

Question 50

Of the Substance of the Angels Absolutely Considered

The distinction of bodily and spiritual creatures :

1. The purely spiritual creature which in Holy Scripture is called angel
2. The creature wholly corporeal
3. The composite creature, corporeal and spiritual which is man

Article one: Whether an Angel Is Altogether Incorporeal?

Objection 1: According to Damascene in (*De Fide Orth. li*) though the Angel in relation to humans is entirely incorporeal, but compared to God is corporeal. Therefore an Angel is not entirely incorporeal.

Obj. 2: Only bodies are moved. According to the same philosopher an angel is an ever movable intellectual substance for it is its nature to be sent as a messenger from God to humans. Therefore angels are corporeal.

Obj. 3: Ambrose says that every creature is limited by its own nature. And this is the nature of bodies. They are limiting. Since angels are limited they must have bodies. Angels are created beings: Ps. 148:2. Therefore, Angels have bodies.

On the contrary: Ps 103:4 it says, "Who makes His angels spirits."

I answer that: The idea is that what God has created is good. Therefore, the Angels must be wholly incorporeal because this completes his good creation. "The very fact that intellect is above sense is a reasonable proof that there are some incorporeal things comprehensible by the intellect alone." TA

Reply to obj. one: It doesn't necessarily follow that since Angels are between God and man in ranking as purely intellectual that angels have to be corporeal in comparison to God.

Reply to obj. two: Just because Angels have movement it isn't required that it be considered to have a body because these creatures are ever actually intelligent and not sometimes or only partly or sometimes potentially as we are. As a result, the distinction is only apparent, but not real.

Reply to obj. three: Yes, being circumscribed by limitations belongs solely to bodies, but some things are not contained in corporeal place, yet they are even so they are no less circumscribed by their bodies.

Article Two: Whether an Angel Is Composed of Matter and Form?

Obj. 1: Angels are in the genus of substance. Everything which is composed of the genus is composed of matter and form. Therefore, it would seem that Angels are composed of matter and form.

Question 50 Article Two Cont.

Obj. two: Since the properties of matter exist, there is matter. The properties of matter receive and give. These qualities are found in Angels, therefore they must be composed of matter and form .

Obj. 3: Being a form or having form as its substance implies that angel's form is to act. Only God is pure act and therefore an angel is not pure act and therefore an angel is not form only, but has a form in matter.

Obj. 4: Form is limited and perfected by matter. Therefore, form which is not matter is infinite and therefore, would be on level with God for only God is infinite and eternal. An angel is not infinite because every creature is not infinite. Therefore, the form of an angel is in matter.

On the contrary: Dionysius says: "The first creatures are understood to be as immaterial as they are incorporeal.

I answer that: It is impossible that corporeal and spiritual things should have the same matter because whatever is subject to form does not have to be limited by its own form as in a body. For matter cannot be one matter of spiritual things and also of corporeal things. Otherwise, the same thing would be corporeal and spiritual. "Hence it would follow that one part of matter receives the corporeal form, and another receives the spiritual form. Matter, however, is not divisible into parts except as regarded under quantity; and without quantity substance is indivisible." Therefore it follows that spiritual things are subject to quantity; which cannot be. On this basis it is not possible that corporeal and spiritual things should have the same matter.

Reply obj. 1: Differences are distinguished in species. In material things there is one thing which determines to what special grade a species exists and from the matter the difference.

Reply obj. 2: The way of receiving is not that of matter, but of an immaterial substance. The intellect does not receive the form in the same way. Matter receives the form as constituted in some species, either of air, or of fire, or of something else. The intelligible form is in the intellect according to the very nature of a form.

Reply obj. 3: The nature of material things is twofold: The first is that of form and matter, whereby the nature is constituted. Existence has its own action and therefore if there be no matter, and supposing that the form itself subsists without matter, there nevertheless still remains the relation of the form to its very existence, as of potentiality to act. And such a kind of composition is understood to be in the angels; and this is what some say, that an angel is composed of, whereby he is, and what is, or existence. But in God existence and what is are not different as was explained above (Q. 3, A.4). Hence God alone is pure act.

Reply obj. 4: Angels are infinite relative to God in their form and finite in that its existence is not absolutely subsisting, but is limited to some nature to which it belongs. Immaterial creatures are finite in their being, but in their form are infinite.

Question 50 cont. Article 3

Article three: Whether the Angels Exist in Any Great Number?

Obj. 1 It seems there are few angels. For a species of a creature with bodies they are limited in number. But as shown in (A.1) that angels are incorporeal and therefore the angels cannot exist in any great number.

Obj. 2 The number of angels is affected by their closeness to God. For angels are nearer than any other created creatures to God. On this basis since God is supremely one, it seems that there is the smallest number in the angelic nature. The nearer a created thing approaches unity, the less quantity is evident in numbers.

Obj. 3 The heavenly bodies appear to be few in number, so too the angels having movement must be in a limited number.

Obj. 4 According to Dionysius all intelligible and intellectual substances exist because of the rays of the divine goodness. Now intellectual substances are immaterial as shown in (A.2). The quantity of rays is dependent upon the number of bodies receiving them. The same conclusion is drawn as before in that limited heavenly bodies limit the number of angels.

On the contrary: Daniel 7:10 says, "Thousands of thousands ministered to Him, and ten thousand times a hundred thousand stood before Him."

I answer that: Basically the number of angels exceeds the number of physical bodies.

Reply obj. 1, The division of what is continuous which is caused by distinction of forms according to the multitude which is reckoned among the ones who are transcendent as said in (A. 30, A. 3: Q. 11).

Reply Obj. 2, Due to closeness to God there must be a great number of angels because God's purposes are great in number.

Reply Obj. 3, Aristotle's argument is that separate substances were made of corporeal substances. Otherwise the immaterial substances would have no purpose and only through sensible things can we come to know intelligible ones.

Reply Obj. 4, Matter is the cause of distinction of things is the source of this objection. But it was refuted in (A. 47, A.1). Also number of angels is not dependent upon the number of bodies, but rather upon divine wisdom. God's wisdom devised the number of the various orders of immaterial substances.

Article four: Whether the Angels Differ in Species?

Obj. 1, All the angels are of one species because difference is nobler than genus. Since all things agree in what is noblest in them which is their intellectuality. So, angels do not differ in species.

Obj. 2, Angels do not differ specifically, but on the basis of differing amount. Since angels differ in terms in complexity or simplicity of intellect. More or less doesn't change a species.

Q. 50 Article four cont.

Obj. 3, Angels and souls are distinguished from each other. Souls and angels are of different species.

Obj. 4, The basis of numbers of a thing should be according to its degree of perfection. But this wouldn't be if there were only one individual under one species, but that is not the case with angels.

On the contrary: The angels are not of the same species because in one species there is no such thing as first and second. But of angels there are first, middle and last.

I answer that: It is impossible for angels to differ in species. This could be compared to whiteness. For there may be several shades of white, but it is still of the same species of whiteness. For it is impossible that angels are like souls to be of one species for angels of one hierarchy, or even of one order are still of one species. Differing in number, but agreeing in form among souls is distinguishable in the material world, but not in the immaterial.

Reply Obj. 1; Irrational animals differ in species according to the various determined degrees of sensitive nature; and in like manner all the angels differ in species according to the diverse degrees of intellectual nature.

Reply Obj. 2; Angels are diversified according to more or less in the sense that forms vary by degree as in fire and air.

Reply Obj. 3; It is much better for the individuals to be multiplied in the one species than for the species to be multiplied in the angels.

Reply Obj. 4; "Perfection of the angelic nature calls for the multiplying of species, but not for the multiplying of individuals in one species."

Article Five: Whether the Angels Are Incorruptible?

Obj. 1, The distinction in angels on whether they can be corrupted is not on the basis of their intellectual substance, but on the partaking of immortality by favor and not by nature. Therefore, it would seem that angels are not corruptible.

Obj. 2, According to Plato the gods were fathered by God and these would be understood as the angels in his work in the Timaeus, which states that they are dissoluble by nature, but not dissoluble by my will. Therefore, the angels are corruptible by their nature.

Obj. 3, Since God made the angels it would seem that they are corruptible by their own nature and not by relation to their creator. Only the hand of the Almighty can preserve creatures. But what can be brought to nothing is corruptible. Therefore they are corruptible.

On the Contrary, Dionysius affirms that the intellectual substances have "*unfailing life, being free from all corruption, death, matter, and generation.*" Therefore, angels cannot fall in their nature.

Q. 50 Article 5 cont.

I answer that: Angels are incorruptible in their nature on the basis that nothing is corrupted except by its form being separated from the matter. Since angels subsist in form as derived from (A. 2), it is impossible for its substance to be corruptible. For what belongs to itself cannot be separated from it like a circle is always round in form, but if there is a bronze circle it could be changed or corrupted into a different shape. Therefore, in terms relation to something else it can be separated or taken away that which belonged to it. Now everything is an actual being according to its form. Matter is an actual being by the form. If the form is separated from the matter a subject composed of matter and form ceases to be. An angel cannot lose its own being. Therefore, the angel's immateriality is the cause of why it is incorruptible by its own nature. The operation of a thing indicates its mode of being since everything acts according as it is actual. Through an intellectual operation a token of this incorruptibility can be gathered. The operation of a thing indicates its mode of being and the species and nature of the operation is understood from the object. "But an intelligible object, being above time, is everlasting. Hence every intellectual substance is incorruptible of its own nature."

Reply Obj. 1, In question 62 later we learn that angels obtain perfect immutability only by favor. That is according to Damascene who dealt with perfect immortality, which includes complete immutability because every change is a form of death and angels don't die.

Reply Obj. 2, Plato's use of "the gods" shows that he supposed the elements make up the heavenly bodies, and therefore are dissoluble by their own nature, yet by divine will are preserved in existence.

Reply Obj. 3, God can remove his act of preservation of an incorruptible being for his own reasons. For it is only God that prevents the decay and corruption of anything he creates. Therefore, without God's preservation even the angels would lapse into nothing. The nature of angels is dependent upon God as its cause. "For a thing is said to be corruptible not merely because God can reduce it to non-existence, by withdrawing His act of preservation, but also because it has some principle of corruption within itself, or some contrariety, or at least the potentiality of matter.

Q & A on Question 50

1. Do the Angels have bodies? : The idea is that what God has created is good. Therefore, the Angels must be wholly incorporeal because this completes his good creation. "The very fact that intellect is above sense is a reasonable proof that there are some incorporeal things comprehensible by the intellect alone." TA

2. Is an Angel composed of matter and form? It is impossible that corporeal and spiritual things should have the same matter because whatever is subject to form does not have to be limited by its own form as in a body. For matter cannot be one matter of spiritual things and also of corporeal things. Otherwise, the same thing would be corporeal and spiritual. "Hence it would follow that one part of matter receives the corporeal form, and another receives the spiritual form. Matter, however, is not divisible into parts except as regarded under quantity; and without quantity substance is indivisible."

Q & A question 50 cont.

Therefore it follows that spiritual things are subject to quantity; which cannot be. On this basis it is not possible that corporeal and spiritual things should have the same matter.

3. Do Angels exist in any great number? I answer that: Basically the number of angels exceeds the number of physical bodies.

4. Do Angels differ in species? It is impossible for angels to differ in species. This could be compared to whiteness. For there may be several shades of white, but it is still of the same species of whiteness. For it is impossible that angels are like souls to be of one species for angels of one hierarchy, or even of one order are still of one species. Differing in number, but agreeing in form among souls is distinguishable in the material world, but not in the immaterial.

5. Are Angels incorruptible? Angels are incorruptible in their nature on the basis that nothing is corrupted except by its form being separated from the matter. Since angels subsist in form as derived from (A. 2), it is impossible for its substance to be corruptible. For what belongs to itself cannot be separated from it like a circle is always round in form, but if there is a bronze circle it could be changed or corrupted into a different shape. Therefore, in terms relation to something else it can be separated or taken away that which belonged to it. Now everything is an actual being according to its form. Matter is an actual being by the form. If the form is separated from the matter a subject composed of matter and form ceases to be. An angel cannot lose its own being. Therefore, the angel's immateriality is the cause of why it is incorruptible by its own nature. The operation of a thing indicates its mode of being since everything acts according as it is actual. Through an intellectual operation a token of this incorruptibility can be gathered. The operation of a thing indicates its mode of being and the species and nature of the operation is understood from the object. "But an intelligible object, being above time, is everlasting. Hence every intellectual substance is incorruptible of its own nature."

Question 51

Of the Angels in Comparison with Bodies

Article one: Whether the Angels Have Bodies Naturally United to Them?

Obj. 1, According to Augustine demons have bodies and are animals of the air. Demons are angels who have fallen from God's grace and therefore it would seem natural that they too have bodies. Origen compares angels to God in that the attribute of having no body is entirely God's quality for it says in God's word that God is spirit. It doesn't say spirit and body. God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit exist without any material substance and without any companionship of corporeal addition. Bernard ascribes incorporeity to God alone even as we do immortality. According to him every created being needs a body.

Question 51 Article One cont.

Obj. 2, Gregory calls an angel a rational animal. All animals are comprised of body and soul. Therefore, angels have bodies naturally united to them.

Obj. 3, Angels animate bodies which are naturally united to them for the soul not only lives, but gives life to the body. And life is more perfect in the angels than in souls. So doesn't it just make sense that angels have bodies?

On the contrary: Dionysius says that angels are understood to be incorporeal.

I answer that: "Not all intellectual substances are united to bodies, but some are quite separated from bodies, and these we call angels." TA It seems natural that since angels do not need to understand by sense since angels are intellectually superior to humans, then it follows that they don't have bodies, but are wholly immaterial. That is, angels do not need bodies since they are knowledge filled through pure intellect and not like humans who have to rely on their senses to compensate for their inferior intelligence.

Reply obj. 1: Angels do not need bodies, but some have had the opinion that there are no incorporeal substances existing except as united to bodies. This has led to a false teaching which asserts that God was the soul of the world. God is exalted above all things as stated in Ps. 8:2 which says, "Thy magnificence is exalted beyond the heavens. Origen was deceived here and in many areas of his teaching. Bernard's view is that angels assume bodies for some purpose and these bodies are not naturally united to it.

Reply obj. 2: Gregory was speaking metaphorically. Angels are to him metaphorically speaking a rational animal on account of the likeness to the rational nature.

Reply obj. 3: On the basis that an angel is not united to a body it is more perfect than a spirit and soul that is united to a body. To give life formally belongs to a substance which is part of some nature, and which has not within itself the full nature of the species.

Article two: Whether Angels Assume Bodies?

Obj. 1, An angel doesn't need a body to do the work God has placed upon angels. There is no act by angels that are superfluous. Angels do not assume bodies.

Obj. 2, "A body is not united to an angel as to a form, as stated (A.1), while in so far as it is united to the angel as to a mover, it is not said to be assumed, otherwise it would follow that all bodies moved by the angels are assumed by them."

Obj. 3, Since angels suddenly disappear they could not assume bodies naturally because this is not the nature of bodies. Also, angels are not fire otherwise everything would be burned if touched by an angel.

On the contrary: Augustine believes that Angels appeared to Abraham under assumed bodies.

Question 51 Article Two Cont.

I answer that: The assumptions regarding the angels in the OT accounts such as with Abraham, Lot and Sarah, Tobit, Tobias and many more can only be regarded as a purposed assumption. This is upon the assumption that angels do not have bodies.

Article three: Whether the Angels Exercise Functions of Life in the Bodies Assumed?

Obj. 1, Angels assume and exercise functions of life in a body. It sure appears to be the case and it would seem deceptive since these apparitions give indication that they have bodily functions.

Obj. 2, The angel assuming the form of a body actually exercises the functions of a body for with the work of the angels there is nothing done without purpose.

Obj. 3, Angels actually walked with Abraham and Tobit and therefore assume the functions of bodies.

Obj. 4, Angels actually speak in the Bible which show the functions of the body are really working.

Obj. 5, Further proof that Angels exercise bodily functions are seen in the example of Abraham who ate a meal with the angels who came to visit him.

Obj. 6, Angels are thought to have beget children as recorded in Genesis 18 where it says that the sons of God went in to the daughters of men, and they brought forth children, these are the mighty men of old, men of renown.

On the contrary: Since angels have no life, as stated in the previous article (ad 3) they cannot exercise functions of life through assumed bodies.

I answer that: Yes, angels exercise functions of life through assumed bodies. This is the same in that the Scripture indicates vital functions can be performed in assumed bodies which are common in such operations such as in speech, walking and other movements. The Philosopher says in *De Somn. Et Vig. I*, "That which has the faculty has the action". Therefore, nothing can have a function of life except what has life, which is the potential principle of such action.

Reply obj. 1: Basically that angels assume bodies purely for some purpose and in all respects appear to have all the functions of humans and more during the apparition in any given occasion.

Reply obj. 2: Angels have no need to gain information through the senses. Even so, for a specific purpose angels do assume the bodily functions of a person whose nature requires a body.

Reply obj. 3: Movement coming from a united mover is a proper function of life, but the bodies assumed by the angels are not thus moved, since the angels are not their forms. Yet, accidentally they are moved when such bodies move. Angels are not moved according to the movement of the heavenly bodies.

Reply obj. 4: Of course, angels do not talk through their assumed bodies, yet there is assumed speech.

Question 51 Article 3 cont.

Reply obj. 5: Technically, angels do not eat with their assumed bodies for they are not dependent upon earthly food for their energy to exist.

Reply obj. 6: Augustine was a bit off base on this one. The sons of God are the sons of Seth for the Angels could not fall from grace and still be called, "Sons of God."

Questions and Answers

Question 51

1. Do angels have bodies naturally tied to them? I answer that: "Not all intellectual substances are united to bodies, but some are quite separated from bodies, and these we call angels." TA It seems natural that since angels do not need to understand by sense since angels are intellectually superior to humans, then it follows that they don't have bodies, but are wholly immaterial. That is, angels do not need bodies since they are knowledge filled through pure intellect and not like humans who have to rely on their senses to compensate for their inferior intelligence.
2. Do angels assume bodies? The assumptions regarding the angels in the OT accounts such as with Abraham, Lot and Sarah, Tobit, Tobias and many more can only be regarded as a purposed assumption. This is upon the assumption that angels do not have bodies.
3. Do Angels Exercise Functions of Life in the Bodies Assumed? Yes, angels exercise functions of life through assumed bodies. This is the same in that the Scripture indicates vital functions can be performed in assumed bodies which are common in such operations such as in speech, walking and other movements. The Philosopher says in De Somn. Et Vig. I, "That which has the faulty has the action". Therefore, nothing can have a function of life except what has life, which is the potential principle of such action.

Question 52

Of the Angels in Relation to Place

Article one: Whether an Angel Is in a Place?

Obj. 1, An angel is not in a place. It would seem that an angel is not ever in a place for it is immaterial and only material things experience space and time.

Obj. 2, A place implies quantity having position for everything which is in a place has some position. There is no benefit for an angel to have position.

Obj. 3, Measurement is involved in a place. But an angel can neither be measured nor contained by a place.

Question 51 cont.

On the Contrary: In the Dominican Breviary it is written, "Let Thy holy angels who dwell herein, keep us in peace."

I answer that: Occupying space by an angel is only in appearance for there is no such quantity in the angels, for theirs is a virtual one. "Consequently, an angel is said to be in a corporeal place by application of the angelic power in any manner whatever to any place." TA

Article two: Whether an Angel can be in several places at once?

Obj. 1, Angels can be in several places at once because the soul is in several places at once, for it is entirely in every part of the body. The angels no doubt have at least been empowered as with a soul.

Obj. 2, The angel can be in various places at once as an angel is in the body which he assumes, and, since the body which he assumes is continuous, it would follow that he is in every part of the body.

Obj. 3, Damascene says that where the angel operates, there he is. An angel can be in several places at one time as in the destruction of Sodom. (Gen. 19: 25)

On the contrary: The angels are not in heaven and in the earth simultaneously.

I answer that: Angel's power is finite. God is everywhere present, but this attribute is not transferable unless He wills it specifically. Angels can only be in one place at a time, but can be continuously in one place.

Article three: Whether Several Angels Can Be at the Same Time in the Same Place?

Obj. 1, It would seem that several angels can be at the same time in the same place. Since angels do not fill space as sensible bodies do. Therefore several angels can be in the same place.

Obj. 2, Also there exists a greater difference between an angel and a body than there is between two angels. But an angel and a body are unable to occupy the same space for a sensible body occupies the entire space, but not so with two angels.

Obj. 3, The soul is in every part of the body, according to Augustine. But demons don't possess souls, but they can possess bodies. Hence the demon and the body are in the same place at one time. This is also true for all spiritual substances.

On the contrary: There are not two angels in one place as there are not two souls in one place.

I answer that: No two angels can be in the same place. This is because two causes cannot cause immediately of one and the same thing. "This is evident in every class of causes: for there is one approximate form of one thing, and there is one proximate mover, although there may be several remote movers.

Q. 52 cont.

Reply Obj. 1: Several angels cannot occupy one place/space because of their filling the place, but for another reason as said before for another reason.

Reply Obj. 2: The angel and a body are not in the same place the same way and therefore it does not follow.

Reply Obj. 3: By the same reason of causality a demon and a soul are compared to a body, since its form, while the demon is not. The inference does not follow.

Whether an Angel Is in a Place? Questions and Answers for Question 52

1. Whether an Angel Is in a Place? Occupying space by an angel is only in appearance for there is no such quantity in the angels, for theirs is a virtual one. "Consequently, an angel is said to be in a corporeal place by application of the angelic power in any manner whatever to any place." TA
2. Whether an angel can be in several places at once? Angel's power is finite. God is everywhere present, but this attribute is not transferable unless He wills it specifically. Angels can only be in one place at a time, but can be continuously in one place.
3. Can several angels be in one place and time? No two angels can be in the same place. This is because two causes cannot cause immediately of one and the same thing. "This is evident in every class of causes: for there is one approximate form of one thing, and there is one proximate mover, although there may be several remote movers.