

Summary



Here Here Here Here Summary of Question 17 from Summa Theologica In this section of St. Thomas Aquinas' work, the philosopher discusses eight articles of discussion in the form of questions about the nature of hope. He arranges this essay in the form of three objections and corresponding responses to each question. Essentially, this approach is analogous to a debate that is arranged to benefit the philosopher's views.

Article one concerns the status of hope as a virtue. The first objection is that hope cannot be a virtue because man makes poor use of hope, and it is countered by the argument that the mere existence of hope satisfies its purpose. It is argued secondly that hope is caused by merits, and therefore doesn't qualify as a virtue. However, Aquinas contends that the occurrence of hope in itself is not based on merits but instead on the desire for happiness, which is virtuous. The last stated problem with hope being a virtue is the imperfect nature of hope, explained as a wish for something that is lacking. Aquinas states that while the desire is imperfect, hope is perfection in that it is reflective of faith in God's rule and influence.

The second article questions if eternal happiness is indeed the object of hope. Objections include denial that humans need to hope for eternal happiness since it is a constant state of the soul, examples of hope being for things other than eternal happiness, and the suggestion that hope deals with many difficulties other than eternal happiness. The replies to these issues state that eternal happiness is veiled and thus not experienced as a constant state by humans, prayers should not be for things other than eternal happiness, and all other desires should seem small in comparison to eternal happiness.

In article three, Aquinas discusses the possibility of one person wishing for

the eternal happiness of another. He argues that this is not possible since hopes for another person are not acts of hope at all, but are instead acts of love. Article four investigates the lawfulness of being hopeful in another person. The author's position is that hope may be placed in a person as long as it is not believed to be virtuous hope, which is reserved for God.

Discussion of the fifth article is very similar to the first. In response to arguments against the nature of hope as a theological virtue, Aquinas relates several examples that are meant to relate hope as being divinely based regardless of its superficial appearance. The distinction of hope from other theological virtues is the topic of article six. It is suggested that this distinction is real due to the different aspects of God involved in separate virtues.

Article seven asks if hope precedes faith. Objections (supporting the concept of hope before faith) include the designation of hope as an entrance to faith. Aquinas disagrees with this view and argues that, although hope often precedes faith, there are many examples of good acts where hope was not a necessary motivation, though it may come to accompany the act. Lastly, the eighth article investigates if charity precedes hope. The author argues that this is not always the case and that instead, hope often comes before the reception of holy charity. The role of merits is also discussed as a possible intermediate between hope and charity.

Work Cited

“ Summa theologiae” Encyclopedia Britannica. Encyclopedia Britannica Online. Encyclopedia Britannica Inc., 2011. Web. 09 Nov. 2011.