

## FIRST PART, QUESTION 20

### God's Love (In Four Articles)

We next consider those things that pertain absolutely to the will of God. In the appetitive part of the soul there are found in ourselves both the passions of the soul, as joy, love, and the like; and the habits of the moral virtues, as justice, fortitude and the like. Hence we shall first consider the love of God, and secondly His justice and mercy. About the first there are four points of inquiry:

- (1) Whether love exists in God?
- (2) Whether He loves all things?
- (3) Whether He loves one thing more than another?
- (4) Whether He loves more the better things?

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#### Whether love exists in God?

Ia q. 20 a. 1

**Objection 1.** It seems that love does not exist in God. For in God there are no passions. Now love is a passion. Therefore love is not in God.

**Objection 2.** Further, love, anger, sorrow and the like, are mutually divided against one another. But sorrow and anger are not attributed to God, unless by metaphor. Therefore neither is love attributed to Him.

**Objection 3.** Further, Dionysius says (Div. Nom. iv): "Love is a uniting and binding force." But this cannot take place in God, since He is simple. Therefore love does not exist in God.

**On the contrary,** It is written: "God is love" (Jn. 4:16).

**I answer that,** We must needs assert that in God there is love: because love is the first movement of the will and of every appetitive faculty. For since the acts of the will and of every appetitive faculty tend towards good and evil, as to their proper objects: and since good is essentially and especially the object of the will and the appetite, whereas evil is only the object secondarily and indirectly, as opposed to good; it follows that the acts of the will and appetite that regard good must naturally be prior to those that regard evil; thus, for instance, joy is prior to sorrow, love to hate: because what exists of itself is always prior to that which exists through another. Again, the more universal is naturally prior to what is less so. Hence the intellect is first directed to universal truth; and in the second place to particular and special truths. Now there are certain acts of the will and appetite that regard good under some special condition, as joy and delight regard good present and possessed; whereas desire and hope regard good not as yet possessed. Love, however, regards good universally, whether possessed or not. Hence love is naturally the first act of the will and appetite; for which reason all the other appetitive movements presuppose love, as their root and origin. For nobody desires anything nor rejoices in anything, except as a good that is loved: nor is anything an object

of hate except as opposed to the object of love. Similarly, it is clear that sorrow, and other things like to it, must be referred to love as to their first principle. Hence, in whomsoever there is will and appetite, there must also be love: since if the first is wanting, all that follows is also wanting. Now it has been shown that will is in God (q. 19, a. 1), and hence we must attribute love to Him.

**Reply to Objection 1.** The cognitive faculty does not move except through the medium of the appetitive: and just as in ourselves the universal reason moves through the medium of the particular reason, as stated in *De Anima* iii, 58,75, so in ourselves the intellectual appetite, or the will as it is called, moves through the medium of the sensitive appetite. Hence, in us the sensitive appetite is the proximate motive-force of our bodies. Some bodily change therefore always accompanies an act of the sensitive appetite, and this change affects especially the heart, which, as the Philosopher says (*De part. animal.* iii, 4), is the first principle of movement in animals. Therefore acts of the sensitive appetite, inasmuch as they have annexed to them some bodily change, are called passions; whereas acts of the will are not so called. Love, therefore, and joy and delight are passions; in so far as they denote acts of the intellectual appetite, they are not passions. It is in this latter sense that they are in God. Hence the Philosopher says (*Ethic.* vii): "God rejoices by an operation that is one and simple," and for the same reason He loves without passion.

**Reply to Objection 2.** In the passions of the sensitive appetite there may be distinguished a certain material element—namely, the bodily change—and a certain formal element, which is on the part of the appetite. Thus in anger, as the Philosopher says (*De Anima* iii, 15,63,64), the material element is the kindling of the blood about the heart; but the formal, the appetite for revenge. Again, as regards the formal element of certain passions a certain imperfection is implied, as in desire, which is of the good

we have not, and in sorrow, which is about the evil we have. This applies also to anger, which supposes sorrow. Certain other passions, however, as love and joy, imply no imperfection. Since therefore none of these can be attributed to God on their material side, as has been said (ad 1); neither can those that even on their formal side imply imperfection be attributed to Him; except metaphorically, and from likeness of effects, as already show (q. 3, a. 2, ad 2; q. 19, a. 11). Whereas, those that do not imply imperfection, such as love and joy, can be properly predicated of God, though without attributing passion to Him, as said before (q. 19, a. 11).

**Reply to Objection 3.** An act of love always tends towards two things; to the good that one wills, and to the person for whom one wills it: since to love a person is

to wish that person good. Hence, inasmuch as we love ourselves, we wish ourselves good; and, so far as possible, union with that good. So love is called the unitive force, even in God, yet without implying composition; for the good that He wills for Himself, is no other than Himself, Who is good by His essence, as above shown (q. 6, Aa. 1,3). And by the fact that anyone loves another, he wills good to that other. Thus he puts the other, as it were, in the place of himself; and regards the good done to him as done to himself. So far love is a binding force, since it aggregates another to ourselves, and refers his good to our own. And then again the divine love is a binding force, inasmuch as God wills good to others; yet it implies no composition in God.

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### Whether God loves all things?

Ia q. 20 a. 2

**Objection 1.** It seems that God does not love all things. For according to Dionysius (Div. Nom. iv, 1), love places the lover outside himself, and causes him to pass, as it were, into the object of his love. But it is not admissible to say that God is placed outside of Himself, and passes into other things. Therefore it is inadmissible to say that God loves things other than Himself.

**Objection 2.** Further, the love of God is eternal. But things apart from God are not from eternity; except in God. Therefore God does not love anything, except as it exists in Himself. But as existing in Him, it is no other than Himself. Therefore God does not love things other than Himself.

**Objection 3.** Further, love is twofold—the love, namely, of desire, and the love of friendship. Now God does not love irrational creatures with the love of desire, since He needs no creature outside Himself. Nor with the love of friendship; since there can be no friendship with irrational creatures, as the Philosopher shows (Ethic. viii, 2). Therefore God does not love all things.

**Objection 4.** Further, it is written (Ps. 5:7): “Thou hatest all the workers of iniquity.” Now nothing is at the same time hated and loved. Therefore God does not love all things.

**On the contrary,** It is said (Wis. 11:25): “Thou lovest all things that are, and hatest none of the things which Thou hast made.”

**I answer that,** God loves all existing things. For all existing things, in so far as they exist, are good, since the existence of a thing is itself a good; and likewise, whatever perfection it possesses. Now it has been shown above (q. 19, a. 4) that God’s will is the cause of all things. It must needs be, therefore, that a thing has existence, or any kind of good, only inasmuch as it is willed by God. To every existing thing, then, God wills some good. Hence,

since to love anything is nothing else than to will good to that thing, it is manifest that God loves everything that exists. Yet not as we love. Because since our will is not the cause of the goodness of things, but is moved by it as by its object, our love, whereby we will good to anything, is not the cause of its goodness; but conversely its goodness, whether real or imaginary, calls forth our love, by which we will that it should preserve the good it has, and receive besides the good it has not, and to this end we direct our actions: whereas the love of God infuses and creates goodness.

**Reply to Objection 1.** A lover is placed outside himself, and made to pass into the object of his love, inasmuch as he wills good to the beloved; and works for that good by his providence even as he works for his own. Hence Dionysius says (Div. Nom. iv, 1): “On behalf of the truth we must make bold to say even this, that He Himself, the cause of all things, by His abounding love and goodness, is placed outside Himself by His providence for all existing things.”

**Reply to Objection 2.** Although creatures have not existed from eternity, except in God, yet because they have been in Him from eternity, God has known them eternally in their proper natures; and for that reason has loved them, even as we, by the images of things within us, know things existing in themselves.

**Reply to Objection 3.** Friendship cannot exist except towards rational creatures, who are capable of returning love, and communicating one with another in the various works of life, and who may fare well or ill, according to the changes of fortune and happiness; even as to them is benevolence properly speaking exercised. But irrational creatures cannot attain to loving God, nor to any share in the intellectual and beatific life that He lives. Strictly speaking, therefore, God does not love irrational creatures

with the love of friendship; but as it were with the love of desire, in so far as He orders them to rational creatures, and even to Himself. Yet this is not because He stands in need of them; but only on account of His goodness, and of the services they render to us. For we can desire a thing for others as well as for ourselves.

**Reply to Objection 4.** Nothing prevents one and the

same thing being loved under one aspect, while it is hated under another. God loves sinners in so far as they are existing natures; for they have existence and have it from Him. In so far as they are sinners, they have not existence at all, but fall short of it; and this in them is not from God. Hence under this aspect, they are hated by Him.

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### Whether God loves all things equally?

Ia q. 20 a. 3

**Objection 1.** It seems that God loves all things equally. For it is said: “He hath equally care of all” (Wis. 6:8). But God’s providence over things comes from the love wherewith He loves them. Therefore He loves all things equally.

**Objection 2.** Further, the love of God is His essence. But God’s essence does not admit of degree; neither therefore does His love. He does not therefore love some things more than others.

**Objection 3.** Further, as God’s love extends to created things, so do His knowledge and will extend. But God is not said to know some things more than others; nor will one thing more than another. Neither therefore does He love some things more than others.

**On the contrary,** Augustine says (Tract. in Joan. cx): “God loves all things that He has made, and amongst them rational creatures more, and of these especially those who are members of His only-begotten Son Himself.”

**I answer that,** Since to love a thing is to will it good, in a twofold way anything may be loved more, or less. In one way on the part of the act of the will itself, which is more or less intense. In this way God does not love some things more than others, because He loves all things by an act of the will that is one, simple, and always the same.

In another way on the part of the good itself that a person wills for the beloved. In this way we are said to love that one more than another, for whom we will a greater good, though our will is not more intense. In this way we must needs say that God loves some things more than others. For since God’s love is the cause of goodness in things, as has been said (a. 2), no one thing would be better than another, if God did not will greater good for one than for another.

**Reply to Objection 1.** God is said to have equally care of all, not because by His care He deals out equal good to all, but because He administers all things with a like wisdom and goodness.

**Reply to Objection 2.** This argument is based on the intensity of love on the part of the act of the will, which is the divine essence. But the good that God wills for His creatures, is not the divine essence. Therefore there is no reason why it may not vary in degree.

**Reply to Objection 3.** To understand and to will denote the act alone, and do not include in their meaning objects from the diversity of which God may be said to know or will more or less, as has been said with respect to God’s love.

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### Whether God always loves more the better things?

Ia q. 20 a. 4

**Objection 1.** It seems that God does not always love more the better things. For it is manifest that Christ is better than the whole human race, being God and man. But God loved the human race more than He loved Christ; for it is said: “He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all” (Rom. 8:32). Therefore God does not always love more the better things.

**Objection 2.** Further, an angel is better than a man. Hence it is said of man: “Thou hast made him a little less than the angels” (Ps. 8:6). But God loved men more than He loved the angels, for it is said: “Nowhere doth He take hold of the angels, but of the seed of Abraham He taketh hold” (Heb. 2:16). Therefore God does not always love more the better things.

**Objection 3.** Further, Peter was better than John, since he loved Christ more. Hence the Lord, knowing

this to be true, asked Peter, saying: “Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me more than these?” Yet Christ loved John more than He loved Peter. For as Augustine says, commenting on the words, “Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me?”: “By this very mark is John distinguished from the other disciples, not that He loved him only, but that He loved him more than the rest.” Therefore God does not always love more the better things.

**Objection 4.** Further, the innocent man is better than the repentant, since repentance is, as Jerome says (Cap. 3 in Isa.), “a second plank after shipwreck.” But God loves the penitent more than the innocent; since He rejoices over him the more. For it is said: “I say to you that there shall be joy in heaven upon the one sinner that doth penance, more than upon ninety-nine just who need not penance” (Lk. 15:7). Therefore God does not always love more the

better things.

**Objection 5.** Further, the just man who is foreknown is better than the predestined sinner. Now God loves more the predestined sinner, since He wills for him a greater good, life eternal. Therefore God does not always love more the better things.

**On the contrary,** Everything loves what is like it, as appears from (Ecclus. 13:19): "Every beast loveth its like." Now the better a thing is, the more like is it to God. Therefore the better things are more loved by God.

**Answer that,** It must needs be, according to what has been said before, that God loves more the better things. For it has been shown (Aa. 2,3), that God's loving one thing more than another is nothing else than His willing for that thing a greater good: because God's will is the cause of goodness in things; and the reason why some things are better than others, is that God wills for them a greater good. Hence it follows that He loves more the better things.

**Reply to Objection 1.** God loves Christ not only more than He loves the whole human race, but more than He loves the entire created universe: because He willed for Him the greater good in giving Him "a name that is above all names," in so far as He was true God. Nor did anything of His excellence diminish when God delivered Him up to death for the salvation of the human race; rather did He become thereby a glorious conqueror: "The government was placed upon His shoulder," according to Is. 9:6.

**Reply to Objection 2.** God loves the human nature assumed by the Word of God in the person of Christ more than He loves all the angels; for that nature is better, especially on the ground of the union with the Godhead. But speaking of human nature in general, and comparing it with the angelic, the two are found equal, in the order of grace and of glory: since according to Rev 21:17, the measure of a man and of an angel is the same. Yet so that, in this respect, some angels are found nobler than some men, and some men nobler than some angels. But as to natural condition an angel is better than a man. God therefore did not assume human nature because He loved man, absolutely speaking, more; but because the needs of man were greater; just as the master of a house may give some costly delicacy to a sick servant, that he does not give to his own son in sound health.

**Reply to Objection 3.** This doubt concerning Peter and John has been solved in various ways. Augustine interprets it mystically, and says that the active life, signified by Peter, loves God more than the contemplative signified by John, because the former is more conscious of the miseries of this present life, and therefore the more ardently desires to be freed from them, and depart to God. God,

he says, loves more the contemplative life, since He preserves it longer. For it does not end, as the active life does, with the life of the body.

Some say that Peter loved Christ more in His members, and therefore was loved more by Christ also, for which reason He gave him the care of the Church; but that John loved Christ more in Himself, and so was loved more by Him; on which account Christ commended His mother to his care. Others say that it is uncertain which of them loved Christ more with the love of charity, and uncertain also which of them God loved more and ordained to a greater degree of glory in eternal life. Peter is said to have loved more, in regard to a certain promptness and fervor; but John to have been more loved, with respect to certain marks of familiarity which Christ showed to him rather than to others, on account of his youth and purity. While others say that Christ loved Peter more, from his more excellent gift of charity; but John more, from his gifts of intellect. Hence, absolutely speaking, Peter was the better and more beloved; but, in a certain sense, John was the better, and was loved the more. However, it may seem presumptuous to pass judgment on these matters; since "the Lord" and no other "is the weigher of spirits" (Prov. 16:2).

**Reply to Objection 4.** The penitent and the innocent are related as exceeding and exceeded. For whether innocent or penitent, those are the better and better loved who have most grace. Other things being equal, innocence is the nobler thing and the more beloved. God is said to rejoice more over the penitent than over the innocent, because often penitents rise from sin more cautious, humble, and fervent. Hence Gregory commenting on these words (Hom. 34 in Ev.) says that, "In battle the general loves the soldier who after flight returns and bravely pursues the enemy, more than him who has never fled, but has never done a brave deed."

Or it may be answered that gifts of grace, equal in themselves, are more as conferred on the penitent, who deserved punishment, than as conferred on the innocent, to whom no punishment was due; just as a hundred pounds [marcoe] are a greater gift to a poor man than to a king.

**Reply to Objection 5.** Since God's will is the cause of goodness in things, the goodness of one who is loved by God is to be reckoned according to the time when some good is to be given to him by divine goodness. According therefore to the time, when there is to be given by the divine will to the predestined sinner a greater good, the sinner is better; although according to some other time he is the worse; because even according to some time he is neither good nor bad.