

St. Thomas Aquinas

The Summa Theologica

(Benziger Bros. edition, 1947)

Translated by

Fathers of the English Dominican Province

[Index](#) [[<<](#) | [>>](#)]

[Second Part of the Second Part](#) [[<<](#) | [>>](#)]

[Question: 52](#) [[<<](#) | [>>](#)]

OF THE GIFT OF COUNSEL (FOUR ARTICLES)

We must now consider the gift of counsel which corresponds to prudence. Under this head there are four points of inquiry:

(1) Whether counsel should be reckoned among the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost?

(2) Whether the gift of counsel corresponds to prudence?

(3) Whether the gift of counsel remains in heaven?

(4) Whether the fifth beatitude, "Blessed are the merciful," etc. corresponds to the gift of counsel?

[Index](#) [[<<](#) | [>>](#)]

[Second Part of the Second Part](#) [[<<](#) | [>>](#)]

[Question: 52](#) [[<<](#) | [>>](#)]

[Article: 1](#) [[<<](#) | [>>](#)]

Whether counsel should be reckoned among the gifts of the Holy Ghost?

Objection 1: It would seem that counsel should not be reckoned among the gifts of the Holy Ghost. The gifts of the Holy Ghost are given as a help to the virtues, according to Gregory (Moral. ii, 49). Now for the purpose of taking counsel, man is sufficiently perfected by the virtue of prudence, or even of {euboulia} (deliberating well), as is evident from what has been said ([Question \[47\]](#), [Article \[1\]](#), ad 2; [Question \[51\]](#), [Articles \[1\], 2](#)). Therefore counsel should not be reckoned among the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

[Donate bitcoin](#). St. Isidore [e-book library/forum](#) » [aquinas](#) » [english](#) » [summa](#) » [SS](#) » [SS052.html](#)
gratuitous graces seems to be that the latter are not given to all, but are divided among various people, whereas the gifts of the Holy Ghost are given to all who have the Holy Ghost. But counsel seems to be one of those things which are given by the Holy Ghost specially to certain persons, according to 1 Macc. 2:65: "Behold... your brother Simon is a man of counsel." Therefore counsel should be numbered among the gratuitous graces rather than among the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost.

Objection 3: Further, it is written ([Rm. 8:14](#)): "Whosoever are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." But counselling is not consistent with being led by another. Since then the gifts of the Holy Ghost are most befitting the children of God, who "have received the spirit of adoption of sons," it would seem that counsel should not be numbered among the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

On the contrary, It is written ([Is. 11:2](#)): "(The Spirit of the Lord) shall rest upon him... the spirit of counsel, and of fortitude."

I answer that, As stated above ([FS, Question \[68\], Article \[1\]](#)), the gifts of the Holy Ghost are dispositions whereby the soul is rendered amenable to the motion of the Holy Ghost. Now God moves everything according to the mode of the thing moved: thus He moves the corporeal creature through time and place, and the spiritual creature through time, but not through place, as Augustine declares (Gen. ad lit. viii, 20,22). Again, it is proper to the rational creature to be moved through the research of reason to perform any particular action, and this research is called counsel. Hence the Holy Ghost is said to move the rational creature by way of counsel, wherefore counsel is reckoned among the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

Reply to Objection 1: Prudence or {euboulia} (deliberating well), whether acquired or infused, directs man in the research of counsel according to principles that the reason can grasp; hence prudence or {euboulia} (deliberating well) makes man take good counsel either for himself or for another. Since, however, human reason is unable to grasp the singular and contingent things which may occur, the result is that "the thoughts of mortal men are fearful, and our counsels uncertain" (Wis. 9:14). Hence in the research of counsel, man requires to be directed by God who comprehends all things: and this is done through the gift of counsel, whereby man is directed as though counseled by God, just as, in human affairs, those who are unable to take counsel for themselves, seek counsel from those who are wiser.

Reply to Objection 2: That a man be of such good counsel as to counsel others, may be due to a gratuitous grace; but that a man be counselled by God as to what he ought to do in matters necessary for salvation is common to all holy persons.

Reply to Objection 3: The children of God are moved by the Holy Ghost according to their mode, without prejudice to their free-will which is the "faculty of will and reason" [*Sent. iii, D, 24]. Accordingly the gift of counsel is befitting the children of God in so far as the reason is instructed by the Holy Ghost about what we have to do.

[Index](#) [[<<](#) | [>>](#)]

[Second Part of the Second Part](#) [[<<](#) | [>>](#)]

[Question: 52](#) [[<<](#) | [>>](#)]

Article: 2 [[<<](#) | [>>](#)]

Objection 1: It would seem that the gift of counsel does not fittingly correspond to the virtue of prudence. For "the highest point of that which is underneath touches that which is above," as Dionysius observes (Div. Nom. vii), even as a man comes into contact with the angel in respect of his intellect. Now cardinal virtues are inferior to the gifts, as stated above ([FS, Question \[68\], Article \[8\]](#)). Since, then, counsel is the first and lowest act of prudence, while command is its highest act, and judgment comes between, it seems that the gift corresponding to prudence is not counsel, but rather a gift of judgment or command.

Objection 2: Further, one gift suffices to help one virtue, since the higher a thing is the more one it is, as proved in De Causis. Now prudence is helped by the gift of knowledge, which is not only speculative but also practical, as shown above ([Question \[9\], Article \[3\]](#)). Therefore the gift of counsel does not correspond to the virtue of prudence.

Objection 3: Further, it belongs properly to prudence to direct, as stated above ([Question \[47\], Article \[8\]](#)). But it belongs to the gift of counsel that man should be directed by God, as stated above ([Article \[1\]](#)). Therefore the gift of counsel does not correspond to the virtue of prudence.

On the contrary, The gift of counsel is about what has to be done for the sake of the end. Now prudence is about the same matter. Therefore they correspond to one another.

I answer that, A lower principle of movement is helped chiefly, and is perfected through being moved by a higher principle of movement, as a body through being moved by a spirit. Now it is evident that the rectitude of human reason is compared to the Divine Reason, as a lower motive principle to a higher: for the Eternal Reason is the supreme rule of all human rectitude. Consequently prudence, which denotes rectitude of reason, is chiefly perfected and helped through being ruled and moved by the Holy Ghost, and this belongs to the gift of counsel, as stated above ([Article \[1\]](#)). Therefore the gift of counsel corresponds to prudence, as helping and perfecting it.

Reply to Objection 1: To judge and command belongs not to the thing moved, but to the mover. Wherefore, since in the gifts of the Holy Ghost, the position of the human mind is of one moved rather than of a mover, as stated above ([Article \[1\]](#); [FS, Question \[68\], Article \[1\]](#)), it follows that it would be unfitting to call the gift corresponding to prudence by the name of command or judgment rather than of counsel whereby it is possible to signify that the counselled mind is moved by another counselling it.

Reply to Objection 2: The gift of knowledge does not directly correspond to prudence, since it deals with speculative matters: yet by a kind of extension it helps it. On the other hand the gift of counsel corresponds to prudence directly, because it is concerned about the same things.

Reply to Objection 3: The mover that is moved, moves through being moved. Hence the human mind, from the very fact that it is directed by the Holy Ghost, is enabled to direct itself and others.

Whether the gift of counsel remains in heaven?

Objection 1: It would seem that the gift of counsel does not remain in heaven. For counsel is about what has 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 there man possesses the last end. Therefore the gift of counsel is not in heaven.

Objection 2: Further, counsel implies doubt, for it is absurd to take counsel in matters that are evident, as the Philosopher observes (Ethic. iii, 3). Now all doubt will cease in heaven. Therefore there is no counsel in heaven.

Objection 3: Further, the saints in heaven are most conformed to God, according to 1 Jn. 3:2, "When He shall appear, we shall be like to Him." But counsel is not becoming to God, according to Rm. 11:34, "Who hath been His counsellor?" Therefore neither to the saints in heaven is the gift of counsel becoming.

On the contrary, Gregory says (Moral. xvii, 12): "When either the guilt or the righteousness of each nation is brought into the debate of the heavenly Court, the guardian of that nation is said to have won in the conflict, or not to have won."

I answer that, As stated above ([Article \[2\]](#); [FS, Question \[68\]](#), [Article \[1\]](#)), the gifts of the Holy Ghost are connected with the motion of the rational creature by God. Now we must observe two points concerning the motion of the human mind by God. First, that the disposition of that which is moved, differs while it is being moved from its disposition when it is in the term of movement. Indeed if the mover is the principle of the movement alone, when the movement ceases, the action of the mover ceases as regards the thing moved, since it has already reached the term of movement, even as a house, after it is built, ceases being built by the builder. On the other hand, when the mover is cause not only of the movement, but also of the form to which the movement tends, then the action of the mover does not cease even after the form has been attained: thus the sun lightens the air even after it is lightened. In this way, then, God causes in us virtue and knowledge, not only when we first acquire them, but also as long as we persevere in them: and it is thus that God causes in the blessed a knowledge of what is to be done, not as though they were ignorant, but by continuing that knowledge in them.

Nevertheless there are things which the blessed, whether angels or men, do not know: such things are not essential to blessedness, but concern the government of things according to Divine Providence. As regards these, we must make a further observation, namely, that God moves the mind of the blessed in one way, and the mind of the wayfarer, in another. For God moves the mind of the wayfarer in matters of action, by soothing the pre-existing anxiety of doubt; whereas there is simple nescience in the mind of the blessed as regards the things they do not know. From this nescience the angel's mind is cleansed, according to Dionysius (Coel. Hier. vii), nor does there precede in them any research of doubt, for they simply turn to God; and this is to take counsel of God, for as Augustine says (Gen. ad lit. v, 19) "the angels take counsel of God about things beneath them": wherefore the instruction which they receive from God in such matters is called "counsel."

Reply to Objection 1: Even in the blessed there are acts directed to an end, or resulting, as it were, from their attainment of the end, such as the acts of praising God, or of helping on others to the end which they themselves have attained, for example the ministrations of the angels, and the prayers of the saints. In this respect the gift of counsel finds a place in them.

Reply to Objection 2: Doubt belongs to counsel according to the present state of life, but not to that counsel which takes place in heaven. Even so neither have the theological virtues quite the same acts in heaven as on the way thither.

Reply to Objection 3: Counsel is in God, not as receiving but as giving it: and the saints in heaven are conformed to God, as receivers to the source whence they receive.

[Index](#) [[<<](#) | [>>](#)]

[Second Part of the Second Part](#) [[<<](#) | [>>](#)]

[Question: 52](#) [[<<](#) | [>>](#)]

Article: 4 [[<<](#) | [>>](#)]

Whether the fifth beatitude, which is that of mercy, corresponds to the gift of counsel?

Objection 1: It would seem that the fifth beatitude, which is that of mercy, does not correspond to the gift of counsel. For all the beatitudes are acts of virtue, as stated above ([FS](#), [Question \[69\]](#), [Article \[1\]](#)). Now we are directed by counsel in all acts of virtue. Therefore the fifth beatitude does not correspond more than any other to counsel.

Objection 2: Further, precepts are given about matters necessary for salvation, while counsel is given about matters which are not necessary for salvation. Now mercy is necessary for salvation, according to James 2:13, "Judgment without mercy to him that hath not done mercy." On the other hand poverty is not necessary for salvation, but belongs to the life of perfection, according to Mt. 19:21. Therefore the beatitude of poverty corresponds to the gift of counsel, rather than to the beatitude of mercy.

Objection 3: Further, the fruits result from the beatitudes, for they denote a certain spiritual delight resulting from perfect acts of virtue. Now none of the fruits correspond to the gift of counsel, as appears from Gal. 5:22, 23. Therefore neither does the beatitude of mercy correspond to the gift of counsel.

On the contrary, Augustine says (De Serm. Dom. iv): "Counsel is befitting the merciful, because the one remedy is to be delivered from evils so great, to pardon, and to give."

I answer that, Counsel is properly about things useful for an end. Hence such things as are of most use for an end, should above all correspond to the gift of counsel. Now such is mercy, according to 1 Tim. 4:8, "Godliness [*Pietas,' which our English word 'pity,' which is the same as mercy; see note on SS, Question [30], Article [1]] is profitable to all things." Therefore the

Reply to Objection 1: Although counsel directs in all the acts of virtue, it does so in a special way in works of mercy, for the reason given above.

Reply to Objection 2: Counsel considered as a gift of the Holy Ghost guides us in all matters that are directed to the end of eternal life whether they be necessary for salvation or not, and yet not every work of mercy is necessary for salvation.

Reply to Objection 3: Fruit denotes something ultimate. Now the ultimate in practical matters consists not in knowledge but in an action which is the end. Hence nothing pertaining to practical knowledge is numbered among the fruits, but only such things as pertain to action, in which practical knowledge is the guide. Among these we find "goodness" and "benignity" which correspond to mercy.