

THE SHACKLES OF THE LATIN CAPTIVITY

or

Anselm's Unsatisfactory Theory

Part Two

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The Scholastic "God"

When people speak about the "Redeeming Sacrifice of Our Lord on the Cross," we have to ask them: "Are you thinking in Anselmian terms?" Because, if they are, they have Saint Gregory the Theologian to correct them in his homily, *On the Holy Pascha*.

Indeed, if Anselm [+1109] or any of the Scholastics had ever bothered to read Saint Gregory, as well as other Fathers, on this point, they would never have propagated their "Satisfaction" theory, nor the concept of "Atonement." A Heavenly Father Who, in His wrath, can be satisfied only by the spilling of His Son's Blood, is a pretty grim sight indeed, not to say unspeakably impious. Taking this and their doctrine of "Original Sin" into consideration, it is no wonder that, in the West, the growing rationalism of the Renaissance produced not only an apathetic renunciation of God, but a passionate and hate-filled revulsion and repugnance for anything that had to do with religion. For truly, the Latin doctrine of Atonement is the product of spiritually ailing and pathologically depressed minds, and it could produce only hatred for, and not love of, God.

How could it be otherwise? For behold what a morbid spectacle, what an impious mish-mash of Greek philosophic error, pagan religions, and distortion of the Scriptures reveals itself in the Scholastics' doctrine of Satisfaction and Atonement. Since "Original Sin" is precisely the inheritance of the *guilt* of Adam's transgression, this false presupposition triggers a whole chain reaction of theology which must cope with this problem. (One wonders: if one accepts the principle that the guilt of one man's sins can be passed on to the next generation, then why cannot the guilt of *all* men be passed on to the following generation? And if this is so, then, in principle, every generation passes on, not only its own guilt, but also the guilt of all the preceding generations — thus the guilt increases by geometric progression. Although the Latins and Protestants do not officially teach this, as far as I know, it is not so clearly ascertained whether they actually deny it either.)

In the meantime (according to this theory), God was looking down at the proliferating race of man which, naturally, was spreading the guilt of Adam's sin far and wide over the face of the earth. But do not think for a moment that this "God" is the One Whom we profess, Who is proclaimed in the Holy Scriptures and in the writings of the Fathers. This "God" is a very different one indeed; for you see, he is the God of the Scholastics, who have given up Saint Paul's "foolishness" and have turned to Aristotle's "wisdom" for definitions (which Saint Gregory the Theologian, as you may recall, refers to as "frivolities and quackeries").

The Greek Super-Goddess

Now, for the poets and philosophers of the pagan Greeks, everything — the cosmos, things visible and invisible, and the gods — depended on and rotated on "the spindle of Necessity", as Plato says in the tenth book of *The Republic*. So too Aristotle, who had been a disciple of Plato, accepted this principle of Necessity. All things for him, including "primary beings" (of which the "God" of the Scholastics is one, even though, for them He was the *only* one, since they had to give some kind of Christian veneer to all this) were what they were and they could not be otherwise. What the primary beings are by nature, they are by necessity. Even primary beings are governed by the necessity of being what they are. Thus, Necessity underlies the nature of being.

Well, the Scholastic "God" is, by this definition, just, and he cannot be unjust, because he is what he is and he cannot be otherwise (for you see, the Super-Goddess Necessity is hanging over his head like a domineering and nagging wife, and he must do her bidding). Divine Love? It does not enter into the picture yet. It cannot. Divine Justice *first* has to be satisfied before Divine Love can begin to work. The Scholastic "God," who is just (by *necessity*, remember — "I am what I am and I cannot be otherwise," says he plaintively) cannot be unjust, and mankind's accumulating guilt is becoming intolerable. "God's" just wrath is growing greater and greater, and mankind is sagging lower and lower under the guilt, and there is only one Person who can calm this wrath.

Making God In Man's Image

Now, by the reckoning of Anselm, the inventor of the "Satisfaction" theory, since God is infinite in majesty, the insult to Him is also infinite in magnitude. (How finite beings can perpetrate infinite acts is not explained).^{*} Hence, the satisfaction of this outrage to the infinite God likewise has to be of infinite worth. Therefore, God *has* to be the victim by Necessity [remember her?]. No man, says Anselm, could have infinite merit to make such a retribution, to pay such a price. According to this reckoning, only God Who became man can serve as the victim. Only the Son can satisfy God's need for justice. Only He can atone for the accumulating guilt of man. Only the blood of the Lamb will wash away mankind's guilt and make God the Father happy again. The more the Son suffers on the Cross, the happier and more "satisfied" the Father's Justice becomes (and thus we have the blood and the gore pouring and oozing from all the Medieval Spanish and German and Italian crucifixes. The more blood and gore, the better. For more on Papal "religious" art, see below).

One becomes rather sick to his stomach even considering these blasphemies. One yearns to get out of this sick and stifling prison of mental and spiritual insanity and hallucination, and into the fresh air of our God's love and meekness and compassion. One longs to flee from the stifling air of the Scholastics' schoolrooms, with their philosophic definitions and "primary beings" groaning under the yoke of Super-Goddess Necessity.

Is there any way out? Is there anyone who can deliver us from this mental and

^{*} Anselm's theory was based on the Medieval Feudal Code, i.e. "an honor is measured by who bestows it; an insult is measured by who receives it." Essentially, Anselm is here telling us that God was following western Europe's medieval code of chivalry, i.e. Anselm was creating God in Western European man's image.

spiritual sickness? How can we break the shackles of this captivity?

Normally, I don't have a mean streak, but this one time I thought it might be a good idea to leave you hanging in suspense....

But fear not! Help is on the way!

Provocations to Iconoclasm (A Footnote)

Some of the most intense criticism of Roman Catholic "religious" art comes from the Roman Catholics themselves. I will cite one example below. It is from an article entitled "Provocations to Iconoclasm" by John Lyon, who was an associate professor at the University of Notre Dame when he wrote this article in the 1980's. Here is a sample of what he writes:

One of the characteristics which certainly proves the soundness [*sic*], vitality and indestructibility of the Roman Catholic church is that she has survived her own iconography. To have grown up Catholic anytime during these last two or three hundred years has meant to have had a good chance that one's religious life would be inundated with graphic and plastic art which, at its best, could be described as sappy, in the middle of its range as pandering to pruriency, and, at its worst, as out rightly solicitous of responses in which sexual libido and sado-masochism are promiscuously mixed.

If there is any truth in Blake's suggestion that we become what we behold, then such abominable [Roman Catholic] graphic art and statuary ought to be destroyed. Art ought to be an aid to worship; instead, it is often an argument against sanctity and belief.

What is revolting about so much representative church art since the seventeenth century is that it is romantic; that is, it is stagy, posed....

John Lyon also complains that their religious art fluctuates between the sadistic and the silly:

The crucified Christ in the center above [the "high altar" of one parish] is flanked by a mourning Mary and a moderately inconsolable John, both in stagy poses dominated by hands clasped in supposed grief, and glances upward at the crucified.... The typical representational positioning of Christ's body upon the cross illustrates the worst and most dangerous characteristic of what perhaps ought to be called "romantic church art." To borrow a line

from the end of a Brendan Behan play, what romantic crucifixes and pietas, for instance, seem to be saying is: "O death, where is thy sting-a-ling-a-ling?"

The question concerning which artistic conventions might be most appropriate in ecclesiastical art was eventually hammered out in the Orthodox church after a century of horrible internecine war and persecution, and left the Byzantine world and its derivative national churches (such as the Russian) with that form of ecclesiastical art which we call "icons": two-dimensional, highly stylized yet at times marvelously wrought and strangely individualized images of Christ and the saints. The West, for good or ill, has had no "Iconoclastic Controversy" to match that of the Byzantine Empire in the eighth and ninth centuries.

Here, we must ask: Was not Rome a part of the Church in the eighth and ninth centuries?