

The rule of st. benedict and the prayer of st. francis



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The Rule of St. Benedict and the Prayer of St. Francis One of the most prominent developments in the early history of the Catholic Church was that of monasticism, which was modeled upon scriptural examples and ideals, and it had the fundamental role in the progress of the church in the early centuries of its growth. The contributions of the various monastic traditions to the development of the religious life within the Catholic Church cannot be ignored at large. In the beginning, monasticism was controlled by the different religious rules such as the Rule of St Basil and the Rule of St Benedict, whereas in the contemporary times the Church law pertaining to each denomination plays a major role in their regulation. The monastic tradition, through the history of the Church, has gone through drastic changes and the religious rules of the monastic people were formulated by the monastic traditions of each period. The Rule of St. Benedict was the most prominent religious rule in the sixth century which was formulated according to the demands of the time. There was drastic change in the way the religious rules of monasticism were formulated and the views regarding such rules changed from one monastic tradition to another. A comparative analysis of the selection of readings from the Rule of St. Benedict and the Prayer of St. Francis drawn from the Christian Monastic tradition in the textbook explicitly suggests the different contexts of the monastic tradition. It is most essential to consider that both of these texts, despite their apparent differences, make sense in the context of the monastic traditions as they reveal the characteristics of the religious rules concerning monasticism in the various periods of Church history.

The selection from the Rule of St. Benedict which belongs to the first half of the sixth century tells about the rules concerning excommunication for faults

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and it hints the severity of the religious rules of the period. The Rule of St. Benedict was formulated in the first half of the sixth century and it reflects the specific features of the monastic tradition of the period. " If a brother be found contumacious or disobedient, proud or grumbler, or in any way acting contrary to the holy Rule and despising the orders of the seniors, let him, according to the Lord's commandment, be privately admonished once and twice by his seniors. If he do not then amend, let him be publically rebuked before all. But if even then he do not correct himself, let him be subjected to excommunication, if he understands the gravity of this penalty. If, however, he is incorrigible, let him undergo corporal chastisement." (p. 245) According to the Rule of St. Benedict, the extent of excommunication is regulated on the basis of the gravity of the fault committed. The Rule of St. Benedict also forbids the monks from possessing anything as his own. All these aspects of the Rule of St. Benedict point to the religious rules of the monastic life at the particular period of history. In comparison, the Prayer of St. Francis which is cherished by several Christians points to the monastic tradition of the Franciscans in the later period of Church history. Here, the prayer gives vital importance to peace, love, forgiveness, faith, hope, light and joy. The Prayer of St. Francis, which has been attributed to St Francis of Assisi by Franciscan oral tradition, has been able to convey the monastic spirit of the twelfth century and it emphasizes forgiveness and peace within the community and all over the world.

In conclusion, a comparative analysis of the Rule of St. Benedict and the Prayer of St. Francis illustrates the context of the monastic tradition in two important periods of monasticism. Whereas the former suggests the prominence given to the strict observation of the religious rules in the early

years of the sixth century, the Prayer of St. Francis hints an important change in the attitudes toward these rules where peace, love, forgiveness, faith etc are given more importance. Therefore, despite their apparent differences, both of these texts make sense in the context of their monastic traditions and they give an important explanation of how monasticism fits into the Christian tradition generally.

Work Cited

World Religions: Western Tradition.