

St. Thomas Aquinas

The Summa Theologica

(Benziger Bros. edition, 1947)

Translated by

Fathers of the English Dominican Province

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OF MERIT (TEN ARTICLES)

We must now consider merit, which is the effect of cooperating grace; and under this head there are ten points of inquiry:

- [\(1\)](#) Whether a man can merit anything from God?
 - [\(2\)](#) Whether without grace anyone can merit eternal life?
 - [\(3\)](#) Whether anyone with grace may merit eternal life condignly?
 - [\(4\)](#) Whether it is chiefly through the instrumentality of charity that grace is the principle of merit?
 - [\(5\)](#) Whether a man may merit the first grace for himself?
 - [\(6\)](#) Whether he may merit it for someone else?
 - [\(7\)](#) Whether anyone can merit restoration after sin?
 - [\(8\)](#) Whether he can merit for himself an increase of grace or charity?
 - [\(9\)](#) Whether he can merit final perseverance?
 - [\(10\)](#) Whether temporal goods fall under merit?
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Whether a man may merit anything from God?

Objection 1: It would seem that a man can merit nothing from God. For no one, it would seem, merits by giving another his due. But by all the good we do, we cannot make sufficient return to God, since yet more is His due, as also the Philosopher says (Ethic. viii, 14). Hence it is written ([Lk. 17:10](#)): "When you have done all these things that are commanded you, say: We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which we ought to do." Therefore a man can merit nothing from God.

Objection 2: Further, it would seem that a man merits nothing from God, by what profits himself only, and profits God nothing. Now by acting well, a man profits himself or another man, but not God, for it is written ([Job 35:7](#)): "If thou do justly, what shalt thou give Him, or what shall He receive of thy hand." Hence a man can merit nothing from God.

Objection 3: Further, whoever merits anything from another makes him his debtor; for a man's wage is a debt due to him. Now God is no one's debtor; hence it is written ([Rm. 11:35](#)): "Who hath first given to Him, and recompense shall be made to him?" Hence no one can merit anything from God.

On the contrary, It is written ([Jer. 31:16](#)): "There is a reward for thy work." Now a reward means something bestowed by reason of merit. Hence it would seem that a man may merit from God.

I answer that, Merit and reward refer to the same, for a reward means something given anyone in return for work or toil, as a price for it. Hence, as it is an act of justice to give a just price for anything received from another, so also is it an act of justice to make a return for work or toil. Now justice is a kind of equality, as is clear from the Philosopher (Ethic. v, 3), and hence justice is simply between those that are simply equal; but where there is no absolute equality between them, neither is there absolute justice, but there may be a certain manner of justice, as when we speak of a father's or a master's right (Ethic. v, 6), as the Philosopher says. And hence where there is justice simply, there is the character of merit and reward simply. But where there is no simple right, but only relative, there is no character of merit simply, but only relatively, in so far as the character of justice is found there, since the child merits something from his father and the slave from his lord.

Now it is clear that between God and man there is the greatest inequality: for they are infinitely apart, and all man's good is from God. Hence there can be no justice of absolute equality between man and God, but only of a certain proportion, inasmuch as both operate after their own manner. Now the manner and measure of human virtue is in man from God. Hence man's merit with God only exists on the presupposition of the Divine ordination, so that man obtains from God, as a reward of his operation, what God gave him the power of operation for, even as natural things by their proper movements and operations obtain that to which they were ordained by God; differently, indeed, since the rational creature moves itself to act by its free-will, hence its action has the character of merit, which is not so in other creatures.

Reply to Objection 1: Man merits, inasmuch as he does what he ought, by his free-will; otherwise the act of justice whereby anyone discharges a debt would not be meritorious.

Reply to Objection 2: God seeks from our goods not profit, but glory, i.e. the manifestation of His goodness; even as He seeks it also in His own works. Now nothing accrues to Him, but only

Reply to Objection 3: Since our action has the character of merit, only on the presupposition of the Divine ordination, it does not follow that God is made our debtor simply, but His own, inasmuch as it is right that His will should be carried out.

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Whether anyone without grace can merit eternal life?

Objection 1: It would seem that without grace anyone can merit eternal life. For man merits from God what he is divinely ordained to, as stated above ([Article \[1\]](#)). Now man by his nature is ordained to beatitude as his end; hence, too, he naturally wishes to be blessed. Hence man by his natural endowments and without grace can merit beatitude which is eternal life.

Objection 2: Further, the less a work is due, the more meritorious it is. Now, less due is that work which is done by one who has received fewer benefits. Hence, since he who has only natural endowments has received fewer gifts from God, than he who has gratuitous gifts as well as nature, it would seem that his works are more meritorious with God. And thus if he who has grace can merit eternal life to some extent, much more may he who has no grace.

Objection 3: Further, God's mercy and liberality infinitely surpass human mercy and liberality. Now a man may merit from another, even though he has not hitherto had his grace. Much more, therefore, would it seem that a man without grace may merit eternal life.

On the contrary, The Apostle says ([Rm. 6:23](#)): "The grace of God, life everlasting."

I answer that, Man without grace may be looked at in two states, as was said above ([Question \[109\]](#), [Article \[2\]](#)): the first, a state of perfect nature, in which Adam was before his sin; the second, a state of corrupt nature, in which we are before being restored by grace. Therefore, if we speak of man in the first state, there is only one reason why man cannot merit eternal life without grace, by his purely natural endowments, viz. because man's merit depends on the Divine pre-ordination. Now no act of anything whatsoever is divinely ordained to anything exceeding the proportion of the powers which are the principles of its act; for it is a law of Divine providence that nothing shall act beyond its powers. Now everlasting life is a good exceeding the proportion of created nature; since it exceeds its knowledge and desire, according to 1 Cor. 2:9: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man." And hence it is that no created nature is a sufficient principle of an act meritorious of eternal life, unless there is added a supernatural gift, which we call grace. But if we speak of man as existing in sin, a second reason is added to this, viz. the impediment of sin. For since sin is an offense against God, excluding us from eternal life, as is clear from what has been said above ([Question \[71\]](#), [Article \[6\]](#); [Question \[113\]](#), [Article \[2\]](#)), no one existing in a state of mortal sin can merit eternal life unless first he be reconciled to God, through his sin being

Reply to Objection 1: God ordained human nature to attain the end of eternal life, not by its own strength, but by the help of grace; and in this way its act can be meritorious of eternal life.

Reply to Objection 2: Without grace a man cannot have a work equal to a work proceeding from grace, since the more perfect the principle, the more perfect the action. But the objection would hold good, if we supposed the operations equal in both cases.

Reply to Objection 3: With regard to the first reason adduced, the case is different in God and in man. For a man receives all his power of well-doing from God, and not from man. Hence a man can merit nothing from God except by His gift, which the Apostle expresses aptly saying ([Rm. 11:35](#)): "Who hath first given to Him, and recompense shall be made to him?" But man may merit from man, before he has received anything from him, by what he has received from God.

But as regards the second proof taken from the impediment of sin, the case is similar with man and God, since one man cannot merit from another whom he has offended, unless he makes satisfaction to him and is reconciled.

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Whether a man in grace can merit eternal life condignly?

Objection 1: It would seem that a man in grace cannot merit eternal life condignly, for the Apostle says ([Rm. 8:18](#)): "The sufferings of this time are not worthy [condignae] to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us." But of all meritorious works, the sufferings of the saints would seem the most meritorious. Therefore no works of men are meritorious of eternal life condignly.

Objection 2: Further, on Rm. 6:23, "The grace of God, life everlasting," a gloss says: "He might have truly said: 'The wages of justice, life everlasting'; but He preferred to say 'The grace of God, life everlasting,' that we may know that God leads us to life everlasting of His own mercy and not by our merits." Now when anyone merits something condignly he receives it not from mercy, but from merit. Hence it would seem that a man with grace cannot merit life everlasting condignly.

Objection 3: Further, merit that equals the reward, would seem to be condign. Now no act of the present life can equal everlasting life, which surpasses our knowledge and our desire, and moreover, surpasses the charity or love of the wayfarer, even as it exceeds nature. Therefore with grace a man cannot merit eternal life condignly.

On the contrary, What is granted in accordance with a fair judgment, would seem a condign reward. But life everlasting is granted by God, in accordance with the judgment of justice,

Lord, the just judge, will render to me in that day." Therefore man merits everlasting life condignly.

I answer that, Man's meritorious work may be considered in two ways: first, as it proceeds from free-will; secondly, as it proceeds from the grace of the Holy Ghost. If it is considered as regards the substance of the work, and inasmuch as it springs from the free-will, there can be no condignity because of the very great inequality. But there is congruity, on account of an equality of proportion: for it would seem congruous that, if a man does what he can, God should reward him according to the excellence of his power.

If, however, we speak of a meritorious work, inasmuch as it proceeds from the grace of the Holy Ghost moving us to life everlasting, it is meritorious of life everlasting condignly. For thus the value of its merit depends upon the power of the Holy Ghost moving us to life everlasting according to Jn. 4:14: "Shall become in him a fount of water springing up into life everlasting." And the worth of the work depends on the dignity of grace, whereby a man, being made a partaker of the Divine Nature, is adopted as a son of God, to whom the inheritance is due by right of adoption, according to Rm. 8:17: "If sons, heirs also."

Reply to Objection 1: The Apostle is speaking of the substance of these sufferings.

Reply to Objection 2: This saying is to be understood of the first cause of our reaching everlasting life, viz. God's mercy. But our merit is a subsequent cause.

Reply to Objection 3: The grace of the Holy Ghost which we have at present, although unequal to glory in act, is equal to it virtually as the seed of a tree, wherein the whole tree is virtually. So likewise by grace of the Holy Ghost dwells in man; and He is a sufficient cause of life everlasting; hence, 2 Cor. 1:22, He is called the "pledge" of our inheritance.

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Whether grace is the principle of merit through charity rather than the other virtues?

Objection 1: It would seem that grace is not the principle of merit through charity rather than the other virtues. For wages are due to work, according to Mt. 20:8: "Call the laborers and pay them their hire." Now every virtue is a principle of some operation, since virtue is an operative habit, as stated above ([Question \[55\]](#), [Article \[2\]](#)). Hence every virtue is equally a principle of merit.

Objection 2: Further, the Apostle says ([1 Cor. 3:8](#)): "Every man shall receive his own reward according to his labor." Now charity lessens rather than increases the labor, because as Augustine says (De Verbis Dom., Sermon lxx), "love makes all hard and repulsive tasks easy and next to nothing." Hence charity is no greater principle of merit than any other virtue.

[Donate bitcoin](#). St. Isidore [e-book library/forum](#) » [aquinas](#) » [english](#) » [summa](#) » [FS](#) » [FS114.html](#)re most meritorious. But the acts of faith and patience or fortitude would seem to be the most meritorious, as appears in the martyrs, who strove for the faith patiently and bravely even till death. Hence other virtues are a greater principle of merit than charity.

On the contrary, Our Lord said ([Jn. 14:21](#)): "He that loveth Me, shall be loved of My Father; and I will love him and will manifest Myself to him." Now everlasting life consists in the manifest knowledge of God, according to Jn. 17:3: "This is eternal life: that they may know Thee, the only true" and living "God." Hence the merit of eternal life rests chiefly with charity.

I answer that, As we may gather from what has been stated above ([Article \[1\]](#)), human acts have the nature of merit from two causes: first and chiefly from the Divine ordination, inasmuch as acts are said to merit that good to which man is divinely ordained. Secondly, on the part of free-will, inasmuch as man, more than other creatures, has the power of voluntary acts by acting by himself. And in both these ways does merit chiefly rest with charity. For we must bear in mind that everlasting life consists in the enjoyment of God. Now the human mind's movement to the fruition of the Divine good is the proper act of charity, whereby all the acts of the other virtues are ordained to this end, since all the other virtues are commanded by charity. Hence the merit of life everlasting pertains first to charity, and secondly, to the other virtues, inasmuch as their acts are commanded by charity. So, likewise, is it manifest that what we do out of love we do most willingly. Hence, even inasmuch as merit depends on voluntariness, merit is chiefly attributed to charity.

Reply to Objection 1: Charity, inasmuch as it has the last end for object, moves the other virtues to act. For the habit to which the end pertains always commands the habits to which the means pertain, as was said above ([Question \[9\]](#), [Article \[1\]](#)).

Reply to Objection 2: A work can be toilsome and difficult in two ways: first, from the greatness of the work, and thus the greatness of the work pertains to the increase of merit; and thus charity does not lessen the toil---rather, it makes us undertake the greatest toils, "for it does great things, if it exists," as Gregory says (Hom. in Evang. xxx). Secondly, from the defect of the operator; for what is not done with a ready will is hard and difficult to all of us, and this toil lessens merit and is removed by charity.

Reply to Objection 3: The act of faith is not meritorious unless "faith... worketh by charity" ([Gal. 5:6](#)). So, too, the acts of patience and fortitude are not meritorious unless a man does them out of charity, according to 1 Cor. 13:3: "If I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."

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Whether a man may merit for himself the first grace?

Objection 1: It would seem that a man may merit for himself the first grace, because, as Augustine says (Ep. clxxxvi), "faith merits justification." Now a man is justified by the first

Objection 2: Further, God gives grace only to the worthy. Now, no one is said to be worthy of some good, unless he has merited it condignly. Therefore we may merit the first grace condignly.

Objection 3: Further, with men we may merit a gift already received. Thus if a man receives a horse from his master, he merits it by a good use of it in his master's service. Now God is much more bountiful than man. Much more, therefore, may a man, by subsequent works, merit the first grace already received from God.

On the contrary, The nature of grace is repugnant to reward of works, according to Rm. 4:4: "Now to him that worketh, the reward is not reckoned according to grace but according to debt." Now a man merits what is reckoned to him according to debt, as the reward of his works. Hence a man may not merit the first grace.

I answer that, The gift of grace may be considered in two ways: first in the nature of a gratuitous gift, and thus it is manifest that all merit is repugnant to grace, since as the Apostle says ([Rm. 11:6](#)), "if by grace, it is not now by works." Secondly, it may be considered as regards the nature of the thing given, and thus, also, it cannot come under the merit of him who has not grace, both because it exceeds the proportion of nature, and because previous to grace a man in the state of sin has an obstacle to his meriting grace, viz. sin. But when anyone has grace, the grace already possessed cannot come under merit, since reward is the term of the work, but grace is the principle of all our good works, as stated above ([Question \[109\]](#)). But of anyone merits a further gratuitous gift by virtue of the preceding grace, it would not be the first grace. Hence it is manifest that no one can merit for himself the first grace.

Reply to Objection 1: As Augustine says (Retract. i, 23), he was deceived on this point for a time, believing the beginning of faith to be from us, and its consummation to be granted us by God; and this he here retracts. And seemingly it is in this sense that he speaks of faith as meriting justification. But if we suppose, as indeed it is a truth of faith, that the beginning of faith is in us from God, the first act must flow from grace; and thus it cannot be meritorious of the first grace. Therefore man is justified by faith, not as though man, by believing, were to merit justification, but that, he believes, whilst he is being justified; inasmuch as a movement of faith is required for the justification of the ungodly, as stated above ([Question \[113\]](#), [Article \[4\]](#)).

Reply to Objection 2: God gives grace to none but to the worthy, not that they were previously worthy, but that by His grace He makes them worthy, Who alone "can make him clean that is conceived of unclean seed" ([Job 14:4](#)).

Reply to Objection 3: Man's every good work proceeds from the first grace as from its principle; but not from any gift of man. Consequently, there is no comparison between gifts of grace and gifts of men.

Objection 1: It would seem that a man can merit the first grace for another. Because on Mt. 9:2: "Jesus seeing their faith," etc. a gloss says: "How much is our personal faith worth with God, Who set such a price on another's faith, as to heal the man both inwardly and outwardly!" Now inward healing is brought about by grace. Hence a man can merit the first grace for another.

Objection 2: Further, the prayers of the just are not void, but efficacious, according to James 5:16: "The continued prayer of a just man availeth much." Now he had previously said: "Pray one for another, that you may be saved." Hence, since man's salvation can only be brought about by grace, it seems that one man may merit for another his first grace.

Objection 3: Further, it is written ([Lk. 16:9](#)): "Make unto you friends of the mammon of iniquity, that when you shall fail they may receive you into everlasting dwellings." Now it is through grace alone that anyone is received into everlasting dwellings, for by it alone does anyone merit everlasting life as stated above ([Article \[2\]](#); [Question \[109\]](#), [Article \[5\]](#)). Hence one man may by merit obtain for another his first grace.

On the contrary, It is written ([Jer. 15:1](#)): "If Moses and Samuel shall stand before Me, My soul is not towards this people" ---yet they had great merit with God. Hence it seems that no one can merit the first grace for another.

I answer that, As shown above ([Articles \[1\], 3, 4](#)), our works are meritorious from two causes: first, by virtue of the Divine motion; and thus we merit condignly; secondly, according as they proceed from free-will in so far as we do them willingly, and thus they have congruous merit, since it is congruous that when a man makes good use of his power God should by His super-excellent power work still higher things. And therefore it is clear that no one can merit condignly for another his first grace, save Christ alone; since each one of us is moved by God to reach life everlasting through the gift of grace; hence condign merit does not reach beyond this motion. But Christ's soul is moved by God through grace, not only so as to reach the glory of life everlasting, but so as to lead others to it, inasmuch as He is the Head of the Church, and the Author of human salvation, according to Heb. 2:10: "Who hath brought many children into glory [to perfect] the Author of their salvation."

But one may merit the first grace for another congruously; because a man in grace fulfils God's will, and it is congruous and in harmony with friendship that God should fulfil man's desire for the salvation of another, although sometimes there may be an impediment on the part of him whose salvation the just man desires. And it is in this sense that the passage from Jeremias speaks.

Reply to Objection 1: A man's faith avails for another's salvation by congruous and not by condign merit.

Reply to Objection 2: The impetration of prayer rests on mercy, whereas condign merit rests on justice; hence a man may impetrate many things from the Divine mercy in prayer, which he does not merit in justice, according to Dan. 9:18: "For it is not for our justifications that we present our prayers before Thy face, but for the multitude of Thy tender mercies."

dwellings, either by impetrating their forgiveness in prayer, or by meriting congruously by other good works, or materially speaking, inasmuch as by these good works of mercy, exercised towards the poor, we merit to be received into everlasting dwellings.

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Whether a man may merit restoration after a fall?

Objection 1: It would seem that anyone may merit for himself restoration after a fall. For what a man may justly ask of God, he may justly merit. Now nothing may more justly be besought of God than to be restored after a fall, as Augustine says [**Cf. Ennar. i super Ps. lxx.*], according to Ps. 70:9: "When my strength shall fail, do not Thou forsake me." Hence a man may merit to be restored after a fall.

Objection 2: Further, a man's works benefit himself more than another. Now a man may, to some extent, merit for another his restoration after a fall, even as his first grace. Much more, therefore, may he merit for himself restoration after a fall.

Objection 3: Further, when a man is once in grace he merits life everlasting by the good works he does, as was shown above ([Article \[2\]](#); [Question \[109\]](#), [Article \[5\]](#)). Now no one can attain life everlasting unless he is restored by grace. Hence it would seem that he merits for himself restoration.

On the contrary, It is written (Ezech. 18:24): "If the just man turn himself away from his justice and do iniquity... all his justices which he hath done shall not be remembered." Therefore his previous merits will nowise help him to rise again. Hence no one can merit for himself restoration after a fall.

I answer that, No one can merit for himself restoration after a future fall, either condignly or congruously. He cannot merit for himself condignly, since the reason of this merit depends on the motion of Divine grace, and this motion is interrupted by the subsequent sin; hence all benefits which he afterwards obtains from God, whereby he is restored, do not fall under merit--the motion of the preceding grace not extending to them. Again, congruous merit, whereby one merits the first grace for another, is prevented from having its effect on account of the impediment of sin in the one for whom it is merited. Much more, therefore, is the efficacy of such merit impeded by the obstacle which is in him who merits, and in him for whom it is merited; for both these are in the same person. And therefore a man can nowise merit for himself restoration after a fall.

Reply to Objection 1: The desire whereby we seek for restoration after a fall is called just, and likewise the prayer whereby this restoration is besought is called just, because it tends to justice; and not that it depends on justice by way of merit, but only on mercy.

[Donate bitcoin.](#) St. Isidore [e-book library/forum](#) » [aquinas](#) » [english](#) » [summa](#) » [FS](#) » [FS114.html](#) here is no impediment (at least, on the part of him who merits), such as is found when anyone recedes from justice after the merit of grace.

Reply to Objection 3: Some have said that no one "absolutely" merits life everlasting except by the act of final grace, but only "conditionally," i.e. if he perseveres. But it is unreasonable to say this, for sometimes the act of the last grace is not more, but less meritorious than preceding acts, on account of the prostration of illness. Hence it must be said that every act of charity merits eternal life absolutely; but by subsequent sin, there arises an impediment to the preceding merit, so that it does not obtain its effect; just as natural causes fail of their effects on account of a supervening impediment.

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Whether a man may merit the increase of grace or charity?

Objection 1: It would seem that a man cannot merit an increase of grace or charity. For when anyone receives the reward he merited no other reward is due to him; thus it was said of some ([Mt. 6:2](#)): "They have received their reward." Hence, if anyone were to merit the increase of charity or grace, it would follow that, when his grace has been increased, he could not expect any further reward, which is unfitting.

Objection 2: Further, nothing acts beyond its species. But the principle of merit is grace or charity, as was shown above ([Articles \[2\], 4](#)). Therefore no one can merit greater grace or charity than he has.

Objection 3: Further, what falls under merit a man merits by every act flowing from grace or charity, as by every such act a man merits life everlasting. If, therefore, the increase of grace or charity falls under merit, it would seem that by every act quickened by charity a man would merit an increase of charity. But what a man merits, he infallibly receives from God, unless hindered by subsequent sin; for it is written ([2 Tim. 1:12](#)): "I know Whom I have believed, and I am certain that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him." Hence it would follow that grace or charity is increased by every meritorious act; and this would seem impossible since at times meritorious acts are not very fervent, and would not suffice for the increase of charity. Therefore the increase of charity does not come under merit.

On the contrary, Augustine says (super Ep. Joan.; cf. Ep. clxxxvi) that "charity merits increase, and being increased merits to be perfected." Hence the increase of grace or charity falls under merit.

I answer that, As stated above ([Articles \[6\], 7](#)), whatever the motion of grace reaches to, falls under condign merit. Now the motion of a mover extends not merely to the last term of the movement, but to the whole progress of the movement. But the term of the movement of grace is eternal life; and progress in this movement is by the increase of charity or grace according to Prov. 4:18: "But the path of the just as a shining light, goeth forward and increaseth even to

Reply to Objection 1: Reward is the term of merit. But there is a double term of movement, viz. the last, and the intermediate, which is both beginning and term; and this term is the reward of increase. Now the reward of human favor is as the last end to those who place their end in it; hence such as these receive no other reward.

Reply to Objection 2: The increase of grace is not above the virtuality of the pre-existing grace, although it is above its quantity, even as a tree is not above the virtuality of the seed, although above its quantity.

Reply to Objection 3: By every meritorious act a man merits the increase of grace, equally with the consummation of grace which is eternal life. But just as eternal life is not given at once, but in its own time, so neither is grace increased at once, but in its own time, viz. when a man is sufficiently disposed for the increase of grace.

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Whether a man may merit perseverance?

Objection 1: It would seem that anyone may merit perseverance. For what a man obtains by asking, can come under the merit of anyone that is in grace. Now men obtain perseverance by asking it of God; otherwise it would be useless to ask it of God in the petitions of the Lord's Prayer, as Augustine says (De Dono Persev. ii). Therefore perseverance may come under the merit of whoever has grace.

Objection 2: Further, it is more not to be able to sin than not to sin. But not to be able to sin comes under merit, for we merit eternal life, of which impeccability is an essential part. Much more, therefore, may we merit not to sin, i.e. to persevere.

Objection 3: Further, increase of grace is greater than perseverance in the grace we already possess. But a man may merit an increase of grace, as was stated above ([Article \[8\]](#)). Much more, therefore, may he merit perseverance in the grace he has already.

On the contrary, What we merit, we obtain from God, unless it is hindered by sin. Now many have meritorious works, who do not obtain perseverance; nor can it be urged that this takes place because of the impediment of sin, since sin itself is opposed to perseverance; and thus if anyone were to merit perseverance, God would not permit him to fall into sin. Hence perseverance does not come under merit.

I answer that, Since man's free-will is naturally flexible towards good and evil, there are two ways of obtaining from God perseverance in good: first, inasmuch as free-will is determined to good by consummate grace, which will be in glory; secondly, on the part of the Divine motion, which inclines man to good unto the end. Now as explained above ([Articles \[6\], 7, 8](#)), that which

[Donate bitcoin](#). St. Isidore [e-book library/forum](#) » [aquinas](#) » [english](#) » [summa](#) » [FS](#) » [FS114.html](#) in merit; and not what is related to the aforesaid movement as principle. Hence it is clear that the perseverance of glory which is the term of the aforesaid movement falls under merit; but perseverance of the wayfarer does not fall under merit, since it depends solely on the Divine motion, which is the principle of all merit. Now God freely bestows the good of perseverance, on whomsoever He bestows it.

Reply to Objection 1: We impetrate in prayer things that we do not merit, since God hears sinners who beseech the pardon of their sins, which they do not merit, as appears from Augustine [*Tract. xlv in Joan.] on Jn. 11:31, "Now we know that God doth not hear sinners," otherwise it would have been useless for the publican to say: "O God, be merciful to me a sinner," Lk. 18:13. So too may we impetrate of God in prayer the grace of perseverance either for ourselves or for others, although it does not fall under merit.

Reply to Objection 2: The perseverance which is in heaven is compared as term to the free-will's movement; not so, the perseverance of the wayfarer, for the reason given in the body of the article.

In the same way may we answer the third objection which concerns the increase of grace, as was explained above.

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Whether temporal goods fall under merit?

Objection 1: It would seem that temporal goods fall under merit. For what is promised to some as a reward of justice, falls under merit. Now, temporal goods were promised in the Old Law as the reward of justice, as appears from Dt. 28. Hence it seems that temporal goods fall under merit.

Objection 2: Further, that would seem to fall under merit, which God bestows on anyone for a service done. But God sometimes bestows temporal goods on men for services done for Him. For it is written ([Ex. 1:21](#)): "And because the midwives feared God, He built them houses"; on which a gloss of Gregory (Moral. xviii, 4) says that "life everlasting might have been awarded them as the fruit of their goodwill, but on account of their sin of falsehood they received an earthly reward." And it is written (Ezech. 29:18): "The King of Babylon hath made his army to undergo hard service against Tyre... and there hath been no reward given him," and further on: "And it shall be wages for his army... I have given him the land of Egypt because he hath labored for me." Therefore temporal goods fall under merit.

Objection 3: Further, as good is to merit so is evil to demerit. But on account of the demerit of sin some are punished by God with temporal punishments, as appears from the Sodomites, Gn. 19. Hence temporal goods fall under merit.

temporal goods regard the good and the wicked alike; according to Eccles. 9:2: "All things equally happen to the just and the wicked, to the good and to the evil, to the clean and to the unclean, to him that offereth victims and to him that despiseth sacrifices." Therefore temporal goods do not fall under merit.

I answer that, What falls under merit is the reward or wage, which is a kind of good. Now man's good is twofold: the first, simply; the second, relatively. Now man's good simply is his last end (according to Ps. 72:27: "But it is good for men to adhere to my God") and consequently what is ordained and leads to this end; and these fall simply under merit. But the relative, not the simple, good of man is what is good to him now, or what is a good to him relatively; and this does not fall under merit simply, but relatively.

Hence we must say that if temporal goods are considered as they are useful for virtuous works, whereby we are led to heaven, they fall directly and simply under merit, even as increase of grace, and everything whereby a man is helped to attain beatitude after the first grace. For God gives men, both just and wicked, enough temporal goods to enable them to attain to everlasting life; and thus these temporal goods are simply good. Hence it is written ([Ps. 33:10](#)): "For there is no want to them that fear Him," and again, Ps. 36:25: "I have not seen the just forsaken," etc.

But if these temporal goods are considered in themselves, they are not man's good simply, but relatively, and thus they do not fall under merit simply, but relatively, inasmuch as men are moved by God to do temporal works, in which with God's help they reach their purpose. And thus as life everlasting is simply the reward of the works of justice in relation to the Divine motion, as stated above ([Articles \[3\],6](#)), so have temporal goods, considered in themselves, the nature of reward, with respect to the Divine motion, whereby men's wills are moved to undertake these works, even though, sometimes, men have not a right intention in them.

Reply to Objection 1: As Augustine says (Contra Faust. iv, 2), "in these temporal promises were figures of spiritual things to come. For the carnal people were adhering to the promises of the present life; and not merely their speech but even their life was prophetic."

Reply to Objection 2: These rewards are said to have been divinely brought about in relation to the Divine motion, and not in relation to the malice of their wills, especially as regards the King of Babylon, since he did not besiege Tyre as if wishing to serve God, but rather in order to usurp dominion. So, too, although the midwives had a good will with regard to saving the children, yet their will was not right, inasmuch as they framed falsehoods.

Reply to Objection 3: Temporal evils are imposed as a punishment on the wicked, inasmuch as they are not thereby helped to reach life everlasting. But to the just who are aided by these evils they are not punishments but medicines as stated above ([Question \[87\]](#), [Article \[8\]](#)).

Reply to Objection 4: All things happen equally to the good and the wicked, as regards the substance of temporal good or evil; but not as regards the end, since the good and not the wicked are led to beatitude by them.

And now enough has been said regarding morals in general.