

Objection 1. It would seem that the virtues are more excellent than the gifts. For Augustine says (De Trin. xv, 18) while speaking of charity: “No gift of God is more excellent than this. It is this alone which divides the children of the eternal kingdom from the children of eternal damnation. Other gifts are bestowed by the Holy Ghost, but, without charity, they avail nothing.” But charity is a virtue. Therefore a virtue is more excellent than the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

Objection 2. Further, that which is first naturally, seems to be more excellent. Now the virtues precede the gifts of the Holy Ghost; for Gregory says (Moral. ii, 26) that “the gift of the Holy Ghost in the mind it works on, forms first of all justice, prudence, fortitude, temperance. . . and doth afterwards give it a temper in the seven virtues” [viz. the gifts], so “as against folly to bestow wisdom; against dullness, understanding; against rashness, counsel; against fear, fortitude; against ignorance, knowledge; against hardness of heart, piety; against piety, fear.” Therefore the virtues are more excellent than the gifts.

Objection 3. Further, Augustine says (De Lib. Arb. ii, 19) that “the virtues cannot be used to evil purpose.” But it is possible to make evil use of the gifts, for Gregory says (Moral. i, 18): “We offer up the sacrifice of prayer. . . lest wisdom may uplift; or understanding, while it runs nimbly, deviate from the right path; or counsel, while it multiplies itself, grow into confusion; that fortitude, while it gives confidence, may not make us rash; lest knowledge, while it knows and yet loves not, may swell the mind; lest piety, while it swerves from the right line, may become distorted; and lest fear, while it is unduly alarmed, may plunge us into the pit of despair.” Therefore the virtues are more excellent than the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

On the contrary, The gifts are bestowed to assist the virtues and to remedy certain defects, as is shown in the passage quoted (obj. 2), so that, seemingly, they accomplish what the virtues cannot. Therefore the gifts are more excellent than the virtues.

I answer that, As was shown above (q. 58, a. 3; q. 62, a. 1), there are three kinds of virtues: for some are theological, some intellectual, and some moral. The theological virtues are those whereby man’s mind is united to God; the intellectual virtues are those whereby reason itself is perfected; and the moral virtues are those which perfect the powers of appetite in obedience to the

reason. On the other hand the gifts of the Holy Ghost dispose all the powers of the soul to be amenable to the Divine motion.

Accordingly the gifts seem to be compared to the theological virtues, by which man is united to the Holy Ghost his Mover, in the same way as the moral virtues are compared to the intellectual virtues, which perfect the reason, the moving principle of the moral virtues. Wherefore as the intellectual virtues are more excellent than the moral virtues and control them, so the theological virtues are more excellent than the gifts of the Holy Ghost and regulate them. Hence Gregory says (Moral. i, 12) that “the seven sons,” i.e. the seven gifts, “never attain the perfection of the number ten, unless all they do be done in faith, hope, and charity.”

But if we compare the gifts to the other virtues, intellectual and moral, then the gifts have the precedence of the virtues. Because the gifts perfect the soul’s powers in relation to the Holy Ghost 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.

Reply to Objection 1. Charity is a theological virtue; and such we grant to be more perfect than the gifts.

Reply to Objection 2. There are two ways in which one thing precedes another. One is in order of perfection and dignity, as love of God precedes love of our neighbor: and in this way the gifts precede the intellectual and moral virtues, but follow the theological virtues. The other is the order of generation or disposition: thus love of one’s neighbor precedes love of God, as regards the act: and in this way moral and intellectual virtues precede the gifts, since man, through being well subordinate to his own reason, is disposed to be rightly subordinate to God.

Reply to Objection 3. Wisdom and understanding and the like are gifts of the Holy Ghost, according as they are quickened by charity, which “dealet not perversely” (1 Cor. 13:4). Consequently wisdom and understanding and the like cannot be used to evil purpose, in so far as they are gifts of the Holy Ghost. But, lest they depart from the perfection of charity, they assist one another. This is what Gregory means to say.