

Lesson 5

Disposition of the Christians Toward Philosophy

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I. God and the Natural Truths of Religion

- For St. Thomas, man can theoretically discover the natural truths concerning himself and God, however, it is extremely difficult in practice, since very few people would have the capacity, the patience, the leisure, the perseverance to reach all those truths by themselves, and if they did, it would be practically impossible to avoid errors mixed with truth.
- Therefore, in order to facilitate man in learning the truths that are vital for him to know regarding God and himself, God was good enough to reveal these truths clearly, so that everybody would know them firmly, easily and without error.
- Pre-Christian philosophers did fall into error in many essential points which are necessary for man to know well so as to direct himself to his true destination, which is the True God
- Post-Christian philosophers (those who have separated themselves from the christian faith) have oftentimes fallen into errors which are even greater, since the corruption of the best is the worst. This sin of *apostasy* (rejection of the christian faith once it has been received) has destructive consequences for the natural powers of man, such as the intelligence and the will.
- Whether the philosophy is pre-Christian or post-Christian, it shows reason's vital need for faith.

II. Philosophy and the Truths of the Natural Order

- Philosophy deals with truths which can be known by natural reason.
- Christian knows some natural truths through his faith.
- The knowledge of natural truths, by faith, is both negative and positive norms
 - Negative norm: these truths tell man what he should not accept
 - Positive norm: helps reason to know those natural truths
- When philosophizing, we should never suspend our judgment about our faith or ignore the knowledge we have through it. We cannot doubt, suspend our judgment, ignore our faith
- The believer, when reasoning, cannot forget his faith. His faith will be his guide (knowledge which is beyond doubt) while the knowledge acquired through reason alone is often subject to doubt.
- The help from faith is very good for the human mind, because it prevents it from falling into presumption of giving too much credence to itself. We all like to learn

by ourselves, but if we accept something from a higher source we avoid the danger of presumption, of trusting in ourselves. What faith does is to heal the human intelligence: it cures reason from its weaknesses

- In order to receive faith, one needs the right disposition of humility.
- "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (Prov. 3:34)
- In conclusion, faith is related to the use of our reason, and therefore to philosophy, for the exercise of reason we also need a disposition of humility and uprightness of mind and will.

III. Christian Philosophy As a Common Cultural Heritage

- Christian philosophy has the role of unifying Christians, because in sharing common heritage we are more united
- Philosophy should serve to strengthen the faith
- There should be no dissociation in the Christian between philosophy and faith, between life and religion
- Catechism is like distillation of the faith, and philosophy forms part of theology, philosophy has also found its way into the catechism
- The help of the faith gives to reason is not a labor-saving device
- Faith does not substitute itself for reason. It enlightens and empowers reason, but then reason has to move by itself
- God does not treat us as puppets, but as intelligent and free beings.

IV. The Help of Faith Not Against the Use of the Intelligence

- How does reason function?
 - In contact with reality
 - The light of reason is reality, not dreams or feelings, and faith does not contradict reality at all
 - Faith enlightens man so that he can see better, but then he has to see, to open his eyes
- Faith does not suppress the natural activity of the intelligence nor the effort of reason to reach the higher truths
- Christian judges philosophical doctrines in the light of his faith
- With philosophy, not with faith, he can point out the roots of errors in those doctrines.