

QUESTION 26

God's Beatitude

Now that we have considered what pertains to the oneness of the divine essence, we must lastly consider God's beatitude (*beatitudo*). On this topic there are four questions: (1) Does beatitude belong to God? (2) Is it with respect to His act of intellect that God is said have beatitude? (3) Is God's beatitude by its essence the beatitude of everyone who is beatified? (4) Is every beatitude included in God's beatitude?

Article 1

Does beatitude belong to God?

It seems that beatitude does not belong to God (*beatitudo Deo non conveniat*):

Objection 1: According to Boethius in *De Consolatione Philosophiae* 3, "Beatitude is a state made perfect by the aggregation of all goods." But an aggregation of goods has no place in God, since there is no composition in God. Therefore, beatitude does not belong to God.

Objection 2: According to the Philosopher in *Ethics* 1, happiness or beatitude is the reward of virtue. But rewards are not fitting for God, and neither are merits. Therefore, neither is beatitude.

But contrary to this: In 1 Timothy 6:15 the Apostle says, "Which in His times He shall show, who is the Blessed (*beatus*) and only Mighty, the King of kings and Lord of lords."

I respond: Beatitude belongs especially to God. For what is understood by the name 'beatitude' is nothing other than the perfect good of an intellectual nature, where an intellectual nature is one which (a) is capable of grasping its own satisfaction with the good that it possesses, (b) is capable of doing well or doing badly, and (c) is a master of its own actions.

Now both of these features, viz., being perfect and being intelligent, belong to God in the most excellent way. Hence, beatitude belongs especially to God.

Reply to objection 1: An aggregation of goods exists in God not in the mode of composition, but in the mode of simplicity. For as was explained above (q. 4, a. 2 and q. 13, a. 4), things that are multiplied in creatures preexist in God in a simple and unified manner.

Reply to objection 2: Being the reward of virtue is an accident that accompanies happiness or beatitude insofar as someone acquires beatitude. In the same way, being the terminus of an act of generation is an accident that accompanies an entity insofar as it goes from potentiality into actuality. Therefore, just as God has *esse* even though He has not been generated, so too He has beatitude even though He has not gained it through merit (*quamvis non mereatur*).

Article 2

Is it with respect to His act of intellect that God is said to have beatitude?

It seems that it is not with respect to His act of intellect that God is said to have beatitude:

Objection 1: Beatitude is the highest good. But 'good' is said of God with respect to His essence, since, according to Boethius in *De Hebdomadibus*, the good is related to being, i.e., something is good with respect to its essence. Therefore, 'beatitude' is likewise said of God with respect to His essence and not with respect to His act of intellect.

Objection 2: Beatitude has the nature of an end. But the end is the object of an act of will in the

same way that the good is. Therefore, ‘beatitude’ is said of God with respect to His act of will and not with respect to His act of intellect.

But contrary to this: In *Moralium* 32 Gregory says, “He is glorious who rejoices in himself and has no need of praise from the outside.” But ‘glorious’ here signifies being happy. Therefore, since we ourselves will enjoy God with our intellect, and since (as Augustine puts it) “the vision [of God] is the whole of the reward,” it seems that ‘beatitude’ is said of God with respect to His act of intellect.

I respond: As has been explained (a. 1), ‘beatitude’ signifies the perfect good of an intellectual nature. And from this it follows that just as each thing desires its own perfection, so an intellectual nature naturally desires to be beatified. But that which is most perfect in any intellectual nature is the intellectual operation by which it in some sense grasps all things. Hence, the beatitude of a created intellectual nature consists in an act of understanding (*in intelligendo*).

Now God’s *esse* and His act of understanding do not differ in reality, but differ only with respect to the concept of an act of understanding. Therefore, beatitude should be attributed to God with respect to His act of intellect, just as it is in the case of other beatified beings, who are said to be beatified because of their assimilation to His beatitude.

Reply to objection 1: This argument proves that God has beatitude with respect to His essence, but not that beatitude belongs to Him under the concept of His essence. Rather, beatitude belongs to Him under the concept of His act of understanding (*secundum rationem intellectus*).

Reply to objection 2: Since beatitude is a good, it is an object of the will. But an object is presupposed by the act of a power. Hence, according to our mode of understanding, God’s beatitude is prior to the act of will that rests in that beatitude, and this can only be the act of His intellect. Hence, His beatitude consists in the act of His intellect.

Article 3

Is God the beatitude of everyone who is beatified?

It seems that God is the beatitude of everyone who is beatified:

Objection 1: As has been shown above (q. 6, a. 2), God is the highest good. But, as is also clear from what was said above (q. 11, a. 3), it is impossible for there to be more than one highest good. Therefore, since it belongs to the nature of beatitude that it is the highest good, it seems that beatitude is nothing other than God.

Objection 2: Beatitude is the ultimate end of a rational nature. But it belongs to God alone to be the ultimate end of a rational nature. Therefore, the beatitude of everyone who is beatified is God alone.

But contrary to this: According to 1 Corinthians 15:41 (“Star differs from star in glory”), the beatitude of one person is greater than the beatitude of another. But nothing is greater than God. Therefore, beatitude is something other than God.

I respond: The beatitude of an intellectual nature consists in an act of the intellect. In this act two things can be considered, viz., (a) the object of the act, which is the intelligible thing, and (b) the act itself, which is an act of understanding.

Thus, if beatitude is considered with respect to the object itself, then in this sense God alone is beatitude, since someone is beatified only in virtue of the fact that he understands God. Accordingly, in *Confessiones* 5 Augustine says, “He is happy who knows You, even if he does not know other things.”

However, if beatitude is considered with respect to the act of understanding, then beatitude is something created that exists in the creatures who are beatified. In God, however, beatitude is something

uncreated in this respect as well.

Reply to objection 1: As far as its object is concerned, beatitude is the highest good absolutely speaking. However, as far as the act is concerned, in beatified creatures this act is not the highest good absolutely speaking, but the highest in that genus of goods that a creature can participate in.

Reply to objection 2: As the Philosopher says, there are two kinds of ends, an *end of which* (*finis cuius*) and an *end by which* (*finis quo*)—more specifically, the thing itself (*ipsa res*) and the possession of that thing (*usus rei*). For instance, in the case of someone who is avaricious, the one end is money and the other is the acquisition of money. Thus, a rational creature's ultimate end, *qua* thing, is God, whereas the ultimate end, *qua* possession (or, better, enjoyment) of the thing, is created beatitude.

Article 4

Does God's beatitude include every beatitude?

It seems that God's beatitude does not include every beatitude:

Objection 1: There are certain false types of beatitude. But in God there is nothing false. Therefore, God's beatitude does not include every beatitude.

Objection 2: According to some, a certain sort of beatitude consists in corporeal things such as sentient pleasures, riches, etc. But these things cannot belong to God, since He is incorporeal. Therefore, His beatitude does not include every beatitude.

But contrary to this: Beatitude is a certain perfection. But as was shown above (q. 4, a. 2), God's perfection includes every perfection. Therefore, God's beatitude includes every beatitude.

I respond: Whatever is desirable in any sort of beatitude—whether true beatitude or false beatitude—preexists as a whole more eminently in God's beatitude.

For with regard to contemplative beatitude, God's beatitude includes the continuous and most sure contemplation of both Himself and all other things, whereas with regard to active beatitude, God's beatitude includes the governance of the whole universe.

On the other hand, with regard to earthly beatitude—which, according to Boethius in *De Consolatione Philosophiae* 3, consists in sentient pleasure, riches, power, authority, and fame—God's beatitude includes (a) rejoicing in Himself and in all other things in the place of pleasure, (b) every type of sufficiency that riches promise in the place of riches, (c) omnipotence in the place of power, (d) ruling over all things in the place of authority, and (e) the admiration of all creatures in the place of fame.

Reply to objection 1: Certain sorts of beatitude, insofar as they are false, fall short of the nature of true beatitude and so are not found in God. However, whatever they have by way of similarity to true beatitude, no matter how tenuous that similarity might be, preexists as a whole in God's beatitude.

Reply to objection 2: The goods that exist corporeally in corporeal things exist in God in a spiritual way according to their own mode.

At this point we have said enough about what pertains to the oneness of God's essence (questions 2-26).