

St. Thomas Aquinas

The Summa Theologica

(Benziger Bros. edition, 1947)

Translated by

Fathers of the English Dominican Province

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OF THE GIFT OF WISDOM (SIX ARTICLES)

We must now consider the gift of wisdom which corresponds to charity; and firstly, wisdom itself, secondly, the opposite vice. Under the first head there are six points of inquiry:

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

(2) What is its subject?

(3) Whether wisdom is only speculative or also practical?

(4) Whether the wisdom that is a gift is compatible with mortal sin?

(5) Whether it is in all those who have sanctifying grace?

(6) Which beatitude corresponds to it?

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

Objection 1: It would seem that wisdom ought not to be reckoned among the gifts of the Holy Ghost. For the gifts are more perfect than the virtues, as stated above ([FS, Question \[68\]](#), [Article \[8\]](#)). Now virtue is directed to the good alone, wherefore Augustine says (De Lib. Arb. ii, 19) that "no man makes bad use of the virtues." Much more therefore are the gifts of the Holy Ghost directed to the good alone. But wisdom is directed to evil also, for it is written ([James 3:15](#)) that

Objection 2: Further, according to Augustine (De Trin. xii, 14) "wisdom is the knowledge of Divine things." Now that knowledge of Divine things which man can acquire by his natural endowments, belongs to the wisdom which is an intellectual virtue, while the supernatural knowledge of Divine things belongs to faith which is a theological virtue, as explained above ([Question \[4\]](#), [Article \[5\]](#); [FS, Question \[62\]](#), [Article \[3\]](#)). Therefore wisdom should be called a virtue rather than a gift.

Objection 3: Further, it is written ([Job 28:28](#)): "Behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil, that is understanding." And in this passage according to the rendering of the Septuagint which Augustine follows (De Trin. xii, 14; xiv, 1) we read: "Behold piety, that is wisdom." Now both fear and piety are gifts of the Holy Ghost. Therefore wisdom should not be reckoned among the gifts of the Holy Ghost, as though it were distinct from the others.

On the contrary, It is written ([Is. 11:2](#)): "The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him; the spirit of wisdom and of understanding."

I answer that, According to the Philosopher (Metaph. i: 2), it belongs to wisdom to consider the highest cause. By means of that cause we are able to form a most certain judgment about other causes, and according thereto all things should be set in order. Now the highest cause may be understood in two ways, either simply or in some particular genus. Accordingly he that knows the highest cause in any particular genus, and by its means is able to judge and set in order all the things that belong to that genus, is said to be wise in that genus, for instance in medicine or architecture, according to 1 Cor. 3:10: "As a wise architect, I have laid a foundation." On the other hand, he who knows the cause that is simply the highest, which is God, is said to be wise simply, because he is able to judge and set in order all things according to Divine rules.

Now man obtains this judgment through the Holy Ghost, according to 1 Cor. 2:15: "The spiritual man judgeth all things," because as stated in the same chapter ([1 Cor. 2:10](#)), "the Spirit searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God." Wherefore it is evident that wisdom is a gift of the Holy Ghost.

Reply to Objection 1: A thing is said to be good in two senses: first in the sense that it is truly good and simply perfect, secondly, by a kind of likeness, being perfect in wickedness; thus we speak of a good or a perfect thief, as the Philosopher observes (Metaph. v, text. 21). And just as with regard to those things which are truly good, we find a highest cause, namely the sovereign good which is the last end, by knowing which, man is said to be truly wise, so too in evil things something is to be found to which all others are to be referred as to a last end, by knowing which, man is said to be wise unto evil doing, according to Jer. 4:22: "They are wise to do evils, but to do good they have no knowledge." Now whoever turns away from his due end, must needs fix on some undue end, since every agent acts for an end. Wherefore, if he fixes his end in external earthly things, his "wisdom" is called "earthly," if in the goods of the body, it is called "sensual wisdom," if in some excellence, it is called "devilish wisdom" because it imitates the devil's pride, of which it is written ([Job 41:25](#)): "He is king over all the children of pride."

Reply to Objection 2: The wisdom which is called a gift of the Holy Ghost, differs from that which is an acquired intellectual virtue, for the latter is attained by human effort, whereas the latter is "descending from above" ([James 3:15](#)). In like manner it differs from faith, since faith assents to the Divine truth in itself, whereas it belongs to the gift of wisdom to judge according

Reply to Objection 3: Just as piety which pertains to the worship of God is a manifestation of faith, in so far as we make profession of faith by worshipping God, so too, piety manifests wisdom. For this reason piety is stated to be wisdom, and so is fear, for the same reason, because if a man fear and worship God, this shows that he has a right judgment about Divine things.

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Whether wisdom is in the intellect as its subject?

Objection 1: It would seem that wisdom is not in the intellect as its subject. For Augustine says (Ep. cxx) that "wisdom is the charity of God." Now charity is in the will as its subject, and not in the intellect, as stated above ([Question \[24\]](#), [Article \[1\]](#)). Therefore wisdom is not in the intellect as its subject.

Objection 2: Further, it is written (Ecclus. 6:23): "The wisdom of doctrine is according to her name," for wisdom [sapientia] may be described as "sweet-tasting science [sapida scientia]," and this would seem to regard the appetite, to which it belongs to taste spiritual pleasure or sweetness. Therefore wisdom is in the appetite rather than in the intellect.

Objection 3: Further, the intellective power is sufficiently perfected by the gift of understanding. Now it is superfluous to require two things where one suffices for the purpose. Therefore wisdom is not in the intellect.

On the contrary, Gregory says (Moral. ii, 49) that "wisdom is contrary to folly." But folly is in the intellect. Therefore wisdom is also.

I answer that, As stated above ([Article \[1\]](#)), wisdom denotes a certain rectitude of judgment according to the Eternal Law. Now rectitude of judgment is twofold: first, on account of perfect use of reason, secondly, on account of a certain connaturality with the matter about which one has to judge. Thus, about matters of chastity, a man after inquiring with his reason forms a right judgment, if he has learnt the science of morals, while he who has the habit of chastity judges of such matters by a kind of connaturality.

Accordingly it belongs to the wisdom that is an intellectual virtue to pronounce right judgment about Divine things after reason has made its inquiry, but it belongs to wisdom as a gift of the Holy Ghost to judge aright about them on account of connaturality with them: thus Dionysius says (Div. Nom. ii) that "Hierotheus is perfect in Divine things, for he not only learns, but is patient of, Divine things."

Now this sympathy or connaturality for Divine things is the result of charity, which unites us to God, according to 1 Cor. 6:17: "He who is joined to the Lord, is one spirit." Consequently

Reply to Objection 1: Augustine is speaking of wisdom as to its cause, whence also wisdom [sapientia] takes its name, in so far as it denotes a certain sweetness [saporem]. Hence the Reply to the Second Objection is evident, that is if this be the true meaning of the text quoted. For, apparently this is not the case, because such an exposition of the text would only fit the Latin word for wisdom, whereas it does not apply to the Greek and perhaps not in other languages. Hence it would seem that in the text quoted wisdom stands for the renown of doctrine, for which it is praised by all.

Reply to Objection 3: The intellect exercises a twofold act, perception and judgment. The gift of understanding regards the former; the gift of wisdom regards the latter according to the Divine ideas, the gift of knowledge, according to human ideas.

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Whether wisdom is merely speculative, or practical also?

Objection 1: It would seem that wisdom is not practical but merely speculative. For the gift of wisdom is more excellent than the wisdom which is an intellectual virtue. But wisdom, as an intellectual virtue, is merely speculative. Much more therefore is wisdom, as a gift, speculative and not practical.

Objection 2: Further, the practical intellect is about matters of operation which are contingent. But wisdom is about Divine things which are eternal and necessary. Therefore wisdom cannot be practical.

Objection 3: Further, Gregory says (Moral. vi, 37) that "in contemplation we seek the Beginning which is God, but in action we labor under a mighty bundle of wants." Now wisdom regards the vision of Divine things, in which there is no toiling under a load, since according to Wis. 8:16, "her conversation hath no bitterness, nor her company any tediousness." Therefore wisdom is merely contemplative, and not practical or active.

On the contrary, It is written (Col. 4:5): "Walk with wisdom towards them that are without." Now this pertains to action. Therefore wisdom is not merely speculative, but also practical.

I answer that, As Augustine says (De Trin. xii, 14), the higher part of the reason is the province of wisdom, while the lower part is the domain of knowledge. Now the higher reason according to the same authority (De Trin. xii, 7) "is intent on the consideration and consultation of the heavenly," i.e. Divine, "types" [*Cf. FP, Question [79], Article [9]; FS, Question [74], Article [7]]; it considers them, in so far as it contemplates Divine things in themselves, and it consults them, in so far as it judges of human acts by Divine things, and directs human acts according to Divine rules.

Reply to Objection 1: The higher a virtue is, the greater the number of things to which it extends, as stated in De Causis, prop. x, xvii. Wherefore from the very fact that wisdom as a gift is more excellent than wisdom as an intellectual virtue, since it attains to God more intimately by a kind of union of the soul with Him, it is able to direct us not only in contemplation but also in action.

Reply to Objection 2: Divine things are indeed necessary and eternal in themselves, yet they are the rules of the contingent things which are the subject-matter of human actions.

Reply to Objection 3: A thing is considered in itself before being compared with something else. Wherefore to wisdom belongs first of all contemplation which is the vision of the Beginning, and afterwards the direction of human acts according to the Divine rules. Nor from the direction of wisdom does there result any bitterness or toil in human acts; on the contrary the result of wisdom is to make the bitter sweet, and labor a rest.

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Whether wisdom can be without grace, and with mortal sin?

Objection 1: It would seem that wisdom can be without grace and with mortal sin. For saints glory chiefly in such things as are incompatible with mortal sin, according to 2 Cor. 1:12: "Our glory is this, the testimony of our conscience." Now one ought not to glory in one's wisdom, according to Jer. 9:23: "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom." Therefore wisdom can be without grace and with mortal sin.

Objection 2: Further, wisdom denotes knowledge of Divine things, as stated above ([Article \[1\]](#)). Now one in mortal sin may have knowledge of the Divine truth, according to Rm. 1:18: "(Those men that) detain the truth of God in injustice." Therefore wisdom is compatible with mortal sin.

Objection 3: Further, Augustine says (De Trin. xv, 18) while speaking of charity: "Nothing surpasses this gift of God, it is this alone that divides the children of the eternal kingdom from the children of eternal perdition." But wisdom is distinct from charity. Therefore it does not divide the children of the kingdom from the children of perdition. Therefore it is compatible with mortal sin.

On the contrary, It is written (Wis. 1:4): "Wisdom will not enter into a malicious soul, nor dwell in a body subject to sins."

I answer that, The wisdom which is a gift of the Holy Ghost, as stated above ([Article \[1\]](#)), enables us to judge aright of Divine things, or of other things according to Divine rules, by reason of a certain connaturalness or union with Divine things, which is the effect of charity, as stated above ([Article \[2\]](#); [Question \[23\]](#), [Article \[5\]](#)). Hence the wisdom of which we are

[Donate bitcoin](#). St. Isidore [e-book library/forum](#) » [aquinas](#) » [english](#) » [summa](#) » [SS](#) » [SS045.html](#) (Question [24], Article [12]). Therefore it follows that the wisdom of which we are speaking cannot be together with mortal sin.

Reply to Objection 1: These words are to be understood as referring to worldly wisdom, or to wisdom in Divine things acquired through human reasons. In such wisdom the saints do not glory, according to Prov. 30:2: "The wisdom of men is not with Me": But they do glory in Divine wisdom according to 1 Cor. 1:30: "(Who) of God is made unto us wisdom."

Reply to Objection 2: This argument considers, not the wisdom of which we speak but that which is acquired by the study and research of reason, and is compatible with mortal sin.

Reply to Objection 3: Although wisdom is distinct from charity, it presupposes it, and for that very reason divides the children of perdition from the children of the kingdom.

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Whether wisdom is in all who have grace?

Objection 1: It would seem that wisdom is not in all who have grace. For it is more to have wisdom than to hear wisdom. Now it is only for the perfect to hear wisdom, according to 1 Cor. 2:6: "We speak wisdom among the perfect." Since then not all who have grace are perfect, it seems that much less all who have grace have wisdom.

Objection 2: Further, "The wise man sets things in order," as the Philosopher states (Metaph. i, 2): and it is written ([James 3:17](#)) that the wise man "judges without dissimulation [*Vulg.: 'The wisdom that is from above... is... without judging, without dissimulation']". Now it is not for all that have grace, to judge, or put others in order, but only for those in authority. Therefore wisdom is not in all that have grace.

Objection 3: Further, "Wisdom is a remedy against folly," as Gregory says (Moral. ii, 49). Now many that have grace are naturally foolish, for instance madmen who are baptized or those who without being guilty of mortal sin have become insane. Therefore wisdom is not in all that have grace.

On the contrary, Whoever is without mortal sin, is beloved of God; since he has charity, whereby he loves God, and God loves them that love Him ([Prov. 8:17](#)). Now it is written (Wis. 7:28) that "God loveth none but him that dwelleth with wisdom." Therefore wisdom is in all those who have charity and are without mortal sin.

I answer that, The wisdom of which we are speaking, as stated above ([Article \[4\]](#)), denotes a certain rectitude of judgment in the contemplation and consultation of Divine things, and as to both of these men obtain various degrees of wisdom through union with Divine things. For the measure of right judgment attained by some, whether in the contemplation of Divine things or in directing human affairs according to Divine rules, is no more than suffices for their

sanctifying grace, since if nature does not fail in necessities, much less does grace fail: wherefore it is written ([1 Jn. 2:27](#)): "(His) unction teacheth you of all things."

Some, however, receive a higher degree of the gift of wisdom, both as to the contemplation of Divine things (by both knowing more exalted mysteries and being able to impart this knowledge to others) and as to the direction of human affairs according to Divine rules (by being able to direct not only themselves but also others according to those rules). This degree of wisdom is not common to all that have sanctifying grace, but belongs rather to the gratuitous graces, which the Holy Ghost dispenses as He will, according to 1 Cor. 12:8: "To one indeed by the Spirit is given the word of wisdom," etc.

Reply to Objection 1: The Apostle speaks there of wisdom, as extending to the hidden mysteries of Divine things, as indeed he says himself ([2 Cor. 1:7](#)): "We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, a wisdom which is hidden."

Reply to Objection 2: Although it belongs to those alone who are in authority to direct and judge other men, yet every man is competent to direct and judge his own actions, as Dionysius declares (Ep. ad Demophil.).

Reply to Objection 3: Baptized idiots, like little children, have the habit of wisdom, which is a gift of the Holy Ghost, but they have not the act, on account of the bodily impediment which hinders the use of reason in them.

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Whether the seventh beatitude corresponds to the gift of wisdom?

Objection 1: It seems that the seventh beatitude does not correspond to the gift of wisdom. For the seventh beatitude is: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God." Now both these things belong to charity: since of peace it is written ([Ps. 118:165](#)): "Much peace have they that love Thy law," and, as the Apostle says ([Rm. 5:5](#)), "the charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost Who is given to us," and Who is "the Spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry: Abba [Father]" ([Rm. 8:15](#)). Therefore the seventh beatitude ought to be ascribed to charity rather than to wisdom.

Objection 2: Further, a thing is declared by its proximate effect rather than by its remote effect. Now the proximate effect of wisdom seems to be charity, according to Wis. 7:27: "Through nations she conveyeth herself into holy souls; she maketh the friends of God and prophets": whereas peace and the adoption of sons seem to be remote effects, since they result from charity, as stated above ([Question \[29\]](#), [Article \[3\]](#)). Therefore the beatitude corresponding to wisdom should be determined in respect of the love of charity rather than in respect of peace.

[Donate bitcoin.](#) St. Isidore [e-book library/forum](#) » [aquinas](#) » [english](#) » [summa](#) » [SS](#) » [SS045.html](#) is chaste, then peaceable, modest, easy to be persuaded, consenting to the good, full of mercy and good fruits, judging without dissimulation [*Vulg.: 'without judging, without dissimulation']. Therefore the beatitude corresponding to wisdom should not refer to peace rather than to the other effects of heavenly wisdom.

On the contrary, Augustine says (De Serm. Dom. in Monte i, 4) that "wisdom is becoming to peacemakers, in whom there is no movement of rebellion, but only obedience to reason."

I answer that, The seventh beatitude is fittingly ascribed to the gift of wisdom, both as to the merit and as to the reward. The merit is denoted in the words, "Blessed are the peacemakers." Now a peacemaker is one who makes peace, either in himself, or in others: and in both cases this is the result of setting in due order those things in which peace is established, for "peace is the tranquillity of order," according to Augustine (De Civ. Dei xix, 13). Now it belongs to wisdom to set things in order, as the Philosopher declares (Metaph. i, 2), wherefore peaceableness is fittingly ascribed to wisdom. The reward is expressed in the words, "they shall be called the children of God." Now men are called the children of God in so far as they participate in the likeness of the only-begotten and natural Son of God, according to Rm. 8:29, "Whom He foreknew... to be made conformable to the image of His Son," Who is Wisdom Begotten. Hence by participating in the gift of wisdom, man attains to the sonship of God.

Reply to Objection 1: It belongs to charity to be at peace, but it belongs to wisdom to make peace by setting things in order. Likewise the Holy Ghost is called the "Spirit of adoption" in so far as we receive from Him the likeness of the natural Son, Who is the Begotten Wisdom.

Reply to Objection 2: These words refer to the Uncreated Wisdom, which in the first place unites itself to us by the gift of charity, and consequently reveals to us the mysteries the knowledge of which is infused wisdom. Hence, the infused wisdom which is a gift, is not the cause but the effect of charity.

Reply to Objection 3: As stated above ([Article \[3\]](#)) it belongs to wisdom, as a gift, not only to contemplate Divine things, but also to regulate human acts. Now the first thing, to be effected in this direction of human acts is the removal of evils opposed to wisdom: wherefore fear is said to be "the beginning of wisdom," because it makes us shun evil, while the last thing is like an end, whereby all things are reduced to their right order; and it is this that constitutes peace. Hence James said with reason that "the wisdom that is from above" (and this is the gift of the Holy Ghost) "first indeed is chaste," because it avoids the corruption of sin, and "then peaceable," wherein lies the ultimate effect of wisdom, for which reason peace is numbered among the beatitudes. As to the things that follow, they declare in becoming order the means whereby wisdom leads to peace. For when a man, by chastity, avoids the corruption of sin, the first thing he has to do is, as far as he can, to be moderate in all things, and in this respect wisdom is said to be modest. Secondly, in those matters in which he is not sufficient by himself, he should be guided by the advice of others, and as to this we are told further that wisdom is "easy to be persuaded." These two are conditions required that man may be at peace with himself. But in order that man may be at peace with others it is furthermore required, first that he should not be opposed to their good; this is what is meant by "consenting to the good." Secondly, that he should bring to his neighbor's deficiencies, sympathy in his heart, and succor in his actions, and this is denoted by the words "full of mercy and good fruits." Thirdly, he should strive in all charity to correct the sins of others, and this is indicated by the words "judging without dissimulation [*Vulg.: 'The wisdom that is from above... is... without judging, without dissimulation']," lest he should purpose to sate his hatred under cover of correction.
