

QUESTION 52

The Gift of Counsel

Next we have to consider the gift of counsel (*donum consilii*), which corresponds to prudence. And on this topic there are four questions: (1) Should counsel be posited among the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit? (2) Does the gift of counsel correspond to the virtue of prudence? (3) Does the gift of counsel remain in heaven? (4) Does the fifth beatitude, i.e., “Blessed are the merciful,” correspond to the gift of counsel?

Article 1

Should counsel be posited among the gifts of the Holy Spirit?

It seems that counsel (*consilium*) should not be posited among the gifts of the Holy Spirit:

Objection 1: As is clear from Gregory in *Moralia* 2, the gifts of the Holy Spirit are given to assist the virtues. But as is clear from what has been said above (q. 47, a. 1 and q. 51, aa. 1-2), a man is sufficiently perfected in deliberating or taking counsel (*ad consiliandum*) by the virtue of prudence—or even by the virtue of *euboulia*. Therefore, counsel should not be posited among the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Objection 2: The difference between the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit and gratuitously given grace (cf. *ST* 1-2, q. 111, a. 1) seems to be that gratuitously given grace is not given to everyone but is instead distributed to different individuals, whereas the gifts of the Holy Spirit are given to everyone who has the Holy Spirit. But counsel seems to be one of those things that is given by the Holy Spirit in a special way to certain individuals—this according to 1 Maccabees 2:65 (“Behold Simon your brother; he is a man of counsel”). Therefore, counsel should be posited among the gratuitously given graces rather than among the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Objection 3: Romans 8:14 says, “Those who are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God.” But counsel does not belong to those who are led by another. Therefore, since the gifts of the Holy Spirit belong to the sons of God, who have received the spirit of adoption as sons, it seems that counsel should not be posited among the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

But contrary to this: Isaiah 11:2 says, “The Spirit of counsel and fortitude rests upon him.”

I respond: As was explained above (*ST* 1-2, q. 68, a. 1), the gifts of the Holy Spirit are certain dispositions by which the soul is rendered easily moveable by the Holy Spirit.

Now God moves each thing in accord with the mode of the thing that is moved; for instance, as Augustine puts it in *Super Genesim ad Litteram*, “He moves a corporeal creature through time and place, whereas he moves a spiritual creature through time and not place.” But it is proper to a rational creature to be moved to do something through the inquiry of deliberation (*per inquisitionem consilii*). And so the Holy Spirit moves a rational creature in the mode of counsel. And it is for this reason that counsel is posited among the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Reply to objection 1: Prudence or *euboulia*, whether acquired or infused, directs a man in the inquiry of deliberation in accord with what reason is able to comprehend. Hence, through prudence or *euboulia* a man comes to be good at deliberating for himself or for another.

However, because human reason is unable to comprehend all the singular and contingent things that can occur (*non potest comprehendere singularia et contingentia quae occurre possunt*), it turns out that, as Wisdom 9:14 says, “the thoughts of mortals are timid, and our counsels are uncertain.” And so a man needs to be directed in the inquiry of deliberation by God, who comprehends all things. This occurs through the gift of counsel, through which a man is directed, as it were, by counsel that he receives from God—just as, in human affairs, those who are not sufficient unto themselves in the inquiry of deliberation likewise require counsel from those who are wiser.

Reply to objection 2: The fact that someone is so good at deliberating that he offers his counsel to

others can be associated with a gratuitously given grace. But it is common to all who are holy (*commune omnium sanctorum*) that they have from God the counsel as to what should be done in matters that are necessary for salvation

Reply to objection 3: The sons of God are led by the Holy Spirit according to their own mode, viz., preserving free choice, which is a faculty of the will and of reason. And so to the extent that reason is instructed by the Holy Spirit with respect to what needs to be done, the gift of counsel belongs to the sons of God.

Article 2

Does counsel fittingly correspond to the virtue of prudence?

It seems that counsel does not fittingly correspond to the virtue of prudence.:

Objection 1: As is clear from Dionysius in *De Divinis Nominibus*, chap. 7, what is lower is such that at its highest it touches what is higher—in the way that man touches the angel by his intellect. But as was established above (*ST* 1-2, q. 68, a. 8), a cardinal virtue is lower than its gift. Therefore, since deliberating is the first and lowest act of prudence, whereas its highest act is to command and its middle act is to judge, it seems that the gift corresponding to prudence is not counsel or deliberation (*non sit consilium*), but rather judgment or command.

Objection 2: Assistance is sufficiently offered to a single virtue by a single gift, since, as is proved in *Liber de Causis*, to the extent that something is higher, it is more unified. But assistance to prudence is offered through the gift of knowledge, which, as was established above (q. 9, a. 3), is not just speculative but practical as well. Therefore, the gift of counsel does not correspond to the virtue of prudence.

Objection 3: As has been established (q. 50, a. 1), it belongs properly to prudence to direct. But as has been explained (a. 1), it belongs to the gift of counsel that a man be directed by God. Therefore, the gift of counsel does not belong to the virtue of prudence.

But contrary to this: The gift of counsel concerns things that have to be done for the sake of an end. But prudence likewise has to do with such things. Therefore, prudence and the gift of counsel correspond to one another.

I respond: A lower principle of movement is assisted and perfected mainly through being moved by a higher principle of movement, in the way that a body is assisted and perfected through being moved by a spirit.

Now it is clear that the rectitude of human reason is related to God's reason in the way that a lower principle of movement is related to a higher principle; for eternal reason is the highest rule of all human rectitude. And so prudence, which implies the rectitude of reason, is perfected and assisted especially insofar as it is regulated and moved by the Holy Spirit. And, as has been explained, this involves the gift of counsel. Hence, the gift of counsel corresponds to prudence in the sense that it assists and perfects it.

Reply to objection 1: Judgment and command belong not to what is moved but rather to what effects movement. And since, as was explained above (a. 1 and *ST* 1-2, q. 68, a. 1), in the case of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the human mind behaves not as what effects movement but instead as what is moved, it follows that it would not be appropriate for the gift corresponding to prudence to be called either command or judgment. Instead, it is appropriately called 'counsel', which can signify the mind's being counseled by another who counsels it.

Reply to objection 2: Since the gift of knowledge exists in the speculative part of the soul, it does not directly correspond to prudence, but it does assist prudence by a certain extension. By contrast, the gift of counsel directly corresponds to prudence insofar as it has to do with the same things that prudence

has to do with.

Reply to objection 3: A moved mover effects movement by the fact that it is moved. Hence, by the very fact that the human mind is directed by the Holy Spirit, it is able to direct itself and others.

Article 3

Does the gift of counsel remain in heaven?

It seems that the gift of counsel does not remain in heaven (*non maneat in patria*):

Objection 1: Counsel concerns things that have to be done for the sake of an end. But in heaven nothing will have to be done for the sake of an end, since men will be enjoying the ultimate end there. Therefore, the gift of counsel does not exist in heaven.

Objection 2: Counsel or deliberation (*consilium*) implies hesitation, since, as is evident from the Philosopher in *Ethics* 3, in matters that are clear it is ridiculous to deliberate. But in heaven all hesitation will be done away with. Therefore, there is no counsel in heaven.

Objection 3: In heaven the saints are especially conformed to God—this according to 1 John 3:2 (“When He appears, we shall be like Him”). But deliberation does not belong to God—this according to Romans 11:34 (“Who was His counselor?”). Therefore, neither does the gift of counsel belong to the saints in heaven.

But contrary to this: In *Moralia* 32 Gregory says, “When either the guilt or the righteousness of each nation is brought into the counsel of the highest court, the head of that nation is presented as having won in the struggle or as not having won.”

I respond: As has been explained (a. 1 and *ST* 1-2, q. 68, a. 1), a gift of the Holy Spirit has to do with a rational creature’s being moved by God. Now there are two things that have to be taken into account concerning the moving of the human mind by God:

The *first* is that the disposition of that which is moved *while it is being moved* is different from its disposition *when it is at the end of the movement*. When what is effecting a movement is just a principle of effecting the movement, then as soon as the movement ceases, the mover’s action ceases on the thing moved, which has now arrived at the terminus. For instance, after a house has been built, then it is no longer being built by the builder. By contrast, when what is effecting a movement is not just a cause of effecting the movement, but is also a cause of the very form toward which the movement is aimed, then the action of what effects the movement does not cease even after the acquisition of the form. For instance, the sun illuminates the air even after the air has been illuminated. And it is in this latter way that God causes both virtue and cognition in us, not only when we first acquire them but also for as long as we persevere in them. And so in the blessed of heaven God causes cognition of what is to be done, not as if He were causing it in those who are ignorant, but in the sense of prolonging in them the cognition of what is to be done.

However, there are certain things which the blessed in heaven—whether angels or men—do not have cognition of and which are not part of the essence of beatitude, but instead have to do with the governance of things in accord with divine providence. And in this regard, there is a *second* thing that has to be taken into account, viz., that the minds of the blessed in heaven are moved by God in a way different from that in which the minds of those in this life are moved by God. For the minds of those in this life are moved by God in matters of action through having an anxiety of hesitation seated in them beforehand. By contrast, in the minds of the blessed in heaven there is a simple lack of knowledge of things they have no cognition of (a lack of knowledge that the angels are likewise cleansed by, according to Dionysius in *De Ecclesiastica Hierarchia*, chap. 6), and there is no inquiry borne of hesitation in them, but instead a simple turning to God. And this is what it is for God to counsel them. As Augustine puts it

in *Super Genesim ad Litteram* 5, the angels “take counsel with God (*Deum consulunt*) about lower things,” and this is why the instruction by which they are instructed by God on these matters is called ‘counsel’.

Accordingly, the gift of counsel exists in the blessed in heaven, both insofar as their cognition of what they already know is prolonged and insofar as they are illuminated about what they do not know regarding what needs to be done.

Reply to objection 1: Even in the blessed in heaven there are some acts ordered toward an end, either in the sense that these acts proceed from the attainment of their end, as when they praise God, or in the sense that by those acts they draw others toward the end that they themselves have attained, as is the case with the ministry of the angels and the prayers of the saints. And in this regard the gift of counsel has a place in them.

Reply to objection 2: Hesitation belongs to deliberation or counsel in the state of the present life, but it does not belong to counsel insofar as it exists in heaven. In the same way, the cardinal virtues likewise do not have altogether the same acts in heaven as in this life.

Reply to objection 3: Counsel exists in God not as in one who receives counsel but as in one who gives counsel. And the saints in heaven are conformed to God as the one who receives is conformed to the one who gives (*sicut recipiens influenti*).

Article 4

Does the fifth beatitude, which is about mercy, correspond to the gift of counsel?

It seems that the fifth beatitude, which is about mercy, does not correspond to the gift of counsel:

Objection 1: As was established above (*ST* 1-2, q. 69, a. 1), all the beatitudes are acts of the virtues. But through counsel our acts are directed in *all* of the virtues. Therefore, the fifth beatitude does not correspond to counsel more than any other beatitude does.

Objection 2: Precepts are given concerning those things that are necessary for salvation, whereas a counsel is given concerning things that are not necessary for salvation. Now mercy is necessary for salvation—this according to James 2:13 (“Judgment without mercy to him who has not shown mercy”)—whereas poverty is not necessary for salvation but instead, as is clear from Matthew 19:21, has to do with a life’s perfection. Therefore, it is the beatitude concerning poverty, rather than the beatitude concerning mercy, that corresponds to the gift of counsel.

Objection 3: The fruits [of the Holy Spirit] follow upon the beatitudes, since they involve a certain spiritual delight that follows upon perfect acts of the virtues. But as is clear from Galatians 5:22-23, nothing corresponding to the gift of counsel is posited among the fruits. Therefore, the beatitude about mercy likewise does not correspond to the gift of counsel.

But contrary to this: In *De Sermone Domini in Monte* Augustine says, “Counsel befits the merciful, since forgiving others and giving to them is the only remedy for rooting out such great evils.”

I respond: Counsel has to do, properly speaking, with what is useful for an end. Hence, what is especially useful for an end ought especially to correspond to the gift of counsel. But such is mercy—this according to 1 Timothy 4:8 (“Compassion (*pietas*) is useful for all things”). And so counsel corresponds to the beatitude concerning mercy, not in the sense that it elicits mercy, but in the sense that it directs mercy.

Reply to objection 1: Even if counsel directs all acts of the virtues, it nonetheless especially directs the operations of charity, and for the reason already explained.

Reply to objection 2: Insofar as counsel is a gift of the Holy Spirit, it directs us in *all the things* that are ordered toward the end of eternal life, whether or not they are necessary for salvation.

Still, not every work of mercy is necessary for salvation.

Reply to objection 3: A fruit implies something ultimate. However, in practical matters what is ultimate lies not in cognition but in operation, viz., the end. And so nothing pertaining to practical cognition is posited among the fruits; instead what is posited is that which belongs to the operations that practical cognition directs. Among these are goodness and kindness, which correspond to mercy.