

QUESTION 63

The Sinful Wickedness of the Angels

Next we have to investigate how the angels became bad, first with respect to the evil of sin (question 63) and second with respect to the evil of punishment (question 64).

On the first topic there are nine questions: (1) Can the evil of sin exist in an angel? (2) What sort of sins can exist in the angels? (3) What was it that an angel sinned by desiring? (4) Given that some angels became bad by a sin of their own will, were any angels naturally bad? (5) Given that no angels were naturally bad, were any of them able to become bad through an act of their own will at the very first instant of their creation? (6) Given that they could not sin at the very first instant of their creation, was there an interval between their creation and their fall? (7) Was the highest angel of those who fell also the highest among all the angels, absolutely speaking? (8) Was the sin of the first angel a cause of the sin of the others? (9) Did as many angels fall as remained faithful?

Article 1

Can the evil of sin exist in angels?

It seems that the evil of sin (*malum culpae*) cannot exist in angels:

Objection 1: As *Metaphysics* 9 says, evil can exist only in those things that are in a state of potentiality, since the subject of a privation is a being in potentiality. But since angels are subsistent forms, they do not have being in potentiality. Therefore, evil cannot exist in them.

Objection 2: The angels have more dignity than the celestial bodies have. But as the philosophers claim, evil cannot exist in the celestial bodies. Therefore, neither can it exist in the angels.

Objection 3: What is natural to a thing is such that it always exists in it. But it is natural to the angels that they should be moved by a movement of love toward God. Therefore, this cannot be taken away from them. But as long as they love God, they do not sin. Therefore, angels are not able to sin (*peccare*).

Objection 4: A desire is only for something good, or at least for an apparent good. But an apparent good that is not a true good cannot exist in the angels, since either (a) there cannot be any error at all in them or (b), at the very least, there cannot be any error in them that precedes sin. Therefore, angels cannot desire anything that is not truly good. But no one sins by desiring what is truly good. Therefore, an angel cannot sin by desiring something.

But contrary to this: Job 4:18 says, “In His angels He found depravity.”

I respond: Angels, along with other rational creatures, are such that if they are considered just in their nature alone, then they are able to sin; and if any rational creature is such that he is not able to sin, then this stems from a gift of grace and not from his natural condition.

The reason for this is that to go amiss (*peccare*) is nothing other than to deviate from the rectitude that a thing’s act ought to have—regardless of whether we are talking about a deviation (*peccatum*) among natural things or among artifacts or in morals. Now the only sort of act that cannot deviate from rectitude is one whose rule is the agent’s very power (*virtus*). For instance, if the craftsman’s hand were itself the rule of cutting, then the craftsman could never cut the wood incorrectly; however, if there is some distinct rule of correct cutting, then his cutting can be either correct or incorrect.

Now it is only God’s will that is the rule of its own act, since God’s will is not ordered to any end higher than itself. By contrast, a creature’s will has rectitude in its act only to the extent that it is regulated by God’s will, to which its ultimate end pertains—just as the will of anyone who is lower must be regulated in accord with the will of his superior, in the way that a soldier’s will is regulated in accord

with the will of the general of the army. So, then, it is only in God's will that there can be no sin, whereas sin can exist in any created will whatsoever, as far as its natural condition is concerned.

Reply to objection 1: Angels do not have potentiality with respect to their natural *esse*, but in their intellectual part they do have potentiality with respect to turning toward this or that object. And it is in this respect that evil can exist in them.

Reply to objection 2: The celestial bodies have only a natural operation. And so just as the evil of substantial corruption cannot exist in their nature, so neither can there be an evil of disorder in their natural action. By contrast, angels, in addition to their natural action, have the action of free choice, and it is with respect to this sort of action that evil can exist in them.

Reply to objection 3: It is natural for an angel to turn toward God with a movement of love, given that God is the principle of the angel's natural *esse*. But to turn toward God as the object of supernatural beatitude is something that stems from the love associated with grace (*ex amore gratuito*), and an angel was able to turn away from this object by sinning.

Reply to objection 4: There are two ways in which sin can exist in an act of free choice.

First, sin can exist in an act of free choice in virtue of the fact that something *evil* is chosen, as when a man sins by choosing adultery, which is evil in itself. This sort of sin always proceeds from some sort of ignorance or error; otherwise, what is evil would not be chosen as something good. Indeed, the adulterer is mistaken about the *particular* case when he chooses *this* pleasure associated with *this* disordered act as a good to be pursued *right now*—and this because of either the inclination of a passion or the inclination of a habit. (This is so even if he is not mistaken about the *universal* principle, but instead holds a true opinion about it.)

Now this sort of sin could not have existed in the angels, since, as is clear from what was said above (q. 59, a. 4), the angels do not have passions by which their reason or intellect might be clouded (*ligetur*) and, again, since no habit inclining them to sin could have preceded their first sin.

Second, one can sin through free choice by choosing something *good* in itself, but choosing that good without ordering it to the proper rule or measure—so that the defect which induces the sin stems solely from the disordered choice and not from the thing that is chosen. For instance, someone might choose to pray while disobeying the order of prayer established by the Church. A sin of this sort does not presuppose ignorance, but presupposes only a lack of consideration of things that ought to be considered.

It is in this second way that the angels sinned, when by their free choice they turned to a proper good without ordering that good to the rule of God's will.

Article 2

Are pride and envy the only sins that can exist in angels?

It seems that pride (*superbia*) and envy (*invidia*) are not the only sins that can exist in angels:

Objection 1: If the pleasure associated with a given sin can belong to someone, then the sin itself can belong to him. But according to Augustine in *De Civitate Dei* 2, the demons also take pleasure in the lewdness of carnal sins. Therefore, carnal sins can also exist in the demons.

Objection 2: Sloth (*acedia*), avarice (*avaritia*), and anger (*ira*) are spiritual sins in the same way that pride and envy are. But spiritual sins belong to the spirit in the same way that carnal sins belong to the flesh. Therefore, it is not just pride and envy that can exist in angels, but sloth and avarice as well.

Objection 3: According to Gregory in *Moralia*, many vices stem from pride and likewise from envy. But once a cause has been posited, its effect is posited. Therefore, if pride and envy can exist in

angels, then for the same reason other vices can exist in them as well.

But contrary to this: In *De Civitate Dei* 14 Augustine says, “Though the devil is not a fornicator or a drunkard or anything else of that sort, he is nonetheless proud and envious.”

I respond: There are two ways in which a sin can exist in someone: first, with respect to *guilt* (*secundum reatum*) and, second, with respect to *affect* (*secundum affectum*).

All sins can exist in the demons with respect to *guilt*. For when the demons induce men to commit all types of sins, they incur guilt for all those sins.

However, the only sins that can exist in the evil angels with respect to *affect* are those that a spiritual nature can be drawn toward. Now a spiritual nature cannot be drawn (*affici*) toward goods that are proper to the body, but is instead drawn toward those goods that can be found in spiritual entities. For an entity is drawn only toward what can in some way be suitable to its nature.

Now in the case of spiritual goods, when someone is drawn toward them, there can be a sin only by virtue of the fact that the rule of a superior is not observed in such an affect. And this is the sin of *pride*, viz., not to submit oneself to a superior in a matter in which one ought to submit. Hence, the first sin of an angel can be nothing other than pride.

However, as a consequence, *envy* was able to exist in an angel as well. For an affect’s tending toward something desirable is of a piece with its resisting the opposite. Now someone is envious in virtue of being saddened by the good of another, insofar as he sees the other’s good as an obstacle to his own good. But a bad angel could have seen another’s good as an obstacle to a good he desired only insofar as he desired to be uniquely excellent, where the other’s excellence would put an end to this uniqueness. And so after the sin of pride, what followed in a sinful angel was the evil of envy, insofar as he was saddened (a) by the good of man and even (b) by God’s excellence, insofar as God uses man, against the will of the devil himself, for His own glory.

Reply to objection 1: The demons do not take pleasure in the lewdness of carnal sins in the sense that they themselves are drawn toward carnal pleasures. Rather, the fact that they take pleasure in all the sins of men, insofar as those sins are impediments to the human good, stems entirely from envy.

Reply to objection 2: Insofar as avarice is a special sin, it is an immoderate desire for temporal things that come into use in human life and whose value can be measured by money. The demons are not drawn toward such goods, just as they are not drawn toward carnal pleasures, either. Hence, avarice, understood properly, cannot exist in them. However, if we use the name ‘avarice’ to designate any immoderate desire for the possession of created goods, then avarice so understood is included in the pride that exists in the demons.

On the other hand, anger, like sense desire (*concupiscentia*), is accompanied by a certain passion. Hence, it itself cannot exist in the demons, except metaphorically.

Finally, sloth is a certain kind of sadness by which a man is rendered lethargic with respect to spiritual acts because of the bodily work they involve. This does not apply to the demons.

So it is clear that only pride and envy are purely spiritual sins that can belong to the demons—as long as the name ‘envy’ is taken not for a passion, but simply for the will to resist the good of another.

Reply to objection 3: All the sins that can stem from pride and envy are included under pride and envy as posited in the demons.

Article 3

Did the devil desire to be like God?

It seems that the devil did not desire to be like God (*esse ut Deus*):

Objection 1: What does not fall under someone's apprehension cannot fall under his desire, since it is an apprehended good that moves appetite, be it a sentient appetite, a rational appetite, or an intellectual appetite (for it is only in appetites of these types that there can be sin). But a creature's being equal to God does not fall under anyone's apprehension, since it implies a contradiction. For what is finite would have to be infinite if it were equal to what is infinite. Therefore, an angel could not have desired to be like God.

Objection 2: That which constitutes the end of a given nature can be desired without sin. But being assimilated to God is the end that every creature naturally tends toward. Therefore, if an angel desired to be like God—not through equality, but through some sort of likeness—then it seems that he did not sin in desiring this.

Objection 3: An angel is created with a greater fullness of wisdom than a man is. But no man, unless he is completely out of his mind, chooses to be equal to an angel, not to mention God. For choice is directed only toward what is possible and toward what is subject to deliberation. Therefore, *a fortiori*, no angel sinned by desiring to be like God.

But contrary to this: Isaiah 14:13-14 says in the person of the devil, "I will ascend into heaven ... and I will be like the Most High." And in *De Quaestionibus Veteris Testamenti* Augustine says, "Inflated with self-exaltation, he wanted to be called 'God'."

I respond: Without any doubt, an angel sinned by desiring to be like God.

However, 'to be like God' can be understood in two ways: first, to be like God through equality (*per aequiparantiam*); and, second, to be like God through similarity (*per similitudinem*).

An angel could not have desired to be like God in the first way, since (a) he knew by his natural cognition that this is impossible, and since (b) his first act of sinning was not preceded by any habit or passion that might have clouded his cognitive power in such a way that, failing to see the impossibility in this particular case, he would choose the impossible—as sometimes happens with us.

And yet even if being like God in this first way were possible, it would still be contrary to an angel's natural desire. For everything has a natural desire to conserve its own being, and its own being would not be conserved if it were transmuted into a different nature. Hence, no entity in a lower grade of nature can desire the grade of a higher nature; for instance, a donkey has no desire to be a horse, since if the donkey were elevated to the grade of that higher nature, then it itself would no longer exist. Yet the imagination is easily deceived about this. For instance, given that a man desires to be in a higher grade of nature with respect to certain accidental characteristics that can increase without the subject's being corrupted, someone might imagine that it is possible for him to desire a higher grade of nature—and yet he could not attain that grade without ceasing to exist.

Now it is clear that God surpasses an angel not only with respect to certain accidental characteristics, but with respect to His grade of nature, and it is also the case that one angel surpasses another in this way. Hence, it is impossible for a lower angel to desire to be equal to a higher angel, not to mention desiring equality with God.

On the other hand, there are two ways in which someone can desire to be like God through similarity.

In one way, he desires to be like God with respect to something in which he is apt by nature to be assimilated to God. And if someone desires to be similar to God in this way, then he does not sin as long

as he desires to attain this similarity to God in the right way, viz., by receiving it from God. However, he would sin if he desired to be similar to God as a matter of justice, i.e., by his own power and not by God's power.

In the second way, someone can desire to be similar to God with respect to something in which he is not apt to be assimilated to God. For instance, suppose that someone desired to be the creator of heaven and earth, which is proper to God; he would sin in this desire. This is the way in which the devil desired to be like God. To be sure, he did not desire to be like God in the sense that he desired not to be subject to anyone, absolutely speaking; for to desire this would be to desire his own non-existence, given that there cannot be a creature who does not participate in *esse* in a way that is subject to God. Rather, he desired to be similar to God in the sense that he desired as his ultimate beatific end something that he could obtain by the power of his own nature, while turning his desire away from the supernatural beatitude that comes from God's grace. Or, alternatively, if he did desire as an ultimate end the sort of similarity to God which is given by grace, he willed to have this through the power of his own nature and without God's help in keeping with the divine plan. This second way of putting it is consonant with the writings of Anselm, who says that the devil desired what he would have attained if he had remained faithful. In fact, these two ways of putting it amount to the same thing in a certain sense. For on both of them, the devil desired to have ultimate beatitude through his own power—something that is proper to God.

And since that which is *per se* is a principle and cause of that which is *per aliud*, it also followed from this that he desired to have dominion over others. In this he likewise desired in a perverted way to be similar to God.

Reply to objection 1 and objection 2 and objection 3: The replies to all the objects are clear from what has been said.

Article 4

Are any demons naturally bad?

It seems that some demons are naturally bad:

Objection 1: As Augustine reports in *De Civitate Dei* 10, Porphyry says, "There are demons of a certain type who are deceitful by nature, pretending to be gods and the souls of the dead." But to be deceitful is to be bad. Therefore, some demons are naturally bad.

Objection 2: Men are created by God in the same way that angels are. But some men are naturally bad, and Wisdom 12:10 says of them, "Their badness was natural." Therefore, some angels can likewise be naturally bad.

Objection 3: Even though non-rational animals are God's creatures, some of them have certain types of natural badness; for instance, foxes are naturally deceptive, and wolves are naturally rapacious. Therefore, even though the demons are God's creatures, they can likewise be naturally bad.

But contrary to this: In *De Divinis Nominibus*, chap. 4, Dionysius says, "The demons are not naturally bad."

I respond: Everything that exists, insofar as it exists and has a certain nature, naturally tends toward some good; for it comes from a good principle, and an effect always turns toward its own principle.

Now it can happen that an evil is conjoined with a *particular* good; for instance, fire has the conjoined evil of being such that it consumes other things. However, no evil can be conjoined with the

universal good. Therefore, if a thing is such that its nature is ordered toward some particular good, then it can naturally tend toward an evil—not insofar as that evil is evil, but *per accidens*, insofar as that evil is conjoined with a certain good. On the other hand, if a thing is such that its nature is ordered to the good in accord with the universal notion of the good (*secundum communem boni rationem*), then such a thing cannot tend by its nature to any evil.

Now it is clear that every intellectual nature is ordered to the universal good, which it can apprehend and which is an object of its will. Hence, since demons are intellectual substances, they cannot in any way have a natural inclination to any evil whatsoever. And so they cannot be naturally bad.

Reply to objection 1: In that same place Augustine reprimands Porphyry for claiming that the demons are naturally deceitful, and he replies that they are deceitful not by nature, but by their own will.

The reason why Porphyry had claimed that the demons are naturally deceitful is that he held that the demons are animals with a sentient nature. Now a sentient nature is ordered toward a particular good, which can have an evil conjoined with it. Accordingly, sentient natures can have a natural inclination toward something evil—but only *per accidens*, insofar as that evil is conjoined with a good.

Reply to objection 2: The badness of some men can be called ‘natural’ either (a) because their badness is by habit, which constitutes a ‘second nature’, or else (b) because of a natural inclination of the sentient nature toward some disordered passion, in the way that some men are said to be naturally angry or naturally lustful. But an intellectual nature cannot have a natural inclination of this sort.

Reply to objection 3: Given their sentient nature, brute animals have a natural inclination toward certain particular goods that evils are conjoined with. For instance, a fox is naturally inclined toward seeking its food in a clever manner, and deceit is conjoined with this. Hence, to be deceitful is not bad for a fox, since it is natural to it, just as—according to Dionysius in *De Divinis Nominibus*, chap. 4—being fierce is not bad for a dog.

Article 5

Was the devil bad through the fault of his own will at the very first instant of his creation?

It seems that the devil was bad through the fault of his own will at the very first instant of his creation:

Objection 1: John 8:44 says, “He was a murderer from the beginning.”

Objection 2: In *Super Genesim ad Litteram* 1 Augustine says that the ‘unformedness’ of creatures preceded their being formed only in origin and not in time. And as he says in *Super Genesim ad Litteram* 2, ‘heaven’, in the sense in which heaven is said to have been created first, means the unformed angelic nature, whereas the sentence “God said, ‘Let there be light’, and there was light” refers to the formation of the angelic nature through its turning toward the Word. Therefore, the nature of an angel was created at the same time that light was made. But as soon as light was made, it was divided from the darkness, where ‘darkness’ designates the sinning angels. Therefore, at the very first instant of their creation some angels were beatified and some sinned.

Objection 3: Sin is opposed to merit. But an intellectual nature is able to gain merit at the first instant of its creation; this happened in the case of Christ’s soul, as well as in the case of the good angels themselves. Therefore, the demons were able likewise to sin at the very first instant of their creation.

Objection 4: Angelic nature is more powerful than corporeal nature. But at the very first instant of its creation a corporeal thing begins to have its own operation; for example, at the first instant at which

it is generated, fire begins to move upward. Therefore, at the first instant of his creation an angel was likewise able to act. Therefore, he had either an upright action or one that was not upright. If the action was upright, then since the angels had grace, they merited beatitude by that action. But as was explained above (q. 62, a. 5), in angels the reward immediately follows upon the merit. Therefore, they would [all] have been beatified immediately and so would never have sinned—which is false. Therefore, it follows that [the bad angels] sinned at the very first instant by acting in an way that was not upright.

But contrary to this: Genesis 1:31 says, “God saw all the things that He had made, and they were very good.” But these things included even the demons. Therefore, at one time even the demons were good.

I respond: Some have claimed that the demons were bad at the very first instant of their creation—not, to be sure, bad by nature, but bad through the sin of their own will. For as Augustine says in *De Civitate Dei* 11, “Those who acquiesced in the position that, as soon as he was made, the devil rejected righteousness, did not agree with those heretics, viz., the Manicheans, who claimed that the devil has an evil nature.”

Still, this position contradicts the authority of Scripture. For in the person of the prince of Babylon, Isaiah 14:12 says of the devil, “How did you fall from heaven, O Lucifer, who rose in the morning?” And in the person of the king of Tyre, Ezechiel 28:13 says to the devil, “You were in the pleasures of the paradise of God.” That is why it was reasonable for the masters to reject this opinion as erroneous.

Hence, others have claimed that the angels were able to sin at the very first instant of their creation, but that they did not sin then.

But some have rejected this position on the grounds that when two operations follow one another, it seems impossible that both of them should be terminated at the very same instant (*nunc*). Now it is obvious that an angel’s sin was an operation posterior to his creation. But the terminus of the act of creation is the angel’s very *esse*, whereas the terminus of his act of sin was his being bad. Therefore, it seems impossible that an angel should have been bad at the very first instant at which he began to exist.

However, this argument does not seem adequate. For it applies only in the case of temporal movements that are effected successively; for instance, if a local motion follows an alteration, then the alteration and the local motion cannot be terminated at the same instant. By contrast, if the changes in question are instantaneous, then the terminus of the first change and the terminus of the second change can be simultaneous and exist at the same instant; for example, the air is illuminated by the moon at the very same instant at which the moon is illuminated by the sun. Now, clearly, creation is an instantaneous action; and so is the movement of free choice in an angel, since, as was explained above (q. 58, a. 3), angels do not have to reason comparatively or discursively. Hence, nothing prevents the terminus of creation and the terminus of an act of free choice from being simultaneous with one another and existing at the very same instant.

So we have to explain in some alternative way why it was impossible for an angel to have sinned in his very first instant through a disordered act of free choice. Even though a thing can begin to operate at the very same instant at which it begins to exist, still, the operation that begins simultaneously with the thing’s *esse* comes to the thing from the agent from whom it has its *esse*. For instance, a fire has its operation of moving upward from the thing that generates the fire. Hence, if a thing has *esse* from a defective agent that can be the cause of a defective action, then it will be able to have a defective operation at the very first instant at which it exists; for instance, a leg that is lame at birth because of a defect in the semen will immediately begin to limp. But the agent that produced angels in their *esse*, viz., God, cannot be a cause of a sin. Hence, one cannot claim that the devil was bad at the very first instant of his creation.

Reply to objection 1: As Augustine explains in *De Civitate Dei* 11, “When Scripture says, ‘The devil sins from the beginning’ (1 John 3:8), he should be thought of as sinning not from the beginning of

his creation, but rather from the beginning of his sin”—namely, because he never drew back from his sin.

Reply to objection 2: Insofar as ‘darkness’ designates the sins of the demons, the distinction between light and darkness should be taken to involve God’s foreknowledge. Hence, in *De Civitate Dei* 11 Augustine says, “The only one who could divide the light from the darkness was He who could likewise foreknow, before they fell, that they would fall.”

Reply to objection 3: Whatever is involved in merit comes from God, and so at the first instant of their creation the angels were able to merit. But as has been explained, the parallel argument does not hold for sin.

Reply to objection 4: As Augustine says in *De Civitate Dei* 11, God did not distinguish among the angels before some turned away from Him and some turned toward Him. And so all of them, having been created in grace, merited at the first instant. But some of them immediately put up an obstacle to their own beatitude and destroyed their previous merit. And so they were deprived of the beatitude that they had merited.

Article 6

Was there an interval between the creation of an angel and his fall?

It seems that there was an interval between the creation of an angel and his fall:

Objection 1: Ezechiel 28:14-15 says, “You walked perfect in your ways from the day of your conception, until iniquity was found in you.” But since walking is a continuous movement, it requires an interval. Therefore, there was an interval between the devil’s creation and his fall.

Objection 2: Origen says, “The ancient serpent did not at first walk on his breast and his belly”—by which he means the serpent’s sin. Therefore, the devil did not sin immediately after the first instant of his creation.

Objection 3: The ability to sin is common to men and angels. But there was an interval between the formation of man and his sin. Therefore, by parity of reasoning, there was an interval between the formation of the devil and his sin.

Objection 4: The instant at which the devil sinned was distinct from the instant at which he was created. But there is time in the middle between any two given instants. Therefore, there was an interval between the devil’s creation and his fall.

But contrary to this: John 8:44 says of the devil that “he stood not in the truth.” And as Augustine says in *De Civitate Dei* 11, “We must take this to mean that he was in the truth, but did not persevere in the truth.”

I respond: There are two opinions about this matter. But the one that is more probable—as well as more consonant with the writings of the saints—is that the devil sinned immediately after the first instant of his creation. It is necessary to hold this if one posits (a) that he broke into an act of free choice at the first instant of his creation and (b) that, as we claimed above (q. 62, a. 3), he was created with grace. For since, as was explained above (q. 62, a. 5), the angels arrived at beatitude through a single meritorious act, it follows that if the devil, created in grace, merited at the first instant, then he would have received beatitude immediately after that first instant if he had not immediately put up an obstacle by sinning.

On the other hand, if one posits that the angels were not created in grace or that they could not have had an act of free choice at the first instant, then nothing would prevent there being an interval between their creation and their fall.

Reply to objection 1: Sometimes in Sacred Scripture instantaneous spiritual movements are understood metaphorically by reference to corporeal movements that are measured by time. And so ‘walking’ here means a movement of free choice tending toward the good.

Reply to objection 2: It is because of the first instant, at which the ancient serpent was not yet bad, that Origen says that the serpent did not walk on his breast immediately or from the beginning.

Reply to objection 3: An angel has inflexible free choice after his act of choice, and so unless he had put up an obstacle to beatitude immediately after the first instant, at which he had a natural movement toward the good, he would have been confirmed in the good. But the same does not hold for a man. And so the conclusion does not follow.

Reply to objection 4: As *Physics* 6 proves, the proposition ‘There is time in the middle between any two given instants’ is true insofar as time is continuous. But in the case of the angels, who are not subject to the celestial movement—i.e., the movement primarily measured by continuous time—‘time’ is understood as the succession of intellectual and affective operations.

So, then, the first instant in the case of angels is taken to correspond to that operation of the angelic mind by which the angel turns inward toward himself through his evening knowledge; for there is mention of an evening, but not a morning, on the first day. And this operation was a good one in all the angels. But from this operation some turned through morning knowledge to the praise of the Word, whereas others, remaining within themselves, became night and “were swelled up with pride,” as Augustine puts it in *Super Genesim ad Litteram* 4. And so the first operation was common to all the angels, but in the second operation they were separated. And so in the first instant all of them were good, but in the second instant the good were separated off from the bad.

Article 7

Was the highest angel among those who sinned the highest among all the angels?

It seems that the highest angel among those who sinned was not the highest among all the angels:

Objection 1: Ezechiel 28:14 says of him, “You were a Cherub, stretched out and protecting, and I set you on the holy mountain of God.” But as Dionysius explains in *De Caelesti Hierarchia*, chap. 7, the order of the Cherubim is lower than the order of the Seraphim. Therefore, the angel who was the highest among those who sinned was not the highest among all the angels.

Objection 2: God made the intellectual nature in order that it might attain beatitude. Therefore, if the angel who is the highest of all the angels sinned, then it would follow that God’s plan was frustrated in his most noble creature. But this is absurd.

Objection 3: The more a thing is inclined toward something, the less able it is to fall short of it. But the higher an angel is, the more inclined he is toward God. Therefore, the less able he is to fall short of God by sinning. And so it seems that the angel who sinned was not the highest among all the angels, but was instead one of the lower angels.

But contrary to this: In his homily on the hundred sheep, Gregory says that the first angel who sinned, “being set above all the hosts of angels, surpassed them in brightness and was by comparison more illustrious than all of them.”

I respond: There are two things to consider in a sin, viz., (a) one’s proneness to sinning and (b) one’s motive for sinning.

Thus, if we consider *the proneness to sinning* among the angels, then the higher angels seem less likely to have sinned than the lower angels. This is why Damascene held that the greatest among those

who sinned were the ones who were set over the terrestrial order. This opinion seems consonant with position of the Platonists that Augustine records in *De Civitate Dei* 8 and 10. For the Platonists claimed that all the gods were good, but that among the demons, some were good and some were bad—where by ‘gods’ they meant those intellectual substances who are higher than the lunar sphere, and by ‘demons’ they meant those intellectual substances who are lower than the lunar sphere but higher than men in the order of nature.

Now this opinion should not be rejected outright as alien to the Faith, since, as Augustine says in *De Trinitate* 3, all of corporeal creation is administered by God through the angels. Hence, nothing prevents one from claiming that (a) lower angels were assigned by God to administer to the lower bodies, (b) higher angels were assigned to administer to the higher bodies, and (c) the highest angels were assigned to attend God. Accordingly, Damascene says that those who fell were from among the lower angels and that within their order there were also some good angels who remained faithful.

On the other hand, if we consider *the motive for sinning*, then the higher angels have a greater motive than the lower angels. For as was explained above (a. 2), the sin of the demons was pride, whose motive is excellence, which was greater among the higher angels. And this is why Gregory says that the one who sinned was the highest of all the angels.

And this opinion seems more plausible. For an angel’s sin proceeded not from any proneness to sin, but solely from free choice. Hence, more weight should be given to the argument taken from the motive for sinning.

Yet this does not mean that the other opinion should be summarily rejected. For even the leader of the lower angels could still have a motive for sinning.

Reply to objection 1: ‘Cherubim’ means ‘full of knowledge’, whereas ‘Seraphim’ means ‘ardent’ or ‘on fire’. And so it is clear that the Cherubim are named from their knowledge, which can co-exist with mortal sin, whereas the Seraphim are named from the ardor of charity, which cannot co-exist with mortal sin. And so the first angel who sinned is called a Cherub rather than a Seraph.

Reply to objection 2: God’s intention is frustrated neither in those who sin nor in those who are saved, since He foreknew how both would turn out, and He has glory from both. For He saves the latter by His goodness, and He punishes the former by His justice.

On the other hand, when an intellectual creature sins, then he himself falls short of his due end. Nor is this absurd in the case of a sublime creature. For an intellectual creature was created by God in such a way that it lies within his own choice to act for the sake of his end.

Reply to objection 3: No matter how strong the inclination to the good was in the highest angel, it still did not induce necessity in him. Hence, he was able by his free choice not to follow that inclination.

Article 8

Was the sin of the first angel who sinned a cause of the sin of the others?

It seems that the sin of the first angel who sinned was not a cause of the sin of the others:

Objection 1: A cause is prior to what it causes. But as Damascene explains, they all sinned at the same time. Therefore, the sin of the one was not a cause of the sin of the others.

Objection 2: As was explained above (a. 2), the first angelic sin was nothing other than pride. But pride seeks excellence. Now to be subject to someone of lower status is more in conflict with excellence than to be subject to someone of higher status; and so, it seems, the sin of the demons was not that they willed to be subject to one of the higher angels rather than to God. But the sin of one angel would have

been a cause of the sin of the others only if the first angel had induced the others to subject themselves to him. Therefore, it does not seem that the sin of the first angel was a cause of the sin of the others.

Objection 3: To will to be subject to another in opposition to God is a greater sin than to will to rule over another in opposition to God, since it involves a weaker motive for sinning. Therefore, if the first angel's sin was a cause of the sin of the others because he induced them to be subject to him, then the lower angels sinned more gravely than the highest angel—which is contrary to the Gloss on Psalm 103:26 (“This sea dragon which You have formed”), which says, “He who was more excellent than the others in *esse* became greater in wickedness.” Therefore, it is not the case that the sin of the first angel was a cause of the sin of the others.

But contrary to this: Apocalypse 13:4 says that the dragon dragged down with him “a third part of the stars.”

I respond: The sin of the first angel was a cause of the sin of the others—not, to be sure, a coercive cause, but rather a cause that induced them by exhortation. An indication of this is evident from the fact that all the demons are subject to that supreme angel, as is clear from what Our Lord says at Matthew 25:41 (“Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels”). For the order of God's justice is such that when someone consents to a sin at the suggestion of another, he is subject in punishment to that other's power—this according to 2 Peter 2:19 (“For by whom a man is overcome, of the same also he is the slave.”)

Reply to objection 1: Even though the demons all sinned at the same time, the sin of the one could still be a cause of the sin of the others. For an angel does not need an interval of time in order to choose or to exhort or to consent—in the way that a man needs deliberation in order to choose or consent and audible speech in order to exhort, where both of these take time. Now it is clear that even a man begins to speak at the very same instant that he has conceived something in his heart. And at the last instant of the speaking, when [the hearer] grasps the speaker's meaning, it is possible for him to assent to what is being said—as is especially clear in the case of first principles (*in primis conceptionibus*), which one accepts as soon as they are heard. Therefore, if we subtract the time taken up by the speech and deliberation that we ourselves require, then at the very same instant at which the first angel expressed his own affection by means of intellectual speech, it was possible for the others to consent to that affection.

Reply to objection 2: Other things being equal, one who is proud wills to subject himself to someone of higher status rather than to someone of lower status. However, if by being subject to someone of lower status he stands to receive some sort of excellence which he cannot receive by being subject to someone of higher status, then he will choose to be subject to the former rather than to the latter. Therefore, it was not contrary to the pride of the demons that they should will to subject themselves to someone of lower status [than God]—especially given that even then it was the highest angel in the order of nature that they were subject to. For they consented to his rule and willed to have him as their prince and leader in order that they might receive their ultimate beatitude by their own natural power.

Reply to objection 3: As was explained above (q. 62, a. 6), an angel does not have anything to hold him back; instead, he moves with all his power to that toward which he is moved, whether it be good or bad. Therefore, since the highest angel had more natural power than the lower angels, he fell into sin with a more intense movement, and thus he also became greater in wickedness.

Article 9

Did as many angels sin as remained faithful?

It seems that more angels sinned than remained faithful (*permanserunt*):

Objection 1: As the Philosopher says, evil is found in the majority, but good in the few.

Objection 2: Sin and moral uprightness are found in angels and men in the same way. But there are more bad men than good men—this according to Ecclesiastes 1:15 (“The number of fools is infinite”). Therefore, by parity of reasoning, the same holds for angels.

Objection 3: The angels are distinguished both in person and in order. Therefore, if a majority of angelic persons remained faithful, then it seems not to be the case that some angels sinned from each of the orders of angels.

But contrary to this: 4 Kings 6:16 says, “There are more with us than with them.” This is interpreted as talking about the good angels who are with us to help and about the bad angels who are opposed to us.

I respond: The angels who remained faithful were more numerous than those who sinned. For sin is contrary to an angel’s natural inclination, and things that are contrary to nature occur in fewer cases, since nature attains its effect always or for the most part.

Reply to objection 1: The Philosopher is talking here about men, in whom evil occurs because (a) they pursue sensible goods, which are known to more of them, and (b) they desert the good of reason, which is known to fewer of them. By contrast, the angels have just an intellectual nature. Hence, the arguments are not parallel.

Reply to objection 2: The reply to this objection is clear from what was just said.

Reply to objection 3: If we follow those who claim that the devil was the highest angel in the lower order of angels who preside over earthly affairs, then it is clearly not the case that angels of each order fell; rather, only angels of the lowest order fell.

By contrast, if we follow those who claim that the devil was the greatest angel of the highest order, then it is probable that some from each order of angels fell—just as men are taken up into every order in compensation for the angelic ruin. This is a corroboration of the freedom of free choice, which can be turned toward evil at any level of creation. However, in Sacred Scripture the names of certain orders, e.g., ‘Seraphim’ and ‘Thrones’, are not attributed to the demons, because these names are derived from the ardor of charity and from God’s indwelling, which cannot co-exist with mortal sin. On the other hand, the names ‘Cherubim’, ‘Powers’, and ‘Principalities’ are attributed to the demons, because these names are taken from knowledge and power, which can be common to both those who are good and those who are bad.