

QUESTION 64

The Punishment of the Demons

Next we inquire into the punishment of the demons. On this topic there are four questions: (1) Is a demon's intellect darkened? (2) Is a demon's will obstinate? (3) Do the demons have sorrow? (4) In what place are the demons punished?

Article 1

Is a demon's intellect darkened by being deprived of the cognition of all truth?

It seems that a demon's intellect is darkened (*intellectus daemonis sit obtenebratus*) by being deprived of the cognition of all truth:

Objection 1: If the demons had cognition of any truth, they would especially have cognition of themselves, i.e., they would have cognition of separated substances. But this is incompatible with their unhappiness (*miseria*), since such cognition seems to involve great happiness—so much so that some have identified man's ultimate beatitude with having cognition of separated substances. Therefore, the demons are deprived of all cognition of the truth.

Objection 2: What is most manifest by its nature seems to be especially manifest to the angels, regardless of whether they are good or bad. For the fact that what is most manifest by its nature is not especially manifest to us stems from the weakness of our intellect, which receives phantasms—just as the fact that an owl cannot see the sun's light stems from the weakness of its eyes. But God, who is in Himself the most manifest object because He is at the summit of truth, is such that the demons cannot have cognition of Him; for they do not have a clean heart, and it is only by means of a clean heart that God can be seen. Therefore, neither do they have cognition of anything else.

Objection 3: According to Augustine, the angels have two types of cognition of things, viz., morning knowledge and evening knowledge. But morning knowledge cannot belong to the demons, since they do not see things in the Word. Nor can they have evening knowledge, since evening knowledge relates the things that are known to the praise of the creator. (This is why Genesis 1 says that after evening comes morning.) Therefore, the demons cannot have any cognition of things.

Objection 4: As Augustine says in *Super Genesim ad Litteram* 5, at their creation the angels knew the mystery of the kingdom of God. But the demons are deprived of this cognition; for if they had known the mystery of the kingdom of God, then, as 1 Corinthians 2:8 says, "They would in no way have crucified the Lord of glory." Therefore, by parity of reasoning, they are likewise deprived of every other cognition of the truth.

Objection 5: If someone knows a truth, then either (a) he has cognition of it naturally, in the way that we ourselves have cognition of first principles, or (b) he has cognition of it by receiving it from another, in the way that we come to know by being taught, or (c) he has cognition of it through long experience (*per experientiam longi temporis*), in the way that we come to know by discovery. But the demons cannot have cognition of the truth by their nature, since, as Augustine says, the good angels are divided off from them as the light is divided off from the darkness, and, as Ephesians 5:13 says, all manifestation takes place by means of light. Similarly, they cannot have cognition of the truth through revelation or by being taught by the good angels, since, as 2 Corinthians 6:14 puts it, "There is no fellowship between light and darkness." Nor can they have cognition of the truth through long experience, since experience has its source in the senses. Therefore, the demons have no cognition of the truth.

But contrary to this: In *De Divinis Nominibus*, chap. 4, Dionysius says, "We claim that the angelic

gifts given to the demons are in no way changed, but remain in their integrity and great splendor.” Now among these natural gifts is the cognition of the truth. Therefore, the demons have some cognition of the truth.

I respond: There are two kinds of cognition of the truth, one of which is had through *nature* and the other of which is had through *grace*. Again, there are two kinds of cognition of the truth had through *grace*, one of which is purely *speculative*, as when certain hidden things about divine matters are revealed to someone, and the other of which is *affective*, which produces love for God and properly pertains to the gift of wisdom.

Now of these three kinds of cognition, the *first* is neither taken away from the demons nor diminished in them. For this kind of cognition follows upon the very nature of an angel, who is by his nature a type of intellect or mind; and because of the simplicity of his substance, nothing can be subtracted from his nature in the sense that he might be punished by the removal of something natural, in the way that a man might be punished by the removal of a hand or a foot, etc. This is why Dionysius says that a demon’s natural gifts remain in their integrity. Hence, the demons’ natural cognition is not diminished.

On the other hand, the *second* kind of cognition, which is had through grace and consists in purely speculative knowledge, is not taken away from the demons in its entirety, but it is diminished. For as Augustine says in *De Civitate Dei* 9, divine secrets of the sort in question are revealed to them as much as is necessary, either by the mediation of the angels or through certain temporal effects of God’s power—though not in the same way that they are revealed to the holy angels, to whom they are revealed in more abundance and more clearly in the Word Himself.

Lastly, the demons are totally deprived of the *third* kind of cognition, just as they are totally deprived of charity.

Reply to objection 1: Happiness consists in one’s being joined to what is higher. Now separated substances are higher than we are in the order of nature, and so a man can have a certain sort of happiness by having cognition of separated substances—even though his perfect happiness lies in knowing the first substance, viz., God.

By contrast, it is natural (*connaturale*) for a separated substance to have cognition of separated substances, in just the way that it is natural for us to have cognition of sensible natures. Hence, just as a man’s happiness does not consist in his having cognition of sensible natures, so an angel’s happiness does not consist in his having cognition of separated substances.

Reply to objection 2: That which is most manifest by its nature is hidden from us because it exceeds the capacity of our intellect, and not just because our intellect receives its cognition from phantasms. Now the divine substance exceeds the capacity not only of the human intellect, but also of the angelic intellect. Hence, even an angel himself cannot by his nature have cognition of God’s substance. Nonetheless, because of the perfection of his intellect, he can by his nature have a deeper cognition of God than a man can. And this sort of cognition of God remains even in the demons. For even if they do not have the purity that comes from grace, they do nonetheless have a purity of nature that is sufficient for the cognition of God that belongs to them by their nature.

Reply to objection 3: A creature is darkness when compared to the excellence of the divine light, and this is why the cognition that a creature has in his own nature is called ‘evening knowledge’. For even though evening has some darkness adjoined to it, it nonetheless has some light as well, since it is night that is totally lacking in light. So, then, when the cognition of things in their proper nature is directed toward the praise of God, as it is in the good angels, then it has something of the divine light and can be called evening knowledge. By contrast, if it is not directed toward God, as happens in the case of the demons, then it is called ‘nocturnal knowledge’ rather than ‘evening knowledge’. Hence, we read in Genesis 1 that the darkness, which God separated from the light, He called ‘night’.

Reply to objection 4: The mystery of God’s kingdom, which is fulfilled through Christ, was known in some way by all the angels at the beginning, especially if they were beatified by their vision of the Word—a vision that the demons never had. However, not all the angels knew this mystery perfectly or equally well. Hence, when Christ came into the world, the demons knew the mystery of the Incarnation much less perfectly than the others did. For as Augustine says, “It was not made known to the demons in the way it was made known to the holy angels, who enjoy a participation in the Word’s eternity. Rather, it had to be made known to them through certain temporal effects in order to instill terror in them.” Now if they had known perfectly and with certitude that Christ was the Son of God and what the effect of His passion would be, they would never have taken care to have the Lord of glory crucified.

Reply to objection 5: There are three ways in which demons know truths.

First, they know some truths by the subtlety of their nature. For even though their intellects are darkened by the fact that they are deprived of the light of grace, they are nonetheless enlightened by the light of their intellectual nature.

Second, they know some truths by having them revealed by the holy angels, with whom they do not have a conformity of will, but with whom they do have a similarity of intellectual nature, in accord with which they are able to receive what is shown to them by others.

Third, they know some truths through long experience—though not in the sense that they receive anything from sensation. Rather, as was explained above when we were discussing angelic cognition (q. 57, a. 3), when the likeness of the intelligible species of a thing that is naturally instilled in the demons is realized in singular things, they know certain things as present which they did not previously know as future.

Article 2

Is the will of the demons obstinate in evil?

It seems that the will of the demons is not obstinate in evil (*non est obstinata in malo*):

Objection 1: As has been explained (a. 1), freedom of choice belongs naturally to an intellectual nature, and this nature remains in the demons. But freedom of choice is ordered *per se* and primarily toward good rather than to evil. Therefore, a demon’s will is not so obstinate in evil that he cannot return to the good.

Objection 2: God’s mercy, which is infinite, is greater than a demon’s wickedness, which is finite. But no one returns from the wickedness of sin to the goodness of justice except through God’s mercy. Therefore, even the demons can return to the state of justice from the state of wickedness.

Objection 3: If the demons have a will that is obstinate in evil, then they have this obstinacy especially in the sin by which they fell. But that sin, viz., pride, does not now remain in them, since the motive for it, viz., excellence, no longer remains in them. Therefore, a demon is not obstinate in evil.

Objection 4: Gregory says that one man can be cured (*reparari*) by another, since he fell because of another. But as was explained above (q. 63, a. 8), the lower demons fell because of the first demon. Therefore, their fall can be cured by another. Therefore, they are not obstinate in evil.

Objection 5: If someone is obstinate in wickedness, then he never does any good work. But a demon does some good works. For a demon confesses the truth when he says to Christ, “I know that you are the holy one of God” (Mark 1:24); the demons also “believe and tremble,” as James 2:19 puts it; again, in *De Divinis Nominibus*, chap. 4, Dionysius says, “The demons desire the good and the best: to

exist, to live, and to understand.” Therefore, the demons are not obstinate in wickedness.

But contrary to this: Psalm 73:23 says, “The pride of those who hate you ascends continually,” which is interpreted as speaking about the demons. Therefore, the demons always persevere obstinately in wickedness.

I respond: Origen’s position was that, because of its freedom of choice, every created will is able to turn toward the good and able to turn toward evil—the only exception being Christ’s soul, due to its union with the Word.

However, this position undermines the genuineness of the beatitude of the holy angels and men, since everlasting stability is part of the nature of genuine beatitude—which is why it is called ‘eternal life’. This position is also incompatible with the authority of Sacred Scripture, which decrees that the demons and evil men “will be sent into eternal punishment,” and that those who are good “will be brought into eternal life” (Matthew 25:46). Hence, the position in question must be counted as erroneous, and according to the Catholic Faith one must hold firmly both that (a) the will of the good angels is confirmed in the good and that (b) the will of the demons is obstinate in evil.

The reason for this obstinacy is to be found not in the gravity of a demon’s sin, but rather in the condition of the nature of his state (*ex conditione naturae status*). For as Damascene puts it, the fall is to angels what death is to men. Now it is clear that all of a man’s mortal sins, whether they be great or small, can be remitted before death, whereas after death they remain forever and cannot be remitted. To understand the reason for this sort of obstinacy, note that in each thing the appetitive power is proportioned to the apprehensive power by which it is moved in the way that a movable thing is proportioned to its mover. For as was explained above (q. 59, a. 1), the sentient appetite is directed toward a particular good, whereas the will is directed toward the universal good; in the same way, the senses apprehend singulars, whereas the intellect apprehends universals. Now an angel’s apprehension differs from a man’s in that through his understanding (*intellectus*) an angel apprehends everything in an immovable way (*immobiliter*), just as we apprehend in an immovable way the first principles that are the object of an act of understanding (*intellectus*). By contrast, through reason (*ratio*) a man understands in a movable way (*mobilititer*) by reasoning discursively from one thing to another, so that he has a way open to both opposites. Hence, it is likewise the case that a man’s will adheres to something in a movable way in the sense that it is able to retreat from that thing and adhere to some contrary thing, whereas an angel’s will adheres to something in a fixed and immovable way. So if we think about an angel before he adheres to something, then he is able freely to adhere to this thing or to its opposite (we are speaking here of things that he does not will naturally); but after he has already adhered to one or the other, he adheres to it in an immovable way. And so it is customary to say that a man’s free choice is flexible with respect to opposites both before and after his act of choice, whereas an angel’s free choice is flexible with respect to opposites before his act of choice, but not afterwards.

So, then, the good angels, who always adhere to justice, are confirmed in the good, whereas the bad angels, who sin, are obstinate in sin. Later on (*Supplement*, q. 98, aa. 1 and 2) we will talk about the obstinacy of men who are damned.

Reply to objection 1: The good and bad angels both have free choice, but, as has been explained, they have it in accord with the mode and condition of their nature.

Reply to objection 2: God’s mercy frees from their sins those who are repentant. But those who are incapable of repentance adhere immovably to evil and are not freed by God’s mercy.

Reply to objection 3: As far as the devil’s desire is concerned, the sin by which he first sinned remains in him—even though it does not remain in him in the sense that he believes that he can fulfill that desire. In the same way, if someone believes that he is able to commit a murder and wills to do so and later has the power to do it taken away from him, the desire (*voluntas*) to commit the murder can still

remain in him in the sense that he wishes that he had done it, or in the sense that he would will to do it if he could do it.

Reply to objection 4: It is not the case that the entire reason why a man's sin can be remitted is that he sinned at the suggestion of another. And so the conclusion does not follow.

Reply to objection 5: A demon has two kinds of act:

One kind of act proceeds from a deliberate will and can properly be called his own act. This kind of act on the part of a demon is always bad, since even if he sometimes effects something good, he nonetheless does not effect it in an upright way—as, for instance, when he tells the truth in order to deceive someone, or when he believes or confesses the truth not willingly, but because he is compelled to by the evidentness of things.

By contrast, the second kind of act on the part of a demon is a natural act, which can be good and which attests to the goodness of his nature. And yet even a good act of this sort he uses for an evil end.

Article 3

Is there sorrow in the demons?

It seems that there is no sorrow (*dolor*) in the demons:

Objection 1: Sorrow and joy are opposed to one another and so they cannot exist in the same thing at the same time. But there is joy in the demons; for in *Contra Manichaeos* Augustine says, “The devil has power over those who despise God's precepts, and he rejoices over this utterly miserable power of his.” Therefore, there is no sorrow in the demons.

Objection 2: Sorrow is a cause of fear, since the things that we fear while they are still future are such that we have sorrow over them when they become present. But according to Job 41:24 (“He was made to fear no one”), there is no fear in the demons. Therefore, there is no sorrow in the demons.

Objection 3: It is good to have sorrow for evil. But the demons are unable to do anything in an upright way. Therefore, they cannot have sorrow, at least sorrow for the evil of sin—the sort of sorrow that involves the ‘worm of conscience’.

But contrary to this: A demon's sin is more grave than a man's sin. But according to Apocalypse 18:7 (“As much as she has glorified herself and lived in delicacies, so much torment and sorrow you give to her”), a man is punished with sorrow for the pleasure he takes in his sin. Therefore, *a fortiori*, the devil, who glorified himself to the maximum, is punished with the grief of sorrow.

I respond: Insofar as fear, sorrow, joy, etc., are passions, they cannot exist in the demons; for as such they are proper to the sentient appetite, which is a power existing in a corporeal organ.

However, insofar as the names ‘fear’, ‘sorrow’, and ‘joy’ designate simple acts of will, they can as such exist in the demons. And one must claim that sorrow does exist in the demons. For insofar as ‘sorrow’ signifies a simple act of will, it is nothing other than the will's resistance either to what does exist or to what does not exist. But it is clear that many things are either such that (a) they exist and the demons wish they did not exist or such that (b) they do not exist and the demons wish they did exist. For instance, because the demons are envious, they wish that those who are in fact saved might be damned. Hence, one must claim that there is sorrow in the demons, principally because it is part of the notion of punishment that punishment be repugnant to the will. In addition, they are deprived of the beatitude that they naturally desire, and their evil will is held in check in many matters.

Reply to objection 1: Joy and sorrow are opposites when they are directed at the same thing, but not when they are directed at diverse things. Hence, nothing prevents one from having sorrow over one

thing while at the same time rejoicing over something else. This is especially true when the sorrow and joy in question are simple acts of will. For not only in diverse things, but even in one and the same thing, there can be both something that we will and something that we will the opposite of.

Reply to objection 2: The demons have fear with respect to what is future in the same way that they have sorrow over what is present.

Now the cited verse, “He was made to fear no one,” is talking about the fear of God that keeps one from sinning. For in another place Scripture says that “the demons believe and tremble” (James 2:19).

Reply to objection 3: To have sorrow for the evil of sin because of the evil itself attests to the *will's* goodness, which the evil of sin is opposed to. By contrast, to have sorrow over the evil of punishment—or over the evil of sin because of the punishment for it—attests to the *nature's* goodness, which the evil of punishment is opposed to. Hence, in *De Civitate Dei* 19 Augustine says, “The sorrow over a good that is lost because of punishment is a witness to the goodness of a nature.” Therefore, since a demon has a perverse and obstinate will, he does not have sorrow for the evil of sin.

Article 4

Is the air the demons' place of punishment?

It seems that the air is not the demons' place of punishment (*aer iste non sit locus poenalis daemonum*):

Objection 1: A demon is a spiritual nature. But a spiritual nature is not affected by place. Therefore, there is no place of punishment for the demons.

Objection 2: A man's sin is not more grave than a demon's sin. But hell (*infernus*) is the place of man's punishment. Therefore, *a fortiori*, it is the place of a demon's punishment. Therefore, the misty air (*aer caliginosus*) is not the place of a demon's punishment.

Objection 3: Demons are punished with a punishment of fire. But there is no fire in the misty air. Therefore, the misty air is not the demons' place of punishment.

But contrary to this: In *Super Genesim ad Litteram* 3 Augustine says, “The misty air is, as it were, the prison of the demons until judgment day.”

I respond: Given their nature, the angels stand between God and men. Now the nature of divine providence is such that it procures the good of lower beings through the mediation of higher beings; and there are two ways in which the good of man is procured through divine providence:

The first way is *direct*, viz., when someone is induced toward the good and drawn back from evil, and this is fittingly accomplished through the mediation of the good angels.

The second way is *indirect*, viz., when someone who is under attack occupies himself with fighting back. And it was appropriate for this sort of procurement of the human good to be accomplished through the mediation of the bad angels—lest after their sin they should be totally useless to the natural order.

Accordingly, there have to be two places of punishment for the demons—one by reason of their sin, and this is hell; and the other for the sake of their putting men to the test, and this is the misty air. Now the procurement of human salvation will last until judgment day, and so the angels' ministry and the demons' agitations will last until then. Hence, until then, the good angels are sent here to us, and the demons are in the misty air to tempt us—even though some of the demons are even now in hell in order to torment those whom they have led into evil, just as some of the good angels are now with the holy souls in heaven.

After judgment day, however, all evildoers, both men and angels, will be in hell, whereas the good

will be in heaven.

Reply to objection 1: A place is a place of punishment for an angel or for a soul not in the sense that it affects them by altering their nature, but in the sense that it affects them by saddening their will, since the angel or soul sees himself as being in a place that is not agreeable to his will.

Reply to objection 2: It is not the case that one soul is given preference over another soul according to the order of nature, in the way that the demons are given preference over men by the order of nature. Therefore, the arguments are not parallel.

Reply to objection 3: Some have claimed that the sentient punishment of both demons and souls is deferred until judgment day and that, similarly, the beatitude of the saints is deferred until judgment day. But this position is erroneous and incompatible with what the Apostle says at 2 Corinthians 5:1 (“If our earthly house of this habitation is dissolved, we have a house in heaven”).

By contrast, others, even though they do not concede this claim with respect to souls, concede it with respect to the demons. However, it is better to hold a uniform opinion about the bad souls and bad angels, just as it is better to hold a uniform opinion about the good souls and good angels.

Hence, one should say that a heavenly place is appropriate for the glory of the angels, even though their glory is not diminished when they come to us, since they still consider this heavenly place to be their own (just as we say that the bishop’s honor is not diminished when he is not actually seated on his episcopal chair). And, similarly, one should say that even if the demons are not actually bound to the fire of Gehenna when they are in the misty air, nonetheless, by the very fact that they know they deserve to be bound to it, their punishment is not diminished. Hence, a Gloss on James 3:6 says, “They carry the fire of Gehenna with them wherever they go.”

Nor is this contrary to the fact that “they pleaded with the Lord not to send them into the abyss,” as Luke 8:31 puts it. For they made this plea because they thought it a punishment to be driven from a place where they could harm men. Hence, Mark 5:10 says, “They begged Him not to drive them away out of the region.”