

QUESTION 6

The Cause of Faith

Next we have to consider the cause of faith. And on this topic there are two questions: (1) Is faith infused in a man by God? (2) Is unformed faith a gift?

Article 1

Is faith infused in a man by God?

It seems that faith is not infused in a man by God:

Objection 1: In *De Trinitate* 14 Augustine says, “Faith is begotten, nurtured, defended, and strengthened in us by knowledge.” But what is begotten in us by knowledge seems to be acquired rather than infused. Therefore, faith does not seem to exist in us because of God’s infusing it.

Objection 2: What a man attains to by hearing and seeing seems to be acquired by the man. But a man attains to belief by seeing miracles and by hearing the faith taught. For John 4:53 says, “The father knew that it was at the same hour that Jesus had said to him, ‘Your son lives’. And he himself believed, and his whole household.” And Romans 10:17 says, “Faith comes from hearing.” Therefore, faith is had by a man as something acquired.

Objection 3: What exists in a man’s will can be acquired by the man. But as Augustine says in *De Praedestinatione Sanctorum*, “Faith exists in the will of believers.” Therefore, faith can be acquired by a man.

But contrary to this: Ephesians 2:8-9 says, “You have been saved by grace, and not from yourselves, that no one might glory; for it is a gift of God.”

I respond: Two things are required for faith. One of them is that the things to be believed be proposed to a man; this is required in order that the man might take something explicitly on faith. The other thing required for faith is the believer’s assent to what is proposed.

As regards the first of these, it is necessary for faith to come from God. For the things that belong to the Faith exceed human reason and hence cannot be included in a man’s contemplation unless God reveals them. To some they are revealed immediately by God, in the way that they were revealed to the apostles and the prophets, whereas to others they are proposed by God’s sending preachers of the Faith—this according to Romans 10:15 (“How will they preach, unless they are sent?”).

As regards the second, viz., a man’s assent to what belongs to the Faith, two causes can be considered:

One is a cause that induces *exteriorly*, e.g., a miracle that is seen, or persuasion by a man (*persuasio hominis*) who is inducing one toward faith. Neither of these is a sufficient cause. For among those who see one and the same miracle or hear the same preaching, some believe and some do not believe.

And so one must posit another, *interior*, cause that moves a man interiorly to assent to what belongs to the Faith.

Now the Pelagians posited man’s free choice alone as this interior cause, and because of this they claimed that the beginning of faith is from ourselves (*initium fidei est ex nobis*), viz., insofar as it is from ourselves that we are ready to assent to what belongs to the Faith, whereas the consummation of faith is from God, through whom the things we ought to believe are proposed to us.

But this is false. For since, in assenting to what belongs to the Faith, a man is elevated above his nature (*elevetur supra naturam suam*), this assent must exist in him from a supernatural principle moving him interiorly, and this is God. And so as regards the assent, which is the principal act of faith, faith is from God moving the man interiorly through grace.

Reply to objection 1: Faith is begotten and nurtured by knowledge in the manner of an exterior persuasion, which comes from some sort of knowledge. But the principal and proper cause of faith is

that which moves one interiorly to assent.

Reply to objection 2: This objection, too, is talking about a cause that proposes exteriorly what belongs to the Faith or that persuades one exteriorly to believe, either by word or by deed.

Reply to objection 3: The act of faith exists in the will of believers, but, as has been explained, a man's will has to be prepared by God through grace in order that it might be elevated to those things that lie above its nature.

Article 2

Is unformed faith a gift of God?

It seems that unformed faith is not a gift of God:

Objection 1: Deuteronomy 32:4 says, "The works of God are perfect." But unformed faith is something imperfect. Therefore, unformed faith is not a work of God.

Objection 2: Just as an act is called deformed because it lacks a due form, so, too, faith is called unformed because it lacks a due form. But as was explained above (*ST* 1-2, q. 79, a. 2), a deformed act of sin is not from God. Therefore, unformed faith is not from God, either.

Objection 3: Whatever God heals, He heals completely; for instance, John 7:23 says, "If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath, so that the law of Moses might not be broken, are you angry with me because I have healed the whole man on the Sabbath?" But through faith a man is healed of unbelief. Therefore, whoever receives the gift of faith from God is at the same time healed of all his sins. But this is so only through informed faith. Therefore, only informed faith is a gift of God. Therefore, unformed faith is not a gift of God.

But contrary to this: A certain Gloss on 1 Corinthians 13:2 says, "Faith which exists without charity is a gift of God." But faith which exists without charity is unformed faith. Therefore, unformed faith is a gift of God.

I respond: Being unformed is a certain privation. But notice that a privation sometimes belongs to the nature of a species, whereas sometimes it does not belong to the nature of the species but is instead added to a thing (*supervenit rei*) that already has a proper species.

For instance, the privation of an appropriate balance of humors (*privatio debitae commensurationis humorum*) belongs to the very nature of illness, whereas darkness is added to, and does not belong to, the nature of the diaphanous itself. Since, therefore, when a cause of a given thing is being assigned, its cause is understood to be assigned insofar as that thing exists in its own proper species, it follows that what is not a cause of the privation cannot be said to be a cause of that thing to which the privation belongs in the sense of belonging to the nature of the species itself. For instance, what is not a cause of an imbalance of humors cannot be called a cause of the illness.

By contrast, something can be called a cause of a diaphanous body even though it not a cause of darkness, which does not belong to the nature of the species *diaphanous*. Now faith's being unformed does not belong to the nature of the species *faith* itself, since, as has been explained (q. 4, a. 4), faith is said to be unformed because of the lack of a certain form exterior to it (*propter defectum cuiusdam exterioris formae*). And so the cause of unformed faith is just the cause of faith simply speaking (*illud est causa fidei informis quod est causa fidei simpliciter dictae*). Hence, it follows that unformed faith is a gift of God.

Reply to objection 1: Even if unformed faith is not perfect absolutely speaking, i.e., with the perfection of virtue, it is nonetheless perfect with a certain perfection that is sufficient for the nature of faith.

Reply to objection 2: As was explained above (*ST* 1-2, q. 18, a. 5), the deformity of an act belongs

to the nature of the species of that act insofar as it is a moral act. For an act is said to be deformed because of the privation of an intrinsic form, viz., the appropriate balancing of the act's circumstances (*debita commensuratio circumstantiarum actus*). And so God, who is not a cause of the *deformity*, cannot be said to be a cause of a deformed act—even though He is a cause of the act insofar as it is an *act*.

An alternative reply is that 'deformity' implies not only the privation of a due form, but also a contrary disposition. Hence, a deformity is related to an act in the way that falsehood is related to the act of faith. And so just as a deformed act is not from God, so neither is any false act of faith. On the other hand, just as unformed faith is from God, so too are acts which are good in their species, even though they are not informed by charity—as happens very frequently in the case of sinners.

Reply to objection 3: One who receives faith without charity from God is not healed absolutely speaking of unbelief, since the guilt (*culpa*) of his previous unbelief is not removed; instead, he is healed in a certain respect (*sanatur secundum quid*), viz., that he desists from that sin. Now it frequently happens that someone desists from one act of sin—where God likewise effects this—even though, prompted by his own iniquity, he does not desist from the act of some other sin. And it is in this way that God sometimes grants to a man that he might have faith, and yet the gift of charity is not given to him—just as the gift of prophecy or something similar is likewise given to some individuals without charity.