

## THE SPIRIT'S SECOND GIFT: UNDERSTANDING

Is 11:1-3; Job 8:10, 12:24; II Tim 2:12

### I. INSIGHT: EUREKA MOMENTS—"AHA!" (Job 8:10, 12:24; II Tim 2:12)

- A. One aspect/definition of understanding: standing under, seeing from within, insight (contrast with "oversight"); "mental grasp, comprehension"—deeper than sense impression; "a sound grasp of the things that are proposed to be believed" (Aquinas, *ST*, II-II, 9,1)
  1. L. *intellectus* (understanding) identical with *intus legere* (to read inwardly);
  2. Gk *suneseos* (insight, power of comprehension)—prefix *syn* means bringing together
  3. Heb *biyn* (perceptive insight, enabling judgment)
- B. Plato discerned four levels of awareness when thinking:
  1. Imagine (*eikasia*) things, e.g. raining on Mars, or in the Sahara Desert, without evidence or logic
  2. Believe (*pistis*) things, e.g. rain will fall, breaking drought (or Christ will return July 30); trusting another person (for better or worse) on basis of his character/word
  3. Understand (*dianoia/suneimi*) things, e.g. standing in, knowing what's falling is rain—experience meshes with common sense, thinking rightly
  4. Reason (*noesis*) about things, e.g. reasons for, value of, chemical components of rain (its nature and purpose, role in creation)
- C. Archimedes' pattern: soaking in bath, he understood the percentage of gold in a crown could be found through water displacement; thereby enlightened he ran through Syracuse crying "Eureka . . ."
  1. Historical illustrations: Isaac Newton re gravity; Arnold Toynbee walking in Greece; Andrew Klavan's *The Great Good Thing*—culminating realization, driving in car in Santa Barbara
  2. Personal illustrations
    - a. Students' eyes suddenly "light up" (young woman realizing Chinese embryo implanted in Swedish woman's womb would be fully Chinese! Thus not "part of a woman's body")
    - b. Cabin roof episode re tongue & groove 2x8s; Honolulu Marathon realization: over-hydration harmful (study of Boston Marathon participants)
    - c. Alisdair Macintyre's *After Virtue*—awakening to falsity of "quandary ethics" & perennial superiority of Aristotle/Aquinas Virtue Ethics
- D. Aquinas' "five ways" facilitates, for many, a certainty re God's existence—e.g. Andrew Younan's *Thoughtful Theism*, Ralph McInerney & Edward Feser's persuasive treatises
- E. Jesus: woman at well—five husbands; rich young ruler re possessions;

### II. EMPATHY: COMPASSIONATE MOMENTS—"AH . . .! OH . . .!"

- A. Secondary aspect/definition of understanding: "sympathetically aware of others' feelings;" "your hurt in my heart;" Heb *hamal* & Gk *splanchnisomai* mean "show pity";
- B. Pascals precept: "the heart has its reasons which reason knows nothing of"
  1. Historical illustrations: Las Casas & Indian anguish; John Woolman & slaves;
  2. Personal illustrations:
    - a. Parents re children; spouses re mate; friends re friends—loving bonds facilitate empathy
    - b. Widows re other widows; addicts re other addicts; soldiers re other soldiers—shared experiences facilitate empathy; "walk a mile in his moccasins"
- C. Bible affirms God's compassion (Ex 34:6)
- D. Jesus "moved with" compassion (Mk 1:41)
  1. His ministry demonstrated (Mt 9:36);
  2. His parables illustrated: Prodigal Son

### III. AGREEMENT: COMMON COMMITMENTS—"OK"

- A. Tertiary aspect/definition: "we agreed," understanding terms & resolving to fulfill them—e.g. "memorandum of understanding" between partners;
- B. OT covenants: Edenic; Adam; Noah; Abraham; Moses; David
- C. New Covenant of Christ (Gal 4:24-26; II Cor 3:7, 9; Heb 9:15)

### IV. SPIRIT'S GIFT AVAILABLE

- A. Gift of God: Daniel 2:21; Job 28:12, 20, 23;
- B. To be prayed for: Ps 119:34
- C. Discerned in Law: Ps 119:104;
- D. Manifest in Jesus' life & teaching: (1. His Mission: the Cross; (2. His Message: the Kingdom

## AUGUSTINE re “ILLUMINATION” & UNDERSTANDING

“The mysteries and secrets of the Kingdom of God first seek out believing men, that they may make them understand. For faith is understanding’s step, and understanding is faith’s reward. . . . To be sure you see somewhat that you may believe somewhat, and from that you see may believe what you see not. . . . God hath given thee eyes in the body, reason in the heart. Arouse the reason of the heart, awaken the interior inhabitant of thy interior eyes, let it take to its windows, let it examine God’s Creation. . . . Believe on Him whom you see not because of those things which you see” (*Serm.* CCXVI, i, 1; ii, 3).

“If a man says to me, I would understand in order that I may believe, I answer, Believe, that you may understand. . . . Understand, in order that you may believe my words; believe in order that you may understand the word of God” (*Serm* XLII, iii, 4; vii, 9)

“For what is believing but consenting to the truth of what is said?” (*De spir. et litt.* xxi, 54).

“If, however, he . . . thinks that it is sufficient to hold fast to the faith without aspiring to an understanding, he ignores the true end and utility of faith” (*Ep.* CXX, ii, 8).

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“We cannot, says Augustine, perceive the immutable truth of things unless they are illuminated as by a sun. This divine light, which illumines the mind, comes from God, who is the ‘intelligible light’, in whom and by whom and through whom all those things which are luminous to the intellect become luminous” (F.G. Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, v. II, pt. 1, p. 77)

“. . . the illumination in question is a spiritual illumination which performs the same function for the objects of the mind as the sun’s light performs for the objects of the eye: in other words, as the sunlight makes corporeal things visible to the eye, so the divine illumination makes the eternal truths visible to the mind” (*Ibid.*, p. 78).

“We need, therefore, a divine illumination, in order to enable us to apprehend what transcends our minds, ‘for no creature, howsoever rational and intellectual, is lighted of itself, but is lighted by participation of eternal Truth’ (*Ibid.*).

“In its final form the Augustinian doctrine concerning the relations between reason and faith comprises three steps: preparation for faith by reason, act of faith, understanding of the content of faith” (Etienne Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine*, p. 29).

“Let us say, then, that man has a mind (*mens*); that in order to acquire knowledge his mind exercises an activity proper to him, namely reason (*ratio*); and finally, that the knowledge gained by reason, or the glimpse of truth thus gained, is understanding (*intellectus*) (*Ibid.*, p. 29).

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## CALVIN re HOLY SPIRIT ILLUMINATING MIND

“But I reply, that the testimony of the Spirit is superior to all reason. For as God alone is a sufficient witness of himself in his own words, so also the word will never gain credit in the hearts of men, till it be confirmed by the internal testimony of the Spirit. It is necessary, therefore, that the same Spirit, who spake by the mouths of the prophets, should penetrate into our hearts, to convince us that they faithfully delivered the oracles which were divinely entrusted to them. . . .

“They who have been inwardly taught by the Spirit, feel an entire acquiescence in the Scripture, and that is the self-authenticated, carrying with it its own evidence, and ought not to be made the subject of demonstration and arguments from reason; but it obtains the credit which it deserves with us by the testimony of the Spirit. For though it conciliate our reverence by its internal majesty, it never seriously affects us till it is confirmed by the Spirit in our hearts. Therefore, being illuminated by him, we now believe the divine original of the Scripture, not from our own judgment or that of theirs, but we esteem the certainty, that we have received it from God’s own mouth by the ministry of men, to be superior to that of any human judgment, and equal to that of an intuitive perception of God himself in it. . . . It is such a persuasion, therefore, as requires no reasons; such a knowledge is supported by the highest reason, in which, indeed, the mind rests with greater security and constancy than in any reasons; it is, finally, such a sentiment as cannot be produced by a revelation from heaven. I speak of nothing but what every believer experiences in his heart, except that my language falls far short of a just explication of the subject. . . . That alone is true faith which the Spirit of God seals in your hearts. . . .

“The Scripture will . . . only be effectual to produce the saving knowledge of God, when the certainty of it shall be founded on the internal persuasion of the Holy Spirit” (John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, I, vii.4-5; I, viii.15).