

QUESTION 9

The Gift of Knowledge

Next we have to consider the gift of knowledge (*donum scientiae*). On this topic there are four questions: (1) Is knowledge a gift [of the Holy Spirit]? (2) Does the gift of knowledge have to do with divine things? (3) Is the gift of knowledge speculative or practical? (4) Which beatitude corresponds to the gift of knowledge?

Article 1

Is knowledge a gift [of the Holy Spirit]?

It seems that knowledge (*scientia*) is not a gift [of the Holy Spirit]:

Objection 1: The gifts of the Holy Spirit exceed our natural capacity (*naturalem facultatem excedunt*). But 'knowledge' implies an effect of natural reason; for in *Posterior Analytics* 1 the Philosopher says, "A demonstration is a syllogism that gives knowledge" (*syllogismus faciens scire*). Therefore, knowledge is not a gift of the Holy Spirit.

Objection 2: As was explained above (*ST* 1-2, q. 68, a. 5), the gifts of the Holy Spirit are common to all the sanctified (*communia omnibus sanctis*). But in *De Trinitate* 14 Augustine says, "Most of the faithful are not capable of knowledge, even though they are capable of faith itself." Therefore, knowledge is not a gift.

Objection 3: As was explained above (*ST* 1-2, q. 68, a. 8), a gift is more perfect than a virtue. Therefore, a single gift is sufficient for perfecting a single virtue. But as was explained above (q. 8, a. 5), the gift of understanding corresponds to the virtue of faith. Therefore, the gift of knowledge does not correspond to the virtue of faith. Nor does it appear to correspond to any other virtue. Therefore, since, as was explained above (*ST* 1-2, q. 68, aa. 1-2), the gifts are perfections of virtues, it seems that knowledge is not a gift.

But contrary to this: In Isaiah 11:2-3 knowledge is counted among the seven gifts.

I respond: Grace is more perfect than nature, and so grace is not lacking in anything in which a man can be perfected through nature. Now when through natural reason a man assents to some truth with his intellect, there two ways in which he is perfected with respect to that truth: first, because he *grasps* it (*capit eam*) and, second, because he has *firm judgment* concerning it (*de ea certum iudicium habet*).

And so two things are required for a man's intellect to assent perfectly to the truth of the Faith. One of them is that he should correctly *grasp* the things that are proposed, and this, as was explained above (q. 8, a. 6), belongs to the gift of *understanding*. But the other is that he should have *firm and correct judgment* about those things, viz., by distinguishing things that are to be believed from things that are not to be believed. And for this the gift of *knowledge* is necessary.

Reply to objection 1: The certitude of cognition is found in diverse ways in diverse natures, in accord with the different condition of each nature.

For instance, a man acquires firm judgment about the truth through discursive reasoning (*per discursum rationis*), and so human scientific knowledge is acquired through demonstrative reasoning.

By contrast, as was explained in the First Part (*ST* 1, q. 14, a. 7), in God there is firm judgment through simple intuitive vision (*per simplicem intuitum*), without any sort of discursive reasoning (*absque omni discursu*); and so God's knowledge is not discursive or ratiocinative, but is instead absolute and simple. The knowledge which is posited as a gift of the Holy Spirit is similar to God's knowledge, since it is a certain participative similitude of it.

Reply to objection 2: There are two kinds of knowledge that can be had with respect to what is to be taken on faith (*circa credenda*).

One is a knowledge by which a man knows what he ought to take on faith (*scit quid credere*

debeat), distinguishing things that are to be taken on faith from things that are not to be taken on faith. On this score, knowledge is a gift [of the Holy Spirit] and is common to all the sanctified.

The other is a knowledge of what is to be taken on faith through which a man not only knows what ought to be taken on faith, but also knows how to make the Faith manifest, how to induce others to believe, and how to refute those who contradict the Faith. And this sort of knowledge is posited among the gratuitously given graces (*ista scientia ponitur inter gratias gratis datas*), and it is given to some but not to everyone. Hence, after the cited passage Augustine adds, “It is one thing to know only what a man ought to believe; it is another thing to know how it might be enriched for the pious and defended against the impious.”

Reply to objection 3: The gifts are more perfect than the moral and intellectual virtues, but they are not more perfect than the theological virtues. Rather, all the gifts are ordered toward perfecting the theological virtues as toward their end. And so there is nothing wrong with diverse gifts being ordered toward a single theological virtue.

Article 2

Does the gift of knowledge have to do with divine things?

It seems that the gift of knowledge has to do with divine things:

Objection 1: In *De Trinitate* 14 Augustine says, “Faith is begotten, nurtured, defended, and strengthened in us by knowledge.” But faith has to do with divine things, since, as was established above (q. 1, a. 1), the object of faith is the First Truth. Therefore, the gift of knowledge likewise has to do with divine things.

Objection 2: The gift of knowledge has more dignity than acquired scientific knowledge. But some acquired scientific knowledge, such as the science of metaphysics, has to do with divine things. Therefore, *a fortiori*, the gift of knowledge has to do with divine things.

Objection 3: Romans 1:20 says, “The invisible things of God ... are clearly seen, being understood through the things that are made.” Therefore, if [the gift of] knowledge has to do with created things, it seems that it has to do with divine things as well.

But contrary to this: In *De Trinitate* 14 Augustine says, “The science of divine things is properly named *wisdom*, whereas the science of human things properly bears the name *knowledge*.”

I respond: A firm or certain judgment (*certum iudicium*) about an entity is taken especially from its cause. And so it is necessary for the ordering of judgments to follow the ordering of causes. For just as a primary cause is a cause of a secondary cause, so one judges about the secondary cause through the first cause (*per causam primam iudicatur de causa secunda*). By contrast, the first cause cannot be judged through any other cause (*per aliam causam*). And so a judgment that is made through the first cause is the first and most perfect sort of judgment.

Now in those cases in which something is the most perfect, the common name of the genus is appropriated to what falls short of being the most perfect, while some special name is appropriated to the most perfect thing itself. This is clear in logic. For instance, in the genus of convertible names, that which signifies the ‘what-ness’ of a thing (*quod quid est*) is called by the special name *definition* (*definitio*), whereas the convertible names that fall short of being definitions retain for themselves the common name; more specifically, they are called *properties* (*propria*).

Therefore, since, as has been explained (a. 1), the name *knowledge* (*scientia*) implies a firmness or certitude of judgment (*importat quandam certitudinem iudicii*), if this firmness of judgment comes through the highest cause, then it has a special name, viz., *wisdom*. For the one who is called ‘wise’ with respect to any given genus is he who knows the highest cause of that genus and can judge everything

through it. And the one who is called ‘wise’ absolutely speaking is he who knows the highest cause absolutely speaking, viz., God. And so the cognition of divine things (*cognitio divinarum rerum*) is called *wisdom*.

On the other hand, the cognition of human matters (*cognitio rerum humanarum*) is called ‘knowledge’ in the sense that this common name implies a firmness of judgment appropriate for a judgment that is made through secondary causes. And so if we take the name *knowledge* in this way, then knowledge is posited as a gift distinct from the gift of wisdom. Hence, the gift of knowledge has to do with human things, or with created things.

Reply to objection 1: Even though the things that faith has to do with are divine and eternal things, still, faith itself is something temporal in the mind of the believer. And so to know what is to be taken on faith belongs to the gift of knowledge.

On the other hand, to know the things themselves that are taken on faith through a sort of union with those things belongs to the gift of wisdom. Hence, the gift of wisdom corresponds more to charity, which unites a man’s mind to God.

Reply to objection 2: This argument is talking about the name ‘knowledge’ taken generally. However, knowledge is posited as a special gift not in this sense, but insofar as it is restricted to the judgment that is made through created things.

Reply to objection 3: As was explained above (q. 1, a. 1), every cognitive habit is directed *formally* toward the medium through which there is a cognition of something, whereas it is directed *materially* toward what is known through that medium. And since what is formal is more powerful, it follows that those sciences which draw conclusions from mathematical principles about material nature are grouped with the mathematical sciences, since they are more similar to them—even though they agree more with natural science as far as their matter is concerned, and even though because of this *Physics 2* says that they are instead natural sciences.

And so when a man has cognition of God through created things, this seems to belong more to *knowledge*, to which it pertains *formally*, than to *wisdom*, to which it pertains *materially*. And, conversely, when we make judgments about created things according to divine things (*secundum res divinas*), this seems to belong more to *wisdom* than to *knowledge*.

Article 3

Is the knowledge which is posited as a gift practical knowledge?

It seems that the knowledge which is posited as a gift is practical knowledge:

Objection 1: In *De Trinitate* 12 Augustine says, “The action by which we use exterior things is allotted to knowledge.” But the knowledge to which action is allotted is practical. Therefore, the knowledge which is a gift is practical knowledge.

Objection 2: In *Moralia* 1 Gregory says, “There is no knowledge if it does not have the advantage of piety, and piety is completely useless if it lacks the discretion of knowledge.” From this it follows that knowledge directs piety. But this role cannot belong to speculative knowledge. Therefore, the knowledge which is a gift is practical and not speculative.

Objection 3: As was established above (q. 8, a. 5), the gifts of the Holy Spirit are had only by the just. But speculative knowledge can be had even by the unjust—this according to James 4:17 (“To one who knows the good and does not do it, it is to him a sin”). Therefore, the knowledge which is a gift is practical and not speculative.

But contrary to this: In *Moralia* 1 Gregory says, “Knowledge on her own day prepares a feast, because she overcomes the fast of ignorance in the belly of the mind.” But ignorance is totally removed

only by both kinds of knowledge, viz., speculative and practical. Therefore, the knowledge which is a gift is both speculative and practical.

I respond: As was explained above (a. 1 and q. 8, a. 8), the gift of knowledge, like the gift of understanding, is ordered toward the firmness or certitude of faith. Now faith consists primarily and principally in a speculative act (*in speculatione*), insofar as it adheres to the First Truth. But since the First Truth is also the ultimate end for the sake of which we act, it likewise follows that faith extends itself to action—this according to Galatians 5:6 (“Faith operates through love”).

Hence, the gift of knowledge must likewise have to do primarily and principally with speculation, viz., insofar as a man knows what ought to be taken on faith. But, secondarily, it also extends itself to action, insofar as we are directed in our acting by our knowledge of what is taken on faith and of those things that follow from what is taken on faith.

Reply to objection 1: Augustine is talking about the gift of knowledge insofar as it extends itself to action. For he attributes action to it, but not action alone or primarily. And it likewise directs piety in this way.

Reply to objection 2: This makes clear the answer to the second objection.

Reply to objection 3: Just as it has been explained (q. 8, a. 5), in the case of the gift of understanding, that not everyone who understands has the gift of understanding, but only he who understands because of the habit of grace (*ex habitu gratiae*), so, too, in the case of the gift of knowledge, one should understand that the only individuals who have the gift of knowledge are those who, because of the infusion of grace, have a firm judgment with respect to what is to be taken on faith and what is to be done, where this judgment does not stray in any way from the rectitude of justice. And this is the knowledge of holy things of which Wisdom 10:10 says, “The Lord led the just man through the right ways and gave him the knowledge of holy things.”

Article 4

Does the third beatitude, viz., “Blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted,” correspond to [the gift of] knowledge?

It seems that the third beatitude, viz., “Blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted,” does not correspond to [the gift of] knowledge:

Objection 1: Just as evil is a cause of sadness and mourning, so, too, good is a cause of joy. But through [the gift of] knowledge what is principally made known are goods more than evils, which are known through the goods; for as *De Anima* 1 says, “What is straight is the judge both of itself and of what is crooked.” Therefore, the beatitude in question does not appropriately correspond to [the gift of] knowledge.

Objection 2: The act of knowledge is the consideration of truth. But there is no sadness in the consideration of truth; rather, there is great joy, since Wisdom 8:16 says, “Her conversation has no bitterness, nor her company any tedium, but joy and gladness.” Therefore, the beatitude in question does not appropriately correspond to the gift of knowledge.

Objection 3: The gift of knowledge consists in speculation before action. But insofar as it consists in speculation, it “says nothing about what is imitable and what is to be avoided,” as *De Anima* 3 says. Therefore, neither does it say anything joyful or sad. Therefore, the beatitude in question is not appropriately posited as corresponding to the gift of knowledge.

But contrary to this: In *De Sermone Domini in Monte* Augustine says, “Knowledge belongs to mourners, who have learned which evils they have been conquered by that they had sought as goods.”

I respond: Correct judgment about creatures properly pertains to knowledge. But a man is

sometimes turned away from God by creatures—this according to Wisdom 14:11: “Creatures have become an abomination and a snare to the feet of the unwise,” i.e., to the feet of those who do not have right judgment with respect to creatures, thinking that their perfect good lies in them. Hence, setting creatures up as their end, they sin and lose the true good.

Now this loss is made known to a man through correct judgment with respect to creatures, which is had through the gift of knowledge. And this is why the [third] beatitude, which has to do with mourning, is said to correspond to the gift of knowledge.

Reply to objection 1: Created goods do not excite spiritual joy except to the extent that they are referred to the divine good, from which spiritual joy properly arises. And so spiritual peace, and the consequent joy, correspond directly to the gift of wisdom.

On the other hand, what corresponds to the gift of knowledge is, first of all, mourning over past mistakes and, after that, consolation, when a man orders creatures toward the divine good through the right judgment of knowledge. And so in the beatitude in question mourning is posited as the *merit*, and the consequent consolation is posited as the *reward*, which begins in this life and is brought to perfection in the future life.

Reply to objection 2: A man rejoices over the consideration of truth, but he can sometimes be saddened by the reality about which he is considering the truth. And this is why mourning is attributed to knowledge.

Reply to objection 3: No beatitude corresponds to [the gift of] knowledge insofar as knowledge consists in speculation, since a man’s beatitude consists in the contemplation of God and not in the consideration of creatures. However, a man’s beatitude does in some sense consist in the appropriate use of creatures and in well-ordered affections with respect to creatures—here I am talking about the sort of beatitude that belongs to the present life.

And so no beatitude that pertains to contemplation is attributed to [the gift of] *knowledge*; instead, those beatitudes are attributed to [the gifts of] *understanding* and *wisdom*, which have to do with divine things.