

The Gifts of the Holy Spirit and Their Indispensability for the Christian Moral Life: Grace as *Motus*

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Introduction

THE Christian moral life is widely and correctly understood to be not merely the life of natural virtue, much less of disordered nature consequent upon original sin. St. Thomas clearly teaches the divine character of those infused actual dispositions whereby we are oriented toward intrinsically supernatural beatitude. As he puts it regarding the theological virtues in his *Scriptum on the Sentences*:

To the third question it must be said that in all things which act for an end there must be an inclination to the end, a certain ‘inchoation’ of the end, otherwise, they would never do something for an end. But the end towards which the divine generosity has ordained and predestined man, namely, the fruition of himself [of God], is in every way elevated above the faculty of created nature, for ‘neither has the eye seen, nor the ear heard, nor has there arisen in the heart of man what things God has prepared for those who love him’ (1 Cor 2:9). Therefore, by his natural powers alone, man does not have a sufficient inclination to this end, and thus it is necessary that something be superadded to man through which he would have the inclination to that end, as by his natural powers he does have an inclination to the end that is connatural to him. And those things that are superadded are called the theological virtues for three reasons. First, as to the object: For, since that end to which we are ordained is God himself, the inclination that is prerequisite [to this end] consists in an operation that regards God himself. Second, as to the cause: For as that end is ordained for us by God not by our nature, so

the inclination to the end is worked in us solely by God; thus it is that these virtues are called theological, as though created in us by God alone. Third, as to knowledge: The inclination to this end is not able to be known by natural reason but rather by divine revelation; therefore, the virtues are called theological since by the divine word they are manifest to us, for the philosophers knew nothing of them.¹

It is manifest that faith, hope, and charity are divine gifts that in no way are mere products or effects of created human nature. For the end to which these gifts order us is God Himself, and the inclination that is required for this end accordingly consists in an act regarding God Himself; further, “as that end is ordained for us by God not by our nature, so the inclination to the end is worked in us solely by God”; and, finally, “The inclination to this end is not able to be known by natural reason but rather by divine revelation” and so these virtues of faith, hope, and charity, are fittingly known as *theological* virtues.

It might be thought—as indeed, it has been thought, for example, by Scotus—that the theological virtues, the natural moral virtues, and grace, are all that is required to orient the Christian believer to the beatific vision. St. Thomas, applying further the metaphysical judgment that potency and act are really distinct, discerned that acts are specified by their objects and ends. Accordingly, acts of moral virtue ordered to an intrinsically supernatural beatific vision could not be merely natural acts, because their end is supernatural. Thus, infused moral virtues are for St. Thomas part of the armory of the Christian soul. Working in us in much

¹ *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, dist. 23, q. 1 a. 4, qc 3 co: “Ad tertiam quaestionem dicendum, quod in omnibus quae agunt propter finem oportet esse inclinationem ad finem, et quamdam inchoationem finis: alias nunquam operarentur propter finem. Finis autem ad quem divina largitas hominem ordinavit vel praedestinavit, scilicet fruitio sui ipsius, est omnino supra facultatem naturae creatae elevatus: quia nec oculus vidit, nec auris audivit, nec in cor hominis ascendit, quae praeparavit deus diligentibus se, ut dicitur 1 corinth., 2, 9. Unde per naturalia tantum homo non habet sufficienter inclinationem ad illum finem; et ideo oportet quod superaddatur homini aliquid per quod habeat inclinationem in finem illum, sicut per naturalia habet inclinationem in finem sibi connaturalem: et ista superaddita dicuntur virtutes theologicae ex tribus. Primo quantum ad objectum: quia cum finis ad quem ordinati sumus, sit ipse deus, inclinatio quae praeexigitur, consistit in operatione quae est circa ipsum deum. Secundo quantum ad causam: quia sicut ille finis est a deo nobis ordinatus non per naturam nostram, ita inclinationem in finem operatur in nobis solus deus: et sic dicuntur virtutes theologicae, quasi a solo deo in nobis creatae. Tertio quantum ad cognitionem, inclinatio in finem non potest per naturalem rationem cognosci, sed per revelationem divinam: et ideo dicuntur theologicae, quia divino sermone sunt nobis manifestatae: unde philosophi nihil de eis cognoverunt.”

the way that acquired natural moral virtues do—in a rational and discursive manner—the intensification of the rational principle is specifically adapted not alone to the medicinal healing of nature in its own order which is one effect of grace, but also and principally to the elevation of the moral life to the supernatural end.

This essay addresses three points. Understanding the necessity for the gifts of the Holy Spirit is aided by understanding the need for infused moral virtues. Likewise, the understanding both of the gifts and of the virtues implies a wider consideration of nature and grace. For these reasons this essay will *first* address the necessity for the infused moral virtues and Thomas's teaching regarding nature and grace—particularly with respect to the natural inclinations—after the Fall of man. *Second*, I will offer a few remarks about the gifts of the Holy Spirit in relation to the moral life in general, focusing specifically upon the gift of *counsel*, which is aligned with acquired and infused prudence, and on the gift of *fortitude*, which is aligned with the moral virtue of fortitude. *Third*, I will briefly address the crucial importance of the divine motion bestowed to man—exemplarily in the instance of the gifts of the Holy Spirit—for the Christian moral life.

I. The Need for Infused Moral Virtue and Considerations of Nature and Grace

The need for infused moral virtue is partially to be understood in terms of the effects of original sin. Thomas, for example, suggests in the course of citing Augustine in *Summa theologiae* II–II, q. 135, a. 2, ad 3, that without grace man turns to concupiscence. But he swiftly observes that this is what he calls a penal exaction “resulting from the first sin”—a penalty consequent upon original sin, and not a function of human nature in itself. For, were it a function of human nature in itself, then human nature in itself would have been created corrupt, with a preference for the private good rather than for the common good. Thus in the *Summa theologiae* I–II, q. 109, a. 3, Thomas writes:

Now to love God above all things is natural to man and to every nature, not only rational but irrational, and even to inanimate nature according to the manner of love which can belong to each creature. And the reason of this is that it is natural to all to seek and love things according as they are naturally fit (to be sought and loved) since “all things act according as they are naturally fit” as stated in Phys. ii, 8. Now it is manifest that the good of the part is for the good of the whole; hence everything, by its natural appetite and love, loves its own proper good on account of the common good of the whole universe, which is God. Hence Dionysius

says (Div. Nom. iv) that “God leads everything to love of Himself.” Hence in the state of perfect nature man referred the love of himself and of all other things to the love of God as to its end; and thus he loved God more than himself and above all things. But in the state of corrupt nature man falls short of this in the appetite of his rational will, which, unless it is cured by God’s grace, follows its private good, on account of the corruption of nature. And hence we must say that in the state of perfect nature man did not need the gift of grace added to his natural endowments, in order to love God above all things naturally, although he needed God’s help to move him to it; but in the state of corrupt nature man needs, even for this, the help of grace to heal his nature.²

The reply of St. Thomas to the first objection in article 3 is also instructive. There he teaches that:

Charity loves God above all things in a higher way than nature does. For nature loves God above all things inasmuch as He is the beginning and the end of natural good; whereas charity loves Him, as He is the object of beatitude, and inasmuch as man has a spiritual fellowship with God. Moreover charity adds to natural love of God a certain quickness and joy, in the same way that every habit of virtue adds to the good act which is done merely by the natural reason of a man who has not the habit of virtue.³

² “Diligere autem Deum super omnia est quiddam connaturale homini; et etiam cuilibet creaturae non solum rationali, sed irrationali et etiam inanimatae, secundum modum amoris qui unicuique creaturae competere potest. Cuius ratio est quia unicuique naturale est quod appetat et amet aliquid, secundum quod aptum natum est esse, *sic enim agit unumquodque, prout aptum natum est*, ut dicitur in II Physic. Manifestum est autem quod bonum partis est propter bonum totius. Unde etiam naturali appetitu vel amore unaquaeque res particularis amat bonum suum proprium propter bonum commune totius universi, quod est Deus. Unde et Dionysius dicit, in libro de Div. Nom., quod *Deus convertit omnia ad amorem sui ipsius*. Unde homo in statu naturae integrae dilectionem sui ipsius referebat ad amorem Dei sicut ad finem, et similiter dilectionem omnium aliarum rerum. Et ita Deum diligebat plus quam seipsum, et super omnia. Sed in statu naturae corruptae homo ab hoc deficit secundum appetitum voluntatis rationalis, quae propter corruptionem naturae sequitur bonum privatum, nisi sanetur per gratiam Dei. Et ideo dicendum est quod homo in statu naturae integrae non indigebat dono gratiae superadditae naturalibus bonis ad diligendum Deum naturaliter super omnia; licet indigeret auxilio Dei ad hoc eum moventis. Sed in statu naturae corruptae indiget homo etiam ad hoc auxilio gratiae naturam sanantis.”

³ “Ad primum ergo dicendum quod caritas diligit Deum super omnia eminentius quam natura. Natura enim diligit Deum super omnia, prout est principium et finis naturalis boni, caritas autem secundum quod est obiectum beatitudinis, et secundum quod homo habet quandam societatem spirituales cum Deo. Addit etiam caritas super dilectionem naturalem Dei promptitudinem quandam et

In the body of the article and in Thomas's response to the objection, we see a twofold need for divine aid. First, and chiefly, because supernatural charity, as a participation in the very love of God, is distinct from the natural love of God, as the supernatural fellowship that results from the divine elevation is distinct from love for God merely as "the beginning and the end of natural good." But secondly, owing to the effects of sin, because "we must say that in the state of perfect nature man did not need the gift of grace added to his natural endowments, in order to love God above all things naturally, although he needed God's help to move him to it; but in the state of corrupt nature man needs, even for this, the help of grace to heal his nature." Nature must be both elevated and healed. It is not alone the elevation of nature to the divine friendship in sanctifying grace that is lost by original sin—nature herself, which has been divinely further ordered in and by grace beyond its proportionate end, is harmed in the Fall even within its own limited proportionate order. The human will, having been elevated to the height of divine friendship in sanctifying grace, cannot upon rejecting such grace and the divine dominion simply rebound into an order of natural love for God, because it has already rejected a nobler gift of God Himself. Accordingly, as St. Thomas stresses, after the Fall it requires grace for man properly to love God even with a properly natural love.

What is true of the noblest inclination is proportionately true of the whole inclinational life of man. For Thomas, it is with natural love, even prior to divine charity, that we aboriginally flow forth from creation loving our Creator above ourselves. When this rational inclination is diminished, the whole ethical life shivers with the tremors of alienation. St. Thomas makes clear in *Summa theologiae* I–II, q. 85, a. 1, resp., that nature is, *in part*, destroyed by original sin. He identifies three senses of human nature: (1) the principles and properties of human nature; (2) the natural inclination to virtue; and (3) that gift of original justice conferred upon the first parents of the human race. He states that the third (the gift of original justice) is destroyed by sin; the second (the natural inclination to virtue) is diminished by sin; and the first (the principles and properties of human nature) is neither destroyed nor diminished by sin (for, were the principles and properties of human nature diminished or destroyed it would be impossible for humans to be damned, because the damned would not be human!). Because the root of our natural inclination to virtue is the rational nature, this inclination cannot be wholly snuffed

delectationem, sicut et quilibet habitus virtutis addit supra actum bonum qui fit ex sola naturali ratione hominis virtutis habitum non habentis."

out—even the damned possess it, for it is the source of their unending remorse of conscience. The tendency of the rational creature to God cannot wholly be eradicated.

Yet our natural inclination to love God more than ourselves is diminished by sin. And, being the capstone of the law, this diminution in the natural love of God is bound to affect all lesser rectitudes, much as the weakening of gravitational force attracting a body toward a planet diminishes motion on the part of the totality of the object and not merely on its most advanced part. The need, then, of divine aid in the practical life—not alone by reason of the intrinsic need that our moral life be adequated to the higher verities and the intrinsically supernatural character of the life of faith, hope, and charity, but by reason of the need for a genuine healing of proportionate natural inclinations—is clear.

It is here that we come to the consideration of infused virtue. For the mode in which the infused moral virtues work is *rational* and *discursive*. Reason is fortified and elevated so as to be able to discern the practical implications of the Christian life and to remediate the wounded natural inclinations so that action is befitting both to the proportionate natural and to the ultimate supernatural end. But the mode of operation is befittingly discursive, and acquired natural virtue is still necessary because the external obstacles to right action must be overcome in singular acts, and the *habitus* of overcoming such obstacles retains its nature. Here, too, grace presupposes nature. The infused moral virtues, as it were, animate a “moral body” that is natural, not only enabling the human creature to move toward the supernatural end, but vivifying, unifying, and ordering the natural virtues which are necessarily required as essential to the human good. If it is true—as it is—that the infused virtues have a medicinal function with respect to natural virtue, it is also true that natural virtue is ineluctably necessary for man’s spiritual progress. Although infused moral virtues provide a higher *ratio* to the moral life—as for example the Christian has a higher reason for temperance than merely natural health—and although they fortify one’s rational inclinations to the proportionate natural good, warring against the effects of the Fall; *nonetheless such virtues are constrained by the limits of rational discursive operation* and presuppose the dynamism of the creature toward natural proportionate good (a dynamism which it aids from above, since, though the mode of infused virtue is rational and discursive, its origin is strictly supernatural).

However, it follows from this analysis that, were man to possess only the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity, the natural acquired virtues, and the infused moral virtues, the motion of man to his last end would still not be secure. For man’s rational discursive power as applied

to action—prudence—falls short of divine omniscience and so cannot pretend perfect extension to all things. Thus the contingency of the moral life with all its unexpected hazards and blessings would not yet be adequately governed by Providence in its motion toward the beatific end were man to enjoy only the theological virtues together with infused supernatural virtue and natural virtue. It is the gifts of the Holy Spirit that address this lacuna. These gifts bestow a principle that is not simply mediated by man's rational discursive insight but rather capacitates the rational creature to be directly governed by God Himself, and under the activation of which the agent moves itself toward the supernatural end by being moved by God.

II. The Gifts of the Holy Spirit: Grace as *Motus*

The gifts of the Holy Spirit perfect man in a higher way than do acquired and infused virtue. In question 68, article 1 of the *prima secundae* of the *Summa theologiae* Thomas writes that the human virtues “perfect man according as it is natural for him to be moved by his reason in his interior and exterior actions. Consequently man needs yet higher perfections, whereby to be disposed to be moved by God.”⁴ The entire passage is worthy of note:

Now it is evident that whatever is moved must be proportionate to its mover: and the perfection of the mobile as such, consists in a disposition whereby it is disposed to be well moved by its mover. Hence the more exalted the mover, the more perfect must be the disposition whereby the mobile is made proportionate to its mover: thus we see that a disciple needs a more perfect disposition in order to receive a higher teaching from his master. Now it is manifest that human virtues perfect man according as it is natural for him to be moved by his reason in his interior and exterior actions. Consequently man needs yet higher perfections, whereby to be disposed to be moved by God. These perfections are called gifts, not only because they are infused by God, but also because by them man is disposed to become amenable to the Divine inspiration, according to Isaiah 50:5: “The Lord . . . hath opened my ear, and I do not resist; I have not gone back.” Even the Philosopher says in the chapter On Good Fortune (*Ethic. Eudem.*, vii, 8) that for those who are moved by Divine instinct, there is no need to take counsel according to human reason, but only to follow their inner promptings, since they are moved by a principle higher than human reason. This

⁴ “Manifestum est autem quod virtutes humanae perficiunt hominem secundum quod homo natus est moveri per rationem in his quae interius vel exterius agit. Oportet igitur inesse homini altiores perfectiones, secundum quas sit dispositus ad hoc quod divinitus moveatur.”

then is what some say, viz. that the gifts perfect man for acts which are higher than acts of virtue.⁵

By the gifts man is disposed to become “amenable to the Divine inspiration” and to be moved “by a principle higher than human reason.” That is to say, the end of the action to which God moves man through the gifts of the Holy Spirit is not merely the proportionate natural good but supernatural beatitude. In the second article of this same question 68, Thomas writes:

Accordingly, in matters subject to human reason, and directed to man’s connatural end, man can work through the judgment of his reason. If, however, even in these things man receive help in the shape of special promptings from God, this will be out of God’s superabundant goodness: hence, according to the philosophers, not every one that had the acquired moral virtues, had also the heroic or divine virtues. But in matters directed to the supernatural end, to which man’s reason moves him, according as it is, in a manner, and imperfectly, informed by the theological virtues, the motion of reason does not suffice, unless it receive in addition the prompting or motion of the Holy Ghost, according to Romans 8:14–17: “Whosoever are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God . . . and if sons, heirs also”: and Psalm 142:10: “Thy good Spirit shall lead me into the right land,” because, to wit, none can receive the inheritance of that land of the Blessed, except he be moved and led thither by the Holy Ghost. Therefore, in order to accomplish this end, it is necessary for man to have the gift of the Holy Ghost.⁶

⁵ “Manifestum est autem quod omne quod movetur, necesse est proportionatum esse motori, et haec est perfectio mobilis inquantum est mobile, dispositio qua disponitur ad hoc quod bene moveatur a suo motore. Quanto igitur movens est altior, tanto necesse est quod mobile perfectiori dispositione ei proportionetur, sicut videmus quod perfectius oportet esse discipulum dispositum, ad hoc quod altiores doctrinam capiat a docente. Manifestum est autem quod virtutes humanae perficiunt hominem secundum quod homo natus est moveri per rationem in his quae interius vel exterius agit. Oportet igitur inesse homini altiores perfectiones, secundum quas sit dispositus ad hoc quod divinitus moveatur. Et istae perfectiones vocantur dona, non solum quia infunduntur a Deo; sed quia secundum ea homo disponitur ut efficiatur prompte mobilis ab inspiratione divina, sicut dicitur Isaiae 1, *dominus aperuit mihi aurem; ego autem non contradico, retrorsum non abii*. Et philosophus etiam dicit, in cap. de bona fortuna, quod his qui moventur per instinctum divinum, non expedit consiliari secundum rationem humanam, sed quod sequantur interiorem instinctum, quia moventur a meliori principio quam sit ratio humana. Et hoc est quod quidam dicunt, quod dona perficiunt hominem ad altiores actus quam sint actus virtutum.”

⁶ “Sic igitur quantum ad ea quae subsunt humanae rationi, in ordine scilicet ad finem connaturalem homini, homo potest operari per iudicium rationis. Si tamen etiam in hoc homo adiuvetur a Deo per specialem instinctum, hoc erit superabundantis bonitatis, unde secundum philosophos, non quicumque habebat

Thus, matters with respect to “man’s connatural end” are subject to the judgment of reason, although even in these matters one may be aided by special motions bestowed by God; but those things bound up with man’s supernatural end exceed the genuine but imperfect governance of human reason, and so human reason requires the help of a higher divine motion terminating in the strictly supernatural order: “the prompting or motion of the Holy Ghost, according to Romans 8:14–17: ‘Whosoever are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God . . . and if sons, heirs also.’”

As Thomas articulates in the very next article, article 3:

Now it is evident from what has been already said, that the moral virtues perfect the appetitive power according as it partakes somewhat of the reason, in so far, to wit, as it has a natural aptitude to be moved by the command of reason. Accordingly the gifts of the Holy Spirit, as compared with the Holy Spirit Himself, are related to man, even as the moral virtues, in comparison with the reason, are related to the appetitive power. Now the moral virtues are habits, whereby the powers of appetite are disposed to obey reason promptly. Therefore the gifts of the Holy Spirit are habits whereby man is perfected to obey readily the Holy Spirit.⁷

These gifts of the Holy Spirit are exceeded in perfection by the theological virtues. The theological virtues stand to the gifts of the Holy Spirit as the intellectual virtues that perfect reason itself stand in relation to the moral virtues that perfect appetite in relation to reason. The intellectual virtues being nobler than the moral, the theological virtues are nobler than the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and accordingly the gifts of the Holy

virtutes morales acquisitas, habebat virtutes heroicas vel divinas. Sed in ordine ad finem ultimum supernaturalem, ad quem ratio movet secundum quod est aliquantulum et imperfecte formata per virtutes theologicas, non sufficit ipsa motio rationis, nisi desuper adsit instinctus et motio spiritus sancti, secundum illud Rom. VIII, *qui spiritu Dei aguntur, hi filii Dei sunt; et si filii, et haeredes*, et in Psalmo CXLII dicitur, *spiritus tuus bonus deducet me in terram rectam*; quia scilicet in haereditatem illius terrae beatorum nullus potest pervenire, nisi moveatur et deducatur a spiritu sancto. Et ideo ad illum finem consequendum, necessarium est homini habere donum spiritus sancti.”

⁷ “Manifestum est autem ex supradictis quod virtutes morales perficiunt vim appetitivam secundum quod participat aliquantulum rationem, inquantum scilicet nata est moveri per imperium rationis. Hoc igitur modo dona spiritus sancti se habent ad hominem in comparatione ad spiritum sanctum, sicut virtutes morales se habent ad vim appetitivam in comparatione ad rationem. Virtutes autem morales habitus quidam sunt, quibus vires appetitivae disponuntur ad prompte obediendum rationi. Unde et dona spiritus sancti sunt quidam habitus, quibus homo perficitur ad prompte obediendum spiritui sancto.”

Spirit require, and are animated and regulated by, faith, hope, and charity. However, in relation to all other virtues, whether speculative or practical, the gifts of the Holy Spirit are more noble. As Thomas writes in article 8:

the gifts perfect the soul's powers in relation to the Holy Spirit their Mover; whereas the virtues perfect, either the reason itself, or the other powers in relation to reason: and it is evident that the more exalted the mover, the more excellent the disposition whereby the thing moved requires to be disposed. Therefore the gifts are more perfect than the virtues.⁸

The intellective gifts of wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and counsel are not only speculative but practical, because they extend to the direction of conduct toward the final end of life, which end is also the First Truth assented to through faith. While with respect to natural truth, the speculative “by extension” becomes practical—because the practical intellect “knows truth just as the speculative, but ordains the known truth to operation”—Thomas teaches that the intellective gifts of their nature are not only speculative but also practical. Thus for example, Thomas argues regarding the gift of understanding in question 8, article 3 of the *secunda secundae* of the *Summa theologiae* that “the gift of understanding extends also to certain actions, not as though these were its principal object, but in so far as the rule of our actions is the eternal law, to which the higher reason, which is perfected by the gift of understanding, adheres by contemplating and consulting it, as Augustine states (De Trin. xii, 7).”

Regarding these intellectual gifts and their differentiation, Thomas teaches in question 8, article 6 of the *secunda secundae*:

Accordingly on the part of the things proposed to faith for belief, two things are requisite on our part: first that they be penetrated or grasped by the intellect, and this belongs to the gift of understanding. Secondly, it is necessary that man should judge these things aright, that he should esteem that he ought to adhere to these things, and to withdraw from their opposites; and this judgment, with regard to Divine things belongs to the gift of wisdom, but with regard to created things, belongs to the gift of knowledge, and as to its application to individual actions, belongs to the gift of counsel.⁹

⁸ “Quia dona perficiunt vires animae in comparatione ad spiritum sanctum moventem, virtutes autem perficiunt vel ipsam rationem, vel alias vires in ordine ad rationem. Manifestum est autem quod ad altiore motorem oportet maiori perfectione mobile esse dispositum. Unde perfectiora sunt dona virtutibus.”

⁹ “Sic igitur circa ea quae fidei proponuntur credenda duo requiruntur ex parte nostra. Primo quidem, ut intellectu penetrentur vel capiantur, et hoc pertinet ad donum intellectus. Secundo autem oportet ut de eis homo habeat iudicium

Just as prudence—which is right reason about things to be done—includes a speculative element that could be known apart from practical application to the good of an operation, so likewise counsel, like the other intellectual gifts of the Holy Spirit, involves the speculative element of “judging these things aright” and knowing that one ought to adhere to the things proposed to faith for belief. While in the instance of counsel this knowledge is for the sake of the application of these judgments to individual actions, nonetheless, this judgment “belongs” to the gift of counsel “as to its application to individual actions.”

Although wisdom, understanding, and knowledge all are not only speculative but also practical, it is most crucially the gift of counsel that enables man to overcome the limits of his rational prudential knowledge, so as to be directed by the God whose providence extends to all things. Yet the life of the theological virtues and gifts is in unison, so that the perfection of faith, hope, and charity is the foundation for the perfection of the active dispositions or supernatural habitus which are the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Thus, for example, the growth in charity implies by its nature a corresponding development in the gift of wisdom. The right intellectual judgment of divine things is predicated on a connatural knowledge of and sympathy for the divine life that is an effect of the charity that unites us to God (*ST* II–II, q. 45, a. 2, resp.). Whereas human reason cannot grasp all the contingencies that pertain to action, God governs all these things, so that man’s prudence needs to be perfected and aided through being moved by the Holy Spirit, which pertains to the gift of counsel.

Human prudence is insufficient surely to govern man’s practical life even when it is fortified by acquired and infused prudence, because these work in an essentially rational and discursive way, within the limits of our reason. Further, infused prudence presupposes acquired prudence, since only through action itself does man acquire the *habitus* of overcoming extrinsic difficulties, whereas infused prudence fortifies and elevates human reason itself. Potencies are known in relation to acts, and acts are known by their objects and ends. Since man cannot, within the limits of human reason, grasp all the contingent singular circumstances that pertain to the perfection of action, only being directed by God through the gift of counsel he can overcome this defect. Of course, since the entire universe belongs to God, God can use any created good as the occasion or instrument for the giving of counsel, and so there is no opposition between the ecclesial

rectum, ut aestimet his esse inhaerendum et ab eorum oppositis recedendum. Hoc igitur iudicium, quantum ad res divinas, pertinet ad donum sapientiae; quantum vero ad res creatas, pertinet ad donum scientiae; quantum vero ad applicationem ad singularia opera, pertinet ad donum consilii.”

good and the gift of counsel, inasmuch as the habitus of counsel may be moved to perfect act by the Holy Spirit in relation to the direction of the Church's teaching and preaching, or to spiritual direction, or to sagacious writings: the gift of counsel is not in its essence a nomadic individualist possession but rather an active disposition given by God whereby He moves one strongly and surely to move oneself well.¹⁰ The gift of counsel is aligned with prudence, as a higher regulative principle governs a lower one, for as Thomas puts it in the ad 3 of question 52, article 2, in the *secunda secundae*, "The mover that is moved, moves through being moved. Hence the human mind, from the very fact that it is directed by the Holy Spirit, is enabled to direct itself and others." This passage, together with many others like it in Thomas's writing, gives testimony to what one might call the "pre motive form of the Christian moral life"—the centrality of the divine motion whereby man is inwardly and freely moved to act toward the supernatural end, which surpasses our natural limitations, a motion that has its cognate or corollary even with respect to purely natural good.¹¹

The necessity for the gifts of the Holy Spirit in the moral life thus is not merely topical but genetic. First, the moral life as such requires the aid of grace, both for the healing of inordinate inclinations after the Fall and for the elevation of man's prudence to take stock of the more profound *ratio* which the life of faith gives him for virtuous conduct. But the mere elevation, revitalization, and fortification of reason in its intrinsic operative perfection relative to the life of grace does not remove the limits of discursive rational nature itself. If man is to be moved surely to God, in a way befit-

¹⁰ I am more than indebted here to the sage analysis of John of St. Thomas, and to the beautiful consideration and explanation of his reading of St. Thomas on these points offered by Fr. Romanus Cessario, O.P., in his essay "John Poinsett: On the Gift of Counsel," in *The Common Things: Essays on Thomism and Education*, ed. Daniel McInerney (Mishawaka, IN: American Maritain Association, 1999): 163–78.

¹¹ Thus, even at the level of proportionate natural good, as St. Thomas writes in *ST I-II*, q. 109, a. 1, resp., "But it is clear that as all corporeal movements are reduced to the motion of the heavenly body as to the first corporeal mover, so all movements, both corporeal and spiritual, are reduced to the simple First Mover, Who is God. And hence no matter how perfect a corporeal or spiritual nature is supposed to be, it cannot proceed to its act unless it be moved by God. —"Manifestum est autem quod, sicut omnes motus corporales reducuntur in motum caelestis corporis sicut in primum movens corporale; ita omnes motus tam corporales quam spirituales reducuntur in primum movens simpliciter, quod est Deus. Et ideo quantumcumque natura aliqua corporalis vel spiritualis ponatur perfecta, non potest in suum actum procedere nisi moveatur a Deo." The natural motion of the will is possessed both by those who apply it further to act, and by those who do not; and one cannot "proceed to act" save insofar as the will is moved from potency to act with respect to its own self-determination in freedom.

ting the infinite power of God and the neediness of man, active dispositions to be governed more intimately and directly by the divine wisdom, love, and mercy need to be inculcated in the human soul. This is particularly manifest in the gift of counsel, because here the mind of man is moved by an exterior counsellor, the Holy Spirit, regarding what is to be done. Both the *respondeo* and the reply to the first objection in question 52, article 2, bear this out. First, the body of Thomas's answer:

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 Spirit, 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.¹²

The reply to the first objection is also arresting:

To judge and command belongs not to the thing moved, but to the mover. Wherefore, since in the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the position of the human mind is of one moved rather than of a mover, as stated above (1; I-II, 68, 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.¹³

The counselled mind is moved by another counselling it; and when it is moved to an intrinsically supernatural end, this requires supernatural

¹² "Respondeo dicendum quod principium motivum inferius praecipue adiuatur et perficitur per hoc quod movetur a superiori motivo principio, sicut corpus in hoc quod movetur a spiritu. Manifestum est autem quod rectitudo rationis humanae comparatur ad rationem divinam sicut principium motivum inferius ad superius, ratio enim aeterna est suprema regula omnis humanae rectitudinis. Et ideo prudentia, quae importat rectitudinem rationis, maxime perficitur et iuvatur secundum quod regulatur et movetur a spiritu sancto. Quod pertinet ad donum consilii, ut dictum est. Unde donum consilii respondet prudentiae, sicut ipsam adjuvans et perficiens."

¹³ "Ad primum ergo dicendum quod iudicare et praecipere non est moti, sed moventis. Et quia in donis spiritus sancti mens humana non se habet ut movens, sed magis ut mota, ut supra dictum est; inde est quod non fuit conveniens quod donum correspondens prudentiae praeceptum diceretur vel iudicium, sed consilium, per quod potest significari motio mentis consiliatae ab alio consiliante."

counsel. All the gifts are infused active dispositions rendering the agent susceptible of immediate inspiration and direction by God. This is also manifest in the gift of fortitude. St. Thomas describes the gift of fortitude as permeating the Christian moral life. One notes the body of his response to question 139, article 1, of the *secunda secundae* of the *Summa theologiae*:

Fortitude denotes a certain firmness of mind, as stated above (123, 2; I-II, 61, 3): and this firmness of mind is required both in doing good and in enduring evil, especially with regard to goods or evils that are difficult. Now man, according to his proper and connatural mode, is able to have this firmness in both these respects, so as not to forsake the good on account of difficulties, whether in accomplishing an arduous work, or in enduring grievous evil. In this sense fortitude denotes a special or general virtue, as stated above (123, 2).

Yet furthermore man's mind is moved by the Holy Spirit, in order that he may attain the end of each work begun, and avoid whatever perils may threaten. This surpasses human nature: for sometimes it is not in a man's power to attain the end of his work, or to avoid evils or dangers, since these may happen to overwhelm him in death. But the Holy Spirit works this in man, by bringing him to everlasting life, which is the end of all good deeds, and the release from all perils. A certain confidence of this is infused into the mind by the Holy Spirit Who expels any fear of the contrary. It is in this sense that fortitude is reckoned a gift of the Holy Spirit. For it has been stated above (I-II, 68, 1 and 2) that the gifts regard the motion of the mind by the Holy Spirit.¹⁴

Through the gift of fortitude the Holy Spirit expels all fear that our moral action is futile—a fear that easily turns to despair—and supplants

¹⁴ "Respondeo dicendum quod fortitudo importat quandam animi firmitatem, ut supra dictum est, et haec quidem firmitas animi requiritur et in bonis faciendis et in malis perferendis, et praecipue in arduis bonis vel malis. Homo autem secundum proprium et connaturalem sibi modum hanc firmitatem in utroque potest habere, ut non deficiat a bono propter difficultatem vel alicuius ardui operis implendi, vel alicuius gravis mali perferendi, et secundum hoc fortitudo ponitur virtus specialis vel generalis, ut supra dictum est. Sed ulterius a spiritu sancto movetur animus hominis ad hoc quod perveniat ad finem cuiuslibet operis inchoati, et evadat quaecumque pericula imminentia. Quod quidem excedit naturam humanam, quandoque enim non subest potestati hominis ut consequatur finem sui operis, vel evadat mala seu pericula, cum quandoque opprimatur ab eis in mortem. Sed hoc operatur spiritus sanctus in homine, dum perducit eum ad vitam aeternam, quae est finis omnium bonorum operum et evasio omnium periculorum. Et huius rei infundit quandam fiduciam menti spiritus sanctus, contrarium timorem excludens. Et secundum hoc fortitudo donum spiritus sancti ponitur, dictum est enim supra quod dona respiciunt motionem animae a spiritu sancto."

this fear with an infused confidence that all that we do and suffer is in the grace of the merciful God efficacious for attaining the infinite good of beatitude, and is thus either impetrative or meritorious in communicating this same grace to others. "A certain confidence of this is infused into the mind by the Holy Spirit Who expels any fear of the contrary." Without such confidence, how could the wayfarer not be overcome with anguish for the stark contingency and failure that visibly characterize so many noble and necessary efforts? How could it otherwise not fail to be the case that not faith, hope, and charity, but doubt, despair, and fear-ridden revulsion at suffering and terrestrial failure would overtake the believer on his way to God? But the Holy Spirit infuses the mind with fortitude, enabling the believer to move toward the most difficult and sublime goods confidently despite the enormity and indeed certainty of terrestrial opposition. Of course, as Thomas notes in the reply to the third objection in the same article:

The gift of fortitude regards the virtue of fortitude not only because it consists in enduring dangers, but also inasmuch as it consists in accomplishing any difficult work. Wherefore the gift of fortitude is directed by the gift of counsel, which seems to be concerned chiefly with the greater goods.

III. Conclusion

One recollects the words of question 52, article 2, ad 3 of the *secunda secundae*: "The mover that is moved, moves through being moved. Hence the human mind, from the very fact that it is directed by the Holy Spirit, is enabled to direct itself and others." One also remembers the words of St. Thomas from *De malo*, q. 3, a. 2, ad 4:

When anything moves itself, this does not exclude its being moved by another, from which it has even this that it moves itself. Thus it is not repugnant to liberty that God is the cause of the free act of the will.¹⁵

As likewise one recollects his teaching in *ST I*, q. 83, a. 1, ad 3:

Free-will is the cause of its own movement, because by his free-will man moves himself to act. But it does not of necessity belong to liberty that what is free should be the first cause of itself, as neither for one thing to be cause of another need it be the first cause. God, therefore, is the first cause, Who moves causes both natural and voluntary. And just

¹⁵ "Similiter cum aliquid mouet se ipsum, non excluditur quin ab alio moueatur a quo habet hoc ipsum quo se ipsum mouet. Et sic non repugnat libertati quod Deus est causa actus liberi arbitrii."

as by moving natural causes He does not prevent their acts being natural, so by moving voluntary causes He does not deprive their actions of being voluntary: but rather is He the cause of this very thing in them; for He operates in each thing according to its own nature.¹⁶

It is hardly credible to suggest that men and women today no longer need or wish to enjoy the experiential savor of divine wisdom, or the gift of understanding, or knowledge, or to be counselled by God, or to be infused with fortitude, in their moral lives, to say nothing of the gifts of piety and fear of the Lord. The moral challenges of life, and the infinite elevation of the last end, provide the strongest grounds possible for desiring divine aid. This aid is bestowed and strengthened in the sacraments and is effectual for the perfection both of contemplation and action. It is crucial to understand that this aid is real, and that it is neither a violation of human freedom for the human will to be moved freely and efficaciously by God, nor foolish to desire it. Only with divine aid will the mind of man be able either to contemplate supernatural truth or to apply such truth as a rule governing action.

The Christian understanding of God's providence as extending to, and governing, man's motion to both proportionate natural good and final supernatural beatitude—the realization that, as Thomas puts it in question 22, article 2 of the *prima pars* of the *Summa theologiae*, “the causality of God, Who is the first agent, extends to all being,” and that consequently as he puts it in question 91, article 2, of the *prima secundae* of the *Summa theologiae*, “all things subject to Divine providence are ruled and measured by the eternal law”—is thus arguably the principal formal element of the Christian understanding of the moral life. And this doctrine of the *promotive form of the Christian moral life* is particularly manifest in the gifts of the Holy Spirit, where not only the origin but the very mode and the end of the motion are supernatural. In explicating this teaching, St. Thomas seems correct in affirming that it requires and implies an intellectualist understanding of free will as deriving from the nature of reason in relation to choice rather than as an absolute liberty of indetermination constituting an answering infinitude to God's; and that

¹⁶ “Dicendum quod liberum arbitrium est causa sui motus; quia homo per liberum arbitrium seipsum movet ad agendum. Non tamen hoc est de necessitate libertatis, quod sit prima causa sui id quod liberum est; sicut nec ad hoc quod aliquid sit causa alterius, requiritur quod sit prima causa eius. Deus igitur est prima causa movens et naturales causas et voluntarias. Et sicut naturalibus causis, movendo eas, non aufert quin actus earum sint naturales; ita movendo causas voluntarias, non aufert quin actiones earum sint voluntariae, sed potius hoc in eis facit; operatur enim in unoquoque secundum eius proprietatem.”

it also presupposes the metaphysics of the absolute transcendence of God. But nowhere is the *promotive form of Christian moral life* so palpable as in Thomas's teaching regarding the divine motion imparted to the soul through the gifts of the Holy Spirit; for only as moved and governed by the divine gifts of wisdom, understanding, knowledge, counsel, fortitude, piety, and fear of the Lord are human contemplation and action well and fruitfully ordered toward eternal beatitude. **N-V**