

QUESTION 38

The Person of the Holy Spirit: The Name ‘Gift’

Next we consider the name ‘Gift’ (*donum*). On this topic there are two questions: (1) Can ‘Gift’ be a name of a person? (2) Is ‘Gift’ a proper name of the Holy Spirit?

Article 1

Is ‘Gift’ the name of a person?

It seems that ‘Gift’ is not the name of a person (*donum non sit nomen personale*):

Objection 1: Every name of a person implies some distinction in God. But the name ‘Gift’ does not imply any distinction in God, since in *De Trinitate* 15 Augustine says, “The Holy Spirit is given as God’s gift in such a way that He also gives Himself as God.” Therefore, ‘Gift’ is not the name of a person.

Objection 2: No name of a person belongs to the divine essence. But as is clear from Hilary in *De Trinitate* 9, the divine essence is a gift that the Father gives to the Son. Therefore, ‘Gift’ is not the name of a person.

Objection 3: According to Damascene, among the divine persons there is no subjection or servitude. But ‘gift’ implies a certain subjection both to the one to whom the gift is given and to the one by whom the gift is given. Therefore, ‘Gift’ is not the name of a person.

Objection 4: ‘Gift’ implies a relation to creatures, and so it seems to be predicated of God from a given point in time. But the names of the persons, e.g., ‘Father’ and ‘Son’, are predicated of God from eternity. Therefore, ‘Gift’ is not the name of a person.

But contrary to this: In *De Trinitate* 15 Augustine says, “Just as a body of flesh is nothing other than the flesh, so too the Gift of the Holy Spirit is nothing other than the Holy Spirit.” But ‘Holy Spirit’ is a name of a person. Therefore, so is ‘Gift’.

I respond: The name ‘Gift’ implies an aptness for being given. Now what is given has a relation both to the one by whom it is given and to the one to whom it is given. For a gift is given by someone only if it belongs to him, and it is given to someone in order that it might belong to him.

Now a divine person is said ‘to belong to someone’ (*esse alicuius*) either (a) according to His origin, in the way that the Son belongs to the Father, or (b) insofar as He is possessed by someone, where we are said to possess what we can in freedom use or enjoy as we wish. A divine person cannot be possessed in this second sense by anything except a rational creature who is conjoined to God. Other creatures can, to be sure, be moved by a divine person, but not in such a way that it is within their power to enjoy the divine person or to make use of some effect of His. By contrast, rational creatures attain to this in some cases—as, for instance, when someone participates in the divine Word and in the Love that proceeds in such a way that he can in freedom know God truly and love God rightly. Hence, only rational creatures can possess a divine person. But they cannot attain to possessing a divine person in this way by their own power. Hence, it is necessary that this be given to them from above; for it is what we have from elsewhere that is said to be given to us. Hence, in this sense it belongs to a divine person to be given and to be a Gift.

Reply to objection 1: The name ‘Gift’ implies a personal distinction insofar as the Gift is said to belong to someone through His origin. And yet the Holy Spirit gives Himself insofar as He belongs to Himself as one who is able to use Himself or, better, to enjoy Himself—in the same sense in which a free man is said to belong to himself. This is why in *Super Ioannem* Augustine says, “What is more yours than yourself?”

An alternative, and better, reply is this: A gift must belong in some way to the giver. But ‘to belong to someone’ has several meanings:

In one sense, one belongs to oneself in the mode of identity, as Augustine says in *Super Ioannem*, and in this sense there is no distinction between the gift and the giver, but only a distinction between the gift and the one to whom the gift is given. And in this sense the Holy Spirit is said to give Himself.

In a second sense, something is said to belong to someone as a possession or as a servant, and in this sense the gift must be distinct in essence from the giver. According to this sense, the gift of God is something created.

In a third sense, something is said to belong to someone just through its origin, and this is the sense in which the Son belongs to the Father and in which the Holy Spirit belongs to both of them. Thus, insofar as a gift is said to belong to the giver in this sense, the gift and the giver are distinct persons, and thus ‘Gift’ is a name of a person.

Reply to objection 2: The essence is called a gift of the Father in the first sense, since the essence belongs to the Father in mode of identity.

Reply to objection 3: Insofar as ‘Gift’ is a name of a person in God, it does not imply subjection, but implies only origin in relation to the giver. However, in relation to the one to whom the Gift is given, it implies free use or enjoyment, as has been explained.

Reply to objection 4: Something is called a ‘gift’ not from the fact that it is actually given, but rather insofar as it has an aptness for being possibly given. Hence, a divine person is called a Gift from eternity, even if He is given from a certain point in time.

Nor does it follow from the fact that ‘Gift’ implies a relation to creatures that it is predicated of the essence. All that follows is that something pertaining to the essence is included in our understanding of ‘Gift’, in just the same way that, as was explained above (q. 34, a. 3), the essence is included in our understanding of a person.

Article 2

Is ‘Gift’ a proper name of the Holy Spirit?

It seems that ‘Gift’ is not a proper name of the Holy Spirit:

Objection 1: ‘Gift’ comes from ‘that which is given’. But Isaiah 9:6 says, “A Son is given to us.” Therefore, the name ‘Gift’ belongs to the Son as well as to the Holy Spirit.

Objection 2: Every proper name of a person signifies some property of His. But the name ‘Gift’ does not signify any property of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, ‘Gift’ is not a proper name of the Holy Spirit.

Objection 3: As was pointed out above (q. 36, a. 1), the Holy Spirit can be called the ‘Spirit’ of a man. By contrast, He cannot be called the ‘Gift’ of any man, but only God’s Gift. Therefore, ‘Gift’ is not a proper name of the Holy Spirit.

But contrary to this: In *De Trinitate* 4 Augustine says, “Just as for the Son to be begotten is for Him to be from the Father, so for the Holy Spirit to be the Gift of God is for Him to proceed from the Father and the Son.” But the Holy Spirit is given proper names insofar as He proceeds from the Father and the Son. Therefore, ‘Gift’ is a proper name of the Holy Spirit.

I respond: Insofar as ‘Gift’ is taken for a person in God, it is a proper name of the Holy Spirit. To see this clearly, note that, according to the Philosopher, a gift is properly speaking an unreturnable offering. That is, a gift is not given with the intention of being repaid, and so ‘gift’ implies a gratuitous

donation. But the reason for the gratuitous donation is love. For we give something gratuitously to another because we will his good. Therefore, the first thing we give him is the love by which we will his good. Thus it is clear that love has the character of a primary gift through which all of our gratuitous gifts are given. Hence, since, as has already been explained (q. 27, a. 4 and q. 37, a. 1), the Holy Spirit proceeds as the Love, He proceeds with the character of the First Gift (*procedit in ratione doni primi*). Thus, in *De Trinitate* 15 Augustine says, “Through the Gift which is the Holy Spirit, the many particular gifts are parceled out to the members of Christ.”

Reply to objection 1: Because the Son proceeds in the manner of a Word, which by its very nature is a likeness of its principle, He is properly speaking called the Image—even though the Holy Spirit is also similar to the Father. In like manner, because the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father as the Love, He is properly speaking called the Gift—even though the Son is also given. For the very fact that the Son is given stems from the Father’s love—this according to John 3:16: “For God so loved the world that He gave His Only-begotten Son.”

Reply to objection 2: The name ‘Gift’ implies that the Gift belongs to the giver through origin. And so it is that ‘Gift’ implies the property of the Holy Spirit’s origin, viz. the Procession.

Reply to objection 3: Before a gift is given, it belongs only to the giver; but after it is given, it belongs to the one to whom it is given. Therefore, since ‘Gift’ does not imply the actual giving, He cannot be said to be the Gift of a man. Instead, He is the Gift of God as giver. However, once He has been given, He is then the Spirit or the Gift of a man.