

QUESTION 109

The Ordering of the Bad Angels

The next thing we have to consider is the ordering of the bad angels. On this topic there are four questions: (1) Are there orders among the demons? (2) Is there an order of precedence (*praelatio*) among the demons? (3) Does one demon illuminate another? (4) Are the demons presided over by the good angels?

Article 1

Are there orders among the demons?

It seems that there are no orders among the demons:

Objection 1: As Augustine points out in *De Natura Boni*, *order* has to do with the notion of goodness, just as *mode* and *species* do; and, conversely, *disorder* has to do with the notion of evil. But there is nothing disordered among the good angels. Therefore, there are no orders among the bad angels.

Objection 2: The angelic orders are contained under hierarchies. But the demons are not under any hierarchy, i.e., sacred principality, since the demons are devoid of all holiness. Therefore, there are no orders among the demons.

Objection 3: As is commonly held, demons fell from each of the orders of angels. Therefore, if demons are said to belong to a given order in virtue of the fact that they fell from that order, then it seems that the names of each one of the orders should be attributed to them. But we never find the demons called Seraphim or Thrones or Dominations. Therefore, by parity of reasoning, the demons are not in any of the orders.

But contrary to this: In Ephesians 6:12 the Apostle says, “Our struggle is against Principalities and Powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness.”

I respond: As has already been explained (q. 108, a. 4), an angelic order may be thought of both in relation to the grade of *nature* and in relation to the grade of *grace*.

Now grace has two states, viz., an *imperfect* state, which is the state of meriting, and a *perfect* state, which is the state of consummate glory. Thus, if the orders of angels are thought of as having the perfection of glory, then the demons are not now and never were in the orders of angels. However, if the orders of angels are thought of as being in the state of imperfect grace, then the demons were once in the angelic orders, but then fell from those orders. This is in keeping with the claim, made above (q. 62, a. 3), that all the angels were created in grace.

On the other hand, if the orders of angels are thought of in relation to nature, then the demons are even now in the orders; for, as Dionysius says, they did not lose their natural gifts.

Reply to objection 1: As was shown above (q. 49, a. 3), good can be found without evil, but evil cannot be found without good. And so the demons are ordered to the extent that they have a good nature.

Reply to objection 2: If the ordering of the demons is thought of from the perspective of God, who orders them, then their order is sacred, since God uses the demons for His own sake. However, if the ordering is thought of from the perspective of the will of the demons themselves, then it is not sacred, since they abuse their own nature for evil purposes.

Reply to objection 3: The name ‘Seraphim’ is imposed because of the ardor of charity, the name ‘Thrones’ is imposed because of God’s indwelling, and the name ‘Dominations’ implies a certain sort of freedom—all of which are opposed to sin. That is why these names are not attributed to the angels who sin.

Article 2

Is there an order of precedence among the demons?

It seems that among the demons there is no order of precedence (*praelatio*):

Objection 1: Every order of precedence corresponds to an order of justice. But the demons fell completely away from justice. Therefore, there is no order of precedence among them.

Objection 2: There is no order of precedence where there is no obedience or subjection. But there is no obedience or subjection without concord, and, according to Proverbs 13:10 (“Among the proud there are always contentions”), there is no concord at all among the demons. Therefore, there is no order of precedence among the demons.

Objection 3: If there is an order of precedence among the demons, then it stems either (a) from their nature or (b) from their sin or punishment. But it does not stem from their nature, since subjection and servitude do not arise from nature but instead follow upon sin. Nor does it stem from sin or punishment, since in that case the higher demons, whose sin was greater, would be subject to the lower demons. Therefore, there is no order of precedence among the demons.

But contrary to this: A Gloss on 1 Corinthians 15:24 says, “As long as the world endures, angels will preside over angels, men over men, and demons over demons.”

I respond: Since an entity’s action follows upon its nature, if the natures of any given entities are ordered, then their actions must also be ordered to one another. This is clear in the case of corporeal things. For since lower bodies lie below the celestial bodies in the order of nature, their actions and movements are subordinated to the actions and movements of the celestial bodies. Now it is clear from what has been said (a. 1) that some demons are situated below others in the order of nature. Hence, their actions are subordinate to the actions of the higher demons. And this is just what the notion of an order of precedence demands, viz., that the action of the one who is subjected be subordinate to the action of the one who is in charge. So, then, the natural arrangement of the demons itself requires that there be an order of precedence among them. This point is also consonant with God’s wisdom, which leaves nothing in the universe unordered and which, as Wisdom 8:1 says, “reaches from end to end mightily, and orders all things agreeably.”

Reply to objection 1: The order of precedence among the demons is based not on their own justice but on the justice of God, who orders all things.

Reply to objection 2: The concord among the demons, by which some obey others, stems not from any friendship they have with one another, but from the common wickedness by which they hate men and fight against God’s justice. After all, it is proper to impious men that they should join with, and subject themselves to, those whom they see as stronger in order that they might live out their wickedness.

Reply to objection 3: The demons are not equal to one another according to nature, and so there is a natural order of precedence among them. This does not happen with men, who are equal by nature.

Now the fact that the lower demons are subject to the higher demons stems not from the goodness of the higher demons, but rather from their evil. For since doing evil is especially relevant to unhappiness, to be preeminent in evil is to be more unhappy.

Article 3

Is there illumination among the demons?

It seems that there is illumination among the demons:

Objection 1: Illumination consists in the manifestation of truth. But a demon can make a truth manifest to another demon, since the higher demons enjoy a greater insightfulness in natural knowledge. Therefore, the higher demons can illuminate the lower demons.

Objection 2: A body that abounds in light can illuminate a body that is weak in light, in the way that the sun illuminates the moon. But the higher demons abound in participation in the natural light. Therefore, it seems that the higher demons are able to illuminate the lower demons.

But contrary to this: As was explained above (q. 106, a. 1), illumination goes along with cleansing and perfecting. But according to Ecclesiasticus 34:4 (“What can be made clean by the unclean?”), cleansing does not befit the demons. Therefore, neither does illumination.

I respond: There is no illumination, properly speaking, among the demons. For it was explained above (q. 107, a. 2) that illumination is, properly speaking, a manifestation of the truth insofar as this truth is ordered toward God, who illuminates every intellect.

However, there can be another sort of manifestation of truth, viz., speaking (*locutio*), as when one angel manifests his own conception to another.

Now the perversity of the demons is such that one demon does not intend to order another demon toward God, but instead intends to lead him away from being ordered toward God. And so it is not the case that one demon illuminates another. However, a demon can, by speaking, intimate his own conception to another.

Reply to objection 1: Not every sort of manifestation of truth satisfies the notion of illumination, but only the sort described above.

Reply to objection 2: As far as things pertaining to natural cognition are concerned, the manifestation of truth is not necessary either in angels or in demons. For, as was explained above (q. 55, a. 2 and q. 79, a. 2), they know all the things pertaining to natural cognition from the very beginning of their creation. And so the greater fullness of natural light which exists in the higher demons cannot be any sort of illumination.

Article 4

Do the good angels preside over the bad angels?

It seems that the good angels do not preside (*non habeant praelationem*) over the bad angels:

Objection 1: The order of precedence among the angels has to do mainly with illumination. But since the bad angels are darkness, they are not illuminated by the good angels. Therefore, the good angels do not preside over the bad angels.

Objection 2: When things are done badly by those subject to someone who presides over them, this seems to involve negligence on his part. But the demons do many bad things. Therefore, if they are subject to good angels who preside over them, then it seems that there is negligence among the good angels. But this is absurd.

Objection 3: As was explained above (a. 2), the order of precedence among the angels follows the order of nature. But if, as is commonly held, demons fell from each one of the orders of angels, then

many demons are higher in the order of nature than many of the good angels. Therefore, it is not the case that good angels preside over all of the bad angels.

But contrary to this: In *De Trinitate* 3 Augustine says, “A spirit of life who is a deserter or a sinner is ruled by a spirit of life who is reasonable, pious, and just.” And Gregory says, “The Powers are those angels whose dictate the adverse powers are subjected to.”

I respond: The entire order of precedence exists primarily and originally in God, and it is participated in by creatures to the extent that they are closer to God. For the creatures that have influence over other creatures are those that are more perfect and closer to God. Now the highest perfection, through which one comes closest to God, belongs to those who, like the holy angels, enjoy God—a sort of perfection that the demons are deprived of. And so the good angels preside over the bad angels and the bad angels are ruled by them.

Reply to objection 1: Many of the divine mysteries are revealed to the demons by the holy angels, since God’s judgment demands that certain things be done by the demons either in order to punish evildoers or to test those who are good—just as in human affairs a judge’s assistants make his sentence known to the executioners. Now if revelations of this sort are thought of in relation to the revealing angels, then they are illuminations, since the angels order them toward God. However, they are not illuminations in relation to the demons, since the demons do not order them toward God, but instead order them toward the exercise of their own wickedness.

Reply to objection 2: The holy angels are the ministers of God’s wisdom. Hence, just as God’s wisdom allows certain evils to be done by bad angels or bad men for the sake of the goods that He elicits from them, so too the good angels do not totally prevent the bad angels from doing harm.

Reply to objection 3: An angel who is lower in the order of nature presides over demons, even if the demons are higher than he is in the order of nature. For the power of God’s justice, which the good angels adhere to, is greater than the natural powers had by the angels. Hence, even among men, “the spiritual man passes judgment on everyone,” according to 1 Corinthians 2:15. And in the *Ethics* the Philosopher says, “The virtuous man is the rule and measure of all human acts.”