

ANSELM OF CANTERBURY—a theologian and philosopher, archbishop, doctor of the Church, called *doctor magnificus*, b. 1033 in Aosta, d. 21 IV 1109 in Canterbury.

Anselm's family was probably from Burgundy. He was educated in the seven liberal arts in Avranches in Normandy where he was taught by the renowned master of dialectic, Lanfranc of Pavia. In 1059 Anselm went to the Benedictine Abbey in Bec (today Le Bec-Hellouin) where Lanfranc was the prior and directory of the cloister school and in 1063 abbot in the Abbey of St. Étienne in Caen; after this fact, Anselm became prior in Bec and director of the cloister school, and after the death of the abbot Herluin (the founder of the abbey), in 1079 he became abbot in Bec. In 1093 he occupied after Lanfranc the primate's see of England and became Archbishop of Canterbury. He remained in this position until his death. He was buried in Canterbury Cathedral along side his old master Lanfranc.

The following are Anselm's most important works: *Monologion* (the original title was *Exemplum meditando de ratione fidei*, 1076; Przegląd Tomistyczny [Thomistic review] 3 (1987), 179–216; Wwa 1992); *Proslogion* (the original title was *Fides quaerens intellectum*, 1077–1078; Przegląd Tomistyczny 4 (1977), 108–178; Wwa 1992); *De grammatico*, *De veritate*, *De libertate arbitrii* (1080–1085); *De fide Trinitatis et incarnatione verbi* (first ed. in 1092, second ed. in 1094); *Cur Deus homo* (1094–1098); *De conceptu virginali et de originali peccato* (1099–1100); *De processione Spiritus Sancti* (1102); *De concordia praescientiae et praedestinationis necnon gratiae Dei cum libero arbitrio* (c. 1007); *De potestate et impotentia, possibilitate et impossibilitate, necessitate et libertate* (unfinished work); *Homiliae et exhortationes*; *Liber meditationum et orationum*; *Tractatus asceticus*; and *Epistolae*.

A critical edition of the works was edited by O. F. S. Schmitt OSB, *Sancti Anselmi Cantuariensis archiepiscopi Opera omnia* (I–VI, Scovii 1938–1961, reprinted St 1968).

In the foreword to the *Monologion*, Anselm presents the method of his scientific work that was suggested to him by his brothers in the order. He expects it to provide a new approach to theological problems “so that they would not be affirmed by the authority of [Sacred] Scripture, but that the conclusions of particular analyses may be deduced with the help of arguments that can be understood by all, so that the necessity of the reasoning may be grasped at once; so that the lecture upon the whole may be clear and simple to show clearly the clarity of the truth. They also wanted the lecture not to neglect answers to objects that might arise, even the simplest and apparently stupid ones.” In this way Anselm conceived what would later become the essence of the scholastic method. The key concepts in Anselm's method are *fides quaerens intellectum*—faith seeking reason; *rectus ordo*—proper order; *remoto Christo*—not resorting to Christ in arguments; *sola ratione*—only by reason; *intellectus fidei*—understanding of the faith; and *aliquid quo maius cogitari nequit*—something greater than which nothing can be thought.

In Anselm's works we may find the strong influence of St. Augustine, and so some called Anselm “*alter Augustinus*.” The influence of Boethius is also apparent, e.g., his sense of methodology and his esteem for the role of the reason as a necessary aid in theological speculations; Anselm's interest in realizing Boethius' postulate is also notable: *fidem si poteris, rationemque coniunge*. Anselm was also inspired by a purpose similar to Boethius', to try by way of reason (*sola ratione, remoto Christo*) to explain the truth of what he previously accepted as true as a believer.

If the current of Augustine's and Boethius' thought show that they can be regarded as the

precursors of scholasticism, Anselm should be regarded as the “father” of scholasticism. In Anselm’s works, the postulates of Augustine and Boethius were confirmed and developed. *Ratio Anselmi* recognized *rectus ordo* in philosophical and theological speculations and provided scholasticism with a clear direction for applying dialectics in theological problems. His starting point and point of reference is always Revelation —God’s Truth—which should be accepted as the highest reason so that thereafter by reason we may explore the truth more deeply. Anselm sees the role of the reason as a factor that cannot be neglected in seeking knowledge of the revealed truth: “*Sicut rectus ordo exigit ut profunda Christianae fidei credamus, priusquam ea praesumamus ratione discutere, negligentia mihi videtur; si, postquam confirmati sumus in fide, non studemus quod credimus intelligere*” (*Cur Deus homo*, PL 157, 362)—“Just as proper order requires us to believe the profound things of the Christian faith before we dare to discuss them by reason, so also it seems to me to be negligence if after we are confirmed in faith we do not try to understand what we believe.”

In the *Proslogion*, Anselm formulates a *ratio* for understanding God’s existence. Some have improperly called this the “ontological proof.” Anselm was inspired by the goal of finding a reason that could help someone who said in his heart: “there is no God” (Ps 14 (13), 1) to understand rightly the word “God” which he pronounces. Anselm does not intend in this work to convince the reader of the existence of God but merely seeks a reason that would allow the reader to understand God’s existence which he has already accepted on faith. Anselm asks in words of prayer: “O Lord, who gives understanding to faith, grant me to understand, insofar as You see fit, that you exist, as we believe You to exist, and You are what we believe You to be. Now we believe that You are something than which nothing greater can be thought.” (*Proslogion*, II). From the concept of God that faith provides it follows that God is perfect and that he is the supreme existence so that we cannot conceive that God does not exist. Faith holds God as the necessary being.

Critics of Anselm’s argument accuse him of the fallacy of reasoning from possible states to real states, since *de posse ad esse not fit illatio* (“there is no passage from possible states to real states”). Anselm’s definition of truth as *rectitudo sola mente perceptibilis* (*De veritate*, PL 158, 480: “a correctness perceptible only by the mind”) destroys the critique of those who oppose his *ratio*. Anselm desires to understand the truth of God’s existence that he was accepted by faith and seeks God’s *esse in intellectu*, not God’s *esse in re*, because all truth as such as perceptible only for the intellect. Anselm presents an attempt to understand God’s existence as *esse in re* in the *Monologion*. In the *Proslogion* he wants to understand God’s *esse* in his own intellect and asks this of God, fully aware that the search for God in His *esse in re* would be equal to seeking God *in act*—and this exceeds the ability of the human mind: “*Vere, Domine, haec est lux inaccessibilis, in qua inhabitas[...]; non potest intellectus meus ad illam*” (“Truly, Lord, the light in which You dwell is inaccessible [...]; my intellect cannot approach it”, *Proslogion*, XVI). What Anselm wants to show in the *Proslogion* to someone who “says in his heart that here is no God” is that fact that the human reason should understand the absurdity of God’s non-existence, which would restrain someone who spoke on the non-existence of God from errors *de dicto*, not from errors *de re*. God’s *esse in re* is a matter of faith alone: “*Actus scientiae non potest esse cum actu fidei circa idem obiectum*” (“An act of science and an act of faith cannot both exist together concerning the same object”). So also in his response to Gaunilon, the first critic of the *ratio Anselmi* who wrote *Liber pro insipiente* and defended the “fool” mentioned in Psalm 14 (13), Anselm mentions that in the matter of God’s *esse in re*, Gaunilon’s faith and conscience are the most powerful argument: “*fide et conscientia tua pro firmissimo utor argumento*” (“Your faith and conscience serve me as the most solid argument”).

Discussion on the *ration Anselmi* began during his lifetime and continue to this day. In the history of philosophy many have addressed the issue: Gaunilon (his first critic), Thomas Aquinas, Bonaventure, Duns Scotus, Descartes, Leibniz, and Kant. E. Mascall in his work *The Openness of Being* presents the current state of the discussion on the *ratio Anselmi*. É. Gilson who also considered the problem perhaps gives the most accurate explanation for the interest of so many philosophers and theologians in this problem: “The only way I can justify yet one more interpretation of Anselm’s argument to those that we already have is that I admit that I could not resist the temptation to do so!” (*Sens et nature de l’Argument de S. Anselme*, AHDLMA 9 (1934), 6 f.)

Vita S. Anselmi auctore Eadmero. Cantuarensi monacho, sancti Anselmi discipulo et comite individuo (PL 158, 39–118); *Eadmeri Historia novorum in Anglia* (PL 159, 347–524); A. Koyré, *L’idée de Dieu dans la philosophie de St. Anselme*, P 1923; K. Barth, *Fides quarens intellectum. Anselms Beweis der Existenz Gottes in Zusammenhang seines theologischen Programms*, Mn 1931, Z 1958²; F. S. Schmitt, *Zur Chronologie der Werke des hl. Anselms*, Revue Bénédictine Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale 6 (1934), 313–330; É. Gilson, *Sens et nature de l’Argument de S. Anselme*, AHDLMA 9 (1934), 6–51; J. Châtillon, *De Guillaume d’Auxerre à Saint Thomas d’Aquin. L’argument de saint Anselme chez les premiers scolastiques de XIII^e siècle*, in: *Spicilegium Beccense, I Congrès International du IX^e centenaire de l’arrivée d’Anselme au Bec*, Le Bec-Hellouin 1959, 209–232; M. Gogacz, *Problem istnienia Boga u Anselma z Canterbury i problem prawdy u Henryka z Gandawy* [Problem of God’s existence in Anselm of Canterbury and the problem of truth in Henry of Ghent], Lb 1961; P. Mazarella, *Il pensiero speculativo di S. Anselmo d’Aosta*, Pd 1962; M. Gogacz, *O najnowszych badaniach dowodu ontologicznego Anselma z Canterbury* [On the latest studies of the ontological proof of Anselm of Canterbury], RF 11 (1963) n. 1, 103–111; M. J. Charlesworth, *St. Anselm’s Proslogion*, Ox 1965; *The Ontological Argument from St. Anselm to Contemporary Philosophers*, GC 1965; D. P. Henry, *The Logic of St. Anselm*, Ox 1967; *The Many-Faced Argument. Recent Studies on the Ontological Argument for the Existence of God*, NY 1967; J. Hicks, *Arguments for the Existence of God*, Lo 1970 (*Argumenty za istnieniem Boga* [Arguments for God’s existence], Kr 1994; B. Burlikowski, *Anselma z Aosty próba racjonalizacja wiary* [Anselm of Aosta’s attempt at the rationalization of faith], Wwa 1971; E. L. Mascall, *The Openness of Being. Natural Theology Today*, Lo 1971 (*Otwartość bytu* [Openness of being], Wwa 1988); J. Vuillemin, *Le Dieu d’Anselme et les apparences de la raison*, P 1971; J. Hopkins, *A Companion to the Study of St. Anselm*, Minneapolis 1972; H. Kohlenberger, *Similitudo und Ratio. Überlegungen zur Methode bei Anselm von Canterbury*, Bo 1972; J. Braun, *Wiara szukająca rozumu* [Faith seeking reason], Tor 1974; W. L. Gombocz, *Zu neuen Beiträgen zur Interpretation von Anselms Proslogion*, Salzburger Jahrbuch für Philosophie 20 (1975), 131–135; G. R. Evans, *Anselm and Talking about God*, Ox 1978; K. Kienzler, *Glauben und Denken bei Anselm von Canterbury*, Fr 1981; S. Gersh, *Anselm of Canterbury*, in: *A History of Twelfth-Century Western Philosophy*, C 1988, 1992², 255–278; R. Schönberger, *Responsio Anselmi. Anselms Selbstinterpretation in seiner Replik auf Gaunilo*, FZPhTh 36 (1989), 3–46; R. W. Southern, *St. Anselm. A Portrait in a Landscape*, C 1990, 1995⁴; *Saint Anselm, Bishop and Thinker*, Lb 1999; T. Grzesik, *Anselm of Canterbury—Christian Philosopher “par excellence”*, AM 12 (1999), 251–256; idem, *What Anselm owes to Boethius and why he may be regarded as the initiator of the Boethius Age*, in: *Cur Deus homo. Atti del Congresso anselmiano internazionale: Roma 21–23 maggio 1998*, R 1999 (passim).

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