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Historical Theology Survey
Saturday, 9am-4pm Section
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Report #3

The Rule of Saint Benedict
100% read, 674 words written

The “Christian Church seemed to be on the point of losing the foothold it had gained amid the ruins of the Roman Empire, [but] St. Benedict appears as the providential instrument of regeneration.” (Gasquet [trans.] *The Rule of Saint Benedict*, New York: Cooper Square Publishers, Inc, 1966, p. xiii) In Subiaco he ruled for 18 years and produced this celebrated code around 528 A.D.; he died March 21st, 543 A.D. (ibid).

The Rule attacks the “sloth of disobedience” and leads the monk to the “excellent arms of obedience” and “earnest prayer.” The monks need this kind of instruction and admonition because of the evil deeds of the flesh. Thus, “it is now the hour for us to rise from sleep.” We must decline evil and do good. If we remain in this good way, “we may deserve to see Him [Christ].”

The Rule is for running the monastery; it is for monks. According to this work, there are four kinds of monks: 1. Cenobites under the abbot or Rule; 2. Anchorites or hermits who live by themselves in the dessert; 3. Sarabites who are the worst and lie; and 4. Gyrovagi Wanderers, even worse who move from place to place and practice gluttony. The work of St. Benedict is for the Cenobites, the best kind, those who abide in the monastery. These live under the abbot, who is in the place of Christ.

This abbot leads via life and words and has equal love for all. He reproveth, entreats and rebukes (using even bodily punishment if necessary). His call is the government of souls of which he shall have to give an account.

The list of rules to live by (from God’s word, but sometimes also from the *apocrypha*) are both fascinating and inspirational. Here are some examples: #10: “To deny oneself in order to follow Christ;” #11: “To chastise the body;” #12: “Not to be fond of pleasures;” #13 “To love fasting;” #47: “To have the vision of death before one’s eyes daily;” #50: “To dash at once against Christ (as against a rock) evil thoughts which rise up in the mind;” and #51: “To reveal all such to one’s spiritual Father.” The “workshop” of all these is the monastery.

In approaching this life within the monastery, it is important to know and live in the steps of humility: 1. fear of God always before him; mindful of all commandments; 2. no heed to satisfy one’s own desires; 3. submit oneself to a superior; 4. patiently and with quiet mind, bear all that is inflicted on him; 5. confess all sin to the abbot; 6. be content

with all that is mean and vile; 7. truly believe that one is lower than all others; 8. abide by the common rule and example of seniors; 9. practice silence; 10. do not be quickly moved to laughter; 11. speak quietly and humbly with few words; 12. show humility to all, keep eyes to ground.

St. Benedict also leads the monks to perpetual worship. The foundational service is Matins that includes 12 psalms and always Psalm 3 and 94. There are the seven hours: 1. Lauds; 2. Prime; 3. Tierce; 4. Sext; 5. None; 6. Evensong; and 7. Compline. These are filled with the psalms, canticles, prayers and other readings. Note this remarkable statement from St. Benedict: “care be taken that every week the whole Psalter of a hundred and fifty psalms be sung.”

The abbot appoints deans to help lead and other workers in charge of special duties. The monks sleep clothed. There are strict disciplinary guidelines and levels of severity that may even lead to the application of “stripes”. Monks may be expelled, but can come back up to two more times. They cannot own anything and eat twice a day. “Idleness is an enemy of the soul,” so that they are constantly worshipping, working, sleeping, eating or taking care of other bodily needs. Initiates must go through a process lasting a year! Finally, it is stated that this rule is “written for beginners”!

Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo?*

100% read, 811 or 1,417 words written (*please* read note)

Note to the reader/grader: The first seven paragraphs are for my personal benefit and are not necessary for the assignment. One may get to the crux of Anselm’s argument by starting at the 8th paragraph below marked by an asterisk “*”. From that point onward is 811 words and gives the rationale for *Cur Deus Homo?* The total word count is 1,417 words, but again the main argument starts at paragraph 8.

“Why the God-man?” The title is explained by the Archbishop of Canterbury himself: “By what logic or necessity did God become man, and by his death, as we believe and profess, restore life to the world, when he could have done this simply through the agency of some other person, angelic or human, or simply by willing it?” (Davies and Evans, eds., *Anselm of Canterbury: The Major Works*, Oxford University Press, p. 265) *Boso* pursues the inquiry, while *Anselm* patiently and humbly makes his case in this dialog that presents the logic behind the necessity of the God-man to save us.

Anselm prepares *Boso* to receive an answer that will logically require an appreciation of such concepts as “power, necessity and will” (p. 266) to answer those who claim “we are inflicting injury and insult on God when we assert that he descended into a woman’s womb...to say nothing of other things which do not seem suitable for God...” (p. 268)

Anselm immediately draws rich parallels to the fall of man and man's restoration. What has happened through Christ is to address what we lost through man's disobedience and the devil's deception. "For it was appropriate that, just as death entered the human race through a man's disobedience, so life should be restored through a man's obedience; and that, just as the sin which was the cause of our damnation originated from a woman, similarly the originator of our justification and salvation should be born of a woman. Also that the devil, who defeated the man whom he beguiled through the taste of a tree, should himself similarly be defeated by a man through tree-induced suffering which he, the devil, inflicted." (pp. 268-269)

These facts, however, seem to suggest that if God is the One doing all of these things, then God is being forced to suffer, but this is impossible. Anselm thus replies: "the divine nature is undoubtedly incapable of suffering" (pp. 274-275). "But we say that the Lord Jesus Christ is true God and true man, one person in two natures and two natures in one person. In view of this, when we say that God is suffering some humiliation or weakness, we do not understand this in terms of the exaltedness of his non-suffering nature, but in terms of the weakness of the human substance which he was taking upon himself." (p. 275)

Boso speaks for man's doubt and skepticism, however, when he then asks why God would put a just man to death for a sinner. Furthermore, how does this confirm God's omnipotence? Is this the *only* way man could be saved? If this was not the only way, what does this then say of God's wisdom and justice?

The answer lies in appreciating the fact that God the Father did not coerce the Son to do what He did, "but Christ himself of his own volition underwent death in order to save mankind." (p. 275) Boso counters with Scripture. For example, "I have not come to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me." (John 6:38) It seems through this and other verses that Christ "endured death under the compulsion of obedience."

Anselm explains, however, that Christ's obedience was not one of "abandonment of his life," (p. 277) but obedience for upholding righteousness. That is, Christ was obedient because of His righteous – and free – desire to suffer rather than allow the human race not to be saved. "For absolute and true obedience is that which occurs when a rational being, not under compulsion but voluntarily, keeps to a desire which has been received from God." (p. 280)

*The question is still resounding for Boso and others: "Why the God-man?" We have to appreciate what *sin* is: "Then, to sin is nothing other than not to give God what is owed to him." (p. 283) "Someone who does not render to God this honour due to him is taking away from God what is his, and dishonouring God, and this is what it is to sin. As long as he does not repay what he has taken away, he remains in a state of guilt. And it is not sufficient merely to repay what has been taken away: rather, he ought to pay back more than he took...*Therefore, everyone who sins is under an obligation to repay to God the*

honour which he has violently taken from him, and this is the satisfaction which every sinner is obliged to give to God." (p. 283)

But to speak of making satisfaction necessitates punishment, because "it is not fitting for God to allow anything in his kingdom to slip by unregulated." (p. 284) *Not* to punish the sinner "does not belong to [God's] freedom or benevolence or will". (p. 286) "***There is nothing more intolerable in the universal order than that a creature should take away honour from the creator and not repay what he takes away.***" (p. 286)

Man had to repay. But how does a sinner repay? If the sinner can only be punished, "God loses his honour without recovering it." (p. 287) This became an issue already in regards to the angels. Some of them fell, but this too necessitates a restoration of honour. God would also desire to ensure that "the human elect will not be fewer in number than the sinful angels". (p. 291) God's honour, however, is appropriately restored to even more honour and "there are to be more humans in a state of blessedness than there are angels in a state of wretchedness." (p. 295)

Again, however, how are these humans to be brought into a state of blessedness if they cannot repay? Anselm puts it simply, but profoundly: "But a man who is a sinner is in no way capable of doing this, for one sinner cannot make another sinner righteous." (p. 309) At the same time, it is man who is in need of salvation, man owes the debt of honour...man – if he is to be saved – *must* pay this debt. In grace, God provides for the personal union to take place. Anselm does not use the term "personal union," but says: "Now, there is nothing superior to all that exists which is not God – except God -- ... But the obligation rests with man, and no one else, to make the payment referred to. Otherwise mankind is not making recompense...***it is necessary that a God-man should pay it.***" (p. 320)

"It is essential that the same one person who will make the recompense should be perfect God and perfect man." (p. 321) Christ is "a member of the same race" (p. 321) and elsewhere Anselm explains that mortality is not a necessary condition of humanity (any more than sin is) (p. 329), God could thus take on flesh and still be God (immortal and without sin). He chooses to come "from a woman without a man," and so "the medicine of sin and the cause of salvation should be born of a woman." And this too will rebuild the hope of women since a virgin woman caused all evil (Eve), now another virgin woman is the cause of all good (Mary). (p. 323)

Christ can and does more than restore the honour of God though by defeating the devil "with the greatest possible difficulty" and "the greatest possible self-giving" (p. 331). And "[Christ's] life outweighs all the sins of mankind, so does his acceptance of death." This is so, because all that He does, He also does as God. All the while at the incarnation His dignity as God was maintained as the Virgin was cleansed of sin before His birth (p. 340). All of this, Christ willed...and any talk of "necessity" is based solely on His gracious will already established for the sake of our salvation and the honour of God.

“But Christ of his own accord gave to his Father what he was never going to lose as a matter of necessity, and he paid on behalf of all sinners, a debt which he did not owe. In view of this, he was all the more setting an example, the purpose of this being that people would not, when there was a compelling reason, have doubts about giving to God something which each of them was some time before long to lose.” (p. 349) This is why we now give our lives to God, through Christ who “offered up his humanity to his divinity” (p. 351) to save us.

Aquinas, *Summa Theologica 1.1, Sacred Doctrine*
100% read, 231 words written

Theology is not merely a part of philosophy. “Now Scripture, inspired of God, is no part of philosophical science, which has been built up by human reason.” (all quotes taken from Dr. Gomes CD, these pages are not numbered) The theology in sacred doctrine “differs in kind” from the theology of philosophy. At the same time, this sacred doctrine is also a different kind of science.

Furthermore, this sacred science is more noble than any other science, because it has a “greater certitude” (other science based on human reason can err), and because it transcends human reason. What is more, the *purpose* of this science alone is reason for its higher place over her handmaidens.

Aquinas maintains that “This doctrine is wisdom above all human wisdom.” No matter what other thing we consider, it is considered in the light of God. This sacred doctrine may also be a matter of argument. This does not mean that faith needs this, but we may argue against heretics or anyone denying an article of faith. While resting on divine authority, we may tap into extrinsic and probable aspects.

In addition, what is communicated from sacred doctrine may also be in metaphors and similes. By making comparisons to natural things, men can “attain to intellectual truths through sensible objects.” At the same time, words may indeed have several senses, esp. the spiritual and literal senses.

Aquinas, *Summa Theologica 1.2, Existence of God*
100% read, 251 words written

Aquinas maintains that the existence of God is not self-evident. The fool who says in his heart, “There is no God” proves this. Something may be self-evident in one of two ways: 1. Self-evident in itself; 2. Self-evident in itself and to us. So, while God knows the truth of the statement, “God exists,” we are not so fortunate. “Now because we do not know the essence of God, the proposition is not self-evident to us; but needs to be demonstrated by things that are more known to us, though less known in their nature –

namely, by effects. Here, Aquinas launches from Romans 1:20: “The invisible things of Him are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made.”

We can approach this way of knowing in two ways: through the cause (*a priori*) or from the effect (*a posteriori*). Now “when an effect is better known to us than its cause, from the effect we proceed to the knowledge of the cause.” From here, Aquinas proceeds to present his “five ways”: 1) From motion that must arrive to a first mover (God); 2) From efficient cause (things cannot be efficient causes within themselves) which leads to God; 3) From possibility and necessity (something must be ultimately necessary, i.e. God); 4) From the gradation of things (there is an ultimate maximum); 5) From the governance of the world (design shows things directed and moving towards a goal, this shows the existence of a being with knowledge and intelligence, i.e. God).

Cairns, *Christianity Through the Centuries*, pp. 202-263

100% read