

QUESTION 62

The Theological Virtues

Next we have to consider the theological virtues. And on this topic there are four questions: (1) Are there any theological virtues? (2) Are the theological virtues distinct from the intellectual and moral virtues? (3) How many theological virtues are there, and which virtues are they? (4) What is the order of the theological virtues?

Article 1

Are there any theological virtues?

It seems that there are no theological virtues:

Objection 1: *Physics* 7 says, “A virtue is a disposition of what is complete toward what is best (*dispositio perfecti ad optimum*), where by ‘complete’ I mean ‘disposed in accord with its nature’.” But what is divine lies beyond man’s nature. Therefore, theological virtues are not the virtues of a man.

Objection 2: The theological virtues are, as it were, God’s virtues (*virtutes divinae*). But as has been explained (q. 61, a. 5), God’s virtues are *exemplary virtues* and exist in God, not in us. Therefore, theological virtues are not virtues that belong to a man.

Objection 3: Theological virtues are virtues by which we are ordered toward God, who is the first principle and ultimate end of things. But by the very nature of his reason and will, a man has an ordering toward the first principle and ultimate end. Therefore, there is no need for any habits of the theological virtues, by which man’s reason and will might be ordered toward God.

But contrary to this: The precepts of the Law have to do with the acts of the virtues. But precepts that have to do with acts of faith (*fides*), hope (*spes*), and charity (*caritas*) are given in divine law. For instance, Ecclesiasticus 2:8ff. says, “You who fear God, believe in Him,” and again, “Hope in Him,” and again, “Love Him.” Therefore, faith, hope, and charity are virtues that order one toward God. Therefore, they are theological virtues.

I respond: As is clear from what was said above (q. 5, a. 7), a man is perfected through the acts by which he is ordered toward beatitude. But as was explained above (q. 5, a. 5), man’s beatitude or happiness is twofold. One sort of beatitude is proportioned to human nature, viz., the beatitude which a man is able to attain through the principles of his own nature. The other sort is a beatitude which exceeds man’s nature and which a man can attain only by God’s power, through a certain participation in the divine nature (*secundum quandam divinitatis participationem*)—this according to 2 Peter 1:4, which says that through Christ we are made “partakers of the divine nature.”

Since this second sort of beatitude exceeds any proportion to human nature, a man’s natural principles, by which he proceeds to act well in a way proportioned to his nature (*secundum suam proportionem*), are not sufficient for ordering the man toward this beatitude. Hence, principles by which he might be so ordered toward supernatural beatitude have to be divinely added to a man—in just the way in which he is ordered by his natural principles toward his connatural end (though not without God’s help). And these principles are called *theological virtues*, not only because (a) they have God as their object, but also because (b) they are infused in us by God alone and because (c) these virtues are made known (*traduntur*) to us only through divine revelation, in Sacred Scripture.

Reply to objection 1: There are two ways in which a nature can be attributed to a given thing. In one way, *essentially*, and in this sense the theological virtues exceed a man’s nature. In the second way, *by participation (participative)*, in the way that a piece of wood that is on fire participates in the nature of fire, and, as has been explained, this is the sense in which a man becomes a partaker in the divine nature. And so the theological virtues befit a man in accord with his *participated nature*.

Reply to objection 2: The virtues in question are not called ‘God’s virtues’ in the sense of being virtues by which God is virtuous, but are instead called ‘God’s virtues’ in the sense that they are virtues

by which we are made virtuous by God and in relation to God. Hence, they are not *exemplary virtues*, but are instead *copied virtues (non sunt exempla sed exemplatae)*.

Reply to objection 3: Man's reason and will are ordered toward God naturally in the sense that God is the principle and end of human nature, yet in a way proportioned to the nature. But man's reason and will are not by their nature adequately ordered toward God insofar as He is the object of supernatural beatitude.

Article 2

Are the theological virtues distinct from the moral and intellectual virtues?

It seems that the theological virtues are not distinct from the moral and intellectual virtues:

Objection 1: If the theological virtues exist in a human soul, they must perfect it either with respect to its intellective part or with respect to its appetitive part. But the virtues that perfect the intellective part are called intellectual virtues, whereas the virtues that perfect the appetitive part are moral virtues. Therefore, the theological virtues are not distinct from the moral virtues and the intellectual virtues.

Objection 2: The virtues that are called theological order us toward God. But among the intellectual virtues there is one that orders us toward God, viz., wisdom, which has to do with divine things, since it considers the highest cause. Therefore, the theological virtues are not distinct from the intellectual virtues.

Objection 3: In *De Moribus Ecclesiae* Augustine shows that the four cardinal virtues are the order of love. But love (*amor*) is charity (*caritas*), which is posited as a theological virtue. Therefore, the moral virtues are not distinct from the theological virtues.

But contrary to this: What lies beyond man's nature (*est supra naturam hominis*) is distinct from what accords with man's nature (*est secundum naturam hominis*). But the theological virtues lie beyond man's nature, while, as was shown above (q. 58, a. 3), by their nature the intellectual and moral virtues accord with man's nature. Therefore, they are distinct from one another.

I respond: As was explained above (q. 54, a. 2), habits are distinct in species according to the formal differences among their objects. But the object of the theological virtues is the ultimate end of things, God Himself, *insofar as He exceeds our reason's cognition*. By contrast, the object of the intellectual and moral virtues is something that *can be comprehended by human reason*. Hence, the theological virtues are distinct in species from the moral and intellectual virtues.

Reply to objection 1: The intellectual and moral virtues perfect man's intellect and appetite in a way proportioned to human nature, whereas the theological virtues perfect them supernaturally.

Reply to objection 2: The wisdom that the Philosopher posits as an intellectual virtue considers divine things *insofar as they can be investigated by human reason*. By contrast, a theological virtue has to do with divine things *insofar as they exceed human reason*.

Reply to objection 3: Even though charity is love, not every sort of love is charity. Therefore, when one claims that every virtue is the order of love, this can be understood either of love in a general sense or of the love of charity (*de amore communiter dicto vel de amore caritatis*). If the claim is being made about love in a general sense, then every virtue is said to be the order of love in the sense that well-ordered affection is required for each of the cardinal virtues, where, as was explained above (q. 27, a. 4 and q. 28, a. 6 and q. 41, a. 2), love is the root and principle of every affection. On the other hand, if the claim is being made about the love of charity, then it means not that every other virtue is essentially charity, but instead that, as will become clear below (q. 65, a. 2 and *ST* 2-2, q. 23, a. 7), all the other virtues in some way depend upon charity.

Article 3

Is it appropriate to posit three theological virtues?

It seems that it is inappropriate to posit three theological virtues:

Objection 1: The theological virtues are related to divine beatitude in the same way that the inclination of our nature is related to our connatural end. But among the virtues ordered toward our connatural end, there is just a single natural virtue, viz., the understanding of principles (*intellectus principiorum*). Therefore, just one theological virtue should be posited.

Objection 2: The theological virtues are more perfect than the intellectual and moral virtues. But faith is not posited among the intellectual virtues; instead, it is something less than a virtue, since it is an imperfect sort of cognition. Similarly, hope is not posited among the moral virtues; instead, it is something less than a virtue, since it is a passion. Therefore, *a fortiori*, faith and hope should not be posited as theological virtues.

Objection 3: The theological virtues order a man's soul toward God. But a man's soul cannot be ordered toward God except through its intellectual part, in which the intellect and the will exist. Therefore, there should be only two theological virtues, one of which perfects the intellect and the other of which perfects the will.

But contrary to this: In 1 Corinthians 13:13 the Apostle says, "Now there remain these three: faith, hope, and charity."

I respond: As was explained above (a. 1), the theological virtues order a man toward supernatural beatitude in the same way that a man is ordered by natural inclination toward the end that is connatural to him. The latter occurs in two respects:

First, *as regards reason or intellect*, insofar as it contains universal first principles known to us by the natural light of the intellect (*per naturale lumen intellectus*), from which reason proceeds both in the case of things to be theorized about and in the case of things to be done (*ex quibus procedit ratio tam in speculandis quam in agendis*).

Second, *through rectitude of the will*, which naturally tends toward the good of reason.

However, these two things fall short of the order of supernatural beatitude—this according to 1 Corinthians 2:9 ("Eye has not seen, nor has ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man, what God has prepared for those who love Him"). Hence, in both respects something has to be added to a man supernaturally to order him toward his supernatural end.

First, as regards the intellect, what are added to man are certain supernatural principles that are grasped by a divine light (*divino lumine capiuntur*), and these are the things to be taken on faith (*credibilia*), with respect to which there is *faith*.

Second, the will is ordered toward its supernatural end both (a) with respect to the movement of intention, which tends toward the end as something possible to attain, and this pertains to *hope*, and also (b) with respect to a certain spiritual union through which the will is in some sense transformed into its end, and this is accomplished through *charity*. For each thing's appetite naturally moves and tends toward the end that is connatural to it, and this movement proceeds from the thing's being conformed in some way to its end (*iste motus provenit ex quadam conformitate rei ad suum finem*).

Reply to objection 1: The intellect needs intelligible species by which it understands, and so one has to posit in the intellect a natural habit that is added to its power.

By contrast, the very nature of the will is sufficient for its natural ordering toward its end, whether (a) with respect to its tending toward the end (*quantum ad intentionis finis*) or (b) with respect to its being conformed to the end (*quantum ad conformitatem ad ipsum*). However, in relation to what lies beyond its nature, this power's nature does not suffice for either of these things. And so a supernatural

habit has to be added with respect to each of them.

Reply to objection 2: Faith and hope imply a certain imperfection, since faith is of what is not seen and hope is for what is not had. Hence, to have faith and hope with respect to what is subject to human power falls short of the nature of a virtue. By contrast, to have faith and hope with respect to what lies beyond the power of human nature exceeds every virtue proportioned to man—this according to 1 Corinthians 1:25 (“God’s weakness is stronger than men”).

Reply to objection 3: There are two things that belong to appetite, viz., (a) a movement toward the end and (b) being conformed to the end through love. And so it is necessary to posit two theological virtues, viz., hope and charity, in the human appetite.

Article 4

Is the order of the theological virtues such that faith is prior to hope and hope is prior to charity?

It seems that the order of the theological virtues is not such that faith is prior to hope and hope is prior to charity:

Objection 1: The root is prior to what comes from the root. But charity is the root of all the virtues—this according to Ephesians 3:17 (“Rooted and grounded in charity”). Therefore, charity is prior to the other virtues.

Objection 2: In *De Doctrina Christiana* 1 Augustine says, “One cannot love what he does not believe to exist. But if he believes and loves, then by acting well he will bring it about that he also has hope.” Therefore, it seems that faith precedes charity and charity precedes hope.

Objection 3: As was explained above (a. 2), love is the principle or beginning (*principium*) of every affection. But ‘hope’ names a certain affection, since, as was explained above (q. 25, a. 2), it is a passion. Therefore, charity, i.e., love, is prior to hope.

But contrary to this is the order in which the Apostle enumerates them: “Now there remain these three: faith, hope, and charity.”

I respond: There are two sorts of order, viz., an order of *generation* and an order of *perfection*.

In the order of *generation*, according to which matter is prior to form in one and the same thing, and according to which what is imperfect is prior to what is perfect, faith precedes hope and hope precedes charity as far as their *acts* are concerned (for the *habits* are infused simultaneously). For an appetitive movement cannot tend toward anything by hoping for it or loving it unless that thing is apprehended by the sensory power or by the intellect. But it is through faith that the intellect apprehends what it hopes for and loves. Hence, in the order of generation faith precedes hope and charity. Similarly, a man loves something by the fact that he apprehends it as his good. But by the fact that a man hopes that he can get a good from someone, he regards the one in whom he has hope as a certain good of his. Hence, from the fact that he places his hope in someone, he proceeds to love him. And so, in the order of generation as regards the acts, hope precedes charity.

By contrast, in the order of *perfection*, charity precedes faith and hope, because both faith and hope are informed by charity and acquire the perfection of virtue through charity (*per caritatem formatur et perfectionem virtutis acquirit*). For as will be explained below (*ST* 2-2, q. 23, aa. 7-8), charity is the mother and root of all the virtues in the sense that it is the form of all the virtues.

Reply to objection 1: The reply to the first objection is clear from what has just been said.

Reply to objection 2: Augustine is speaking of the hope by which someone will come to beatitude because of merits that he already possesses, i.e., the merits of *informed* hope, which *follows upon* charity. However, someone can have hope before he has charity, not because of merits that he already has, but

because of merits that he hopes he will have.

Reply to objection 3: As was explained above when we were talking about the passions (q. 40, a. 7), hope has to do with two things:

One is its *principal object*, viz., the good that is hoped for. And in this respect, love always precedes hope, since a good is never hoped for unless it is desired and loved.

Hope also has to do with the *one from whom* the individual hopes he can obtain the good. And in this respect, hope at first precedes love, even though afterwards the hope is increased by the love itself. For by the fact that an individual thinks that he can obtain some good through someone else, he begins to love him, and from the fact that he loves him, he afterwards places his hope more strongly in him.