

St. Thomas Aquinas

The Summa Theologica

(Benziger Bros. edition, 1947)

Translated by

Fathers of the English Dominican Province

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OF THE GRACE OF GOD AS REGARDS ITS ESSENCE (FOUR ARTICLES)

We must now consider the grace of God as regards its essence; and under this head there are four points of inquiry:

(1) Whether grace implies something in the soul?

(2) Whether grace is a quality?

(3) Whether grace differs from infused virtue?

(4) Of the subject of grace.

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Whether grace implies anything in the soul?

Objection 1: It would seem that grace does not imply anything in the soul. For man is said to have the grace of God even as the grace of man. Hence it is written ([Gn. 39:21](#)) that the Lord gave to Joseph "grace [Douay: 'favor'] in the sight of the chief keeper of the prison." Now when we say that a man has the favor of another, nothing is implied in him who has the favor of the other, but an acceptance is implied in him whose favor he has. Hence when we say that a man has the grace of God, nothing is implied in his soul; but we merely signify the Divine acceptance.

Objection 2: Further, as the soul quickens the body so does God quicken the soul; hence it is written ([Dt. 30:20](#)): "He is thy life." Now the soul quickens the body immediately. Therefore

Objection 3: Further, on Rm. 1:7, "Grace to you and peace," the gloss says: "Grace, i.e. the remission of sins." Now the remission of sin implies nothing in the soul, but only in God, Who does not impute the sin, according to Ps. 31:2: "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord hath not imputed sin." Hence neither does grace imply anything in the soul.

On the contrary, Light implies something in what is enlightened. But grace is a light of the soul; hence Augustine says (De Natura et Gratia xxii): "The light of truth rightly deserts the prevaricator of the law, and those who have been thus deserted become blind." Therefore grace implies something in the soul.

I answer that, According to the common manner of speech, grace is usually taken in three ways. First, for anyone's love, as we are accustomed to say that the soldier is in the good graces of the king, i.e. the king looks on him with favor. Secondly, it is taken for any gift freely bestowed, as we are accustomed to say: I do you this act of grace. Thirdly, it is taken for the recompense of a gift given "gratis," inasmuch as we are said to be "grateful" for benefits. Of these three the second depends on the first, since one bestows something on another "gratis" from the love wherewith he receives him into his good "graces." And from the second proceeds the third, since from benefits bestowed "gratis" arises "gratitude."

Now as regards the last two, it is clear that grace implies something in him who receives grace: first, the gift given gratis; secondly, the acknowledgment of the gift. But as regards the first, a difference must be noted between the grace of God and the grace of man; for since the creature's good springs from the Divine will, some good in the creature flows from God's love, whereby He wishes the good of the creature. On the other hand, the will of man is moved by the good pre-existing in things; and hence man's love does not wholly cause the good of the thing, but pre-supposes it either in part or wholly. Therefore it is clear that every love of God is followed at some time by a good caused in the creature, but not co-eternal with the eternal love. And according to this difference of good the love of God to the creature is looked at differently. For one is common, whereby He loves "all things that are" (Wis. 11:25), and thereby gives things their natural being. But the second is a special love, whereby He draws the rational creature above the condition of its nature to a participation of the Divine good; and according to this love He is said to love anyone simply, since it is by this love that God simply wishes the eternal good, which is Himself, for the creature.

Accordingly when a man is said to have the grace of God, there is signified something bestowed on man by God. Nevertheless the grace of God sometimes signifies God's eternal love, as we say the grace of predestination, inasmuch as God gratuitously and not from merits predestines or elects some; for it is written ([Eph. 1:5](#)): "He hath predestinated us into the adoption of children... unto the praise of the glory of His grace."

Reply to Objection 1: Even when a man is said to be in another's good graces, it is understood that there is something in him pleasing to the other; even as anyone is said to have God's grace---with this difference, that what is pleasing to a man in another is presupposed to his love, but whatever is pleasing to God in a man is caused by the Divine love, as was said above.

Reply to Objection 2: God is the life of the soul after the manner of an efficient cause; but the soul is the life of the body after the manner of a formal cause. Now there is no medium between form and matter, since the form, of itself, "informs" the matter or subject; whereas

Reply to Objection 3: Augustine says (Retract. i, 25): "When I said that grace was for the remission of sins, and peace for our reconciliation with God, you must not take it to mean that peace and reconciliation do not pertain to general peace, but that the special name of grace signifies the remission of sins." Not only grace, therefore, but many other of God's gifts pertain to grace. And hence the remission of sins does not take place without some effect divinely caused in us, as will appear later ([Question \[113\]](#), [Article \[2\]](#)).

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Whether grace is a quality of the soul?

Objection 1: It would seem that grace is not a quality of the soul. For no quality acts on its subject, since the action of a quality is not without the action of its subject, and thus the subject would necessarily act upon itself. But grace acts upon the soul, by justifying it. Therefore grace is not a quality.

Objection 2: Furthermore, substance is nobler than quality. But grace is nobler than the nature of the soul, since we can do many things by grace, to which nature is not equal, as stated above ([Question \[109\]](#), [Articles \[1\],2,3](#)). Therefore grace is not a quality.

Objection 3: Furthermore, no quality remains after it has ceased to be in its subject. But grace remains; since it is not corrupted, for thus it would be reduced to nothing, since it was created from nothing; hence it is called a "new creature"([Gal. 6:15](#)).

On the contrary, on Ps. 103:15: "That he may make the face cheerful with oil"; the gloss says: "Grace is a certain beauty of soul, which wins the Divine love." But beauty of soul is a quality, even as beauty of body. Therefore grace is a quality.

I answer that, As stated above ([Article \[1\]](#)), there is understood to be an effect of God's gratuitous will in whoever is said to have God's grace. Now it was stated ([Question \[109\]](#), [Article \[1\]](#)) that man is aided by God's gratuitous will in two ways: first, inasmuch as man's soul is moved by God to know or will or do something, and in this way the gratuitous effect in man is not a quality, but a movement of the soul; for "motion is the act of the mover in the moved." Secondly, man is helped by God's gratuitous will, inasmuch as a habitual gift is infused by God into the soul; and for this reason, that it is not fitting that God should provide less for those He loves, that they may acquire supernatural good, than for creatures, whom He loves that they may acquire natural good. Now He so provides for natural creatures, that not merely does He move them to their natural acts, but He bestows upon them certain forms and powers, which are the principles of acts, in order that they may of themselves be inclined to these movements, and thus the movements whereby they are moved by God become natural and easy to creatures, according to Wis. 8:1: "she... ordereth all things sweetly." Much more therefore does He infuse into such as He moves towards the acquisition of supernatural good,

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promptly to acquire eternal good; and thus the gift of grace is a quality.

Reply to Objection 1: Grace, as a quality, is said to act upon the soul, not after the manner of an efficient cause, but after the manner of a formal cause, as whiteness makes a thing white, and justice, just.

Reply to Objection 2: Every substance is either the nature of the thing whereof it is the substance or is a part of the nature, even as matter and form are called substance. And because grace is above human nature, it cannot be a substance or a substantial form, but is an accidental form of the soul. Now what is substantially in God, becomes accidental in the soul participating the Divine goodness, as is clear in the case of knowledge. And thus because the soul participates in the Divine goodness imperfectly, the participation of the Divine goodness, which is grace, has its being in the soul in a less perfect way than the soul subsists in itself. Nevertheless, inasmuch as it is the expression or participation of the Divine goodness, it is nobler than the nature of the soul, though not in its mode of being.

Reply to Objection 3: As Boethius [*Pseudo-Bede, Sent. Phil. ex Artist] says, the "being of an accident is to inhere." Hence no accident is called being as if it had being, but because by it something is; hence it is said to belong to a being rather to be a being (Metaph. vii, text. 2). And because to become and to be corrupted belong to what is, properly speaking, no accident comes into being or is corrupted, but is said to come into being and to be corrupted inasmuch as its subject begins or ceases to be in act with this accident. And thus grace is said to be created inasmuch as men are created with reference to it, i.e. are given a new being out of nothing, i.e. not from merits, according to Eph. 2:10, "created in Jesus Christ in good works."

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Whether grace is the same as virtue?

Objection 1: It would seem that grace is the same as virtue. For Augustine says (De Spir. et Lit. xiv) that "operating grace is faith that worketh by charity." But faith that worketh by charity is a virtue. Therefore grace is a virtue.

Objection 2: Further, what fits the definition, fits the defined. But the definitions of virtue given by saints and philosophers fit grace, since "it makes its subject good, and his work good," and "it is a good quality of the mind, whereby we live righteously," etc. Therefore grace is virtue.

Objection 3: Further, grace is a quality. Now it is clearly not in the "fourth" species of quality; viz. "form" which is the "abiding figure of things," since it does not belong to bodies. Nor is it in the "third," since it is not a "passion nor a passion-like quality," which is in the sensitive part of the soul, as is proved in Physic. viii; and grace is principally in the mind. Nor is it in the "second" species, which is "natural power" or "impotence"; since grace is above nature and does not regard good and evil, as does natural power. Therefore it must be in the "first" species

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itself is a virtue after a manner, as stated above ([Question \[57\]](#), [Articles \[1\]](#),2). Therefore grace is the same as virtue.

On the contrary, If grace is a virtue, it would seem before all to be one of the three theological virtues. But grace is neither faith nor hope, for these can be without sanctifying grace. Nor is it charity, since "grace foreruns charity," as Augustine says in his book on the Predestination of the Saints (De Dono Persev. xvi). Therefore grace is not virtue.

I answer that, Some held that grace and virtue were identical in essence, and differed only logically---in the sense that we speak of grace inasmuch as it makes man pleasing to God, or is given gratuitously---and of virtue inasmuch as it empowers us to act rightly. And the Master seems to have thought this (Sent. ii, D 27).

But if anyone rightly considers the nature of virtue, this cannot hold, since, as the Philosopher says (Physic. vii, text. 17), "virtue is disposition of what is perfect---and I call perfect what is disposed according to its nature." Now from this it is clear that the virtue of a thing has reference to some pre-existing nature, from the fact that everything is disposed with reference to what befits its nature. But it is manifest that the virtues acquired by human acts of which we spoke above ([Question \[55\]](#), seqq.) are dispositions, whereby a man is fittingly disposed with reference to the nature whereby he is a man; whereas infused virtues dispose man in a higher manner and towards a higher end, and consequently in relation to some higher nature, i.e. in relation to a participation of the Divine Nature, according to 2 Pt. 1:4: "He hath given us most great and most precious promises; that by these you may be made partakers of the Divine Nature." And it is in respect of receiving this nature that we are said to be born again sons of God.

And thus, even as the natural light of reason is something besides the acquired virtues, which are ordained to this natural light, so also the light of grace which is a participation of the Divine Nature is something besides the infused virtues which are derived from and are ordained to this light, hence the Apostle says ([Eph. 5:8](#)): "For you were heretofore darkness, but now light in the Lord. Walk then as children of the light." For as the acquired virtues enable a man to walk, in accordance with the natural light of reason, so do the infused virtues enable a man to walk as befits the light of grace.

Reply to Objection 1: Augustine calls "faith that worketh by charity" grace, since the act of faith of him that worketh by charity is the first act by which sanctifying grace is manifested.

Reply to Objection 2: Good is placed in the definition of virtue with reference to its fitness with some pre-existing nature essential or participated. Now good is not attributed to grace in this manner, but as to the root of goodness in man, as stated above.

Reply to Objection 3: Grace is reduced to the first species of quality; and yet it is not the same as virtue, but is a certain disposition which is presupposed to the infused virtues, as their principle and root.

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Objection 1: It would seem that grace is not in the essence of the soul, as in a subject, but in one of the powers. For Augustine says (Hypognosticon iii [*Among the spurious works of St. Augustine]) that grace is related to the will or to the free will "as a rider to his horse." Now the will or the free will is a power, as stated above ([FP, Question \[83\]](#), [Article \[2\]](#)). Hence grace is in a power of the soul, as in a subject.

Objection 2: Further, "Man's merit springs from grace" as Augustine says (De Gratia et Lib. Arbit. vi). Now merit consists in acts, which proceed from a power. Hence it seems that grace is a perfection of a power of the soul.

Objection 3: Further, if the essence of the soul is the proper subject of grace, the soul, inasmuch as it has an essence, must be capable of grace. But this is false; since it would follow that every soul would be capable of grace. Therefore the essence of the soul is not the proper subject of grace.

Objection 4: Further, the essence of the soul is prior to its powers. Now what is prior may be understood without what is posterior. Hence it follows that grace may be taken to be in the soul, although we suppose no part or power of the soul---viz. neither the will, nor the intellect, nor anything else; which is impossible.

On the contrary, By grace we are born again sons of God. But generation terminates at the essence prior to the powers. Therefore grace is in the soul's essence prior to being in the powers.

I answer that, This question depends on the preceding. For if grace is the same as virtue, it must necessarily be in the powers of the soul as in a subject; since the soul's powers are the proper subject of virtue, as stated above ([Question \[56\]](#), [Article \[1\]](#)). But if grace differs from virtue, it cannot be said that a power of the soul is the subject of grace, since every perfection of the soul's powers has the nature of virtue, as stated above ([Question \[55\]](#), [Article \[1\]](#); [Question \[56\]](#), [Article \[1\]](#)). Hence it remains that grace, as it is prior to virtue, has a subject prior to the powers of the soul, so that it is in the essence of the soul. For as man in his intellective powers participates in the Divine knowledge through the virtue of faith, and in his power of will participates in the Divine love through the virtue of charity, so also in the nature of the soul does he participate in the Divine Nature, after the manner of a likeness, through a certain regeneration or re-creation.

Reply to Objection 1: As from the essence of the soul flows its powers, which are the principles of deeds, so likewise the virtues, whereby the powers are moved to act, flow into the powers of the soul from grace. And thus grace is compared to the will as the mover to the moved, which is the same comparison as that of a horseman to the horse---but not as an accident to a subject.

And thereby is made clear the Reply to the Second Objection. For grace is the principle of meritorious works through the medium of virtues, as the essence of the soul is the principal of vital deeds through the medium of the powers.

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rational nature. But the soul is not classed in a species by any of its powers, since the powers
are natural properties of the soul following upon the species. Hence the soul differs specifically
in its essence from other souls, viz. of dumb animals, and of plants. Consequently it does not
follow that, if the essence of the human soul is the subject of grace, every soul may be the
subject of grace; since it belongs to the essence of the soul, inasmuch as it is of such a species.

Reply to Objection 4: Since the powers of the soul are natural properties following upon the
species, the soul cannot be without them. Yet, granted that it was without them, the soul would
still be called intellectual or rational in its species, not that it would actually have these
powers, but on account of the essence of such a species, from which these powers naturally
flow.