

## FIRST PART, QUESTION 108

### Of the Angelic Degrees of Hierarchies and Orders (In Eight Articles)

We next consider the degrees of the angels in their hierarchies and orders; for it was said above (q. 106, a. 3), that the superior angels enlighten the inferior angels; and not conversely.

Under this head there are eight points of inquiry:

- (1) Whether all the angels belong to one hierarchy?
- (2) Whether in one hierarchy there is only one order?
- (3) Whether in one order there are many angels?
- (4) Whether the distinction of hierarchies and orders is natural?
- (5) Of the names and properties of each order.
- (6) Of the comparison of the orders to one another.
- (7) Whether the orders will outlast the Day of Judgment?
- (8) Whether men are taken up into the angelic orders?

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#### Whether all the angels are of one hierarchy?

Ia q. 108 a. 1

**Objection 1.** It would seem that all the angels belong to one hierarchy. For since the angels are supreme among creatures, it is evident that they are ordered for the best. But the best ordering of a multitude is for it to be governed by one authority, as the Philosopher shows (*Metaph.* xii, *Did.* xi, 10; *Polit.* iii, 4). Therefore as a hierarchy is nothing but a sacred principality, it seems that all the angels belong to one hierarchy.

**Objection 2.** Further, Dionysius says (*Coel. Hier.* iii) that “hierarchy is order, knowledge, and action.” But all the angels agree in one order towards God, Whom they know, and by Whom in their actions they are ruled. Therefore all the angels belong to one hierarchy.

**Objection 3.** Further, the sacred principality called hierarchy is to be found among men and angels. But all men are of one hierarchy. Therefore likewise all the angels are of one hierarchy.

**On the contrary,** Dionysius (*Coel. Hier.* vi) distinguishes three hierarchies of angels.

**I answer that,** Hierarchy means a “sacred” principality, as above explained. Now principality includes two things: the prince himself and the multitude ordered under the prince. Therefore because there is one God, the Prince not only of all the angels but also of men and all creatures; so there is one hierarchy, not only of all the angels, but also of all rational creatures, who can be participators of sacred things; according to Augustine (*De Civ. Dei* xii, 1): “There are two cities, that is, two societies, one of the good angels and men, the other of the wicked.” But if we consider the principality on the part of the multitude ordered under the prince, then principality is said to be “one” accordingly as the multitude can be subject in “one” way to the government of the prince. And those that cannot be governed in the same way by a prince be-

long to different principalities: thus, under one king there are different cities, which are governed by different laws and administrators. Now it is evident that men do not receive the Divine enlightenments in the same way as do the angels; for the angels receive them in their intelligible purity, whereas men receive them under sensible signs, as Dionysius says (*Coel. Hier.* i). Therefore there must needs be a distinction between the human and the angelic hierarchy. In the same manner we distinguish three angelic hierarchies. For it was shown above (q. 55, a. 3), in treating of the angelic knowledge, that the superior angels have a more universal knowledge of the truth than the inferior angels. This universal knowledge has three grades among the angels. For the types of things, concerning which the angels are enlightened, can be considered in a threefold manner. First as preceding from God as the first universal principle, which mode of knowledge belongs to the first hierarchy, connected immediately with God, and, “as it were, placed in the vestibule of God,” as Dionysius says (*Coel. Hier.* vii). Secondly, forasmuch as these types depend on the universal created causes which in some way are already multiplied; which mode belongs to the second hierarchy. Thirdly, forasmuch as these types are applied to particular things as depending on their causes; which mode belongs to the lowest hierarchy. All this will appear more clearly when we treat of each of the orders (a. 6). In this way are the hierarchies distinguished on the part of the multitude of subjects.

Hence it is clear that those err and speak against the opinion of Dionysius who place a hierarchy in the Divine Persons, and call it the “supercelestial” hierarchy. For in the Divine Persons there exists, indeed, a natural order, but there is no hierarchical order, for as Dionysius says (*Coel. Hier.* iii): “The hierarchical order is so directed

that some be cleansed, enlightened, and perfected; and that others cleanse, enlighten, and perfect”; which far be it from us to apply to the Divine Persons.

**Reply to Objection 1.** This objection considers principality on the part of the ruler, inasmuch as a multitude is best ruled by one ruler, as the Philosopher asserts in those passages.

**Reply to Objection 2.** As regards knowing God Him-

self, Whom all see in one way—that is, in His essence—there is no hierarchical distinction among the angels; but there is such a distinction as regards the types of created things, as above explained.

**Reply to Objection 3.** All men are of one species, and have one connatural mode of understanding; which is not the case in the angels: and hence the same argument does not apply to both.

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### Whether there are several orders in one hierarchy?

Ia q. 108 a. 2

**Objection 1.** It would seem that in the one hierarchy there are not several orders. For when a definition is multiplied, the thing defined is also multiplied. But hierarchy is order, as Dionysius says (Coel. Hier. iii). Therefore, if there are many orders, there is not one hierarchy only, but many.

**Objection 2.** Further, different orders are different grades, and grades among spirits are constituted by different spiritual gifts. But among the angels all the spiritual gifts are common to all, for “nothing is possessed individually” (Sent. ii, D, ix). Therefore there are not different orders of angels.

**Objection 3.** Further, in the ecclesiastical hierarchy the orders are distinguished according to the actions of “cleansing,” “enlightening,” and “perfecting.” For the order of deacons is “cleansing,” the order of priests, is “enlightening,” and of bishops “perfecting,” as Dionysius says (Eccl. Hier. v). But each of the angels cleanses, enlightens, and perfects. Therefore there is no distinction of orders among the angels.

**On the contrary,** The Apostle says (Eph. 1:20,21) that “God has set the Man Christ above all principality and power, and virtue, and dominion”: which are the various orders of the angels, and some of them belong to one hierarchy, as will be explained (a. 6).

**I answer that,** As explained above, one hierarchy is one principality—that is, one multitude ordered in one way under the rule of a prince. Now such a multitude would not be ordered, but confused, if there were not in it different orders. So the nature of a hierarchy requires diversity of orders.

This diversity of order arises from the diversity of offices and actions, as appears in one city where there are different orders according to the different actions; for there is one order of those who judge, and another of those who fight, and another of those who labor in the fields, and so forth.

But although one city thus comprises several orders,

all may be reduced to three, when we consider that every multitude has a beginning, a middle, and an end. So in every city, a threefold order of men is to be seen, some of whom are supreme, as the nobles; others are the last, as the common people, while others hold a place between these, as the middle-class [populus honorabilis]. In the same way we find in each angelic hierarchy the orders distinguished according to their actions and offices, and all this diversity is reduced to three—namely, to the summit, the middle, and the base; and so in every hierarchy Dionysius places three orders (Coel. Hier. vi).

**Reply to Objection 1.** Order is twofold. In one way it is taken as the order comprehending in itself different grades; and in that way a hierarchy is called an order. In another way one grade is called an order; and in that sense the several orders of one hierarchy are so called.

**Reply to Objection 2.** All things are possessed in common by the angelic society, some things, however, being held more excellently by some than by others. Each gift is more perfectly possessed by the one who can communicate it, than by the one who cannot communicate it; as the hot thing which can communicate heat is more perfect than what is unable to give heat. And the more perfectly anyone can communicate a gift, the higher grade he occupies, as he is in the more perfect grade of mastership who can teach a higher science. By this similitude we can reckon the diversity of grades or orders among the angels, according to their different offices and actions.

**Reply to Objection 3.** The inferior angel is superior to the highest man of our hierarchy, according to the words, “He that is the lesser in the kingdom of heaven, is greater than he”—namely, John the Baptist, than whom “there hath not risen a greater among them that are born of women” (Mat. 11:11). Hence the lesser angel of the heavenly hierarchy can not only cleanse, but also enlighten and perfect, and in a higher way than can the orders of our hierarchy. Thus the heavenly orders are not distinguished by reason of these, but by reason of other different acts.

**Objection 1.** It seems that there are not many angels in one order. For it was shown above (q. 50, a. 4), that all the angels are unequal. But equals belong to one order. Therefore there are not many angels in one order.

**Objection 2.** Further, it is superfluous for a thing to be done by many, which can be done sufficiently by one. But that which belongs to one angelic office can be done sufficiently by one angel; so much more sufficiently than the one sun does what belongs to the office of the sun, as the angel is more perfect than a heavenly body. If, therefore, the orders are distinguished by their offices, as stated above (a. 2), several angels in one order would be superfluous.

**Objection 3.** Further, it was said above (obj. 1) that all the angels are unequal. Therefore, if several angels (for instance, three or four), are of one order, the lowest one of the superior order will be more akin to the highest of the inferior order than with the highest of his own order; and thus he does not seem to be more of one order with the latter than with the former. Therefore there are not many angels of one order.

**On the contrary,** It is written: “The Seraphim cried to one another” (Is. 6:3). Therefore there are many angels in the one order of the Seraphim.

**I answer that,** Whoever knows anything perfectly, is able to distinguish its acts, powers, and nature, down to the minutest details, whereas he who knows a thing in an imperfect manner can only distinguish it in a general way, and only as regards a few points. Thus, one who knows natural things imperfectly, can distinguish their orders in a general way, placing the heavenly bodies in one

order, inanimate inferior bodies in another, plants in another, and animals in another; whilst he who knows natural things perfectly, is able to distinguish different orders in the heavenly bodies themselves, and in each of the other orders.

Now our knowledge of the angels is imperfect, as Dionysius says (Coel. Hier. vi). Hence we can only distinguish the angelic offices and orders in a general way, so as to place many angels in one order. But if we knew the offices and distinctions of the angels perfectly, we should know perfectly that each angel has his own office and his own order among things, and much more so than any star, though this be hidden from us.

**Reply to Objection 1.** All the angels of one order are in some way equal in a common similitude, whereby they are placed in that order; but absolutely speaking they are not equal. Hence Dionysius says (Coel. Hier. x) that in one and the same order of angels there are those who are first, middle, and last.

**Reply to Objection 2.** That special distinction of orders and offices wherein each angel has his own office and order, is hidden from us.

**Reply to Objection 3.** As in a surface which is partly white and partly black, the two parts on the borders of white and black are more akin as regards their position than any other two white parts, but are less akin in quality; so two angels who are on the boundary of two orders are more akin in propinquity of nature than one of them is akin to the others of its own order, but less akin in their fitness for similar offices, which fitness, indeed, extends to a definite limit.

**Objection 1.** It would seem that the distinction of hierarchies and of orders is not from the nature of the angels. For hierarchy is “a sacred principality,” and Dionysius places in its definition that it “approaches a resemblance to God, as far as may be” (Coel. Hier. iii). But sanctity and resemblance to God is in the angels by grace, and not by nature. Therefore the distinction of hierarchies and orders in the angels is by grace, and not by nature.

**Objection 2.** Further, the Seraphim are called “burning” or “kindling,” as Dionysius says (Coel. Hier. vii). This belongs to charity which comes not from nature but from grace; for “it is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost Who is given to us” (Rom. 5:5): “which is said not only of holy men, but also of the holy angels,” as Augustine says (De Civ. Dei xii). Therefore the angelic orders are not from nature, but from grace.

**Objection 3.** Further, the ecclesiastical hierarchy is

copied from the heavenly. But the orders among men are not from nature, but by the gift of grace; for it is not a natural gift for one to be a bishop, and another a priest, and another a deacon. Therefore neither in the angels are the orders from nature, but from grace only.

**On the contrary,** The Master says (ii, D. 9) that “an angelic order is a multitude of heavenly spirits, who are likened to each other by some gift of grace, just as they agree also in the participation of natural gifts.” Therefore the distinction of orders among the angels is not only by gifts of grace, but also by gifts of nature.

**I answer that,** The order of government, which is the order of a multitude under authority, is derived from its end. Now the end of the angels may be considered in two ways. First, according to the faculty of nature, so that they may know and love God by natural knowledge and love; and according to their relation to this end the orders

of the angels are distinguished by natural gifts. Secondly, the end of the angelic multitude can be taken from what is above their natural powers, which consists in the vision of the Divine Essence, and in the unchangeable fruition of His goodness; to which end they can reach only by grace; and hence as regards this end, the orders in the angels are adequately distinguished by the gifts of grace, but dispositively by natural gifts, forasmuch as to the angels

are given gratuitous gifts according to the capacity of their natural gifts; which is not the case with men, as above explained (q. 62, a. 6). Hence among men the orders are distinguished according to the gratuitous gifts only, and not according to natural gifts.

From the above the replies to the objections are evident.

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### Whether the orders of the angels are properly named?

Ia q. 108 a. 5

**Objection 1.** It would seem that the orders of the angels are not properly named. For all the heavenly spirits are called angels and heavenly virtues. But common names should not be appropriated to individuals. Therefore the orders of the angels and virtues are ineptly named.

**Objection 2.** Further, it belongs to God alone to be Lord, according to the words, "Know ye that the Lord He is God" (Ps. 99:3). Therefore one order of the heavenly spirits is not properly called "Dominations."

**Objection 3.** Further, the name "Domination" seems to imply government and likewise the names "Principalities" and "Powers." Therefore these three names do not seem to be properly applied to three orders.

**Objection 4.** Further, archangels are as it were angel princes. Therefore this name ought not to be given to any other order than to the "Principalities."

**Objection 5.** Further, the name "Seraphim" is derived from ardor, which pertains to charity; and the name "Cherubim" from knowledge. But charity and knowledge are gifts common to all the angels. Therefore they ought not to be names of any particular orders.

**Objection 6.** Further, Thrones are seats. But from the fact that God knows and loves the rational creature He is said to sit within it. Therefore there ought not to be any order of "Thrones" besides the "Cherubim" and "Seraphim." Therefore it appears that the orders of angels are not properly styled.

On the contrary is the authority of Holy Scripture wherein they are so named. For the name "Seraphim" is found in Is. 6:2; the name "Cherubim" in Ezech. 1 (Cf. 10:15,20); "Thrones" in Col. 1:16; "Dominations," "Virtues," "Powers," and "Principalities" are mentioned in Eph. 1:21; the name "Archangels" in the canonical epistle of St. Jude (9), and the name "Angels" is found in many places of Scripture.

**I answer that,** As Dionysius says (Coel. Hier. vii), in the names of the angelic orders it is necessary to observe that the proper name of each order expresses its property. Now to see what is the property of each order, we must consider that in coordinated things, something may be found in a threefold manner: by way of property, by way of excess, and by way of participation. A thing

is said to be in another by way of property, if it is adequate and proportionate to its nature: by excess when an attribute is less than that to which it is attributed, but is possessed thereby in an eminent manner, as we have stated (q. 13, a. 2) concerning all the names which are attributed to God: by participation, when an attribute is possessed by something not fully but partially; thus holy men are called gods by participation. Therefore, if anything is to be called by a name designating its property, it ought not to be named from what it participates imperfectly, nor from that which it possesses in excess, but from that which is adequate thereto; as, for instance, when we wish properly to name a man, we should call him a "rational substance," but not an "intellectual substance," which latter is the proper name of an angel; because simple intelligence belongs to an angel as a property, and to man by participation; nor do we call him a "sensible substance," which is the proper name of a brute; because sense is less than the property of a man, and belongs to man in a more excellent way than to other animals.

So we must consider that in the angelic orders all spiritual perfections are common to all the angels, and that they are all more excellently in the superior than in the inferior angels. Further, as in these perfections there are grades, the superior perfection belongs to the superior order as its property, whereas it belongs to the inferior by participation; and conversely the inferior perfection belongs to the inferior order as its property, and to the superior by way of excess; and thus the superior order is denominated from the superior perfection.

So in this way Dionysius (Coel. Hier. vii) explains the names of the orders accordingly as they befit the spiritual perfections they signify. Gregory, on the other hand, in expounding these names (Hom. xxxiv in Evang.) seems to regard more the exterior ministrations; for he says that "angels are so called as announcing the least things; and the archangels in the greatest; by the virtues miracles are wrought; by the powers hostile powers are repulsed; and the principalities preside over the good spirits themselves."

**Reply to Objection 1.** Angel means "messenger." So all the heavenly spirits, so far as they make known Divine

things, are called “angels.” But the superior angels enjoy a certain excellence, as regards this manifestation, from which the superior orders are denominated. The lowest order of angels possess no excellence above the common manifestation; and therefore it is denominated from manifestation only; and thus the common name remains as it were proper to the lowest order, as Dionysius says (Coel. Hier. v). Or we may say that the lowest order can be specially called the order of “angels,” forasmuch as they announce things to us immediately.

“Virtue” can be taken in two ways. First, commonly, considered as the medium between the essence and the operation, and in that sense all the heavenly spirits are called heavenly virtues, as also “heavenly essences.” Secondly, as meaning a certain excellence of strength; and thus it is the proper name of an angelic order. Hence Dionysius says (Coel. Hier. viii) that the “name ‘virtues’ signifies a certain virile and immovable strength”; first, in regard of those Divine operations which befit them; secondly, in regard to receiving Divine gifts. Thus it signifies that they undertake fearlessly the Divine behests appointed to them; and this seems to imply strength of mind.

**Reply to Objection 2.** As Dionysius says (Div. Nom. xii): “Dominion is attributed to God in a special manner, by way of excess: but the Divine word gives the more illustrious heavenly princes the name of Lord by participation, through whom the inferior angels receive the Divine gifts.” Hence Dionysius also states (Coel. Hier. viii) that the name “Domination” means first “a certain liberty, free from servile condition and common subjection, such as that of plebeians, and from tyrannical oppression,” endured sometimes even by the great. Secondly, it signifies “a certain rigid and inflexible supremacy which does not bend to any servile act, or to the act, of those who are subject to or oppressed by tyrants.” Thirdly, it signifies “the desire and participation of the true dominion which belongs to God.” Likewise the name of each order signifies the participation of what belongs to God; as the name “Virtues” signifies the participation of the Divine virtue; and the same principle applies to the rest.

**Reply to Objection 3.** The names “Domination,” “Power,” and “Principality” belong to government in different ways. The place of a lord is only to prescribe what is to be done. So Gregory says (Hom. xxiv in Evang.), that “some companies of the angels, because others are subject to obedience to them, are called dominations.” The name “Power” points out a kind of order, according to what the Apostle says, “He that resisteth the power, resisteth the ordination of God” (Rom. 13:2). And so Dionysius says (Coel. Hier. viii) that the name “Power” signifies a kind of ordination both as regards the reception of Divine things, and as regards the Divine actions performed by superiors towards inferiors by leading them to things above. Therefore, to the order of “Powers” it belongs to regulate what

is to be done by those who are subject to them. To preside [principari] as Gregory says (Hom. xxiv in Ev.) is “to be first among others,” as being first in carrying out what is ordered to be done. And so Dionysius says (Coel. Hier. ix) that the name of “Principalties” signifies “one who leads in a sacred order.” For those who lead others, being first among them, are properly called “princes,” according to the words, “Princes went before joined with singers” (Ps. 67:26).

**Reply to Objection 4.** The “Archangels,” according to Dionysius (Coel. Hier. ix), are between the “Principalties” and the “Angels.” A medium compared to one extreme seems like the other, as participating in the nature of both extremes; thus tepid seems cold compared to hot, and hot compared to cold. So the “Archangels” are called the “angel princes”; forasmuch as they are princes as regards the “Angels,” and angels as regards the Principalties. But according to Gregory (Hom. xxiv in Ev.) they are called “Archangels,” because they preside over the one order of the “Angels”; as it were, announcing greater things: and the “Principalties” are so called as presiding over all the heavenly “Virtues” who fulfil the Divine commands.

**Reply to Objection 5.** The name “Seraphim” does not come from charity only, but from the excess of charity, expressed by the word ardor or fire. Hence Dionysius (Coel. Hier. vii) expounds the name “Seraphim” according to the properties of fire, containing an excess of heat. Now in fire we may consider three things. First, the movement which is upwards and continuous. This signifies that they are borne inflexibly towards God. Secondly, the active force which is “heat,” which is not found in fire simply, but exists with a certain sharpness, as being of most penetrating action, and reaching even to the smallest things, and as it were, with superabundant fervor; whereby is signified the action of these angels, exercised powerfully upon those who are subject to them, rousing them to a like fervor, and cleansing them wholly by their heat. Thirdly we consider in fire the quality of clarity, or brightness; which signifies that these angels have in themselves an inextinguishable light, and that they also perfectly enlighten others.

In the same way the name “Cherubim” comes from a certain excess of knowledge; hence it is interpreted “fulness of knowledge,” which Dionysius (Coel. Hier. vii) expounds in regard to four things: the perfect vision of God; the full reception of the Divine Light; their contemplation in God of the beauty of the Divine order; and in regard to the fact that possessing this knowledge fully, they pour it forth copiously upon others.

**Reply to Objection 6.** The order of the “Thrones” excels the inferior orders as having an immediate knowledge of the types of the Divine works; whereas the “Cherubim” have the excellence of knowledge and the “Seraphim” the excellence of ardor. And although these two excellent attributes include the third, yet the gift belonging to the

“Thrones” does not include the other two; and so the order of the “Thrones” is distinguished from the orders of the “Cherubim” and the “Seraphim.” For it is a common rule in all things that the excellence of the inferior is contained in the superior, but not conversely. But Dionysius (Coel. Hier. vii) explains the name “Thrones” by its relation to material seats, in which we may consider four things. First, the site; because seats are raised above the earth, and to the angels who are called “Thrones” are raised up to the immediate knowledge of the types of things in God.

Secondly, because in material seats is displayed strength, forasmuch as a person sits firmly on them. But here the reverse is the case; for the angels themselves are made firm by God. Thirdly, because the seat receives him who sits thereon, and he can be carried thereupon; and so the angels receive God in themselves, and in a certain way bear Him to the inferior creatures. Fourthly, because in its shape, a seat is open on one side to receive the sitter; and thus are the angels promptly open to receive God and to serve Him.

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### Whether the grades of the orders are properly assigned?

Ia q. 108 a. 6

**Objection 1.** It would seem that the grades of the orders are not properly assigned. For the order of prelates is the highest. But the names of “Dominations,” “Principalities,” and “Powers” of themselves imply prelacy. Therefore these orders ought not to be supreme.

**Objection 2.** Further, the nearer an order is to God, the higher it is. But the order of “Thrones” is the nearest to God; for nothing is nearer to the sitter than the seat. Therefore the order of the “Thrones” is the highest.

**Objection 3.** Further, knowledge comes before love, and intellect is higher than will. Therefore the order of “Cherubim” seems to be higher than the “Seraphim.”

**Objection 4.** Further, Gregory (Hom. xxiv in Evang.) places the “Principalities” above the “Powers.” These therefore are not placed immediately above the Archangels, as Dionysius says (Coel. Hier. ix).

**On the contrary,** Dionysius (Coel. Hier. vii), places in the highest hierarchy the “Seraphim” as the first, the “Cherubim” as the middle, the “Thrones” as the last; in the middle hierarchy he places the “Dominations,” as the first, the “Virtues” in the middle, the “Powers” last; in the lowest hierarchy the “Principalities” first, then the “Archangels,” and lastly the “Angels.”

**I answer that,** The grades of the angelic orders are assigned by Gregory (Hom. xxiv in Ev.) and Dionysius (Coel. Hier. vii), who agree as regards all except the “Principalities” and “Virtues.” For Dionysius places the “Virtues” beneath the “Dominations,” and above the “Powers”; the “Principalities” beneath the “Powers” and above the “Archangels.” Gregory, however, places the “Principalities” between the “Dominations” and the “Powers”; and the “Virtues” between the “Powers” and the “Archangels.” Each of these placings may claim authority from the words of the Apostle, who (Eph. 1:20,21) enumerates the middle orders, beginning from the lowest saying that “God set Him,” i.e. Christ, “on His right hand in the heavenly places above all Principality and Power, and Virtue, and Dominion.” Here he places “Virtues” between “Powers” and “Dominations,” according to the placing of Dionysius. Writing however to the Colossians

(1:16), numbering the same orders from the highest, he says: “Whether Thrones, or Dominations, or Principalities, or Powers, all things were created by Him and in Him.” Here he places the “Principalities” between “Dominations” and “Powers,” as does also Gregory.

Let us then first examine the reason for the ordering of Dionysius, in which we see, that, as said above (a. 1), the highest hierarchy contemplates the ideas of things in God Himself; the second in the universal causes; and third in their application to particular effects. And because God is the end not only of the angelic ministrations, but also of the whole creation, it belongs to the first hierarchy to consider the end; to the middle one belongs the universal disposition of what is to be done; and to the last belongs the application of this disposition to the effect, which is the carrying out of the work; for it is clear that these three things exist in every kind of operation. So Dionysius, considering the properties of the orders as derived from their names, places in the first hierarchy those orders the names of which are taken from their relation to God, the “Seraphim,” “Cherubim,” and “Thrones”; and he places in the middle hierarchy those orders whose names denote a certain kind of common government or disposition—the “Dominations,” “Virtues,” and “Powers”; and he places in the third hierarchy the orders whose names denote the execution of the work, the “Principalities,” “Angels,” and “Archangels.”

As regards the end, three things may be considered. For firstly we consider the end; then we acquire perfect knowledge of the end; thirdly, we fix our intention on the end; of which the second is an addition to the first, and the third an addition to both. And because God is the end of creatures, as the leader is the end of an army, as the Philosopher says (Metaph. xii, Did. xi, 10); so a somewhat similar order may be seen in human affairs. For there are some who enjoy the dignity of being able with familiarity to approach the king or leader; others in addition are privileged to know his secrets; and others above these ever abide with him, in a close union. According to this similitude, we can understand the disposition in the orders

of the first hierarchy; for the “Thrones” are raised up so as to be the familiar recipients of God in themselves, in the sense of knowing immediately the types of things in Himself; and this is proper to the whole of the first hierarchy. The “Cherubim” know the Divine secrets supereminently; and the “Seraphim” excel in what is the supreme excellence of all, in being united to God Himself; and all this in such a manner that the whole of this hierarchy can be called the “Thrones”; as, from what is common to all the heavenly spirits together, they are all called “Angels.”

As regards government, three things are comprised therein, the first of which is to appoint those things which are to be done, and this belongs to the “Dominations”; the second is to give the power of carrying out what is to be done, which belongs to the “Virtues”; the third is to order how what has been commanded or decided to be done can be carried out by others, which belongs to the “Powers.”

The execution of the angelic ministrations consists in announcing Divine things. Now in the execution of any action there are beginners and leaders; as in singing, the precentors; and in war, generals and officers; this belongs to the “Principalities.” There are others who simply execute what is to be done; and these are the “Angels.” Others hold a middle place; and these are the “Archangels,” as above explained.

This explanation of the orders is quite a reasonable one. For the highest in an inferior order always has affinity to the lowest in the higher order; as the lowest animals are near to the plants. Now the first order is that of the Divine Persons, which terminates in the Holy Ghost, Who is Love proceeding, with Whom the highest order of the first hierarchy has affinity, denominated as it is from the fire of love. The lowest order of the first hierarchy is that of the “Thrones,” who in their own order are akin to the “Dominations”; for the “Thrones,” according to Gregory (Hom. xxiv in Ev.), are so called “because through them God accomplishes His judgments,” since they are enlightened by Him in a manner adapted to the immediate enlightening of the second hierarchy, to which belongs the disposition of the Divine ministrations. The order of the “Powers” is akin to the order of the “Principalities”; for as it belongs to the “Powers” to impose order on those subject to them, this ordering is plainly shown at once in the name of “Principalities,” who, as presiding over the government of peoples and kingdoms (which occupies the first and principal place in the Divine ministrations), are the first in the execution thereof; “for the good of a nation is more divine than the good of one man” (Ethic. i, 2); and hence it is written, “The prince of the kingdom of the Persians resisted me” (Dan. 10:13).

The disposition of the orders which is mentioned by Gregory is also reasonable. For since the “Dominations” appoint and order what belongs to the Divine ministrations, the orders subject to them are arranged according to the disposition of those things in which the Divine ministrations are effected. Still, as Augustine says (De Trin. iii), “bodies are ruled in a certain order; the inferior by the superior; and all of them by the spiritual creature, and the bad spirit by the good spirit.” So the first order after the “Dominations” is called that of “Principalities,” who rule even over good spirits; then the “Powers,” who coerce the evil spirits; even as evil-doers are coerced by earthly powers, as it is written (Rom. 13:3,4). After these come the “Virtues,” which have power over corporeal nature in the working of miracles; after these are the “Angels” and the “Archangels,” who announce to men either great things above reason, or small things within the purview of reason.

**Reply to Objection 1.** The angel’s subjection to God is greater than their presiding over inferior things; and the latter is derived from the former. Thus the orders which derive their name from presiding are not the first and highest; but rather the orders deriving their name from their nearness and relation to God.

**Reply to Objection 2.** The nearness to God designated by the name of the “Thrones,” belongs also to the “Cherubim” and “Seraphim,” and in a more excellent way, as above explained.

**Reply to Objection 3.** As above explained (q. 27, a. 3), knowledge takes place accordingly as the thing known is in the knower; but love as the lover is united to the object loved. Now higher things are in a nobler way in themselves than in lower things; whereas lower things are in higher things in a nobler way than they are in themselves. Therefore to know lower things is better than to love them; and to love the higher things, God above all, is better than to know them.

**Reply to Objection 4.** A careful comparison will show that little or no difference exists in reality between the dispositions of the orders according to Dionysius and Gregory. For Gregory expounds the name “Principalities” from their “presiding over good spirits,” which also agrees with the “Virtues” accordingly as this name expressed a certain strength, giving efficacy to the inferior spirits in the execution of the Divine ministrations. Again, according to Gregory, the “Virtues” seem to be the same as “Principalities” of Dionysius. For to work miracles holds the first place in the Divine ministrations; since thereby the way is prepared for the announcements of the “Archangels” and the “Angels.”

**Objection 1.** It would seem that the orders of angels will not outlast the Day of Judgment. For the Apostle says (1 Cor. 15:24), that Christ will “bring to naught all principality and power, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God and the Father;” and this will be in the final consummation. Therefore for the same reason all others will be abolished in that state.

**Objection 2.** Further, to the office of the angelic orders it belongs to cleanse, enlighten, and perfect. But after the Day of Judgment one angel will not cleanse, enlighten, or perfect another, because they will not advance any more in knowledge. Therefore the angelic orders would remain for no purpose.

**Objection 3.** Further, the Apostle says of the angels (Heb. 1:14), that “they are all ministering spirits, sent to minister to them who shall receive the inheritance of salvation”; whence it appears that the angelic offices are ordered for the purpose of leading men to salvation. But all the elect are in pursuit of salvation until the Day of Judgment. Therefore the angelic offices and orders will not outlast the Day of Judgment.

**On the contrary,** It is written (Judges 5:20): “Stars remaining in their order and courses,” which is applied to the angels. Therefore the angels will ever remain in their orders.

**I answer that,** In the angelic orders we may consider two things; the distinction of grades, and the execution of their offices. The distinction of grades among the angels takes place according to the difference of grace and nature, as above explained (a. 4); and these differences will ever remain in the angels; for these differences of natures cannot be taken from them unless they themselves be corrupted. The difference of glory will also ever remain in them according to the difference of preceding merit. As to the execution of the angelic offices, it will to a certain degree remain after the Day of Judgment, and to a certain degree will cease. It will cease accordingly as their offices

are directed towards leading others to their end; but it will remain, accordingly as it agrees with the attainment of the end. Thus also the various ranks of soldiers have different duties to perform in battle and in triumph.

**Reply to Objection 1.** The principalities and powers will come to an end in that final consummation as regards their office of leading others to their end; because when the end is attained, it is no longer necessary to tend towards the end. This is clear from the words of the Apostle, “When He shall have delivered up the kingdom of God and the Father;” i.e. when He shall have led the faithful to the enjoyment of God Himself.

**Reply to Objection 2.** The actions of angels over the other angels are to be considered according to a likeness to our own intellectual actions. In ourselves we find many intellectual actions which are ordered according to the order of cause and effect; as when we gradually arrive at one conclusion by many middle terms. Now it is manifest that the knowledge of a conclusion depends on all the preceding middle terms not only in the new acquisition of knowledge, but also as regards the keeping of the knowledge acquired. A proof of this is that when anyone forgets any of the preceding middle terms he can have opinion or belief about the conclusion, but not knowledge; as he is ignorant of the order of the causes. So, since the inferior angels know the types of the Divine works by the light of the superior angels, their knowledge depends on the light of the superior angels not only as regards the acquisition of knowledge, but also as regards the preserving of the knowledge possessed. So, although after the Judgment the inferior angels will not progress in the knowledge of some things, still this will not prevent their being enlightened by the superior angels.

**Reply to Objection 3.** Although after the Day of Judgment men will not be led any more to salvation by the ministry of the angels, still those who are already saved will be enlightened through the angelic ministry.

**Objection 1.** It would seem that men are not taken up into the orders of the angels. For the human hierarchy is stationed beneath the lowest heavenly hierarchy, as the lowest under the middle hierarchy and the middle beneath the first. But the angels of the lowest hierarchy are never transferred into the middle, or the first. Therefore neither are men transferred to the angelic orders.

**Objection 2.** Further, certain offices belong to the orders of the angels, as to guard, to work miracles, to coerce the demons, and the like; which do not appear to belong to the souls of the saints. Therefore they are not transferred

to the angelic orders.

**Objection 3.** Further, as the good angels lead on to good, so do the demons to what is evil. But it is erroneous to say that the souls of bad men are changed into demons; for Chrysostom rejects this (Hom. xxviii in Matt.). Therefore it does not seem that the souls of the saints will be transferred to the orders of angels.

**On the contrary,** The Lord says of the saints that, “they will be as the angels of God” (Mat. 22:30). I answer that, As above explained (Aa. 4,7), the orders of the angels are distinguished according to the conditions of na-



ture and according to the gifts of grace. Considered only as regards the grade of nature, men can in no way be assumed into the angelic orders; for the natural distinction will always remain. In view of this distinction, some asserted that men can in no way be transferred to an equality with the angels; but this is erroneous, contradicting as it does the promise of Christ saying that the children of the resurrection will be equal to the angels in heaven (Lk. 20:36). For whatever belongs to nature is the material part of an order; whilst that which perfects is from grace which depends on the liberality of God, and not on the order of nature. Therefore by the gift of grace men can merit glory in such a degree as to be equal to the angels, in each of the angelic grades; and this implies that men are taken up into the orders of the angels. Some, however, say that not all who are saved are assumed into the angelic orders, but only virgins or the perfect; and that the other will constitute their own order, as it were, corresponding to the whole society of the angels. But this is against what Augustine says (De Civ. Dei xii, 9), that “there will not be two societies of men and angels, but only one; because the beatitude of all is to cleave to God alone.”

**Reply to Objection 1.** Grace is given to the angels in

proportion to their natural gifts. This, however, does not apply to men, as above explained (a. 4; q. 62, a. 6). So, as the inferior angels cannot be transferred to the natural grade of the superior, neither can they be transferred to the superior grade of grace; whereas men can ascend to the grade of grace, but not of nature.

**Reply to Objection 2.** The angels according to the order of nature are between us and God; and therefore according to the common law not only human affairs are administered by them, but also all corporeal matters. But holy men even after this life are of the same nature with ourselves; and hence according to the common law they do not administer human affairs, “nor do they interfere in the things of the living;” as Augustine says (De cura pro mortuis xiii, xvi). Still, by a certain special dispensation it is sometimes granted to some of the saints to exercise these offices; by working miracles, by coercing the demons, or by doing something of that kind, as Augustine says (De cura pro mortuis xvi).

**Reply to Objection 3.** It is not erroneous to say that men are transferred to the penalty of demons; but some erroneously stated that the demons are nothing but souls of the dead; and it is this that Chrysostom rejects.