense in which it is impossible for a man to fly.

In the second way, the thing in question exceeds the relevant power not with respect to the power’s natural ordering, but rather because of some impediment that is conjoined with the power. For instance, to ascend is not contrary to the natural ordering of the soul’s moving power, since the soul, taken just by itself, is apt to move to any place at all; rather, the soul is impeded from doing this by the body’s heaviness (*gravitas*).

Now to turn toward ultimate beatitude is difficult for a man both because it exceeds his nature and also because he has impediments stemming from the corruption of the body and the infection of sin. By contrast, turning toward ultimate beatitude is difficult for an angel solely because it exceeds his nature.

Reply to objection 3: Every movement of the will toward God can be called a ‘turning toward’ Him (*conversio ad ipsum*). So there are three types of turning toward God.

One type is through perfect love, which is had by a creature who is already enjoying God. What is required for this type of turning toward God is consummated grace (*gratia consummata*).

The second type is that turning toward God which merits beatitude. And what is required for this is habitual grace (*habitualis gratia*), which is the principle of merit.

The third type is that turning toward God through which someone prepares himself to have grace. And what is needed for this is not habitual grace, but rather the action of God turning the soul toward Himself, in accord with Lamentations 5:21 (“Convert us, O Lord, to You, and we shall be converted”).

Hence, it is clear that there is no infinite regress here.

Article 3

Were the angels created in grace?

It seems that the angels were not created in grace:

Objection 1: In *Super Genesim ad Litteram 2* Augustine says that angelic nature was first created in an unformed way and called ‘heaven’, and that afterwards it was formed and called ‘light’. But this formation occurs through grace. Therefore, the angels were not created in grace.

Objection 2: Grace inclines a rational creature toward God. Therefore, if the angels had been created in grace, then no angel would have turned away from God.

Objection 3: Grace lies between nature and glory. But the angels were not beatified at their creation. Therefore, it seems that they were not created in grace, either. Rather, first they were created only in their nature, and afterwards they attained grace, and finally they were beatified.

But contrary to this: In *De Civitate Dei 12* Augustine says, “Who else fashioned the good will in the angels other than He who created them with His will—i.e., with the pure love by which they adhered to Him—which simultaneously produced their nature and bestowed grace on them?”

I respond: There are diverse opinions on this matter, with some claiming that the angels were created just with their natural powers and others claiming that they were created in grace. Still, the opinion which, it seems, should be held as most probable and which is more consonant with the writings of the saints is that the angels were created in habitual grace (*in gratia gratum faciente*).

For in this way we see that all the things that were produced by a temporal process through the work of divine providence, with creatures operating in subordination to God, were produced in the first condition of things as certain ‘seminal reasons’ (*seminales rationes*), as Augustine calls them in *Super Genesim ad Litteram*—for instance, trees and animals and other such things. But it is clear that habitual grace is related to beatitude in just the way that a seminal reason in nature is related to a natural effect. This is why in 1 John 3:9 grace is called “the seed of God.” Therefore, following Augustine’s opinion, just as he posits that the seminal reasons of all natural effects were instilled in the very first creation of corporeal creation, so too from the very beginning the angels were created in grace.

Reply to objection 1: This ‘unformedness’ of an angel should be understood either (a) in relation to the formation effected by *glory*, in which case the ‘unformedness’ precedes the formation in time, or (b) in relation to the formation effected by *grace*, in which case it preceded the formation only in the order of nature and not in the order of time—in keeping with what Augustine likewise claims about corporeal formation.

Reply to objection 2: Every form inclines its subject in a way that accords with the mode of the subject’s nature. But the natural mode of an intellectual nature is that it should tend freely to the things that it wills. And so the inclination of grace does not impose necessity; instead, one who has grace is able not to use it and to sin.

Reply to objection 3: Even though grace lies between nature and glory in the order of nature, nonetheless, as far as the order of time is concerned, it is not fitting for the nature and the glory to have existed from the same moment (*simul*) in a created nature. For glory is the end of the nature’s operation as assisted by grace. By contrast, grace is not the end of operation, since it does not stem from works; rather, it is the beginning of operating well. And so it was appropriate for God to give grace immediately along with the nature.

Article 4

Did a beatified angel merit his own beatitude?

It seems that a beatified angel did not merit his own beatitude:

Objection 1: Merit stems from the difficulty of the meritorious act. But an angel had no difficulty in acting well. Therefore, his good act was not meritorious for him.

Objection 2: We ourselves do not merit by what is natural to us. But it was natural for an angel to turn toward God. Therefore, he did not merit beatitude by doing this.

Objection 3: If an angel merited his beatitude, then he did this either before he had the beatitude or after he had it. But he did not merit his beatitude before he had it, since, as many hold, he did not have grace beforehand, and without grace there is no merit. Nor, again, did he merit his beatitude after he had it, since in that case he would be gaining meriting even now—which seems false, since a lesser angel would by his merit be able to attain to the level of a higher angel, and so there would not be stable distinctions among the levels of grace. But this is absurd. Therefore, a beatified angel did not merit his own beatitude.

But contrary to this: Apocalypse 21:17 says that “the measure of an angel” in the heavenly Jerusalem is “the measure of a man.” But a man cannot attain beatitude except through merit. Therefore, neither can an angel.

I respond: Perfect beatitude is natural to God alone, since His *esse* is the same as His being happy. By contrast, being beatified is the ultimate end, and not the nature, of every [intellectual] creature. But each entity attains its ultimate end through its operation. And the operation that leads to the end is such that either (a) it *effects* the end, when the end does not exceed the power of that which is operating for the sake of the end, as when medicine effects health, or else (b) it *merits* the end, when the end exceeds the power of that which is operating for the end, and so the end is expected as a gift from another.

Now as is clear from what has been said (a. 1), ultimate beatitude exceeds both angelic nature and human nature. Hence, it follows that both men and angels have merited their own happiness. And if an angel was created in grace, without which there is no merit, then we can say that it was without difficulty that he merited his beatitude—and the same holds as long as one concedes that he had grace in some way or other before he had glory.

By contrast, if he did not have grace before he was beatified, then one would have to claim that he had beatitude without merit, in the way that we ourselves have grace without merit. But this is contrary to the notion of beatitude, which has the nature of an end and which is, as the Philosopher says in *Ethics* 1, the reward of virtue. Or, alternatively, one would have to claim, as certain others have, that the angels merit their beatitude by the things they do in their divine ministries once they have already been beatified. But this is contrary to the notion of merit, since merit has the nature of a pathway (*via*) to the end, whereas it is absurd for someone who is already at the terminus to be moved toward the terminus; and so no one merits what he already has. Or, alternatively, one would have to say that one and the same act of turning toward God is both (a) *meritorious* insofar as it proceeds from free choice and (b) *a fruit of beatitude* insofar as it attains its end. But this, too, seems absurd. For free choice is not a sufficient cause of merit, and so an act cannot be meritorious *qua* proceeding from free choice except to the extent that the act is informed by grace; but it cannot simultaneously be informed both by *imperfect grace*, which is a principle of merit, and by *perfect grace*, which is a principle of the enjoyment of beatitude. Hence, it does not seem possible for someone to be enjoying beatitude at the same time that he is meriting that enjoyment.

And so it is better to say that an angel had grace before he was beatified, and that he merited

beatitude through that grace.

Reply to objection 1: The angels have difficulty in acting well not because of any contrariety or because of any impediment to their natural power, but rather because there is a certain good work that exceeds the power of their nature.

Reply to objection 2: An angel merits beatitude not by his natural turning toward God, but rather by his turning toward God with charity, which occurs through grace.

Reply to objection 3: The reply to this objection is clear from what has been said.

Article 5

Did an angel have beatitude immediately after just one meritorious act?

It seems that an angel did not have beatitude immediately after just one meritorious act:

Objection 1: It is more difficult for a man to act well than for an angel. But a man is not rewarded immediately after just one act. Therefore, neither is an angel.

Objection 2: An angel could have had some act instantaneously at the very beginning of his creation; for even natural bodies begin to be moved at the very instant of their creation, and if a body's movement could be instantaneous, as acts of intellect and will are, then a body would have movement at the very first instant of its generation. Therefore, if an angel merited beatitude through a single movement of his will, then he merited beatitude at the first instant of his creation. Therefore, if the beatitude of angels is not delayed, then they were beatified at the very first instant.

Objection 3: Things that are far distant from one another are such that there have to be many things that mediate between them. But an angel's state of beatitude is far distant from his state of nature, and it is meritorious action that mediates between the two of them. Therefore, an angel had to go through many such mediating acts in order to arrive at beatitude.

But contrary to this: An angel and a human soul are ordered toward beatitude in similar ways, and thus the saints are promised equality with the angels at Luke 20:36. But if a soul which is separated from its body has merited beatitude, then it immediately receives beatitude unless there is some other impediment. Therefore, by parity of reasoning, the same holds for an angel. But an angel merited beatitude immediately upon his first act of charity. Therefore, since there was no impediment in him, he arrived at beatitude immediately through just one meritorious act.

I respond: An angel was beatified immediately after the first act of charity by which he merited beatitude. The reason for this is that grace perfects nature in accord with the mode of that nature, just as every perfection is received in a perfectible thing in accord with the thing's own mode. But as was shown above (q. 58, a. 3), it is proper to an angelic nature to have its natural perfection immediately through its nature rather than to acquire it through a process. But an angel is ordered to glory by his merit in the same way that he is ordered to natural perfection by his nature. And so an angel received beatitude immediately after he merited it.

Now the meriting of beatitude—not only in the case of an angel, but even in the case of a man—can come through a single action, since a man merits beatitude by each act that is informed by charity. Hence, it follows that an angel was beatified immediately after just one act informed by charity.

Reply to objection 1: A man is not apt by his nature, in the way that an angel is, to attain ultimate perfection immediately. And so a man is given a longer pathway for meriting beatitude than an angel is.

Reply to objection 2: An angel exists outside the time of corporeal things, and so different instants in matters pertaining to angels are taken only from the successiveness of their acts.

Still, an angel's meritorious act could not have been simultaneous with his act of beatitude, i.e., his act of enjoyment, since the one is an act of imperfect grace, whereas the other is an act of consummated grace. Hence, it follows that there had to be distinct instants, at one of which he merited beatitude and at the other of which he was beatified.

Reply to objection 3: It is part of an angel's nature that he immediately attains the perfection to which he is ordered. And so all that is required is a single act, and it can be called a mediating act in the sense that the angel is ordered to beatitude through it.

Article 6

Do angels receive grace and glory in a quantity proportionate to their natural gifts?

It seems that angels do not receive grace and glory in a quantity proportionate to their natural gifts (*secundum quantitatem suorum naturalium*):

Objection 1: Grace is given by God's will alone. Therefore, the quantity of grace likewise depends on God's will and not on the quantity of natural gifts.

Objection 2: A human act seems closer to grace than human nature does, since a human act is a preparation for grace. But as Romans 11:6 explains, grace does not come from works. Therefore, *a fortiori*, the quantity of grace in angels is not proportionate to the quantity of natural gifts.

Objection 3: A man and an angel are ordered to beatitude or grace in the same way. But grace is not given to men in proportion to the level of their natural gifts. Therefore, neither is grace given to angels in proportion to the level of their natural gifts.

But contrary to this: In 3 *Sentences*, dist. 2, the Master says, "Those angels who by nature were created more subtle and insightful in their wisdom were likewise given greater gifts of grace."

I respond: It is reasonable to hold that angels are given gifts of grace, along with the perfection of beatitude, in proportion to the level of their natural gifts. There are two possible explanations for this.

The first lies on the side of God, who by the order of His wisdom established the diverse grades of angelic nature. Now just as the angelic nature was made by God to attain grace and beatitude, so too the diverse grades of the angelic nature seem to be ordered to diverse levels of grace and glory—in the way, for instance, that when a builder is smoothing stones in constructing a house, by the very fact that he makes some of them more comely and attractive, he seems to be ordering them to a more ornate part of the house. So, then, it seems that the angels to whom God gave a higher nature are such that He ordered them to greater gifts of grace and to a more ample beatitude.

Second, the same conclusion is evident on the side of the angel himself. For an angel is not composed of diverse natures in such a way that the inclination of the one nature might impede or restrain the impulse of the other—as happens in the case of a man, in whom the movement of the intellective part of the soul is restrained or impeded by the inclination of the sentient part. But when there is nothing to restrain or impede a nature, it moves with all its strength. And so it is reasonable to hold that those angels who had a better nature also turned to God more firmly and efficaciously. Now it happens even in the case of men that they are given greater grace and glory in proportion to the intensity of their conversion to God. Hence, it seems that the angels who had better natures had more of grace and glory.

Reply to objection 1: Just as grace comes from God's will alone, so also does an angel's nature. And just as God's will ordered this nature toward grace, so too God's will ordered the diverse grades of this nature toward diverse levels of grace.

Reply to objection 2: A rational creature's act comes from himself, but his nature comes directly

from God. Hence, it seems that grace is given in proportion to the grade of nature rather than because of works.

Reply to objection 3: The diversity of natural gifts is one thing among angels, who differ from one another in species, and another thing among men, who differ from one another only in number. For a difference in species stems from the end, whereas a numerical difference stems from the matter.

Also, in a man—but not in the angels—there is something that can impede or restrain the movement of the intellective nature. Hence, the same line of reasoning does not hold in the two cases.

Article 7

Do natural cognition and love remain in the beatified angels?

It seems that natural cognition and love do not remain in the beatified angels:

Objection 1: As 1 Corinthians 13:10 says, “When what is perfect comes, what is partial will pass away.” But natural love and cognition are imperfect in relation to beatific cognition and love. Therefore, natural cognition and love cease with the advent of beatitude.

Objection 2: Where one thing suffices, anything else is superfluous. But glorified love and cognition suffice in the beatified angels. Therefore, it would be superfluous for natural cognition and love to remain in them.

Objection 3: The same power cannot simultaneously have two acts, just as a single line is not terminated by two points in the same direction. But the beatified angels always have an act of beatified cognition and love, since, as *Ethics* 1 says, happiness is an act and not a habit. Therefore, there can never be natural cognition or love in the angels.

But contrary to this: As long as a given nature remains, its operation remains. But beatitude does not destroy the nature, since it is the perfection of the nature. Therefore, it does not destroy natural cognition and love.

I respond: Natural cognition and love remain in the beatified angels. For operations are themselves related to one another in the way that the principles of those operations are related to one another. But it is clear that the nature is related to beatitude in the way that what is first is related to what is second, since beatitude adds something to the nature. But what is first must always be preserved in what is second. Hence, the nature must be preserved in beatitude. And, similarly, the act of the nature must be preserved in the act of beatitude.

Reply to objection 1: When a perfection is achieved, it destroys any imperfection that is opposed to it. However, the imperfection of nature is not opposed to the perfection of beatitude. Rather, the imperfection of nature underlies the perfection of beatitude in the way that the imperfection of a potentiality underlies the perfection of the corresponding form. For it is not the potentiality that is destroyed by the form; instead, it is the privation opposed to the form that is destroyed by the form.

In the same way, the imperfection of natural cognition is not opposed to the perfection of glorified cognition. For nothing prevents one from knowing something through diverse middle terms; for instance, it is possible for something to be known through a probable middle term and through a demonstrative middle term simultaneously. Similarly, an angel can simultaneously know God through God’s essence, which pertains to glorified cognition, and through his own essence, which pertains to natural cognition.

Reply to objection 2: What belongs to beatitude is sufficient *per se*. But in order for it to exist, it presupposes what belongs to nature, since there is no beatitude that subsists *per se* except [God’s] uncreated beatitude.

Reply to objection 3: It is impossible for two operations to belong simultaneously to a single power unless the one operation is ordered to the other. But natural cognition and love are ordered to glorified cognition and love. Hence, nothing prevents an angel from having natural cognition and natural love simultaneously with glorified cognition and glorified love.

Article 8

Is a beatified angel able to sin?

It seems that a beatified angel is able to sin:

Objection 1: As has been explained (a. 7), beatitude does not destroy the nature. But it is part of the notion of a created nature that it is able to fall short. Therefore, a beatified angel is able to sin.

Objection 2: As the Philosopher says, rational powers are open to opposites. But a beatified angel's will does not cease to be rational. Therefore, it is open to both good and evil.

Objection 3: It is part of free choice that a man is able to choose good and to choose evil. But free choice is not diminished in the beatified angels. Therefore, they are able to sin.

But contrary to this: In *Super Genesim ad Litteram* 11 Augustine says that the holy angels have a nature that is not able to sin. Therefore, the holy angels are not able to sin.

I respond: The beatified angels are not able to sin. The reason for this is that their beatitude consists in their seeing God through His essence. But God's essence is the very essence of goodness. Hence, an angel who sees God through His essence is related to God Himself in the same way that someone who does not see God is related to the common notion of the good. But it is impossible for anyone to will or to do anything except by fixing his sight (*attendens*) on the good, and it is impossible for anyone to turn away from the good *qua* good. Therefore, a beatified angel is not able to will or to do anything except by fixing his sight on God. But one who wills and acts in this way is not able to sin. Hence, a beatified angel is in no way able to sin.

Reply to objection 1: A created good, considered in itself, can fall short. But from its perfect union with the uncreated good—and beatitude is a union of this sort—it reaches the point of not being able to sin, and for the reason explained above.

Reply to objection 2: Rational powers are open to opposites in cases with respect to which they have no natural ordering, but they are not open to opposites with respect to what they are naturally ordered to. For instance, the intellect is not able not to assent to naturally known principles and, similarly, the will is not able not to adhere to a good *qua* good, since it is naturally ordered to the good as its object.

Therefore, an angel's will is open to opposites with respect to doing or not doing many things. But with respect to God Himself, whom the angels see to be the very essence of goodness, they are not open to opposites. Rather, they are directed to all things in accord with God, no matter which opposites they might choose. And this is what it is to be without sin.

Reply to objection 3: Free choice is related to choosing the means to an end in the same way that the intellect is related to [syllogistic] conclusions. Now it is clear that the intellect's power is such that it can proceed to diverse conclusions given a certain set of principles. However, when the intellect proceeds to a given conclusion by ignoring the order imposed by the principles, this stems from its own defectiveness. Hence, the fact that free choice is able to choose diverse things while preserving the order imposed by the end pertains to the perfection of its freedom. But when it chooses something by deviating from the order imposed by the end—i.e., when it sins—this is a defect in its freedom (*defectus libertatis*).

Hence, the angels, who are not able to sin, have a greater freedom of choice than we ourselves, who are able to sin.

Article 9

Are the beatified angels able to make progress in beatitude?

It seems that the beatified angels are able to make progress in beatitude:

Objection 1: Charity is the principle of merit. But the angels have perfect charity. Therefore, the beatified angels are able to merit. But when merit increases, the reward of beatitude likewise increases. Therefore, the beatified angels are able to make progress in beatitude.

Objection 2: In *De Doctrina Christiana* Augustine says, “God uses us to our own advantage and for His goodness.” The same holds for the angels, whom He uses in spiritual ministries, since, as Hebrews 1:14 says, “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent to minister for those who shall receive the inheritance of salvation?” But it would not be to their advantage if through this ministry they did not merit or make progress in beatitude. Therefore, it follows that the beatified angels are able to merit and to make progress in beatitude.

Objection 3: It is an imperfection for someone who is not at the summit to be unable to make progress. But angels are not at the summit. Therefore, if they are unable to make more progress, then it seems that they are imperfect and defective. But this is absurd.

But contrary to this: Meriting and making progress belong to the state of the pilgrim (*viator*). But angels are ‘comprehenders’ (*comprehensores*) and not pilgrims. Therefore, the beatified angels are unable to merit and unable to make progress in beatitude.

I respond: In every movement the mover’s intention is directed toward something determinate to which it intends to lead the movable object. For an intention is directed toward an end, and it is impossible for an end to be indeterminate. But since, as is clear from what was said above (q. 12, a. 7), a rational creature cannot by his own power attain beatitude, which consists in the vision of God, it is obvious that he needs to be moved toward beatitude by God. Therefore, there must be something determinate to which, as an ultimate end, every rational creature is directed.

And, in the context of the vision of God, this determinate thing cannot consist in *what* is seen, since the highest truth is seen by all those who are beatified in all the diverse grades. However, as far as the *mode of seeing* is concerned, the terminus is fixed beforehand in different ways by the intention of the one who is directing [the rational creatures] to their end. For it is impossible that a rational creature should be produced in order to have the *highest mode* of seeing or comprehending in the same way that he is produced in order to see the *highest essence*. For as is clear from what was said above (q. 12, a. 7), this highest mode can belong only to God. But since (a) infinite efficacy is required to comprehend God, and (b) a creature’s efficacy in seeing can only be finite, and (c) there are infinitely many degrees by which something finite can be distant from what is infinite, it follows that there can be infinitely many modes in which a rational creature understands God with more or less clarity. And just as beatitude consists in the seeing itself, so a given level of beatitude consists in a determinate mode of seeing. So, then, each rational creature is led by God to the end of beatitude in such a way that he is also led by God’s predestination to a determinate level of beatitude. Hence, once this level of beatitude has been attained, it is not possible to pass to a higher grade.

Reply to objection 1: Meriting belongs to that which is moving toward the end. Now a rational creature is moved to the end not only by being acted upon but also by acting. And if the end in question

is subject to the rational creature's power, then the action in question will be said to *acquire* the end, in the way in which a man acquires knowledge by studying, whereas if the end is not within his power but is instead expected from another, then the action will *merit* the end. On the other hand, someone who is already at the last terminus is such that he has been moved and not such that he is being moved.

Hence, imperfect charity, which belongs to the path [to the ultimate end], is what merits, whereas perfect charity does not merit but instead enjoys the reward—just as, even in the case of acquired habits, an operation that precedes the habit helps one to acquire the habit, whereas an operation that flows from the habit once acquired is now a perfect operation accompanied by delight. In the same way, an act of perfect charity does not have the nature of merit, but rather belongs to the perfection of the reward.

Reply to objection 2: There are two ways in which something is said to be advantageous.

First, it may be advantageous as something on the path to the end, and what merits beatitude is advantageous in this sense.

Second, it may be advantageous in the way in which a part is advantageous to the whole—for instance, in the way that a wall is advantageous to a house. It is in this second way that the ministry of the angels is advantageous to the beatified angels, since it is a certain part of their beatitude. For to diffuse a perfection one has to another is part of the nature of the perfect insofar as it is perfect.

Reply to objection 3: Even though a beatified angel might not be at the highest level of beatitude absolutely speaking, he is nonetheless at the limit as far as he himself is concerned, in keeping with God's predestination.

Still, an angel's joy can be increased by the salvation of those who are saved through his ministry—this according to Luke 15:10 (“There is joy among the angels of God over one sinner doing penance”). But this joy, which can continue to increase right up to judgment day, is incidental to the angel's reward. Hence, some claim that the angels can still merit as far as this incidental reward is concerned. However, it is better to insist that someone who is beatified cannot gain merit in any way at all (unless he is simultaneously a pilgrim and a comprehender, as Christ alone was both a pilgrim and a comprehender). For rather than meriting the joy in question, the angels acquire it by virtue of their beatitude.