

Christology According Anselm
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Introduction

Much is written on Anselm's ontological argument for the greatness of God, but "virtually no published book in English" addressing Anselm's Christology exists.¹ Authors concur that the works of Anselm are enduring treatises on the subject of Christ's birth, sinless life, and death that paid the price for man's sin.² Woven within works dealing with his ontological argument are commentaries on his Christology. This paper deals primarily with Anselm's writings, but also includes portions of these commentaries on his greatest contribution, his Christology.

This paper seeks to examine Anselm's Christology as revealed in three of his most notable works: *On the Incarnation of the Word*, *Why God Became Man*, and *On the Virgin Conception and Original Sin*. Each of these works originates out of a reaction against what Anselm perceived to be heresy. His arguments are based solely on reason. Gerald Phelan states, "No more vigorous defender of human reason ever lived than St. Anselm of Canterbury."³ He weaves a combination of experience, intellect, reason, and Scripture together as the impetus by which man can ascertain these truths. He seems to have little regard for the weaker minds, yet is patient to delineate each doctrine. Overall Anselm's arguments are consistent with the testimony of Scripture. He defaults on several occasions to Catholic Dogma, but nonetheless presents a powerful defense for the faith from the viewpoint of a reasonable argument.

¹Daniel Deme, *The Christology of Anselm of Canterbury* (London: Ashgate, 2003), ix.

²John D. Hannah, "Anselm on the Doctrine of Atonement," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 135 (Oct – Dec 1978): 333.

³Gerald Phelan, *The Wisdom of Saint Anselm* (Latrobe: Archabbey Press, 1960), 1.

Anselm and Reason

Anselm was born in 1033 at Aosta, Italy and died in Canterbury, England in 1109.⁴ At twenty-seven years of age Anselm became monk of the Abbey of Bec.⁵ Seven days a week, he would read the Psalms so that it was voiced in its entirety every week. By the age of 45 he had read aloud the full Psalter over nine hundred times.⁶ His devotional emphasis did not hinder him from a willingness to deal with the hard questions concerning Christ.⁷ Anselm's mark on history is twofold: first, his ontological argument for the existence of God; second, his satisfaction theory of atonement.⁸ He continues to attract readers today "by the attractiveness of a fundamental confidence in faith, coupled with a willingness to discuss any knotty problem with an open reasonableness and evident enjoyment."⁹ To his peers, Anselm was more than a scholar; he was a man of deep devotion to his Lord. Evans notes that the chief principles guiding Anselm's life included "striving with all one's heart to seek God," and the "abandonment of self-

⁴R. W. Church, *Saint Anselm* (London: MacMillan, 1879), 8. R. W. Southern notes, "When Anselm died seventy-six years later all these landmarks had been moved. The Greek Empire was territorially only a shadow of its former self It can scarcely be too strongly emphasized that the span of Anselm's life covered one of the most momentous periods of change in European history, comparable to the centuries of the Reformation and the Industrial Revolution." See, R. W. Southern, *Saint Anselm: A Portrait in a Landscape* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 4.

⁵ Paul M. Van Buren, "Anselm's Formula and the Logic of God," *Religious Studies* 9 (Summer, 1973): 279.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷Gillian Rosemary Evans, "St. Anselm and Knowing God," *Journal of Theological Studies* 28 (October 1977): 430. G. R. Evans notes, "In this time he read, and continued to read, the works of the Fathers, of which the growing library at Bec had a good supply, particularly Augustine. His intellectual horizons expanded into the field of speculative theology. During the same period he became familiar with the Scriptures, both by reading and through the liturgy, in a way which was new to him . . . he reflected constantly on the most puzzling and obscure questions about the being and nature of God and about the faith." See, G. R. Evans, *Anselm* (Wilton: Morehouse-Barlow, 1989), 5.

⁸Stephen R. Holmes, "The Upholding of Beauty: A Reading of Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo*," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 54 (2001): 189. His ontological argument is summarized as "that than which a greater cannot be conceived" See, Ian Davie, "Anselm's Argument Reassessed," *Downside Review* 112 (April 1994): 103.

⁹Evans, *Anselm*, ix.

will in loving obedience.”¹⁰ He was, arguably, “the greatest Christian bishop, the greatest religious example of his age.”¹¹ His passion for godliness is evident in the writings examined in this work.

Anselm, although yielding to biblical authority, sought to prove his position in each work by reason alone.¹² It should be understood that in the monastic life, especially at Bec, reason “was considered in terms supplied by Scripture and by the broader Christian tradition.”¹³ He notes that his appeal to reason is due to the absence of perceived value of God’s Word on behalf of the unregenerate.¹⁴ Anselm states, “The authority of Sacred Scripture is not a sufficient response to such persons, since they either do not believe in Scripture or interpret it in a perverse sense.”¹⁵ His aim of reason was to demonstrate the rationality of God becoming man in order to explain the possibility of mankind’s salvation.¹⁶

¹⁰Evans, *Anselm*, 9.

¹¹Church, *Saint Anselm*, 287.

¹²Gillian Evans notes, “It is a fundamental and often repeated principle of his thought that everything we can know about God is acceptable to reason. Reason is implanted in man precisely so that he can accept such commonsense arguments about God with pleasurable recognition of their rightness and fitness” See, Gillian R. Evans, “The Cur Deus Homo: The Nature of St. Anselm’s Appeal to Reason,” *Studia Theologica* 31 (1977): 33.

¹³Scott Matthews, *Reason, Community and Religious Tradition* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), 15.

¹⁴Brian Davis and G. R. Evans, eds., *Anselm of Canterbury: The Major Works* (Oxford: Oxford Press, 1998), 238. Gregory Schufreider states, “Anselm must provide an interpretation, or at least an indication, of how he thinks reasoning works insofar as he can no longer assume the good faith of dialecticians or assume that they see reason as an element in the ascent to the vision of God.” See, Gregory Schufreider, *Confessions of a Rational Mystic: Anselm’s Early Writings* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1994), 245.

¹⁵Brian Davis and G. R. Evans, eds., *Anselm of Canterbury: The Major Works* (Oxford: Oxford Press, 1998), 238.

¹⁶Davis and Evans, eds., *Anselm of Canterbury*, x.

Anselm did not assert that man's limited mind could fully comprehend the infinite mind of God.¹⁷ He states, "But if he cannot understand, let him not toss his horns in strife but let him bow his head in reverence."¹⁸ Anselm's reason based argument did not eliminate the faith element in understanding truth.¹⁹ Anselm notes the multiplicity of problems that arise when one sets out to reason about the nature and work of Christ.²⁰ He simply sought to move his audience to understand that all pertaining to Christ is the rational basis of how salvation must occur.²¹

On the Incarnation

In response to his nemesis, Roscelin, Anselm writes this work in order to clarify his Trinitarian position. Stanley Kane notes that Anselm uses ordinary language of the day, writings of Scripture, and church dogma on which to base his reasonable argument.²² *On the Incarnation* was worked out over a period of three to four years.²³ Roscelin posited that if the Father, Son,

¹⁷Gregory Schufreider states, "Anselm's visionary epistemology stresses the human mind's active struggle to elevate its thinking to God by means of those formations of rational thought that allow it to entertain a likeness of the thing itself, while at the same time exploiting the passive determination of thought by reality in its inner vision of things, in the case in point, in the partial illuminations of the inner eye of the mind that the God of truth continues to impart while we await the end of history." See, Gregory Schufreider, *Confessions of a Rational Mystic*, 245.

¹⁸Anselm in David S. Hogg, *Anselm of Canterbury: The Beauty of Theology* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 98. Hogg notes, "And yet, we see that reason is applied to that which is revealed, and that which reason cannot comprehend is not the cause of doubt and apostasy, but of a return to faith and submissive reverence" 98.

¹⁹Phelan, *The Wisdom of Saint Anselm*, 1. He states, "Yet no one has ever more vehemently asserted the necessity of faith as the prerequisite condition for the achievement of rational knowledge."

²⁰Fredrick Sontag, "Anselm and the Concept of God," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 35 (1982): 218.

²¹Michael Root, "Necessity and Unfittingness in Anselm's Cur Deus Homo," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 40 (1997): 213.

²²Stanley G. Kane, "Anselm's Definition of Freedom," *Religious Studies* 9 (Summer 1973): 299. G. R. Evans notes, "If at several periods of his life Anselm was required to defend the orthodox view of the Trinity before shrewd scholars, we may take it that he frequently found himself explaining the doctrine to his monks, too, in the course of his pastoral duties. Accordingly, he seems to have provided his listeners within the community with comparatively simple, concrete, pictorial images, or models, and defended himself against the reported attacks of Roscelin by means of abstract conceptual imagery at an altogether different level." See, G. R. Evans, "Saint Anselm's Images of Trinity," *Journal of Theological Studies* 27 (April 1976): 48.

and Spirit were not three separate “things,” but one, then each of them by their oneness would have need to be incarnate just like the Son.²⁴ Anselm appeals to the authority of the church, indicating that it is not in anyone’s prerogative to argue against the doctrine of the church, but to investigate the nature of such doctrines.²⁵ Marylou Rudd notes that Anselm may have hoped “a meeting with the pope could very well bring Rome’s support to the archbishop in the ongoing conflict by ensuring Anselm’s primatial or legatine powers.”²⁶ For Anselm, it was acceptable, even encouraged of one to ask questions in regards to doctrine, but wholly unacceptable to question the doctrine of the church.

Anselm’s criticism of Roscelin increases throughout his defense of right doctrine. He indicates that Roscelin’s beliefs about the Trinity are indicators that he is unregenerate.²⁷ Coloman Viola notes, “He shows also – in Roscelin’s case – how the autonomous and absolute use of dialectic can lead its masters to grave errors even in their own field so that he calls them ‘*dialecticae haeretici*’: heretics of dialect.”²⁸ Evans notes that Anselm first received word of Roscelin’s attack on the doctrine of the Trinity from John the Monk who indicated that the nature

²³Southern, *Saint Anselm*, 179. Eadmer, Anselm’s biographer, wrote, “The *De Incarnatione Verbi* had been started as an answer to Roscelin’s Trinitarian heresy before Anselm left Bec. Anselm began revising and adding to it in the winter of 1092 during his enforced leisure in England awaiting an interview with the king on the business of the abbey; and he completed it as archbishop in 1093-4” See, Eadmer, *The Life of Saint Anselm*, Trans. R. W. Southern (New York: Thomas Nelson, 1962), 72.

²⁴Davis and Evans, eds., *Anselm of Canterbury*, viii.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 235.

²⁶Marylou Rudd, “Unworthy Servants: The Rhetoric of Resignation at Canterbury, 1070-1170,” *The Journal of Religious History* 22 (Fall, 1998): 5.

²⁷Davis and Evans, eds., *Anselm of Canterbury*, 236-41.

²⁸Coloman Etienne Viola, “Authority and Reason in Saint Anselm’s Life and Thought,” in D. E. Luscombe and G. R. Evans, eds. *Anselm Aosta, Bec and Canterbury* (Sheffield: Sheffield Press, 1996), 206.

of the attack formed the manner in which Anselm responded.²⁹ Mews notes that John the Monk's desire was for an authoritative voice to speak to the city in which no voice of authority could be found at that time.³⁰

Anselm addresses the issue by speaking of the Son and the Father while implying that what applies to these two will also apply to the Spirit.³¹ His notations of the Spirit sometimes seem to diminish His deity, but this is obviously not Anselm's view. Roscelin asserts that if God is one then he had to be incarnated in all three persons.³² Southern notes that if this argument is true then the reverse also applies, namely if only the Son was incarnate then each member of the Trinity must be three distinct things.³³

The basis of Anselm's argument is that the relationships in the Trinity are "unity of substance and plurality of persons".³⁴ A. I. C. Heron notes that the foundational premise of Anselm's argument is a continual emphasis on the unity of the Trinity, while understanding how God can be both three and one.³⁵ He distinguishes between substance and persons by using the

²⁹Evans, "Saint Anselm's Images of Trinity," 50. Southern notes, "It was about 1089, that Anselm first heard that Roscelin had produced a logical consequence of the doctrine of the Trinity, for which he claimed the support of both Lanfranc and Anselm. What made his claim peculiarly embarrassing was that there was a grain of truth in it; and Roscelin was not a man easy to meet in friendly discussion." See, Southern, *Saint Anselm: A Portrait in a Landscape*, 175. C. J. Mews records the words of John the Monk to Anselm, "We know for sure, venerable father, truly we know that your insight proceeds by solving even those knotty problems of Scripture at which most others fail. Therefore your diligence should not be reluctant to write to me and certain others what faith, simple prudence and prudent simplicity thinks about the three persons of the godhead for the common good of catholic Christians" See, C. J. Mews, "St. Anselm, Roscelin, and the See of Beauvais," in D. E. Luscombe and G. R. Evans, eds. *Anselm Aosta, Bec and Canterbury* (Sheffield: Sheffield Press, 1996), 107.

³⁰Mews, "St. Anselm, Roscelin, and the See of Beauvais," 108.

³¹Davis and Evans, eds., *Anselm of Canterbury*, 238.

³²Deme, *The Christology of Anselm*, 139.

³³Southern, *Saint Anselm: A Portrait in a Landscape*, 177.

³⁴Davis and Evans, eds., *Anselm of Canterbury*, 238.

³⁵A. I. C. Heron, "Who Proceedeth from the Father and the Son: The Problem of Filioque," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 24 (May 1971): 154.

terms “common” and “proper.”³⁶ Included in their commonality are their deity, power, and eternity. Their proper characteristics are displayed in their individual uniqueness as Father and Son. They are not two things in regard to their substance for their substance is that which is common. Evans notes, “When we use the word ‘God’ we understand it to signify that which is common to all the persons, such as omnipotence, eternity.”³⁷ The Father and the Son are two things in regards to their relations, but still remain one in regards to their substance.

Anselm’s argument based on reason states that a father is never the father of himself, nor is a son the son of his self, but both the father is one person and the son is one person.³⁸ If indeed there is no uniqueness of Father and Son and the Father became flesh with the Son, Anselm argues that what is common to all within the Trinity is equal with what is proper to each.³⁹ Evans states, “God is one in number as he is in nature or substance, and so though ‘Father’ and ‘Son’ are two, they are predicated of a single substance which is God.”⁴⁰ Further, if they are deity because of their individuality and not commonality, then there is by necessity three gods.⁴¹ Evans notes that Anselm had to produce a defense for sound doctrine that was clear and simple, so he initially set out to demonstrate the absurdity of Roscelin’s claims.⁴²

³⁶Davis and Evans, eds., *Anselm of Canterbury*, 239. Roscelin states, “If he says, ‘the three persons are only one thing, and there are not three things, each intrinsically distinct, like three angels or three souls, so that they are nonetheless completely one and the same in will and power, then the Father and the Holy Spirit became flesh with the Son’” (238).

³⁷Evans, *Anselm*, 58.

³⁸Davis and Evans, eds., *Anselm of Canterbury*, 239.

³⁹Ibid., 243

⁴⁰Evans, *Anselm*, 59.

⁴¹Davis and Evans, eds., *Anselm of Canterbury*, 245.

⁴²Evans, *Anselm*, 58.

The argument continues with Anselm specifically addressing Roscelin's heresy that the unity of the Trinity would require the incarnation of the Father and the Spirit.⁴³ Anselm notes, "When God respecting one person became flesh, it was nevertheless not necessary that the same God respecting the other persons become flesh."⁴⁴ Deme concurs stating that Anselmian Christology clearly maintains that only the Son became flesh, but that the incarnation occurred with the cooperation of the Father and the Spirit.⁴⁵ The first flaw in Roscelin's view is that if there are three gods, he has no way of showing how they exist separately.⁴⁶ Anselm later continues this same argument with an emphasis on the impossibility of multiple eternities. The second flaw is based on the premise that God, by definition, is the supreme good. Three gods cannot equally be the supreme good. "For if there are several supreme goods, they are equal. But the supreme good is the good that surpasses other goods, so that it has neither an equal nor anything that surpasses it."⁴⁷ Each of these arguments diverted from Anselm's original intent. He originally intended to only show that "only a single person of the Trinity could be incarnate," but Roscelin's attacks made it necessary for him to go deeper in the argument.⁴⁸

Anselm concludes that the distinction between Father and Son is not in regards to their substance for they are of the same substance.⁴⁹ This issue of one substance is where Roscelin

⁴³Davis and Evans, eds., *Anselm of Canterbury*, 246.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Deme, *The Christology of Anselm of Canterbury*, 138.

⁴⁶Davis and Evans, eds., *Anselm of Canterbury*, 248.

⁴⁷Ibid., 248.

⁴⁸Southern, *Saint Anselm*, 180.

⁴⁹Davis and Evans, eds., *Anselm of Canterbury*, 249.

could not escape his view of the necessity for the Father to become flesh.⁵⁰ Anselm argues that it is possible for one person to become flesh while the other did not. Deme notes that the capacity to become man exclusively belongs to the Son, which highlights the soteriological necessity of the Son becoming man.⁵¹ He notes, “The Son assumed a human being in the unity of his person not in the unity of his substance.”⁵² There is no room in Anselm’s Christology for the creation of a third type of being. Evans notes that Anselm’s argument shows that if Roscelin is correct, then “The Father would be the grandson of the parents of the Virgin and his Son would be the grandson of the Virgin as well as her son.”⁵³ Anselm also argues for the appropriateness of the Son’s incarnation as opposed to the Father or the Spirit becoming incarnate based on several factors including the hierarchy of origin in the relationships and the unity of the will of the Son.⁵⁴ Deme states the “power or will do not belong to the Father or the Son according to their proper characteristics, so that there is not any paternal or filial personal will.”⁵⁵ In this view the wills are not separate, but the Son’s is submissive to that of the Father’s will. It is reasonable that the functional submission within the proper roles of the Trinity is a Son to a Father.

⁵⁰Ibid., 249.

⁵¹Deme, *The Christology of Anselm of Canterbury*, 138.

⁵²Davis and Evans, eds., *Anselm of Canterbury*, 249. Deme states, “The solution to the problem is found again in God’s relational and substantial differentiation. The Son of God could not become the Son of woman with regard to his substantial being, because he assumed a human nature into his divine person, not into his divine substance. Such an act would make him a man-god, something that is the opposite of the God-Man in Christ. If he became flesh in his substantial unity there would be no way in which one could see the Father and the Spirit as participating in this even on the same level as the Son does. The Son became man only as one of the three eternal divine self-relations, not confused with the other two, nor was he cut off from their common essence.” See, Deme, *The Christology of Anselm*, 139.

⁵³Evans, *Anselm*, 60.

⁵⁴Davis and Evans, eds., *Anselm of Canterbury*, 252.

⁵⁵Deme, *The Christology of Anselm of Canterbury*, 132.

The next of Roscelin's heresies addressed by Anselm is Roscelin's view that since there was the person of the Son and the person of the Man that the incarnation produced two persons.⁵⁶ Anselm argues that there are several natures in the one person, namely a divine nature and a human nature, which are in one person.⁵⁷ Evans notes that Anselm utilizes an image of the Trinity that was commonly used in patristic analogies, especially that of Augustine.⁵⁸ He utilizes an analogy from the Nile existing in three separate names: "source," "river," "delta."⁵⁹ Each of the three is called the Nile. He states, "Therefore, we here predicate one thing of three things, and three things of one thing, and yet not the three things of one another."⁶⁰ Rosemary indicates that Anselm's argument was a necessary means of communicating his doctrine in his day, but also that Anselm meant this analogy to go no further than an "illuminating approximation."⁶¹ His line of reason states that if such a relationship is evident in created, temporal things, how far greater the possibility that it exists in things unlimited by temporality.

Anselm next appeals to the eternity of God in order to demonstrate by reason His oneness.⁶² He notes that there cannot be multiple eternities and if there are multiple Gods a necessity for multiple eternities would exist.⁶³ He continues this same line of argument in regards

⁵⁶Davis and Evans, eds., *Anselm of Canterbury*, 252.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 253.

⁵⁸Evans, *Anselm*, 60.

⁵⁹Davis and Evans, eds., *Anselm of Canterbury*, 255.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, 256.

⁶¹Rosemary, "St. Anselm's Images of Trinity," 46. Rosemary further notes, "The extension of the image, however, seems to have led him into difficulties. It was Anselm's practice to avoid the dangers of over extension always inherent in the use of analogies, by taking care to match his analogy closely with his subject as far as it would go, and then to stop" 52.

⁶²Davis and Evans, eds., *Anselm of Canterbury*, 257.

⁶³*Ibid.*, 257.

to one omnipotence. He concludes *On the Incarnation of the Word* noting that God possesses an “inseparable plurality” in regard to the Trinitarian relations, but asserts that God is one person, the Son is one person, and the Spirit is one person [by implication], distinct in person and unified in substance.⁶⁴ Deme notes that Anselm follows the traditional view that Jesus was constituted of a “divine person and a divine nature which can never be separated and an assumed human nature that must be clearly distinguished from the divine.”⁶⁵

Why God Became Man

Anselm now addresses, before Pope Urban II, the reasons why God became man.⁶⁶ He divides his argument into two books. The first book presents answers to those who reject Christianity as illogical. The second book appeals to the logical nature of man’s need for the God-man as a result of the purpose for which man was created as well as the logical fact that God’s act appeared to be the only solution to man’s need. Deme notes, “The very aim of the *Cur Deus Homo* [is] to show that nobody else could have acted as Jesus Christ did than the impassible God himself.”⁶⁷ This presentation is couched in a fictional dialogue between Anselm and Boso. Boso is presented as an unregenerate person who is less than educated in these

⁶⁴Ibid., 258-59. Anselm states, “For as God is necessarily always one and the same, and not one and another, so, by reason of these relations, the Father is never the same as his Son, nor the one who proceeds the same as the one from whom he proceeds. Rather, the Father is always one person, and the Son another, and the one who proceeds one person, and the one from whom he proceeds another, nor can they ever be predicated of one another. Therefore, since neither the divine substance can lose singularity, nor the divine relations plurality, when God is generated from God, or God proceeds from God, one thing in God is thus three, and three things are one, and yet the three things are not predicated of one another. Nor should it be incredible that there is in the substance that is superior to everything and dissimilar to everything else something whose imitation cannot be found perfectly in other things” (258-59).

⁶⁵Deme, *The Christology of Anselm of Canterbury*, 151.

⁶⁶Davis and Evans, eds., *Anselm of Canterbury*, 260.

⁶⁷Deme, *The Christology of Anselm of Canterbury*, 59. Schufreider notes, “With respect to the *Cur Deus Homo*, a text whose radical rational theology presumes to demonstrate the necessity of a God-Man not just *sola ratione* but *remoto Christo* – that is, without reference to Christ, “as if he had never been heard of” – Anselm finds himself defending the right of reason to be employed in theological matters” See Schufreider, *Confessions of a Rational Mystic*, 240.

matters.⁶⁸ He believes that the doctrine of God is under attack by unbelievers because it mocks the very nature of God.⁶⁹

Anselm presents God's plan of redemption through the incarnation.⁷⁰ John Hannah states that Anselm's focus on the redemptive plan of God in Christ is only on His death, rather than, like the Reformers, on His life and death.⁷¹ Further, Anselm sees the God-man providing satisfaction, thus the incarnation cannot be divided from the redemptive work of Christ.⁷² It is noteworthy that Anselm uses far less technical language in this work than in *On the Incarnation of the Word*. Twenty five issues constitute the dialogue in Book I. The pivotal question from which all others originate is, "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 through the agency of some other person, angelic or human, or simply by willing it?"⁷³ It does not imply unreasonableness or a lack of power if God could not redeem man any other way. Fairweather contends that Anselm's answers throughout the *Cur Deus Homo* are strictly conformed to patristic writings.⁷⁴

⁶⁸Davis and Evans, eds., *Anselm of Canterbury*, 265-66.

⁶⁹Hogg, *Anselm of Canterbury*, 35.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, 158.

⁷¹John D. Hannah, "Anselm on the Doctrine of Atonement," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 135 (October – December 1978): 341.

⁷²*Ibid.*

⁷³Davis and Evans, eds., *Anselm of Canterbury*, 265. Regarding the use of reason, Hogg notes, "The *Cur Deus Homo* is thoroughly rooted in Christian presuppositions. Its arguments, its progression of thought, its content, are intended to be criticized and studied from within that same context. Any attempt to shift the ground of examination, whether through anachronistic interpretation or modern philosophical speculation, will inevitably result in deracinating its constituent elements." See, Hogg, *Anselm of Canterbury*, 159.

⁷⁴Eugene R. Fairweather, "Incarnation and Atonement: An Anselmian Response to Aulen's *Christus Victor*," *Canadian Journal of Theology* 7 (July 1961): 172.

In the initial stages of the dialogue Anselm seems tentative to even engage in the discussion, fearing he will paint an unjust picture of God's perfect plan.⁷⁵ His first line of argument is the appropriateness of life being restored to the human race through one man's obedience, just as it was destroyed through one man's disobedience.⁷⁶ Anselm, although tentative in his initial presentation of this argument, commends his work to God, thus demonstrating his belief that if God were to measure the validity of his doctrine, God would authorize it as consistent with revelation.⁷⁷ Boso does not consider Anselm's arguments valid for they are not "fitting" with the nature of God.⁷⁸

The response to the proposal that God could have created another human being like Adam to redeem mankind is refuted on the grounds that if this were so, mankind would be indebted to someone who was not God.⁷⁹ Evans notes, "He points out that if a man saves another's life, that man is rightly considered thenceforth to be his servant."⁸⁰ This type of hierarchy seems to play a prominent role in Anselm's Christology. Another dilemma of the unredeemed is the appearance that God was powerless against sin, since He could not reconcile man any other way.⁸¹ Also, if there was another way and God did not take it, there seemed to be an issue with the validity of His wisdom. In response, Anselm contends that God did not use His power to defeat the devil for "there was nothing in the devil . . . which made God obliged not to

⁷⁵Davis and Evans, eds., *Anselm of Canterbury*, 266.

⁷⁶Ibid., 268.

⁷⁷Schufreider, *Confessions of a Rational Mystic*, 242.

⁷⁸Root, "Necessity and Unfittingness in Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo*," 212.

⁷⁹Davis and Evans, eds., *Anselm of Canterbury*, 270.

⁸⁰Evans, "The *Cur Deus Homo*: The Nature of Anselm's Appeal," 39.

⁸¹Davis and Evans, eds., *Anselm of Canterbury*, 271.

use his mighty power against him for the purpose of liberating mankind”.⁸² Within this entire argument, Boso remains steadfast in his contention that there is an apparent indignity in God reducing Himself to the confinements of a virgin’s womb and growing up to suffer common physical needs like other men.⁸³

Boso proceeds with his assertion that the incarnation is irrational. This claim is one of many examples where Boso seems to speak on the behalf of the reader, as if he is voicing to Anselm what others are really thinking.⁸⁴ Anselm replies that all God does is logical.⁸⁵ He further stipulates that the humility of God’s suffering was not in terms of His deity, but rather in terms of his humanity.⁸⁶ Anselm contends that God was not humiliated in the incarnation, but rather humanity was exalted.⁸⁷ He notes in response to the confusion of how a loving God could allow such infliction to come upon his Son, that Christ volitionally endured the cross in order to save mankind, out of an obedience that was not forced, but rather upheld His own righteousness.⁸⁸ His death portrayed the unity of the Trinity’s choice to display His power through death.⁸⁹ The issue of His obedience is solved by the fact that a rational being voluntarily does that which has been received by God.⁹⁰ “For absolute and true obedience is that which

⁸²Davis and Evans, eds., *Anselm of Canterbury*, 274.

⁸³Evans, *Anselm*, 72.

⁸⁴Evans, “The Cur Deus Homo: The Nature of Anselm’s Appeal,” 47.

⁸⁵Davis and Evans, eds., *Anselm of Canterbury*, 274.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*, 275.

⁸⁷*Ibid.*

⁸⁸Davis and Evans, eds., *Anselm of Canterbury*, 278. Anselm notes, “Rather the Apostle’s saying is so phrased in the light of the fact that Christ, along with the Father and the Holy Spirit, had determined that the way in which he would demonstrate the exaltedness of his omnipotence would be none other than through his death” (278).

⁸⁹*Ibid.*

⁹⁰*Ibid.*, 280.

occurs when a rational being, not under compulsion but voluntarily, keeps to a desire which has been received from God.”⁹¹

The issue proceeds to the rationality behind God forgiving man’s sin. Anselm defines sin as “nothing other than not to give God what is owed to him.”⁹² Robert Strimple notes that when Anselm referred to ‘debt’ or ‘owe,’ he was referring to the will of every creature owing submission to the will of God.⁹³ Root notes, “For Anselm, sin is the non-uprightness of the will. It is the refusal to praise and honor God as a moral creature should.”⁹⁴ Boso poses the issue of the mercy of God being enough to forgive man without any restitution paid to God.⁹⁵ Anselmian Christology states, “Forgiveness by mere fiat would be a contradiction and a disruption of God’s moral government of the universe.”⁹⁶ Anselm notes that without punishment, the position of the sinner and non-sinner is the same before God.⁹⁷ Hunter Brown states, “The human being’s purpose in life is to represent God in Creation. Humanity has deliberately disregarded this vocation.”⁹⁸ This act resulted not only in man being declared a sinner but also in man not paying

⁹¹Davis and Evans, eds., *Anselm of Canterbury*, 280.

⁹²Ibid., 283.

⁹³Robert B. Strimple, “St. Anselm’s Cur Deus Homo and John Calvin’s Doctrine of the Atonement,” in D. E. Lunscombe and G. R. Evans, *Anselm Aosta, Bec, and Canterbury* (Sheffield: Sheffield, 1996), 348.

⁹⁴ Root, “Necessity and Unfittingness,” 221.

⁹⁵Davis and Evans, eds., *Anselm of Canterbury*, 284.

⁹⁶ Strimple in Luscombe, *Anselm*, 349.

⁹⁷Davis and Evans, eds., *Anselm of Canterbury*, 284. Martin Werner states, “He develops the theory that the divine mercy could forgive the guilt of sinful man only if, for man and in his stead (man being incapable thereof), a sinless God-Man should by his voluntary surrender to death make reparation for the wounding of God’s honor through man’s sin and thus satisfy divine justice.” See, Martin Werner, “The Atonement as Moral Example,” *Christian Century* 78 (October 1961): 1232.

⁹⁸Hunter Brown, “Anselm’s Cur Deus Homo Revisited,” *Eglise Et Theologie* 25 (1994): 190. Brown also notes, “For God to refrain from reacting would essentially dissolve any difference between good and evil” 196.

the honor that was due to God.⁹⁹ The foundational human offense, in Anselmian Christology, was a violation of the honor God deserved.¹⁰⁰ If sin is not punished, it is not subject to the law. God is the only one not subject to law, therefore unpunished sin would resemble God.¹⁰¹ If sin is not punished or the honor taken from God not repaid, either God is not just or is without power to enforce His law.¹⁰² Symeon Rodger states, “Anselm’s theory requires an atoning work to be carried out by a man who is free from sin and guilt and who, therefore, can offer an acceptable sacrifice to God.”¹⁰³ That man, by reason, had to be the God-man.

He moves next to the issue of mankind’s salvation without recompense.¹⁰⁴ He notes that it is not fitting for a man to be allowed into heaven without paying recompense.¹⁰⁵ Southern notes, “The principle that God did whatever was most ‘fitting’ became one of the hallmarks of the Anselmian school.”¹⁰⁶ Boso objects to Anselm’s argument indicating that the mere issue of ‘fittingness’ places a limitation on God’s freedom.¹⁰⁷ He notes that creation is in debt to God and

⁹⁹Holmes, “The Upholding of Beauty,” 196. Holmes states, “The world and every creature in it exist to honour God; this is so much their purpose that, as Anselm and Boso discuss, it would be better that the universe cease to be than for one glance to be cast contrary to God’s will. Sin dishonours God, not in the sense of detracting from his actual dignity in himself, but in the sense of preventing or perverting the honouring of God that is the centre or height of the order to creation.”

¹⁰⁰Ibid., 193.

¹⁰¹Davis and Evans, eds., *Anselm of Canterbury*, 284.

¹⁰²Ibid., 287.

¹⁰³Symeon Rodger, “The Soteriology of Anselm of Canterbury, An Orthodox Perspective,” *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 34 (Spring 1989): 19.

¹⁰⁴Davis and Evans, eds., *Anselm of Canterbury*, 300.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., 301.

¹⁰⁶Southern, *Saint Anselm: A Portrait*, 181.

¹⁰⁷Root, “Necessity and Unfittingness in Anselm’s *Cur Deus Homo*,” 222.

any other way than the payment of recompense would cause him to deal with God as an equal.¹⁰⁸ He further notes that the recompense should be proportional to the magnitude of the sin.¹⁰⁹ The magnitude of sin is such that it cannot be paid by man for “one sinner cannot make another sinner righteous”.¹¹⁰ Anselm notes that the Son paid the honor that was due to the Father on behalf of mankind.¹¹¹ “Man, therefore, neither ought nor can receive from God what God planned to give him, unless man returns to God all that he has taken away from him.”¹¹² His reasoned argument leads to a polemic for the necessity, from man’s view, to be saved only by Christ. With this conclusion, book one ends.¹¹³

Book Two begins with the foundation that man was created righteous in order that his rational nature might find happiness through rejoicing in God. Two possible arguments flow from God’s creative purpose for man. Either God will complete what He has done or it was for no reason that he created man.¹¹⁴ The issue of the necessity of salvation is addressed in regards to whether it was a necessity for God or rather compulsory.¹¹⁵ Root states, “God is free to create or

¹⁰⁸Davis and Evans, eds., *Anselm of Canterbury*, 302.

¹⁰⁹*Ibid.*, 303.

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*, 309.

¹¹¹George Huntston Williams, “The Sacramental Presuppositions of Anselm’s *Cur Deus Homo*,” *Church History* 26 (Summer 1957): 264.

¹¹²Davis and Evans, eds., *Anselm of Canterbury*, 309.

¹¹³Root notes, “What Boso does not realize is that from this point all is downhill. Anselm has derived the necessary elements of the proposition that show the necessity of incarnation and crucifixion. A satisfaction is required (otherwise an impossible unfittingness is introduced into the Heavenly City) that only humanity should pay (otherwise an impossible unfittingness is introduced into the Heavenly City) and only God can pay (a satisfaction any creature could provide, besides being already owed to God, would be less than proportional to sin and thus introduce an unfittingness into the Heavenly city).” See Root, “Necessity and Unfittingness,” 226.

¹¹⁴Davis and Evans, eds., *Anselm of Canterbury*, 317.

¹¹⁵Phelan, *The Wisdom of Anselm*, 31. Phelan states, “Aware that the term ‘necessary’ is in danger of being misunderstood, St. Anselm takes pains to explain his meaning. ‘Wherever the term ‘necessity’ is used in relation to God,’ he says, ‘it is used in an improper sense. God is in no way obliged or forced to do anything, or prevented or

not create humanity with certain destiny. Nevertheless, once the divine intention is set, the action required to carry out that intention necessarily follows.”¹¹⁶ Anselm notes that God will complete what He has started, not for His sake but for man’s sake, since God is in need of nothing.¹¹⁷ Any necessity by which He acts is of necessity to uphold that which is honorable.¹¹⁸

The conclusion is reached that no one but one who is God and man is able to bring about the recompense. He notes the price is one in which no one should pay but man and no one can pay but God, therefore it is necessary that the God-Man should pay it.¹¹⁹ Anselm states, “But this cannot come about unless there should be someone who would make a payment to God greater than everything that exists apart from God.”¹²⁰ A. C. Welch notes, “Yet no man can render due satisfaction, for the debt is practically infinite, and nothing which a finite being can render is commensurate with it.”¹²¹ Deme asserts that even if it had been placed on man to repay his debt, man has nothing to offer God as a satisfactory means of payment.¹²² It should be noted that this was not some sort of ransom to Satan theory. Rodger notes, “Any notion that the ransom paid by

impeded from doing anything. Properly speaking, necessity refers to all other things. That is to say, there is a necessity prohibiting them from acting or constraining them not to act against that which is said of God. Things are because God willed them to be. Because God always preserves truth and does nothing irrational, nothing outside of God can in any way show that these things are or are not true.’ Necessity does not mean that God was necessitated to do these things; it means rather that of necessity other things cannot be contrary to God or to what He has said or done or made.” Anselm in Phelan, *The Wisdom of Anselm*, 31-32.

¹¹⁶Root, “Necessity and Unfittingness,” 228.

¹¹⁷Davis and Evans, eds., *Anselm of Canterbury*, 319.

¹¹⁸*Ibid.*, 319.

¹¹⁹*Ibid.*, 320.

¹²⁰*Ibid.*, 319.

¹²¹A. C. Welch, *Anselm and His Work* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1901), 175.

¹²²Deme, *The Christology of Anselm of Canterbury*, 60.

Christ on the cross was paid to the devil as some kind of financial transaction has no place in the Anselmian theory.”¹²³

Stemming from this conclusion is the issue of the possibility of a God-Man existing. He notes that there was no change in nature, for this would produce one that is neither God nor man or one that is of a mixed third nature, neither of these options satisfies the requirement for one that can pay the price.¹²⁴ So the same person who is in nature God and man can alone make recompense. He states, “The wholeness of both natures is kept intact”.¹²⁵ Now the issue of God assuming human nature is addressed. Anselm demonstrates that God could not have created another man like Adam that could adequately represent man as a satisfaction to God.¹²⁶ Satisfaction had to be made to God by man.¹²⁷ For God to create a new man, not descended from Adam is to create a new race that is not representative of Adam’s race, therefore he will have no obligation to pay the price for mankind.¹²⁸ Boso thought that God could have just created another man, but this would divide the order of submission in creation established by God.¹²⁹ The man

¹²³Rodger, “Anselm: An Orthodox Perspective,” 39.

¹²⁴Davis and Evans, eds., *Anselm of Canterbury*, 320.

¹²⁵*Ibid.*, 321.

¹²⁶Hannah, “Anselm on the Doctrine of Atonement,” 337.

¹²⁷Strimple, *Anselm, Aosta*, 349. Strimple notes, “The only alternative to this punishment, then, is for the sinner to make satisfaction to God for their sin. This satisfaction must be something above that which God justly demands of the sinner. It will not suffice, therefore, for them merely to bring their entire being—intellect, will, and emotions—back into subjection to God. The person who thinks that they can make satisfaction for their own sin, Anselm writes, has simply ‘not yet considered the heavy weight sin is.’” 349-50.

¹²⁸Davis and Evans, eds., *Anselm of Canterbury*, 321.

¹²⁹Evans, *Anselm*, 74.

through which humanity would be restored had to be taken from Adam.¹³⁰ The man also had to be God.¹³¹

Returning to the question of how God takes human nature upon himself, Anselm notes four methods God makes man: man and woman together, neither man nor woman (Adam), man without woman (Eve), or from a woman without man, which He did in order to prove He was competent to utilize this method as well.¹³² His logical argument is that the sin of mankind originated from a woman, therefore the remedy of sin should be born of a woman.¹³³ Hogg states, “He chose to restore humanity through humanity, in the form of his incarnate Son.”¹³⁴ The capability of the God-Man dying as a consequence of His human nature is solved by noting that he willingly lays down His life in order to honor God, but since He is not a debtor, He is under no obligation.¹³⁵ Anselm notes that just as His life outweighs all the sins of mankind, so does his

¹³⁰Davis and Evans, eds., *Anselm of Canterbury*, 322.

¹³¹Hannah, “Anselm on the Doctrine of Atonement,” 336. Hannah notes, “The sinner’s substitute must be God in order to present a worthy sacrifice, and the substitute must be man in order to restore Adam’s fallen race since this was man’s obligation.” Deme states, “The theological proof of the Cur Deus Homo proves the necessity of a satisfaction through someone who represents the debtor’s side who ought to pay what he owes, and represents also the other side which is able to accomplish such a satisfaction, because he possesses the means of its achievement.” See Deme, *The Christology of Anselm of Canterbury*, 92.

¹³²Davis and Evans, eds., *Anselm of Canterbury*, 323.

¹³³Evans states, “It does not seem to Anselm worth asking whether this was more fittingly to be done from a virgin or not. Besides, it has the symmetry of repairing the damage originally done to the human race by the virgin Eve.” See, Evans, *Anselm*, 80.

¹³⁴Hogg, *Anselm of Canterbury*, 45. Hogg further notes, “What is clear in this magnificent passage is that as integral to the institution of the incarnation as Mary is, she is still an instrument. True, she is honoured because of her place in the economy of redemption, and for this reason Anselm seems comfortable placing her near the apex of a divine progeny which includes all those who believe, but Anselm is careful not to raise her to the rarified heights of Trinitarian activity. It is not what Mary does that captivates Anselm, so much as how she is used and who she produces” 45.

¹³⁵Davis and Evans, eds., *Anselm of Canterbury*, 320.

acceptance of death.¹³⁶ His death was so powerful that its effects extend to those who were absent geographically or temporally.¹³⁷

Anselm returns to the issue of the ability of the God-Man to sin. He notes that Jesus had the capacity to tell lies, but was not able to wish to tell lies.¹³⁸ Holmes notes, “Just as God’s freedom cannot be interpreted in such a way that he is free to lie, so neither his freedom nor his compassion may be interpreted in such a way that he is seen to be unjust.”¹³⁹ He further states that the God-Man was capable of saving His life, but was not capable of wishing to save it.¹⁴⁰ This is what Anselm calls in regards to God’s will “maintaining itself by its own spontaneous unchangeability.”¹⁴¹ Therefore the God-Man could not not die for it was God’s will that he die.¹⁴² This will to die for man was a volitional act on Christ’s part, not a coerced or forced act. Evans states, “We must conclude that Christ willingly underwent death, not obeying any command to give up his life, but going steadily on in justice and willingly taking the consequences.”¹⁴³ Anselm is careful to avoid the concept of “necessity” in relation to his death, but rather emphasizes “the strength of his power alone.”¹⁴⁴ Hannah asserts, “In that Christ died voluntarily,

¹³⁶Ibid., 333.

¹³⁷Ibid., 339.

¹³⁸Ibid., 341.

¹³⁹Holmes, “The Upholding of Beauty,” 196.

¹⁴⁰Davis and Evans, eds., *Anselm of Canterbury*, 341.

¹⁴¹Ibid., 342.

¹⁴²Holmes notes, “It is not that he needed to die, or that he was killed (could he not call down twelve legions of angels?); emphatically, it is not that the Father was looking for someone to punish and lighted upon the God-Man. He offered his life as a gift to the Father.” See Holmes, “The Upholding of Beauty,” 202.

¹⁴³Evans, *Anselm*, 75.

¹⁴⁴Davis and Evans, eds., *Anselm of Canterbury*, 343.

that is, apart from obligation, the results can be meritorious.”¹⁴⁵ Anselm states, “For all necessity, and all impossibility, is subject to his will. Moreover his will is not subject to any necessity or impossibility. For nothing is necessary or impossible for any reason other than that he himself so wills it.”¹⁴⁶ All this dialogue is narrowed down to the issue that His will is unchangeable.¹⁴⁷

Another attempt is made to clarify why another attempt to save mankind was not made, but that Christ died to save mankind. He returns to the will of God noting that what He wishes is what “ought” to be.¹⁴⁸ The incarnation being God’s will for the payment of the sinner’s debt is clearly Anselm’s premise behind the entire argument.¹⁴⁹ The offering was not to anyone but himself. Anselm notes, “He offered up his humanity to his divinity, the one selfsame divinity which belongs to the three persons.”¹⁵⁰ A payment was made for the sins of man.¹⁵¹ Evans notes that the payment not only involved paying what was originally owed, but also a restoration of the honor that belongs to God.¹⁵² It was a payment that Christ made to Himself. Anselm’s Christology makes it clear that this payment was the only means by which man could find salvation from the wrath of God.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁵Hannah, “Anselm on the Doctrine of the Atonement,” 137.

¹⁴⁶Davis and Evans, eds., *Anselm of Canterbury*, 343.

¹⁴⁷Hogg notes, “There in the *Cur Deus Homo* we . . . see the union of the transcendent and the immanent; that which was signified obliquely (to use language from the *De Grammatico*), taking a form which allowed the supreme essence to be signified precisely” See Hogg, *Anselm of Canterbury*, 82.

¹⁴⁸Davis and Evans, eds., *Anselm of Canterbury*, 351.

¹⁴⁹Hannah, “Anselm on the Doctrine of the Atonement,” 337.

¹⁵⁰Davis and Evans, eds., *Anselm of Canterbury*, 351.

¹⁵¹Hannah notes, “The infinite injustice done to Christ by being the Sin-bearer results in infinite merit, so much so that forgiveness can be extended.” See Hannah, “Anselm on the Doctrine of the Atonement,” 338.

¹⁵²Evans, *Anselm*, 76.

¹⁵³Deme, *The Christology of Anselm of Canterbury*, 102.

The issue is now addressed what reward could possibly be given to the Son who is in need of nothing. This dialogue is on the basis that such an act could certainly not go unrewarded. So the Son's reward is bestowed on the recipients of the benefits of His death in order that they may share His reward and imitate Him.¹⁵⁴ The recompense that was paid was for the offense against God and debt was to God not the devil.¹⁵⁵ Evans notes that the recompense "must be something which is greater than every existing thing other than God."¹⁵⁶ Anselm states,

On whom is it more appropriate for him to bestow the reward and recompense for his death than on those for whose salvation, as the logic of truth teaches us, he made himself a man, and for whom, as we have said, he set an example, by his death, of dying for the sake of righteousness? For they will be imitators of him in vain, if they are not to be sharers in his reward.¹⁵⁷

It was God who said "take my Son" and that the God-Man should say "take me and redeem yourself."¹⁵⁸ If there were no reward given for such an act, the work of Christ on the cross would seem in vain.¹⁵⁹

On The Virgin Conception and Original Sin

Anselm leaves the dialogue format and returns to an epistolary method of discussion. He begins by offering a definition of original sin, which he states, "would seem to take its name

¹⁵⁴Davis and Evans, eds., *Anselm of Canterbury*, 353,

¹⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 354.

¹⁵⁶Evans, *Anselm*, 79.

¹⁵⁷Davis and Evans, eds., *Anselm of Canterbury*, 353.

¹⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 354.

¹⁵⁹Strimple, *Anselm, Aosta*, 351. Strimple states, "The death of the God-Man is so precious that it demands a reward. There would seem to be, however, no reward that can be made to this one who, as perfect God, possesses all things. Since the reward must be given, or the work of the God-Man will seem to have been in vain, and since it is impossible for it to be made to him, it is given to men and women, for whom the God-Man died."

form the origin of each human person.”¹⁶⁰ He equates “original” sin with “natural” sin since it is taken up in one’s nature.¹⁶¹ Williams notes that this places the origin of man’s corruption with Adam.¹⁶² “Personal” sin is such that it is the fault of the person.¹⁶³ The corrupt nature originated when man abandoned the justice he had been given.¹⁶⁴ Hannah notes, “The failure of mankind to maintain uprightness of character and therefore his failure to honor God is traced to the account of the Fall.”¹⁶⁵ Williams concurs stating that for Anselm the Fall was a “willful turning from the original uprightness” that belonged to man before the Fall.¹⁶⁶ Anselm notes that sin only exists in the rational will and states that original sin does not exist in infants until they have a rational soul.¹⁶⁷ He postulates that an act is not unjust on its own but must be accompanied by an unjust will. Evil, according to Anselm, is the absence of good that ought to be there. Since Christ was blameless in regards to both natural and personal sin, He alone was sufficiently mankind’s restitution for sin.¹⁶⁸ Evans asserts that Anselm’s Christology allows for the tension that Christ was unable to sin, but deserves praise because he chose not to sin.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁰Davis and Evans, eds., *Anselm of Canterbury*, 359.

¹⁶¹*Ibid.*

¹⁶²Williams, “The Sacramental Presuppositions,” 259.

¹⁶³Davis and Evans, eds., *Anselm of Canterbury*, 359.

¹⁶⁴*Ibid.*, 360.

¹⁶⁵Hannah, “Anselm on the Doctrine of the Atonement,” 335.

¹⁶⁶Williams, “The Sacramental Presuppositions,” 259.

¹⁶⁷Davis and Evans, eds., *Anselm of Canterbury*, 361.

¹⁶⁸Williams, “The Sacramental Presuppositions,” 260.

¹⁶⁹Evans, *Anselm*, 81.

We all sinned in Adam, not because of our actions, but because we were to be born from him.¹⁷⁰ He asserts that the seed itself is not unclean, but that it produced the necessity, when man gains a rational soul, to sin.¹⁷¹ Mankind is called sinful, because it is in the will that man sins, but the embryo has no capacity to will.¹⁷² Williams notes that as a result of this view, Anselm “is able largely to free himself from the idea that original sin is propagated by conjugal concupiscence and to locate man’s sinfulness in his essential being rather than in the manner of his non-angelic propagation.”¹⁷³ All other men were subject to Adam’s sin in that they were born through “the property of generation which was subdued to his will and power”.¹⁷⁴ Kane asserts that Anselm’s view of sin is that it comes from man’s will, which is not the freedom to sin, but rather the ability not to sin.¹⁷⁵

He discusses how sin is not in infants at conception even though they are said to be conceived of impure seed. Infants, according to Anselm, do not have the will to sin at conception, therefore there is no sin in them.¹⁷⁶ The miraculous is not governed by the natural or voluntary laws.¹⁷⁷ Thus the birth from the Virgin was miraculous and not subject to any of the laws by which the necessity for rational man to sin is transmitted. The sinfulness of man from

¹⁷⁰Davis and Evans, eds., *Anselm of Canterbury*, 367.

¹⁷¹*Ibid.*, 361.

¹⁷²*Ibid.*, 362.

¹⁷³Williams, “The Sacramental Presuppositions,” 259.

¹⁷⁴Davis and Evans, eds., *Anselm of Canterbury*, 380.

¹⁷⁵Kane, “Anselm’s Definition of Sin,” 300. Kane further explains, “Hence the sin was committed by a free will. But it was not committed by that will through the particular ability which constitutes its freedom. It just so happens that in Satan and Adam the ability which constitutes freedom is accompanied by a second ability which is independent from it, namely the ability to sin; and, so says Anselm, this second ability neither enhances nor detracts from the first.”

¹⁷⁶Davis and Evans, eds., *Anselm of Canterbury*, 367.

¹⁷⁷*Ibid.*, 372.

birth or conception is called such because of his future impurity when he becomes a rational man.¹⁷⁸ Anselm seems to vacillate on his argument about the nature of children or infants, but concludes “original sin to be simply the sin which is in an infant as soon as he has a rational soul.”¹⁷⁹ If an infant, who was baptized, still does not have a rational soul and dies, he is, “saved through the justice of Christ who gave Himself for them, and the justice of the faith of their mother the Church which keeps the faith for them as if they were just.”¹⁸⁰ Evans notes that only when an infant matures can there be a rational decision to act in original sin, which is foundationally injustice against God.¹⁸¹

This makes it possible that the Son could take something from the Virgin, but not be stained with sin. The new nature that was added to the Virgin’s Son protected Him from having the necessity to sin when He became a rational person.¹⁸² Kane notes that Anselm did not include the ability to sin in his definition of freedom.¹⁸³ It is irrational to think that sin could descend to the Virgin’s Son from His lineage or that God would make His rational nature unjust.¹⁸⁴ God could only produce a just Offspring.¹⁸⁵ Evans states, “Christ lifted up human nature rather than

¹⁷⁸Deme, *The Christology of Anselm of Canterbury*, 55-56. Deme clarifies, “Original sin is transmitted from parent to the child through natural intercourse, in which the seed of the father is the material cause, and the carnal desire of the will of both parents is the formal cause of the child’s birth. Because sin and the subsequent guilt are attached only to the rational will or soul of man, the will is the formal cause which plays the main role in the transference of original sin” 56.

¹⁷⁹Davis and Evans, eds., *Anselm of Canterbury*, 386.

¹⁸⁰*Ibid.*, 388.

¹⁸¹Evans, *Anselm*, 85.

¹⁸²Davis and Evans, eds., *Anselm of Canterbury*, 375.

¹⁸³Kane, “Anselm’s Definition of Freedom,” 300.

¹⁸⁴Davis and Evans, eds., *Anselm of Canterbury*, 376.

¹⁸⁵*Ibid.*, 377.

diminishing his divinity to come down to human level.”¹⁸⁶ He had original justice rather than original sin. Evans states that Christ’s not sinning was of His choice and not an inability that detracts from His infinite abilities.¹⁸⁷ Christ was not subject to Adam’s will and power because it was not Adam’s power that brought Him into being.¹⁸⁸ Deme states, “Christ cannot sin because he is true God, and will not sin because he is true man.”¹⁸⁹

Conclusion

This paper examined Anselm’s Christology as revealed in three of his most notable works: *On the Incarnation of the Word*, *Why God Became Man*, and *On the Virgin Conception and Original Sin*. Anselm offered Christianity not only a foundation on which much Christology since the Twelfth Century emerged, but one that causes the believer to celebrate the price that was paid. Anselm reminds us

No member of the human race except Christ ever gave to God by dying, anything which that person was not at some time going to lose as a matter of necessity. Nor did anyone ever pay a debt to God which he did not owe. 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 sinners, a debt which he did not owe.¹⁹⁰

Evans states that act of Christ should “compel our gratitude to an infinitely greater degree than a slavish doing what is necessary could ever do.”¹⁹¹ Anselm’s Christology produces doxology in the satisfied believer’s heart.

¹⁸⁶Evans, *Anselm*, 81.

¹⁸⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸Davis and Evans, eds., *Anselm of Canterbury*, 380.

¹⁸⁹Deme, *The Christology of Anselm of Canterbury*, 57.

¹⁹⁰Davis and Evans, eds., *Anselm of Canterbury*, 349.

¹⁹¹Evans, *Anselm*, 79.

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