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Mercy greater than which non could be conceived of: A new interpretation of
Anselm's soteriology from the perspective of
Raymund Schwager

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Preface

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INTRODUCTION

That Jesus Christ was crucified and died on the cross is generally accepted historically and theologically. Historians such as the Jewish historian Josephus Flavius and the Roman historians Tacitus and Pliny mention Jesus's execution by Pontius Pilate. The New Testament gives detailed information about his life, suffering, death, and resurrection. Undeniably, his death on the cross occupies a central place in the teaching of the redemption of the human being in theological discussions.

But what meaning and significance are truly attached to the suffering and death of Jesus? Was his death a personal choice or a consequence of his decisions? Was his death merely like that of anyone else? Was it truly necessary for a sinless man to die? These are some of the questions that Anselm of Canterbury sought to answer at length, particularly in one of his major works, the "*Cur Deus Homo*," in which he articulated his classic teaching on soteriology. Through this work, the *Cur Deus Homo*, he is credited with being "the theologian who gave us the first systematic account of the Atonement."¹ While his position was not the officially defined and adopted stance of the Church on soteriology, it is one that has profoundly shaped many people's understandings of redemption over the centuries.

It is common knowledge, however, that before Anselm formulated his doctrine of soteriology, several church fathers and theologians had already addressed the topic of redemption. It is essential to briefly mention what the prevailing understanding of redemption was prior to Anselm developing his famous yet controversial doctrine. Furthermore, we will examine the perspectives of contemporary theologians regarding Anselm's teaching.

In the New Testament scriptures, a soteriological meaning was attached to the death of Jesus Christ. His death on the cross is described as a sacrifice offered in atonement for the sins of the world, as a substitute sacrifice, or as a ransom for the world's salvation. Two schools of thought regarding the interpretation of soteriology emerged among the Fathers of the Church in the early centuries: the Eastern and the Western schools of thought. Thomas Pröpper identifies the Eastern interpretation as incarnational soteriology (*inkarnatorische Soteriologie*)², while the Western interpretation is described as predominantly Staurocentric soteriology.³ According to

¹ John MCINTYRE, *St. Anselm and his critics. A Re-interpretation of the Cur Deus Homo*, Edinburgh 1954, 2.

² Thomas PRÖPPER, *Erlösungsglaube und Freiheitsgeschichte. Eine Skizze zur Soteriologie*, München 1991, 71.

³ Thomas PRÖPPER, *Erlösungsglaube und Freiheitsgeschichte*, 74.

Thomas Pröpper, in the Eastern Church, the Greek theologies concentrated more on the divinisation of the human person and the incarnation of Jesus,⁴ while the belief that salvation was a real historical event somehow got lost or received less attention⁵. The doctrine of salvation receives attention when Greek theology asserts that Christ genuinely sought humanity and guided humanity along the path of imitation (mimesis) through his teachings and communion.⁶

Gregory Nazianzen (329-390) is a key example of Greek theologians, among others, who explicitly offered a strong critique of the Western interpretation of the death of Jesus as a substitution or as a ransom for the human being. He criticised the idea of ransom in the following words:

To whom was the ransom paid? To the evil one? What an outrage! If it is supposed not merely that the thief received a ransom from God, but that the ransom is God himself - a payment for his act of arbitrary power so excessive that it certainly justified his releasing us! If it were paid to the father, I ask why? We were not held captive by him. Secondly, what reason can be given why the blood of the only begotten should be pleasing to the Father? For he did not even accept Isaac when he was offered by his father but gave a substitute for the sacrifice, a lamb to take the place of the rational victim.⁷

In Western theology, interpreting Jesus's death as substitution, i.e., that Christ took the place of the sinner, and so redeemed the sinner, was more prominent. This is where Anselm from Canterbury aligned his teaching of redemption, which has dominated the Western tradition for centuries.

It was in the Middle Ages when Saint Anselm wrote his works and formulated a detailed systematic teaching on the topic, which remained a long-held position in the Western church until the nineteenth and twentieth centuries when it came under heavy critique. Though not responding directly to Gregory Nazianzen but to some learned Jews in London who arrived from Mainz and questioned the rationale behind the doctrine of incarnation and ransom to Satan,⁸ Anselm formulated his teaching of redemption. He took care of the questions raised above by Gregory. He vigorously refuted the interpretation that was attached to the death of

⁴ Cf. ST. ATHANASIUS, *De Incarnatione*, [transl. by Archibald ROBERTSON], London 21891, 54, 3. See also CCC no. 460. "God became man so that man might become God".

⁵ Cf. Thomas PRÖPPER, *Erlösungsglaube und Freiheitsgeschichte*, 101.

⁶ Cf. Thomas PRÖPPER, *Erlösungsglaube und Freiheitsgeschichte*, 101.

⁷ Michael WINTER, *Atonement*, London 1995, 50.

⁸ Hansjürgen VERWEYEN, *Anselm von Canterbury. Denker, Beter, Erzbischof*, Regensburg 2009, 115.

Jesus as a ransom paid to the devil. This was because it contradicted his image of God, who is greater than anything that can be thought of.⁹ He instead preferred the second option, that the ransom was paid to God, not because man was held captive by God but because the sin of humanity injured God's honour. Satisfaction was, therefore, required to restore God's injured honour caused by the sins of humanity. Jesus offered this satisfaction out of his free will to redeem mankind, but mankind needed to accept this gift out of free will. In this, he argues, is manifested God's justice and mercy, greater than can be thought of.

As abbot of the Benedictine monastery at Bec in France and later as Archbishop of Canterbury, Anselm wrote and composed a number of prayers for his fellow monks. But he was also a philosopher and theologian who wrote many other philosophical and theological works. Traces of his soteriology can be found in some of his letters, meditations and prayers. His works show both a combination of his personal deep faith and spirituality as a monk and his intellectual life as a thinker. Among his works, we have the *Monologion*, *Proslogion* and *Cur Deus Homo*. It is in the *Cur Deus Homo* that he presented his systematic soteriology. In a concise manner, he also explores soteriology in his brief work, *Meditatio Redemptionis Humanae*, composed soon after *Cur Deus Homo*. While *Cur Deus Homo* offers a systematic and speculative approach to soteriology, *Meditatio Redemptionis Humanae* takes on a more contemplative tone. As rightly observed by Schönborn, *Cur Deus Homo* speaks about God, *Meditatio Redemptionis Humanae* addresses itself to God¹⁰ or to Christ.¹¹ According to Sandra Klinge, the developed doctrine of redemption in the *Cur Deus Homo* is transmitted or passed on in *Meditatio Redemptionis Humanae* in the form of liturgical prayers.¹²

Anselm's theory of redemption, however, contradicted the long-held traditional view of ransom. The theory of offering ransom or satisfaction not to Satan but to God raises questions regarding the image of God. If a ransom is offered to God, what image does that paint of God? Friedrich Nietzsche, Adolf Harnack and Ernst Bloch, among others, detested such a position, saying that it portrays God as a bloodthirsty God full of wrath, who could not forgive humanity without demanding the blood of his son through a cruel death on the cross.¹³

⁹ Cf. ANSELM OF CANTERBURY, *Proslogion* II.

¹⁰ Cf. Christoph SCHÖNBORN, *Gott sandte seinen Sohn. Christologie*, Paderborn 2002, 242.

¹¹ Cf. Sandra KLINGE, *Die Erlösungsvorstellung Anselms von Canterbury in seiner Meditatio Redemptionis humanae und das Verhältnis zu Cur Deus homo*, in: *Archa Verbi: Yearbook for the Study of Medieval Theology* 8 (2011), 33-59.

¹² Cf. Sandra KLINGE, *Die Erlösungsvorstellung Anselms von Canterbury*, 58.

¹³ Cf. Adolph HARNACK, *History of Dogma, Vol. III*, [transl. by Neil Buchanan], Boston 1897, 312.

It is noteworthy to mention here that his work *Cur Deus Homo* has been at the centre of disputations as different commentators have raised divergent views about it. In some instances, his soteriology has been well-received and highly praised,¹⁴ but in other instances, totally rejected and written off as being obsolete. In the twenty-first century, Anselm continues to receive similar harsh criticisms, as noted by McIntyre: “No major Christian thinker has suffered quite so much as St. Anselm from the hit and run tactics of historians of theism and soteriology.”¹⁵

Though there are many interpreters of Anselm from the 12th century to date, this project wishes to limit itself to the reception of Anselm in contemporary times. We have only chosen some among the many interpreters for the sole purpose of giving us a general picture of the reception. Furthermore, this present work seeks to take account of both sides of Anselm’s reception, i.e., the credits he has received and the criticisms he has been receiving. At the end, we shall attempt a re-interpretation of his soteriology for the contemporary audience with more inclination towards the mercy of God, which was Anselm’s primary goal.

1. Theological discipline and personal interest

Since this project seeks to both trace the history of attempts to answer the question of redemption in theology and then propose a new understanding of redemption today, it shall fall under the scope of systematic theology. To be more specific, since it is centred on what Christ did, it shall fall under dogmatic theology, particularly under Christology. We are aware of the vital observation by Ratzinger, who vehemently argued against the idea of splitting and separating soteriology from Christology, saying doing so will make both disciplines become incomprehensible.¹⁶ Hence, the statement that it shall fall under Christology.

Aside from dogmatic theology, the soteriological teachings, as espoused by Anselm, must address the specific pastoral needs of today if it is to remain relevant. What Anselm attempted to do was inculturate the doctrine of redemption into the German legal thought system to resonate with his audience. His inculturation, however, has become almost incomprehensible

¹⁴ Gerhard GÄDE, *Eine andere Barmherzigkeit. Zum Verstandnis der Erlösungslehre Anselm von Canterbury*, 2. aktualisierte und erweiterte Auflage, Berlin 2018, 19.

¹⁵ John MCINTYRE, *St. Anselm and his critics*, 2.

¹⁶ Joseph RATZINGER, *Introduction to Christianity*, 231.

today, given that cultures keep evolving. To be relevant today, there is a need to re-inculturate his inculturated teaching into concepts understandable today. Just like Anselm's goal in writing this book was for polemics and pastoral reasons, answering pastoral challenges of his time concerning the Jews, Moslems, and Christians who had doubts about their faith, we also see the pastoral implications for this project to be near to the goals we hope to achieve in this project.

We see two pastoral possibilities where this theme could be of relevance: firstly, in the reconciliation services or during retreats where the theme of reconciliation is always a must. Secondly, since we live in a society where more and more people are attaining higher education, there is, consciously or unconsciously, a deep-felt need to rationally understand what they believe in. This work should help respond to the pastoral needs of educated Catholics who would want to also rationally conceptualise their understanding of salvation wrought through Jesus Christ. This would be in the form of catechesis or seminars in parishes or institutions of higher learning.

2. Personal interest

Growing up in a police camp in Zambia, in an environment where discipline and orderliness were the order of the day, introduced me from an early age to the world where a good name meant everything and was rewarded while punishment was seen as a consequence for having committed a wrong capable of denting one's good reputation or even that of the family. At that time in Zambia, in the 1980s and 1990s, in schools, teachers were also entrusted and mandated by the parents and the state not only to teach pupils but also to instil discipline in them, which even entailed giving corporal punishment when it was deemed fit. It was not uncommon, therefore, for the children to receive punishment, including corporal punishment,¹⁷ either at home or at school, if they broke the rules or did something seriously wrong, to maintain a good reputation but, above all, to prevent disorder and to ensure order prevailed in the community. It was, therefore, clear to me from that time that good has to be rewarded, and wrong has to be punished. From the Zambian context, Anselm's theory would be understood without much difficulty. It was, however, my question then as a child, and still is my question today as an adult, as to what proportion a wrong has to be punished. Is there a measure? Sometimes, a seemingly bigger punishment is meted out for a small wrong act and vice versa. It has always been my desire, therefore, since then, to understand the relationship between justice in a society

¹⁷ Corporal punishment has now been banned in schools, for it is now considered a violation of human rights.

which ensures that order is maintained and punishment for the sins or wrongs done against that order.

I find the same topics of Justice, punishment, merit (reward), honour and order, among others, addressed in the course of the formulation of the doctrine of redemption by Anselm, who firmly argued that sin has to be punished or atoned for according to divine justice in order to restore divine order in the world and honour to God, to resonate with my Zambian upbringing. Of greater interest for me in the soteriology of Anselm, however, is wanting to find out in-depth how the relationship between the justice of God and his mercy, as shown in both the Old and New Testament, is to be understood and justified and which contemporary models or categories of thought can help the contemporary audience understand his doctrine better.

3. State of Research: Anselm in dispute of interpretation

The theme of redemption by Anselm has not been attracting much attention and interest of late. There are, however, several publications about the theme that came out in the last fifty years to which we want to draw our attention. Key publications related to this theme in this period which we wish to review include the following:

Hans Kessler's book entitled; "*Die Theologische Bedeutung des Todes Jesu: Eine traditions-geschichtliche Untersuchung*", 1970. Kessler focuses his entire book on investigating the meaning attached to the death of Jesus. He dedicates 82 pages, from pages 83 to 165, to discussing Anselm's theological interpretation of the death of Christ. In almost the first half of his discourse, he reconstructs in detail the soteriology of Anselm while highlighting what he finds problematic or incomprehensible in Anselm's presentation. In the second half, he offers his critique. In his critique, he singles out the theme of satisfaction as the main teaching, which captures the whole soteriological presentation of Anselm. According to him, all other themes lead ultimately to the theme of satisfaction. He next takes hold of the term *ordo Universi* and classifies it as a term borrowed from the juridical or legal language, traceable to Tertullian and Augustine and also to Lanfranc, the teacher of St. Anselm.¹⁸ This is because Western Latin theology was shaped very early on by theologians who were also experts in law or legal matters.¹⁹ He convincingly argues that the Germanic law had an immense influence on Anselm in the formulation of the soteriological teaching. This can be seen in the application of juridical

¹⁸ Hans KESSLER, *Die theologische Bedeutung des Todes Jesu. Eine traditions-geschichtliche Untersuchung*, Düsseldorf 1970, 129.

¹⁹ Hans KESSLER, *Die theologische Bedeutung des Todes Jesu*, 129.

concepts to explain theological concepts. In the end, according to Kessler, it proved to have misrepresented the image of God. He firmly holds the view that the term *ordo*, as presented by Anselm, is deficient. The demands of Anselm, according to Kessler, only exist in an unhistorical–static world of material equivalents, in which God stands before man relationless. It presents God as one without love and relationless and portrays God and the human being as separated subjects against each other.²⁰

Next in the line is the book, “*Der wunderbare Tausch*,” by Raymund Schwager, published in 1986 and later reprinted in 2015. Schwager is greatly inspired in this work by René Girard’s mimesis theory. It is a work that not only traces the development of the doctrine of redemption from the New Testament to the contemporary period but also attempts to interpret it for today, using René Girard as an interpreter of the same for the contemporary audience. He is one of the pioneers, if not the very first theologian, to handle René Girard and introduce him into theological circles by using him as an interpreter of the soteriological teaching of the church. In this publication, Schwager covers the doctrine of redemption, beginning from the New Testament and the early centuries, before coming to the Middle Ages, where he looks at Anselm before looking at the soteriological teaching in protestant theology and closing the book with Hans Urs von Balthasar’s *Theo-Drama*, all from the perspective of René Girard’s *scapegoat* and *mimesis* theories. Looking specifically at the portion on Anselm from pages 276-311, not only does Schwager undertake a reconstruction of the doctrine of redemption by Anselm, but, in the end, he also attempts to interpret him using Girard. He singles out the theme of freedom and natural will as the main contribution of Anselm to the theology of redemption. Schwager convincingly argues that the redemption of a human being also has to do with restoring the human will to enable it to once again say yes to God. And this restoration takes place through and in Christ.

In 1988, Gerhard Gäde presented a dissertation at the University of Sankt Georgen in Frankfurt entitled “*Eine andere Barmherzigkeit: Zum Verständnis der Erlösungslehre Anselms von Canterbury*.” In this research work, Gäde makes an attempt to interpret Anselm anew in a bid to rehabilitate him. In this high-quality work, not just does Gäde passionately reconstruct the detailed works of Anselm and defend him, but he also argues that *Cur Deus Homo* is about another kind of mercy, a kind that is just and justice that is merciful²¹. He puts it succinctly that

²⁰ Hans KESSLER, *Die theologische Bedeutung des Todes Jesu*. 83-165.

²¹ Gerhard GÄDE, *Eine andere Barmherzigkeit. Zum Verständnis der Erlösungslehre Anselm von Canterbury*, 10.

there exists no cheap mercy. He strongly argues and shows that the theory of redemption by Anselm could only be fully grasped when one takes into consideration also the image of God which Anselm had, as presented in his earlier work in the Proslogion. Just as God is one greater than which nothing greater can be thought of, so is his mercy and justice greater than can be conceived of. In April 2018, Gerhard Gäde released an edited and expanded version of his earlier publication and made some additions to it, making it, therefore, the most current work on Anselm.

Another well-detailed research on Anselm, this time coming from the English world, is the work by Sir Richard William Southern in a book entitled *St. Anselm, A Portrait in a Landscape, 1990*. In a bid to make Anselm understandable, he provided a deeper historical and social background to Anselm's works. It is a detailed biography of Anselm and a detailed presentation of all his works. A lengthy presentation on the rights of the devil and the right understanding of the same is handled in detail. He rejects the notion that the devil has rights over humans and so qualified not to receive a ransom from God. This is his focal point in analysing *Cur Deus Homo* and his principal and very important contribution.

The latest in the line of works about Anselm is the book by Hansjürgen Verweyen, "*Anselm von Canterbury: Denker, Beter und Erzbischof*," 2009. It was published to mark 900 years of the death of Anselm. In this book, Verweyen reconstructs Anselm using the latest research available to him to come up with an updated and latest stand in the research about the Benedictine Monk. He, too, gives an excellent biography and analyses the major contents of each work of Anselm. He tried to supply what he felt was lacking in Anselm, namely the Love of God by complementing it with texts from *Meditatio Redemptionis Humanae*.

Looking at the above reviews, which focused on different aspects of Anselm, it is felt that the theme of mercy has not received enough positive coverage like Justice and satisfaction. There is a need to highlight this theme, which was Anselm's primary goal. The term *satisfaction* is problematic and is not understood today, therefore calling for a new concept that would be easy to understand today.

4. The Research Question and Method

At the centre of Anselm's teaching on redemption is the theory of satisfaction. This concept of satisfaction has, however, been strongly criticised by Nietzsche, Harnack, Ratzinger, Kessler,

and Striet, among other philosophers and theologians. Ratzinger refers to the satisfaction theory as being “cruelly mechanical and less and less feasible.”²² Magnus Striet says it’s untranslatable into contemporary thinking.²³ Michael Winter compresses this contemporary view in the following words:

On the one hand, there is an almost universal consensus that explanations along the lines of compensation (satisfaction), ultimately traceable to St. Anselm, are now untenable. This applies to his own straight forward legalistic theory of quasi-compensation to God for the affront done to his honour by sin, and also to theories of penal substitution in which Christ is deemed to have taken on himself the punishment for the sins of the human race...Reasons which were convincing to him and his contemporaries no longer command assent among religious thinkers today.²⁴

Saint Anselm employed the term *satisfaction*, a medieval concept, to formulate his soteriology. Today, this concept of satisfaction feels hermeneutically alien and has become problematic, necessitating a new interpretation. Consequently, in this project, we sought to utilise the concepts of mimetic desire and violence that lead towards the attainment of peace and liberation, as presented by Raymund Schwager in his dramatic theology.

That the mercy of God is greater than can be thought of has not been refuted by commentators of Anselm. In his major soteriological work, the *Cur Deus Homo*, Anselm gives in the second part of his book in chapter XX, a key statement, which is supposed to be the main goal he had been trying to drive at, but quite overlooked by some commentators. It is a statement on the mercy of God, greater than which none could be conceived. This is the statement that has been chosen for the title of this proposed project. It reads:

Mercy, greater than which none could be conceived of: A new interpretation of Anselm’s Soteriology from the perspective of Raymund Schwager

5.1. **Research question**

The primary research question is: How can Raymund Schwager's concept of mimetic desire and violence illuminate Anselm's teachings *for contemporary understanding*?

²² Joseph RATZINGER, *Introduction to Christianity*, 231.

²³ Cf. Magnus STRIET, *Erlösung durch den Opfertod Jesus*, 15.

²⁴ Michael WINTER, *The Atonement*, London, 1995, Viii.

Schwager, inspired by the mimetic theory of René Girard of a triangle of mimetic desires, tried to use this theory to explain the redemption of the human person brought by Jesus. Girard observed that, between two people, desire leads to rivalry and conflict if they desire the same object. Each person views the other as an obstacle. On the level of a community or society, in primitive societies, during a calamity, there exists the violence of all against one victim or scapegoat believed to be an obstacle or believed to have caused the calamity. After eliminating the victim through lynching, peace seemingly is restored in the community. This makes the victim appear responsible for both the disorder/calamity and also for the unity which is created during the lynching and the peace which is obtained afterwards. Hence leading to what he calls the double character of the scapegoat. Religions and cultures are said to be founded on this scapegoat mechanism. The Jewish Christian revelation, however, unveils this mechanism of violence. Only Jesus proclaimed a God of love, totally clean from every deceit and violence. He ended up being the victim of violence himself from all forces coming together against him, all against one.²⁵ Resultant peace was attributed to him, and his divinity was reaffirmed.

In relation to Anselm's redemption theory, Schwager argues that the human person ought to make satisfaction to God but is unable to do so. Similarly, according to René Girard's mimetic theory, one cannot escape the mechanism of sin or violence. Schwager asserts that the root of sin (violence) must be healed first rather than just addressing its symptoms. The human will is that root. It can be restored to God through Jesus, who enters the mechanism of sin and the confined world of human freedom. He elevates the human will, opening human freedom from within and enabling the human person to once again choose God.

To effectively address the primary research question, it is essential to first answer the following secondary research questions:

- a) *How has Anselm's soteriology been criticised and defended in the last century?*
- b) *What is the biographical and historical context of Anselm's approach and what are his main arguments and key concepts?*

5.2. Methodology

To undertake the project of reinterpreting Anselm's teaching on redemption, we will, first and foremost, aim to establish the reception of Anselm's works by contemporary theologians. This

²⁵ Cf. Raymund SCHWAGER, *Der wunderbare Tausch*, 43-46.

will offer a general overview of various interpreters' perspectives regarding St. Anselm's soteriological theory. The disputes in interpreting Anselm will be examined from three different viewpoints: those of strong critics, mild critics, and apologists or defenders of Anselm.

After discussing the disputes in interpretation, we shall then attempt to reconstruct Anselm's teaching objectively in the subsequent part by examining the social and historical background, or *Sitz im Leben*, that inspired him to develop his views on redemption, as well as the audience he had in mind: Jews, Muslims, and Christians who questioned their faith.

In the third and final part, we shall endeavour to provide a re-interpretation of *Cur Deus Homo*, having examined the criticisms it has received. The new interpretation will consider the concepts of mimetic desire and violence.

Since the whole work shall, by and large, preoccupy itself with the presentation of different interpretations by interpreters of Anselm, a reconstruction of the soteriology of Anselm, an analysis, and an attempt at the end to re-interpret Anselm for the contemporary audience of today, the method that we shall employ is theological hermeneutics.

PART I

RECEPTION OF THE TEACHING OF ST. ANSELM

Chapter one

1.0. Saint Anselm in dispute of interpretations

Saint Anselm of Canterbury's theory of atonement, or satisfaction, is described by Schöndorf as Christianity's most famous theory of soteriology.²⁶ However, this theory has attracted a number of mixed views and interpretations over the centuries, earning praise from some while also facing criticism and condemnation from others. Much the same is true today for his soteriology. As observed by Greshake, there are varying interpretations and contradictions regarding his soteriology.²⁷ One need only read several commentaries on Anselm to recognise that almost every interpreter possesses a distinct perspective and a unique lens through which to analyse his work. It soon becomes evident that some interpreters vehemently criticise him and dismiss his contributions entirely, labelling his theory as obsolete without acknowledging his positive impact, such as the correction of the ransom theory. Others ardently defend him against his critics, while some adopt a more moderate stance. Overall, three distinct categories of interpreters of his soteriology emerge: (a) strong critics, (b) mild critics, and (c) his defenders or apologists. In this chapter, we will explore the various receptions and interpretations that Anselm has received from these three groups. This will provide a general overview of the key arguments supporting or opposing Anselm's soteriology.

1.1. Strong critics

The label of *strong critics* is here employed to refer to those interpreters or commentators who are radically critical of Anselm's theory of redemption, not only in terms of content but, at times, also in the selection of very strong words used to highlight and criticise the perceived flaws of his redemption theory. These include words referring to "God as an offended private

²⁶ Cf. Harald SCHÖNDORF, *Warum musste Jesus leiden? Eine neue Antwort auf eine alte Frage*, München 2013, 31.

²⁷ Cf. Gisbert GRESHAKE, *Erlösung und Freiheit*, 325.

man,”²⁸ or as a revered cannibal in heaven,²⁹ and words referring to Anselm’s theory as “cruelly mechanical,”³⁰ “less feasible”³¹, rigid,³² the worst theory³³ and a false and narrow theory, among others.³⁴ These critics are mainly focused on highlighting the perceived serious shortcomings of Anselm’s soteriology. While some of these strong critics do partially acknowledge the positives found in Anselm’s theory of redemption in terms of how it has shaped the consciousnesses of many, the harsh critiques they raise against his redemption theory far outweigh the positives, hence the tag of strong critics. It is not an exaggeration to state that these strong criticisms have made the soteriological theory of Anselm infamous.

There are several interpreters of Anselm who can be categorised as his strongest critics. For the purposes of this study and in this chapter, however, we have confined our focus to contemporary critics only. Through them, it is hoped that the essential criticisms, even from earlier critics, will be captured and represented. Among the many radical contemporary critics of Anselm, we have selected only three, which is sufficient to provide us with a general critical perspective on St. Anselm’s doctrine of redemption. The selected three critics arranged chronically are Felix Hammer, Joseph Ratzinger, and Hans Kessler.

1.1.1. Felix Hammer: Critique of external satisfaction

Felix Hammer is one of the renowned authorities on Anselm. Having completed his doctorate at Innsbruck University in Austria in 1963 with a dissertation on the theory of redemption by Anselm entitled “*Die Erlösungslehre des heiligen Anselm von Canterbury auf ihrem zeitgeschichtlichen und wissenschaftlichen theoretischen Hintergrund: versuch einer Deutung*,”³⁵ he remains an authority on Anselm. He wrote his dissertation while the Vatican Council II was still in session. He then went on to publish it into a book but changed its title and probably changed a few things to take into consideration some of the new perspectives from Vatican II. In his book entitled *Genugtuung und Heil*, published in 1967, two years after the close of Vatican Council II., Felix Hammer focuses his attention on analysing only the fundamental elements of the soteriology of Anselm. From pages 113-132, he reconstructs

²⁸ Hans KESSLER, *Die theologische Bedeutung des Todes Jesu*, 32.

²⁹ Cf. Ernst BLOCH, *Atheismus im Christentum*, Frankfurt am Main 1968, 223.

³⁰ Joseph RATZINGER, *Introduction to Christianity*, Bangalore 1969, 231.

³¹ Joseph RATZINGER, *Introduction to Christianity*, 231.

³² Joseph RATZINGER, *Introduction to Christianity*, 233.

³³ Adolph HARNACK, *History of Dogma*, Vol.6, Boston 1899, 76.

³⁴ Joseph RATZINGER, *Introduction to Christianity*, 281.

³⁵ Felix HAMMER, *Die Erlösungslehre des heiligen Anselm von Canterbury auf ihrem zeitgeschichtlichen und wissenschaftlichen theoretischen Hintergrund. Versuch einer Deutung*, Innsbruck University, 1963.

Anselm's theory of redemption as presented in the *Cur Deus Homo*. Then from pages 132 to 149, he offers his critique. It is this critique that is our area of interest here. In his critique, Hammer labels the entire theory of redemption by Anselm as a *satisfaction theory*. He has strong reservations and objections, especially against (1) external Satisfaction, (2) the concept of Justice, (3) the lack of solidarity, and (4) the narrow understanding of the concept of honour.

His outstanding critique, tied to the axiom of *aut poena aut satisfaction*, meaning *either punishment or satisfaction*, focuses on the *aut satisfactio* part. He raises a critique here regarding what he terms a narrow understanding of the satisfaction theory, which, according to him, focuses only on external satisfaction. The satisfaction that is to be paid is limited only to the external recompense from the offender to the offended party. This is linked to Anselm's understanding of sin. His understanding is that, fundamentally, man's sin does not affect God as He exists in himself, in His ontological nature. This implies that God remains untouched by sin. His interpretation, thus, is that what is touched or affected is the external glory of God - *gloria dei externa*, i.e., the right order (*ordo*) of the world.³⁶ Now, since what is affected is only the external, Hammer argues that the satisfaction theory which Anselm proposes is also reduced to or limited only to the externals. He observed that Anselm had put more emphasis on the satisfaction that has to be offered, on something external rather than on the inner disposition where little or nothing about it is mentioned. Hammer observes that the inner disposition or interior aspect, which should be very cardinal, is completely overlooked. Hammer, therefore, argues that there is a misplaced focus in the presentation of Anselm's soteriology. This way of looking at sin and the relation between God and man, which Anselm handles only at the surface, makes Hammer label it as an extrinsic approach or extrinsicism.³⁷

By categorising the redemption theory of Anselm as extrinsic, Hammer is of the view that Anselm focused too much attention on exteriors or superficial and minor matters, which in this case, are juridical elements, and left out the interior or the most important aspects. Hammer argues that Anselm's theory thereby tarnishes God's love. According to him, the insistence by Anselm on the necessity of the incarnation of Christ as a requirement for this justice scheme tarnishes the view of God's transcendent love, which dwells in the trinity and manifests and culminates in Christ who freely offers himself by turning towards the sinful humanity.³⁸ But

³⁶ Cf. Felix HAMMER, *Genugtuung und Heil*, 139.

³⁷Cf. Felix HAMMER, *Genugtuung und Heil*, 42. Extrinsicism according to Raffelt, is defined as "das Problem eines bloß äußerliches Verhältnisses von Offenbarung und Vernunft." See: Albert RAFFELT, Extrinsezismus-intrinsezismus, in: LThK 3, 1135-1137.

³⁸ Cf. Felix HAMMER, *Genugtuung und Heil*, 139.

should this personal turning of God towards sinful humanity be neglected or ignored, then and only then can God be perceived as one who is not interiorly affected by man's sin.³⁹ This, however, according to Hammer, would be unthinkable. Hammer qualifies his argument further by going back to the definition of sin by Anselm where he described sin as not giving God, His debt or his due – "*non reddere deo debitum*."⁴⁰ This is but just one aspect of sin. Hammer finds this definition of sin to be inadequate and so says Anselm leaves out another aspect, which is that sin is the sinful turning away from God and, above all, the rejection of God's love.⁴¹ Hammer's alternative definition of sin, as a rejection of God's love, emphasises that sin occurs within the human being. However, according to Hammer, this internal dimension is absent in Anselm's theory.

Hammer finds the presentation of sin as external contamination inadequate and fails to point out the relation between sin, deficiency, and death. Though Anselm clearly knows that death belongs to the corrupt nature, the connection between sin and death appears to be an external just punishment. Death is seen by Anselm as an external debt placed on the human person, not as a corporealization of a sinful basic disposition.⁴²

Hammer directed his next critique to the notion of justice, just like the first one, towards Anselm's axiom of "*aut poena aut satisfactio*," but focused on the *poena* part. He says that according to this axiom, the entire presentation of the redemption activity appears one-sided, leaning more towards God's justice, standing in contrast to God's mercy.⁴³ Hammer is of the view that this one-sided emphasis towards justice by Anselm builds on the description of the image of God in the *Monologion*, who is presented not only as being a God who must act justly (*gerecht*) but also as being Justice (*Gerechtigkeit*) itself.⁴⁴ That in itself is perfectly correct. However, Hammer thinks this description should also have been applied to other common attributes of God, not just to justice alone. Since *Cur Deus Homo* has mainly two poles, that is, Justice and mercy, there should have been a balance between the two. However, according to Hammer, of the two poles in the CDH, i.e., justice and mercy, justice is more favoured or rather given more space. Hammer, therefore, strongly contends that justice does not have to be favoured or appear more favoured, as Anselm portrays.⁴⁵ In *Cur Deus Homo*, on the contrary,

³⁹ Cf. Felix HAMMER, *Genugtuung und Heil*, 139.

⁴⁰ Felix HAMMER, *Genugtuung und Heil*, 139.

⁴¹ Felix HAMMER, *Genugtuung und Heil*, 139.

⁴² Cf. Felix HAMMER, *Genugtuung und Heil*, 140.

⁴³ Cf. Felix HAMMER, *Genugtuung und Heil*, 133.

⁴⁴ Cf. Felix HAMMER, *Genugtuung und Heil*, 133.

⁴⁵ Cf. Felix HAMMER, *Genugtuung und Heil*, 133.

only justice alone is put at par or equated with the nature of God. He, therefore, objects to Anselm's presentation of Justice, for it does not give a balanced picture of God. His critique notwithstanding, which seemingly is only based on book one, overlooks the mercy which Anselm spoke about in book two. Gerhard Gäde will instead, on the contrary, emphasise more the mercy (*misericordia*) of God.⁴⁶

Felix Hammer next turns to what he calls the externalisation of the saving act of Christ. The death of Christ, around which Anselm develops his entire dialectic, entails a tremendous achievement of sacrifice, which requires or demands recognition and appreciation in the form of a reward. Anselm, however, concluded by saying that Jesus does not need this reward or merit. Thus, it is passed on by Christ to sinful mankind. According to Hammer, something is missing here, namely the aspect of solidarity. It appears as though Christ went all the way to suffer and sacrificed his life without any involvement of mankind, and only when the merit was given to him, which he did not require, did he turn to humanity and pass on this merit to mankind. There is no aspect of solidarity between the living, suffering, and dying Christ and the human person in need of salvation, in the sense of the Pauline second Adam.

Furthermore, Hammer goes step by step in showing how Anselm's soteriology does not agree with the theology of St. Paul. To prove his point, Hammer quotes from the letter to the Corinthians to show the contrary of what Anselm held: "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf." (2 Cor. 5:21). From the Pauline perspective, Jesus is presented as being one with humanity, of the same sinful nature with humanity. Solidarity is clearly spelt out here between Jesus and sinful humanity. Hammer, therefore, accuses Anselm of not acknowledging this solidarity of Christ with the sinful flesh. Balthasar, however, would not agree to this accusation, for in his critique on *Stellvertretung* (representation) he says Christ is a representative of humanity, and "the actions and the suffering of the 'representative' has an inner effect on the persons in whose place he stands"⁴⁷ The objections of Balthasar notwithstanding, Hammer had claimed that the whole argument of Anselm accordingly is destroyed or no longer holds water by this proven recognition of Christ's solidarity with humanity in the letter of St. Paul. He concludes his critique by saying; when one acknowledges

⁴⁶ Cf. Gerhard GÄDE, *Eine andere Barmherzigkeit*, 311.

⁴⁷ Hans Urs von BALTHASAR, *Theo-Drama. Theological Dramatic theory III*. 121.

such solidarity and by it, the subjection of Christ to death, the final swinging power of Anselm's dialectic justice is lost.⁴⁸

Last but not least, Felix Hammer, directed his critique towards the concept of honour of God, *Honor Dei*. He said that for Anselm, the death of Jesus Christ is a matter of only honouring God, not necessarily the sanctification of the sinful flesh, nor getting back home, the one interiorly affected by sin, i.e., the human person. It remains purely externalised. Hammer says that the only real relationship between the death of Christ and humanity is that of a good example of Christ.⁴⁹

In summary, Hammer does not look favourably at the soteriology of Anselm. According to him, it is not good enough, for it is, among other things, very narrow, focused only on divine justice and neglecting the mercy of God. He classifies it as being extrinsic, for it focuses only on superficial elements of a juridical nature. The kind of satisfaction to which it limits itself is external, for it omits interior disposition and the conversion of a sinner. Last but not least, the death of Christ is presented from a perspective of honouring God, not necessarily offered in solidarity with the sinful flesh. So, it remains for him only as a good example to be imitated. He would have loved to see mercy and solidarity given a lot of space.

1.1.2. Joseph Ratzinger: Critique on infinite satisfaction

Joseph Ratzinger brings out one of the most popular critiques on Anselm, especially in his book "Introduction to Christianity," written in 1969 while teaching at the University of Tübingen. This book is a compilation of his lectures in 1967 at the University of Tübingen.⁵⁰ He was conscious of the dark shadow of the holocaust in Europe by Hitler, which ended in 1945, and also of the liberation struggles going on at the time in Latin America, countries with a Catholic majority. The silence or the indifference of the church during these atrocities is vividly before his eyes. A new theology born from these happenings emphasised more that God suffered with the victims as opposed to being one punishing the Jewish people and the suffering masses in Latin America. Hence, the critical perspective Ratzinger adopted towards any theological theory that seemed, or indeed used, a language that portrayed God as a punishing God was considered to be of a bad test, insensitive and outdated. Indirectly, he is offering a critique of the world's past and present violence and suffering. This is the perspective he has when

⁴⁸ Cf. Felix HAMMER, *Genugtuung und Heil*, 141.

⁴⁹ Cf. Felix HAMMER, *Genugtuung und Heil*, 145.

⁵⁰ Joseph RATZINGER, *Introduction to Christianity*, Bangalore 1969, 32.

reviewing the redemption theory of Anselm. Because of the Middle Ages language of Anselm, which insisted on punishment and his rejection of sola misericordia, he made himself a target of strong attacks by Ratzinger. Writing in the 20th century, Ratzinger found the satisfaction theory of Anselm not only to contain strong language of punishments but also to be obsolete, hence his strong critical stance against it.

In his book, which is a commentary on the articles of the creed, Ratzinger confronted the soteriology of Saint Anselm while looking at two articles of faith and expressed his critical interpretation of the same. In the article “*I believe in Jesus Christ, his only son our Lord,*” Ratzinger focused on the theme of Christology and the doctrine of redemption. He mentioned particularly two historical aspects of belief in Jesus that developed in the course of time, namely Christology and soteriology. After arguing against the idea of splitting the two, he focuses his discussion on the theology of redemption as developed by Anselm at the threshold of the Middle Ages. Ratzinger acknowledges, first of all, that the doctrine of redemption by Anselm, in both its classic as well as in its vulgarised form, has, to a great extent, shaped the general consciousness.⁵¹ He acknowledges by that that it is widespread and deeply ingrained, especially in the Western church. That is a positive acknowledgement. This, however, can be turned into a negative score for Ratzinger, for it is perceived to portray a picture of God that needs to be reformed. The more widespread it is, the more work needs to be put into uprooting it, correcting and reversing its perceived misconceptions, and circulating them around. One of the misconceptions highlighted by Ratzinger is that he finds it to be “cruelly mechanical and less and less feasible.”⁵² Though Anselm is criticised for allegedly expressing harsh views as having being captured by a feudal view of God as held by Olsen,⁵³ Ratzinger is not unaffected by the same, for he unleashes a very harsh critique against Anselm, as seen even by the word choice. The word cruel, more often than not, is closely associated with violence and heartlessness. Ratzinger thus accuses Anselm of painting a picture of God as cruel and emotionless, and we could also add -loveless. But how does Ratzinger arrive at such an assertion, and how does he justify it? Before justifying this statement, Ratzinger first attempts to summarise the main teaching of Anselm in his own words, employing an analogy of a beggar and a president.

⁵¹ Joseph RATZINGER, *Introduction to Christianity*, 231.

⁵² Joseph RATZINGER, *Introduction to Christianity*, 231.

⁵³ Cf. Glenn W. OLSEN, *Hans Urs von Balthasar and the Rehabilitation of St. Anselm's Doctrine of the Atonement*, in: *Scottish journal of Theology* 34 (2009) 49-61, here:53.

After drawing a distinction between the sin a man commits against a beggar and a sin against the president in terms of magnitude, he phrases Anselm's conclusion in the following words regarding man's sin against God: "He can offend infinitely - his capacity extends that far - but he cannot produce an infinite reparation; what he, as a finite being gives, will always be only finite. His powers of destruction extend further than his capacity to reconstruct."⁵⁴ This, according to Ratzinger, is ironic and an obvious stark contradiction, for on the one hand, a human person possesses so infinite a power as to offend infinitely and, on the other hand, remains limited and unable to offer infinite reparation. Indirectly, Ratzinger is arguing that the human person's offence can only be finite, just like his powers to make finite reparation. He disagrees with Anselm on the measure of the sin's gravity depending on who is offended instead of the offence done. By pointing out this contradiction, Ratzinger only lays the foundation of his strongest critique, which is yet to follow.

Ratzinger sums up Anselm's solution that Christ had to die on the cross in order to make good the infinite offence that had been committed and, in this way, restore the order that had been violated.⁵⁵ Ratzinger vehemently rejects this view, for to just say Jesus had to die to make good what was violated sounds for him to be a one-sided view. He argues that this one-sided view is arrived at due to the philosophical and juridical concepts which he (Anselm) employed in coming up with this solution. Ratzinger objects to the offered solution, saying it lacks the biblical goal for the existence of man. Here, Ratzinger offers his quick lecture and biblical goal of man before coming back to concretise his assertion against Anselm's solution. He argues that "the guiding thread offered remains the truth which the Bible expresses in the little word centred on the word *"for"*."⁵⁶ Man, says Ratzinger, lives or comes from God and lives *for* God, comes from another (parents) and lives *for* another. Ultimately, man lives from him who lived *for* all.⁵⁷ He highlights here the origin of man and also points at the goal of man. Further, Ratzinger underlines the word *"for"* as a call to that *"for"* in which man confidently lets himself fall, ceases to cling to himself into the infinite, the leap through which alone he can come to himself."⁵⁸

According to Ratzinger, therefore, a balanced theory of redemption needed to take into account both sides. The account must consider not only what humankind offers to God in reparation

⁵⁴ Joseph RATZINGER, *Introduction to Christianity*, 232.

⁵⁵ Joseph RATZINGER, *Introduction to Christianity*, 233.

⁵⁶ Joseph RATZINGER, *Introduction to Christianity*, 233.

⁵⁷ Joseph RATZINGER, *Introduction to Christianity*, 233.

⁵⁸ Joseph RATZINGER, *Introduction to Christianity*, 233.

but more importantly, what God has done for humankind and what God provides. This leads Ratzinger to the observation that; “the perfectly logical divine - *cum* - human legal system erected by Anselm distorts the perspectives and with its rigid logic can make the image of God appear in a sinister light.”⁵⁹ In other words, Anselm’s flirtation with the juridical scheme concepts made him come up with such a flawed theological position.

Having said that, we now move to the next article in the creed, where he unleashes another sharp critique, which is, “*He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried.*” Ratzinger comes back to Anselm and strongly observes misunderstandings that Anselm’s theory is capable of raising. He says:

To many, many Christians, and especially to those who only know the faith from a fair distance, it looks as if the cross is to be understood as part of a mechanism of injured and restored right. It is the form, so it seems, in which the infinitely offended righteousness of God was propitiated again by means of an infinite expiation.⁶⁰

Though he does not mention the name, it is common knowledge that he is referring to Anselm’s theory here, especially when he makes reference to the injured and restored rights and the infinitely offended righteousness of God. Ratzinger finally comes to the point where he concludes his strong critique against Anselm by stating that: “Christian faith in the cross imagines a God whose unrelenting righteousness demanded a human sacrifice, the sacrifice of his own son, and one turns away in horror from a righteousness whose sinister wrath makes the message of love incredible.”⁶¹ The word “incredible,” a translation of the original German term “*unglaublich*,” should be understood to mean *not believable* or *not credible*, as it carries a negative connotation rather than a positive one. Consequently, according to Ratzinger, Anselm’s theory undermines the credibility of the Christian message of love. This, according to Ratzinger, is a false understanding. Emphasising the wrath over the love of God is a misrepresentation of God. “This picture is as false as it is widespread.”⁶²

It can be concluded, therefore, that, for Ratzinger, Anselm’s theory is a bad one for it is cruelly mechanical, portrays God in a sinister light and turns people away in horror. In other words, he

⁵⁹ Joseph RATZINGER, *Introduction to Christianity*, 233.

⁶⁰ Joseph RATZINGER, *Introduction to Christianity*, 281.

⁶¹ Joseph RATZINGER, *Introduction to Christianity*, 281. The idea of God sacrificing His son has been refuted by Gäde who says; Christ’s death was not a ransom paid to the Devil. It is also not an offering to placate the anger of God but an expression of God’s relationship with Jesus, who could not be distracted by any *power* of the world from recognizing the honour of God and to live for Him and thereby avoiding any idolatry. See also; Gerhard GÄDE, *Eine andere Barmherzigkeit*, 310.

⁶² Joseph RATZINGER, *Introduction to Christianity*, 281.

vehemently rejects Anselm's theory, to the extent of labelling it as false. He correctly calls Anselm's theory as a theology of the cross, but a wrong one. For it does not strike a balance between justice (the wrath of God) and the love of God. Very strong words are selected to accompany his strong critique. Ratzinger does go on in his catechesis to explain the meaning of the cross from God's perspective, i.e., that on the cross, God did offer and show love rather than demanding a sacrifice. Anselm's theory is, therefore, totally refuted and labelled as a bad theory. Ratzinger has, however, been criticised by Kienzler, who observed that Ratzinger, in his entire critique, has mentioned the words justice and rights a number of times but never even once mentioned the mercy of God, which Anselm mentioned at the end of his work. He points out, therefore, that Ratzinger's critique was deficient, for it focused only on one part while leaving aside the other part.⁶³ Ratzinger focused more on Anselm's discussion of satisfaction and punishment in book one and left out or ignored book two, where mercy was addressed.

1.1.3. Hans Kessler's critique of staurocentric soteriology

Although Pröpper says that the soteriology of the entire Western church was generally described as a staurocentric soteriology,⁶⁴ Kessler takes it up here as the main critique point, directed against the soteriology of Anselm. Kessler wrote many works and articles on the suffering of Jesus and redemption from a critical point of view. Among them are: (1) *Theologische Bedeutung des Todes Jesu*, 1970; (2.) *Erlösung als Befreiung*, 1972; (3.) *Theologie interculturel*, etc., to mention a few. He engaged himself in discussing the theodicy question, where he looked at the question of suffering from the perspective of victims, atheists, and from the point of view of other major world religions. He shows a high sensitivity and consciousness towards others' opinions against our Christian faith and the church and ultimately against God when he states the following words in an article in *Stimmen der Zeit* entitled, *God - why we do not need Him*: "The masses have taken leave of God, or more precisely, of the images of God communicated on the level of a bad catechism."⁶⁵

Furthermore, in the book entitled *Die theologische Bedeutung des Todes Jesu: Eine traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung*, published in 1970, he devoted his whole book to exploring the meaning of the death of Christ. He comes up with a critical view, especially against the language employed by Anselm, which may fall into the category of what he termed

⁶³ Cf. Klaus KIENZLER, *Gott ist größer. Studien zu Anselm von Canterbury*, Würzburg, 1997, 144

⁶⁴ Cf. Thomas PRÖPPER, *Erlösungsglaube und Freiheitsgeschichte*, 74.

⁶⁵ Hans KESSLER, *God – Why We do not need Him*, in: *Stimmen der Zeit* 3 (2009) 173-187. 174

as a bad catechism. It is from this background that we have to view his critique. He raises a number of critiques against Anselm's theory of redemption. We want to highlight some of his most outstanding critiques. The main one is staurocentricism, but also *Justitia commutativa* and satisfaction.

One of the strongest, if not also the most famous of Kessler's critiques against Anselm is the critique of his soteriology as being staurocentric. His point of departure for this critique is Anselm's insistence that God cannot forgive sins *sola misericordia*. According to Kessler, this eventually led Anselm to narrow his soteriology to a mere staurocentric soteriology. Behind this thought of staurocentric soteriology is the questionable and objectionable thought of whether "God so delights in or requires the blood of the innocent, that only on condition of His death will He, or can He, spare the guilty."⁶⁶ The answer of Anselm to this question was that God cannot redeem humanity in any other way other than salvation only through the death of Jesus Christ.⁶⁷ Salvation seems thus to have been reduced only to the death of Christ on the cross. This position, according to Kessler, raises the following questions: What about the events and activities of Christ that precede his death? Are they not meaningful and important to soteriology? These same questions become Kessler's objections, as he challenges this narrow way of perception. He says; in that case, one may be led to conclude that the incarnation, as well as the life and works of Jesus, have no soteriological meaning or importance at all.⁶⁸

The incarnation, in this case, serves only as a pre-condition of the redemptive act on the cross, nothing more. It implies he only became man in order to die. Kessler goes on to add that the constituting of a God-man is the possible precondition for the offering of a spotless, infinite satisfaction in his death. He underlines his objection against this staurocentric view by quoting from Adolph Harnack, whose view on this matter he fully supports. "The death of Christ is entirely severed from His life-work on earth, and isolated. This God-man need not have preached, and founded a kingdom and gathered disciples: He only required to die."⁶⁹ In agreement with Harnack, Kessler contests the understanding that Humanity is saved only through the death of Jesus. Hans Kessler winds up his objection against the staurocentric presentation by saying that hardly anywhere for Anselm does Harmatology and Staurology so

⁶⁶ CDH I, X. See also Hans KESSLER, *Die theologische Bedeutung des Todes Jesu*, 158. My translation.

⁶⁷ Cf. Hans KESSLER, *Die theologische Bedeutung des Todes Jesu*, 158. See also CDH I 10.

⁶⁸ Cf. Hans KESSLER, *Die theologische Bedeutung des Todes Jesu*, 158.

⁶⁹ Adolf von HARNACK, *History of Dogma* Vol. 6, Translated from the third German edition by Neil Buchanan, Boston 1899, 76. See also Hans KESSLER, *Die theologische Bedeutung des Todes Jesu*, 158.

correspond with one another, so strongly and at the same time one-sided, narrow and external.⁷⁰ Apart from the events that precede the crucifixion of Christ, the resurrection does not seem to have any salvific value. It, therefore, appears that for Anselm, the resurrection is detached from his death and is totally irrelevant soteriologically and does not even need to be mentioned.⁷¹

Next, Kessler critiques what he calls the equivalence thought (*Justitia commutativa*) in the God-Human relationship. He deduces this from the famous axiom of *aut poena aut satisfactio*, where Anselm argues against God forgiving sin by simply granting divine amnesty. Under this concept of *justitia commutativa*, Kessler questions Anselm's presentation of God, saying it creates an impression that God conducts himself as an offended private man.⁷² Kessler bases his position on the following words of Anselm: "Just like the sinner by sinning takes what belongs to God, so God in punishing takes away that which is man's own."⁷³ According to Kessler, this view suggests that punishing the sinner is equivalent to honouring God. However, Greshake countered this interpretation, strongly emphasising that God's honour cannot be lost, as Anselm also stated several times.⁷⁴

Commenting further on the *justitia commutativa*, Kessler sharpens his critique even further when he says; it is odd to see how the creator demands from his creature an equivalent compensation, as if this creature was not dependent on Him and his subject, but treats him as His equal, and He the Lord equal in rank to him (man).⁷⁵ This kind of understanding and formulation is said to be metaphysically and juridically influenced. Anselm is said to be trying to come up with a rational explanation which has to convince everyone. However, this line of thought implies that God and humankind seem to be presented as equal partners with equal rights. Kessler finds some difficulties with this line of thought when he says: between freedom, which brings God and man as equal partners on the same level, to a total dependence on each other, in which then between the involved parties nothing relevant can happen (without the other), is a seemingly hopeless or worthless alternative.⁷⁶

The main theory of soteriology by Anselm is also identified by Kessler, like many other theologians, as a satisfaction theory. He directs his attention to the inner life of the sinner in

⁷⁰ Adolf von HARNACK, *History of Dogma Vol. 6*. [translated from the third German edition by Neil Buchanan,] Boston 1899, 76. See also Hans KESSLER, *Die theologische Bedeutung des Todes Jesu*, 159.

⁷¹ Hans KESSLER, *Die theologische Bedeutung des Todes Jesu*, 159.

⁷² Cf. Hans KESSLER, *Die theologische Bedeutung des Todes Jesu*, 132.

⁷³ Cf. Hans KESSLER, *Die theologische Bedeutung des Todes Jesu*, 132-133. See also CDH I, XIV.

⁷⁴ Cf. Gisbert GRESHAKE, *Erlösung und Freiheit*, 327.

⁷⁵ Cf. Hans KESSLER, *Die theologische Bedeutung des Todes Jesu*, 135.

⁷⁶ Cf. Hans KESSLER, *Die theologische Bedeutung des Todes Jesu*, 136.

need of salvation and, from that angle, raises a strong critique in the following ways: Firstly, the conception of sin as something external and the demand for external satisfaction has no relationship to the inner being. The relation remains external and formal.⁷⁷ Kessler further qualifies his observation by saying that God is not personally affected (except only his external honour) or the human person.⁷⁸ We find this statement by Kessler to be extreme. To draw such a conclusion is to read more into Anselm than is there. He goes a step further than Hammer, who labelled Anselm's satisfaction as extrinsic, never touching God,⁷⁹ by also suggesting that man remains untouched. Wiese refutes Kessler's claim that God is not touched by human sin and that man is also not personally affected by his own sin.⁸⁰ The claim of Kessler here Means that sin remains external to both God and man. It resembles a dispute settlement between two parties; the offender pays the price without undergoing any inner transformation. According to Kessler, this concept of redemption overlooks a cardinal aspect of soteriology, which is the inner disposition of man. Anselm's category of thought does not lead one to an inner change, so it is unsuitable for reorientating one's being.

With regards to Anselm's concept of satisfaction, which is described as extrinsic with regard to restitution thinking, Kessler points to what he sees as a chain of contradictions. With regard to the concept of God's honour, which is manifested in the order created by God and in the blessedness of those in his kingdom, therein is proof of God's divinity. When the order is disturbed, then God's honour is robbed. Punishment is a means of restoring back this honour. Therefore, God restores (*ordo*) order by punishing. Punishment means the restoration of the external glory of God. But in terms of content, God gains nothing from the punishments; the punishment restores nothing, and the damage done to the order remains. Only from a perspective of the equivalent scheme can one come to the understanding that punishment can restore the external honour of God.⁸¹

Secondly, Kessler says the idea of punishment as an alternative to satisfaction in the *Cur Deus Homo* must be disqualified. Kessler agrees on this point with H. Dombois who said, inside the

⁷⁷ Hans KESSLER, *Die theologische Bedeutung des Todes Jesu*, 159.

⁷⁸ Hans KESSLER, *Die theologische Bedeutung des Todes Jesu*, 161. He contradicted himself when he said God's external honour is affected by sin but the human person is not. Man, being a part of creation, the external glory of God, is also affected.

⁷⁹ Cf. Felix HAMMER, *Genugtuung und Heil*, 139.

⁸⁰ Cf. Hans-Ulrich WIESE, *Die Lehre Anselms Von Canterbury über den Tod Jesu in der Schrift „Cur Deus Homo“*, in: *Wissenschaft und Weisheit: Zeitschrift für Augustinisch-Franziskanische Theologie und Philosophie in der gegenwart*, 41. Band, 1978, 152.

⁸¹ Cf. Hans KESSLER, *Die theologische Bedeutung des Todes Jesu*, 162.

concept of satisfaction, the idea of punishment is absurd.⁸² Having disqualified punishment, Kessler now turns to the concept of satisfaction itself and advances his strong critiques. He says: if the satisfaction offered by Christ possesses the power of full restoration, so must the punishment be fully eliminated, and the initial order be fully healed.⁸³ Furthermore, Kessler says that the substitute for the injured honour of God is not at the same time a substitute for the damage done to the *ordo*. the difference arises because in *Cur Deus Homo*, the formal logical-juridical argumentation cannot be communicated with deep theological insights.⁸⁴

The statement about the external glory of God has some implications, especially with regard to the understanding of the word obedience, which is something interior, not external. This is totally ignored or overlooked. Under this understanding presented by Anselm, the understanding of obedience is emptied from a personal to a purely formal paying (*reddere*) of a debt: a quantitative equivalent thing has to be given for another that was taken away.⁸⁵ This is like a business transaction where goods are exchanged. Under this arrangement, God's glory is, and remains preserved for all times, the people basically no longer need to be obedient, in order to honour God (but only then, when they want to attain blessedness), for one of them was infinitely obedient and paid the total debt in advance.

Furthermore, Kessler says God's actions are understood from the perspective of an equivalent benefit; incommensurable quantities are brought into direct equivalence.⁸⁶ From the above raised objections, it becomes crystal clear that Kessler strongly disagrees with Anselm's soteriology.

In conclusion, it can be seen that Kessler found and identified many contradictions to which he raised his serious objections. He finds God's presentation using juridical logical concepts to understand Him as incorrect. The *justitia commutativa* presents God as an offended private man demanding for an equivalent compensation. This view reduces God to being an equal of man and as one dependent on man. He vehemently rejects the staurocentric presentation of salvation, saying salvation is not to be reduced just to the death of Christ on the cross. If that were to be the case, then he only needed to die, not to preach or to gather disciples around himself. Kessler comes out strongly to reject the idea of punishment as a means of restoring

⁸² Cf. Hans KESSLER, *Die theologische Bedeutung des Todes Jesu*, 162.

⁸³ Cf. Hans KESSLER, *Die theologische Bedeutung des Todes Jesu*, 162.

⁸⁴ Cf. Hans KESSLER, *Die theologische Bedeutung des Todes Jesu*, 162.

⁸⁵ Hans KESSLER, *Die theologische Bedeutung des Todes Jesu*, 162.

⁸⁶ Hans KESSLER, *Die theologische Bedeutung des Todes Jesu*, 163.

honour back to God, saying God gains nothing in terms of content, and neither is the damage done to the *ordo* restored. When it comes to the theory of satisfaction, Kessler says it remains something external and formal, affecting God as well as man not personally or interiorly. Hans Ulrich Wiese, however, criticised Kessler for saying sin is external to God and man: The sin of man deeply affects man and does not remain external to him...if redemption is a necessity, then God must also be affected by sin... as much as man is.⁸⁷ External satisfaction omits the obedience of man to God, something which is a cardinal element in the redemption of a human person and his relation to his creator. While proposing and magnifying the need for obedience which he says Anselm overlooked, Kessler himself overlooked or minimized Christ's solidarity with mankind in his reading of the *Cur Deus Homo*.

Given the criticisms mentioned above from the radical critics, a question arises as to whether Anselm's entire soteriological theory is really an example of bad catechism. Do the radical critics imply that it should be discarded? Are there really no identifiable beneficial elements that would still be useful for understanding redemption theory? Whereas Anselm's theory was not perfect, Mild critics brought a new perspective on how to understand it, to which we now turn our attention.

1.2. Mild critics

This second category of interpreters of Anselm, who criticised his soteriology but mildly, and most importantly, also balanced it up with the scores they passionately thought he also brought to the theological discussion on soteriology, is here referred to as mild critics. They are moderate in their criticism, or in other words, balanced in their critique. They do not only highlight some weaknesses, sometimes even using strong words as well, such as describing "God is a merciless creditor."⁸⁸ On the other hand, they also take account of the strengths of his theory of redemption. Of the many interpreters who fit into this category, we have equally only chosen three contemporary theologians. They will help us have a glimpse into those who hold a mild position. These three arranged chronologically are: (1) Hans Urs von Balthasar, (2) Thomas Pröpper and (3) Jürgen Werbick.

⁸⁷ Hans-Ulrich WIESE, *Die Lehre Anselm von Canterbury über den Tod Jesu in der Schrift "Cur Deus Homo"*, in: Wissenschaft und Weisheit. Zeitschrift für Augustinisch-Franziskanische Theologie und Philosophie in der Gegenwart, 41. Band, 1978, 152.

⁸⁸ Jürgen WERBICK, *Soteriologie*, 244.

1.2.1. Hans Urs von Balthasar : Critique against the passivity of man

In his book *Theo-Drama III*, originally published in the German language in 1978, Balthasar commented on the soteriology of Anselm and gave his critique from pages 107-109, then 117-122. He rightly classifies Anselm's theory as polemics. He praises the soteriology of Anselm, saying it is the climax of the polemics where soteriology is concerned. Balthasar, however, has some observations on some aspects of Anselm's soteriology theory. These include (1) the method, and (2) the theology of representation / solidarity.

Balthasar finds a problem with the method that Anselm employed to put across his theory of redemption. He says Anselm forced the biblical foundations on soteriology into the juridical system.⁸⁹ The word "force" already suggests that biblical concepts did not quite fit into the judicial system and, therefore, the intended goal was not achieved with this method or that the two did not blend well together. He labels the theory of Anselm as a synthesis of the biblical and juridical systems. It was some sort of inculturation but an imperfect one. Looking at the satisfaction theory in its entirety, he observes that God seems to do everything for man. A human person is presented more or less like a spectator in his or her own salvation, watching from a distance what Jesus is doing to God the Father. This initiative of God to initiate reconciliation for man, where almost everything is done by God himself in Christ, makes it appear to be a one-sided arrangement. It appears as though God is doing everything towards himself. This is reminiscent of the critique by Harnack, who said, "the son offers himself to himself."⁹⁰ In other words, God offered himself to himself. Mankind is almost passive. Against this, Balthasar raises a critique, saying: "The one-sided emphasis on the fact that, in Jesus, God himself has intervened on man's behalf and demonstrated his graciousness gives the impression that the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus are nothing more than a symbolic visual aid in the instruction that God imparts to mankind."⁹¹ Here Balthasar points out that it seems as if God reconciles with himself.⁹² An implication of this criticism would be that the death of Christ on the cross was not necessarily to save mankind but was merely serving as an example for man to follow. Balthasar differs in opinion here with Kessler and Pröpper, who said Anselm's theory is staurocentric and that salvation was achieved only by Christ's death on the cross. For

⁸⁹ Hans Urs von BALTHASAR, *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic theory, III. Dramatis Personae, persons in Christ*, San Francisco 1992, 117.

⁹⁰ Adolph HARNACK, *History of Dogma*, Vol.6, 77.

⁹¹ Hans Urs von BALTHASAR, *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic theory, III*. 117.

⁹² Adolf HARNACK, *History of dogma* vol. 6, 77. Harnack prepared the argument for Balthasar when he said: "For according to Anselm, the son offers Himself to Himself."

Balthasar, “the cross would be simply the external expression of the way in which legal righteousness puts itself in the wrong before God.”⁹³

Balthasar next moves to look at the word *representation* as one word that describes what Anselm had deeply thought about but only spoke about on the surface. In talking about *representation*, Balthasar says: “This indispensable concept introduces into theology something that Anselm had pondered deeply but had formulated in a rather narrow way: the process of reconciliation ... is dramatic, both within the Godhead and in the relationship between God and man.”⁹⁴ He implies by this that Jesus represented God when he became man and established relations with humanity in the world. Inside the God-head, on the ontological level, after his earthly ministry, Jesus carried and represented humanity inside the trinity. He notes that representation or *stellvertretung* by Jesus signifies a “being in our stead, our place” (*Stelle*). Representation, therefore, implied everything that the earthly Jesus lived, brought about and endured, up to and including his death.⁹⁵ Balthasar stressed that “death is only the last stage and consequence of the path of Jesus, and in isolation, it has no saving significance.”⁹⁶

Contrary to what others have said about Anselm, Balthasar finds the theory of Anselm to have represented the sacrifice of Christ, who offered himself as a sacrifice in solidarity with mankind. He says: “The actions and the suffering of the ‘representative’ has an inner effect on the persons in whose place he stands.”⁹⁷ This is quite a favourable interpretation of Anselm. He acknowledges, contrary to others, the inner aspect of Anselm’s theory.

In conclusion, Balthasar both criticises and praises Anselm’s theory of satisfaction. He criticises the understanding of the redeeming act by God doing everything as being more of a visual aid, thereby portraying man as passive and taking no part in his salvation. But he praises Anselm’s theory as highlighting the aspect of solidarity with mankind, making reconciliation with God possible.

⁹³ Hans Urs von BALTHASAR, *Theo-Drama. Theological Dramatic theory, III*. 117.

⁹⁴ Hans Urs von BALTHASAR, *Theo-Drama. Theological Dramatic theory III*. 120-121.

⁹⁵ Hans Urs von BALTHASAR, *Theo-Drama. Theological Dramatic theory III*. 108.

⁹⁶ Hans Urs von BALTHASAR, *Theo-Drama. Theological Dramatic theory III*. 108.

⁹⁷ Hans Urs von BALTHASAR, *Theo-Drama. Theological Dramatic theory III*. 121.

1.2.2. Thomas Pröpper's critique against conditionalising God's mercy

Thomas Pröpper, in his books *Erlösungsglaube und Freiheitsgeschichte* as well as in *Theologische Anthropologie II*, also added his voice and made a commentary on the soteriology of Anselm. Pröpper acknowledges first of all the merits or *Verdienste* of Anselm's soteriology, as he calls it. He gives him credit, among other things, for overcoming the scandalous traditional understanding of ransom among his contemporaries, that is, the idea that ransom was paid to the devil. Merit is also given to Anselm's theory for raising a point about the responsible freedom of mankind and its participation in the salvation event. He admires how Anselm seriously wrestled to elaborate in detail on the relation between justice and the mercy of God.⁹⁸ However, Pröpper notes some problems with some elements of Anselm's soteriology. Two objections, in particular, are of major concern for him. These are: (1) making divine mercy conditional and (2) staurocentric understanding of salvation.

i) *Critique against making the unconditional mercy conditional*

Pröpper objects strongly to the theory of satisfaction, considering that the magnitude of man's sin is measured against God's infinite honour. This has one consequence to the understanding of the mercy of God. It makes the unconditional divine mercy of God conditional.⁹⁹ Implied by that is that one has to pay to receive mercy or pardon. He based his critique on the following words of Anselm: "He who has not paid says in vain, forgive."¹⁰⁰ In other words, Anselm ruled out the idea of divine mercy or compassion for sin without paying compensation or satisfaction.

Furthermore, Pröpper raises questions about the concrete effects of satisfaction on the sinner and the world that was, is, and will remain destroyed in the future. He asserts that it is difficult to shed light on the concrete effects of this fact of a historical event of the death of Jesus. While acknowledging its difficulty, Pröpper finds a theological justification for the satisfaction by linking it with two other concepts of the merits and the example of Christ. Man receives, through faith, a share in the merits of Christ, which then enables man to follow his (Christ's) obedient justice.¹⁰¹

On the other hand, Pröpper, in his earlier work *Erlösungsglaube und Freiheitsgeschichte*, speaks favourably of Anselm's satisfaction act. Paying attention to the satisfaction act itself,

⁹⁸ Thomas PRÖPPER, *Theologische Anthropologie II*, Freiburg 2015, 673.

⁹⁹ Cf. Thomas PRÖPPER, *Theologische Anthropologie II*, 673.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Thomas PRÖPPER, *Theologische Anthropologie II*, 673. See also CDH I, XIX.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Thomas PRÖPPER, *Erlösungsglaube und Freiheitsgeschichte*, 80.

he says, the satisfaction act of Christ was in no way meant as a punishment but as a merit of voluntary personal abandonment.¹⁰²

i) *Critique against staurocentricism*

His basic objection remains the fixation of salvation only on what happened on the cross. This sacrifice of the cross was supposed to be made by the God–man for only he was able to pay the price. This entails he had first to be incarnated, but this incarnation, so objects Pröpper, was only a precondition for his redeeming death on the cross.¹⁰³ Pröpper further expressly states that: for that he became man that he should die - “*Denn dazu war er Mensch, daß er stirbe.*”¹⁰⁴ That means, apart from the purpose of dying, his incarnation would have been useless. Other activities of Christ are thereby excluded from having any redeeming value. The incarnation would have been unnecessary without the salvific death on the cross.

In conclusion, Pröpper tried to balance his critique by acknowledging the important aspect of man’s freedom for his own salvation and rejecting the notion of ransom to the devil. He clearly opposed staurocentricism, for according to him, it made God's unconditional mercy conditional.

1.2.3. Jürgen Werbick: Critique of the narrow perspective of God’s honour

Werbick is an authority on the subject of soteriology. In his book entitled *Soteriology*, written in 1990, Jürgen Werbick naturally also handled the soteriological theory of Anselm. In this book, he briefly summarises the teaching of Anselm before offering his critique. While analysing the soteriology of Anselm, Werbick selectively picked those words of Anselm that sounded very controversial. For example, when reconstructing the satisfaction concept of Anselm, he selects this passage; “either the sinner freely pays his debt or God takes it from him against his will.”¹⁰⁵ The same is said about obedience or subjection. Werbick says; “either man freely yields due submission to God, be it by not sinning or by satisfying for his sin, or God subjects him unwillingly by compulsion and thus declares Himself to be his Lord.”¹⁰⁶ That means, with or without wanting, man must submit. Werbick uses the German word “*foltert*,”¹⁰⁷

¹⁰² Cf. Thomas PRÖPPER, *Erlösungsglaube und Freiheitsgeschichte*, 78.

¹⁰³ Cf. Thomas PRÖPPER, *Theologische Anthropologie*, 673.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Thomas PRÖPPER, *Theologische Anthropologie*, 673.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Jürgen WERBICK, *Soteriologie*, Düsseldorf 1990, 244.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Jürgen WERBICK, *Soteriologie*, 244. See also CDH 1, 14.

¹⁰⁷ Jürgen WERBICK, *Soteriologie*, 244. *Foltert* is quite stronger than compulsion and is considered as inhuman in the contemporary world view of human rights.

meaning *torture* instead of *compulsion*, in his text written in the German language, implying that God uses torture¹⁰⁸ on humans to bring them to submission. This could have negative connotations for human freedom, for torture is incompatible with freedom. The fact that torture is today looked at as inhuman, associating God with it paints a bad picture of HIM. This seems to paint God as one who is cruel and obsessed with his honour and has consequently no respect for human freedom.

Regarding God's honour and the debt man owes God and God's reaction to that, Werbick critiques Anselm as follows; God is a merciless creditor (*ein unbarmherziger Gläubiger*) who demands a balance (of payment) from the human race for the injury done to his honour.¹⁰⁹ The sins of mankind are here compared to a monetary debt, which God, with His last ferocity, exacts from the defaulter or his representative.¹¹⁰ He uses very strong words of critique towards Anselm's theory. Despite the strong tone he uses to criticise the sinister image painted of God as a merciless creditor, he turns around to support and defend the intention of the concept of *honor Dei*, and against the common critique levelled against Anselm, regarding the presentation of God as a private man.

He says, the *honor Dei* as espoused by Anselm, is not about the private personal rights of God over and against the human person but is rather about obliging the human person to preserve the divinely created order.¹¹¹ Carrying on with his defence of Anselm, he brings up a critique by Reimarus only in order to criticise it afterwards. The quote of Reimarus' critique states that: the atonement theory of Anselm spoke not about the God concerned with reconciliation but one more concerned with his honour and retribution. This punishing God, full of wrath and revenge, justly (legally) reacts against the sins of the unjust mankind. This soteriological syndrome appears absurd.¹¹²

Werbick defends Anselm against Reimarus by saying that this form of presenting soteriology has little to do with the thought of redemption in the Gospels and does not correspond to or

¹⁰⁸ The universal declaration of human rights of 1948 describes torture as inhuman. "No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment." Universal declaration of human rights (1948, art. 5)

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Jürgen WERBICK, *Soteriologie*, 244.

¹¹⁰ Cf. Jürgen WERBICK, *Soteriologie*, 244 -245.

¹¹¹ Cf. Jürgen WERBICK, *Soteriologie*, 245.

¹¹² Cf. Jürgen WERBICK, *Soteriologie*, 246.

represent the intention of Anselm's satisfaction doctrine.¹¹³ He thus implies that Anselm's theory is in harmony with scripture.

Werbick has both sharply criticised and expressly come to Anselm's defence. He is at the borderline of those who criticised Anselm and the apologists. We now move on to the apologists.

1.3. Defenders of Anselm

This category of critics covers those interpreters who positively view Anselm's soteriology and come to his defence. Equally, three theologians from the contemporary period have been selected whose views should be sufficient to give us a perspective from another angle than what we have seen so far. These three, arranged chronologically, are: (1) Gisbert Greshake, (2) Gerhard Gäde and (3) Peter Hünemann.

1.3.1. Gisbert Greshake – Legitimate inculturation in medieval Germanic law

Greshake, in his article entitled: *Erlösung und Freiheit: zur Neuinterpretation der Erlösungslehre* Anselm von Canterbury, begins by acknowledging that there is no theological theory that is so passionately disputed and yet, though not an officially defined teaching of the church, has so much shaped the faith consciousness of many as the satisfaction theory of St. Anselm from Canterbury.¹¹⁴ He acknowledges that Anselm's theory has faced widespread rejection, especially because of the stereotypical presentation of Jesus' death on the cross as placating the wrath of God through which reconciliation between God and mankind is founded.¹¹⁵ Aware of these attacks, Greshake comes to the defence of Anselm by rejecting this stereotype as not really representing Anselm's view. To justify his assertions and redeem Anselm from this stereotype, Greshake tries to provide context to Anselm's work. He briefly explains the historical background of the criticisms against Anselm, saying they were influenced by the liberal theology of the last century represented by Ritschl and Harnack. Harnack, in particular, categorically labelled it as a bad teaching of the church when he said that: "in spite of Anselm's good intentions and in spite of some correct perceptions, no theory

¹¹³ Cf. Jürgen WERBICK, *Soteriologie*, 247.

¹¹⁴ Gisbert GRESHAKE, *Erlösung und Freiheit*, 323.

¹¹⁵ Cf. Gisbert GRESHAKE, *Erlösung und Freiheit*, 323. See also; Adolph HARNACK, *History of Dogma Vol. III*, 312. Harnack repeated this stereotype of Christ's death as a sacrifice to propitiate God's wrath emphatically.

so bad had ever before his day been given out as ecclesiastical.”¹¹⁶ Greshake counters this sharp critique from Harnack by bringing in the views of Emil Brunner. Brunner calls the concept of Anselm a qualified, invaluable, and historic theological act of the first range.¹¹⁷

Before Greshake can now give his personal critique, he stresses the importance of understanding Anselm from his historical background. He summarised it, saying Anselm wrote this piece of work in a hasty during a restless situation when he had no peace due to the investiture conflict in which he was entangled, which saw him exiled from his seat. The people around him quickly published the unedited text. These external factors may have been responsible, as Anselm admits it was not yet finished and ripely considered. According to Greshake, this is the reason for the existence of some disjointed lines of thought and ideas. Due to this, it is difficult to pinpoint the CDH text's central theme. According to Greshake, this is why there are varying interpretations and contradictions regarding his text.¹¹⁸

Notwithstanding the fact that Anselm's arguments might be disjointed in CDH, as highlighted above, Greshake proceeds to look at the content of the book. He says salvation through Jesus Christ has various dimensions. Like Abelard, Anselm can also say salvation lies in the revelation of the unending love of God. Anselm also points out in the CDH the redeeming function of Christ precisely through example and teaching. Greshake notes that Anselm does not deny all these dimensions but admits that whatever a person can say, there still remain deeper hidden grounds on such an important matter (CDH I, 2). According to Geshake, therefore, Anselm did not wish to present a round teaching on salvation.¹¹⁹

Paying attention specifically to the concept of *God's Honour*, Greshake cites Harnack's critique that; “the worst thing in Anselm's theory: the mythological conception of God as the mighty private man, who is incensed at the injury done to His honour and does not forgo His wrath till He has received an at least adequately great equivalent.”¹²⁰ Harnack's critique goes further to say, “Is it not a terrible thought, that God has a horrible prerogative not to forgive out of love but always needing a payment?”¹²¹ This critique has since then become a like general topos of critique against Anselm. Ratzinger fully agreed with this critique, too¹²². Before

¹¹⁶ Adolf HARNACK, *History of dogma* vol. 6, 77-78.

¹¹⁷ Cf. Gisbert GRESHAKE, *Erlösung und Freiheit*, 323.

¹¹⁸ Cf. Cf. Gisbert GRESHAKE, *Erlösung und Freiheit*, 325.

¹¹⁹ Cf. Cf. Gisbert GRESHAKE, *Erlösung und Freiheit*, 325

¹²⁰ Adolf HARNACK, *History of dogma* vol. 6, 76.

¹²¹ Cf. Adolf von HARNACK, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte III*, Tübingen 1932, 409.

¹²² Cf. Joseph RATZINGER, *Introduction to Christianity*, 281.

commenting on the above critique, Greshake brings in the subject of God's mercy and love. In the axiom of *aut poena aut satisfactio*, it appears that there is no place for God's love and mercy.

After stating all the above critiques by others against Anselm, which he clearly does not agree with, Greshake comes to the defence of Anselm by saying that the mercy is accounted for and is there towards the end of CDH, where Anselm claims triumphantly: "The mercy of God ... we now find to be so great and so consonant with Justice as that neither greater nor juster could be conceived of."¹²³ This mercy of God, according to Anselm, is always joined to the justice of God. To express this view further, Greshake brings in the exposition of the mercy and justice of God as presented in the *Proslogion* to defend the just mercy of God:

That which is not done justly ought not to be done, and that which ought not to be done is done unjustly. Therefore, if it were not just for You to pity the wicked, You ought not to pity them, and if You ought not to pity them, it would be unjust for You to pity them. If it is sinful to say that, then it is lawful to believe that You justly pity the wicked.¹²⁴

In light of the above quote from the *Proslogion*, Greshake underlines that the mercy of God must be just. Granting mercy without justice or *ordo iustitiae* is letting sin become inordinate or get out of control. It would be a scorn to want to ascribe such mercy to God.¹²⁵ Coming back to the most controversial theme of *honor Dei*, Greshake comes to the defence of Anselm by stating that many interpreters overlook his decisive statements which are compact and brief: "It is not possible that God can lose his honor."¹²⁶ To concretise this statement, Greshake cites again another equally overlooked passage of Anselm which says:

It is not possible for anything to add to or to diminish the honour of God, in so far as it appertains to Himself. For that same honour of His is incorruptible, and in no way mutable. But when any creature follows its own course ... it is said to obey and honour Him. ...when this creature wills what he should, he honours God; not because he gives anything, but because he freely yields himself to the Will and decision of God and preserves as far as in him lies his place in the universal order, and the beauty of that universe. But when he does not will what he ought, he dishonours God, so far as in him lies, since he submits not himself freely to direction, and as far as he can, perturbs the order and the beauty of the universe, even though he in no way can injure or lower the power or dignity of God.¹²⁷

¹²³ CDH. II, XX

¹²⁴ ANSELM OF CANTERBURY, *Proslogion* 9.

¹²⁵ Cf. Gisbert GRESHAKE, *Erlösung und Freiheit*, 327.

¹²⁶ Cf. Gisbert GRESHAKE, *Erlösung und Freiheit*, 327.

¹²⁷ Cf. Gisbert GRESHAKE, *Erlösung und Freiheit*, 327. See also CDH I, XV.

Greshake stresses that God's honour and Glory are not injured by the sins of man and so demands no satisfaction for the restoration of his honour. It is not about God; rather it is about the human person and about the beauty of creation and order which was given to the stewardship of man but which is now destroyed due to his fault. Restoration of the *ordo* lies in man staying in his lane and occupying his rightful place in the universe.

1.3.1.1. Sociological context

In his continued defence of Anselm, Greshake now looks at the sociological context of honour in Teutonicism. He argues that Anselm's concept of honour should be understood in a social context, for every theory has a plausible sociological structure behind it. That background is the medieval German constitutional law. It is anchored on the suzerain treaty, where the king and his vassals or feudal lords enter into an agreement. There is mutual dependence. The sovereign offers protection and a portion of power. The sovereign king sits at the apex of the pyramid, and immediately under him come the vassals in their different levels. Maintaining this hierarchical order grants the vassals peace and freedom. Law, peace, and freedom are synonyms for honour; the opposite is lack of honour, and injuring honour means lawlessness and lack of peace. The vassal promises allegiance and service to the sovereign. Breaking this treaty or the promise amounts to dishonouring the king and disrupting the social order. It also leads to the loss of protection, peace, and freedom. According to this German law, the state is not an abstract juridical person but identical to the office bearers and vice versa. This applies to the king above all. His position and his honour, are the State and the law respectively. If the honour is injured, then peace is lost, and the social order is endangered. Restoration of the injured honour according to German law is done through punishment or satisfaction.¹²⁸

Greshake comments that this analogy of German law was the social context that influenced Anselm's soteriology. Having provided the social context of that time, Greshake now shows that Anselm corrects the German constitutional law model for the theological statement. Whereas in the German constitutional law, breaking the agreement constituted dishonour to the personal honour (of the King) as well as public social disorder, here, sin only affects the order of the world. It only affects the creature alone. Greshake says that God's honour can neither be diminished nor increased. He holds further the view that Anselm is either overlooked or is not fully evaluated in the interpretations of his theory up to now. The social context has not

¹²⁸ Cf. Gisbert GRESHAKE, *Erlösung und Freiheit*, 330-332.

always been considered. Salvation is neither about placating God's anger nor reconciling with God but about reconciling with the world. Mankind needs this, not God.¹²⁹

Greshake illustrates that Anselm made a further modification regarding German law. German law had an element of punishment, but Anselm's theory tried to move more and more away from that. He instead says that the satisfaction which God demands is not a punishment but rather something positive. People have to radically give God honour again, i.e., by recognising him as Lord and subjecting their free will to Him. From a social context, God's demand for honour is not about Him but about creation.

1.3.1.2. Critique on Free will

Greshake goes on to highlight another overlooked but key contribution of Anselm concerning the issue of free will. He links the free will of God to the *ordo Justitia*. Commenting on the *ordo justitiae*, Greshake says that the *ordo justitiae* is nothing other than the unconditional faithfulness of God to his free, self-sustaining creature. This understanding of Anselm comes close to the biblical understanding of Justice. In his Justice, God opens the *sedakah*, a living space of the covenant in which man not only receives divine goodness, but in which he can also be God's free partner, which man must receive both as a gift (*Gabe*) and as a task (*Aufgabe*).¹³⁰ The free recognition of God's honour, according to the covenant, is man's response, which gives him life and allows creation to remain intact. Should man refuse to give a response, he falls into death... the covenant obliges the human person and at the same time sets him free towards a freedom that God can not overlook.¹³¹

Greshake highlights the relationship existing between human freedom and the salvation brought by God. He underlines that only God alone brings salvation and liberation. Human freedom can only accept and receive the salvation wrought by God.¹³² He notes that in Western theologies, God is no longer presented as a subject who acts alone, but man is, through Christ, involved in his own liberation. Greshake brings in Anselm's teaching, saying that Anselm's theory of redemption connects the thought of satisfaction closely with the freedom and dignity of man. Humanity must lift itself up and stand up. Mankind is, in its freedom, responsible for the restoration of creation. God's mercy is, therefore, an empowerment for the human person towards his own liberation, and this is, namely, through Jesus Christ, who already, as a free

¹²⁹ Cf. Gisbert GRESHAKE, *Erlösung und Freiheit*, 334.

¹³⁰ Cf. Gisbert GRESHAKE, *Erlösung und Freiheit*, 98.

¹³¹ Cf. Gisbert GRESHAKE, *Erlösung und Freiheit*, 98.

¹³² Cf. Gisbert GRESHAKE, *Erlösung und Freiheit*, 99.

person, is our representative. Through this, Christ added more value to the dignity of human nature. In the words of Anselm himself: "In all these occurrences, the divine nature was not abased, but the human nature was exalted."¹³³ This way of looking at Anselm, if one does not read him quickly and is not deterred by criticisms, would make one realise that Anselm is a protagonist for the emancipation of mankind as aspired for by modern times.

Finally, Greshake concludes his defence of Anselm with the observation that Luther and Calvin, among others, reformulated Christ's satisfaction as *satispassio*. This painted a negative picture of God as one who vented his wrath on his son, through which mercy was granted to us. Talk about freedom and enabling power of a creature is no longer there. This painted an impression according to Greshake, that God is against God.¹³⁴

Because of the above reasons, Greshake boldly asserted that the contemporary criticisms against Anselm's satisfaction doctrine do not really apply to him as such but to that deformed doctrine of his, in which they retain the same concepts or terms but not the spirit.¹³⁵

In summary, Greshake defended Anselm's soteriology from the criticism mainly caused by the liberal theology of the last century driven by Ritschl and Harnack but also the earlier transformation of his theory by Calvin and Luther, who deformed *satisfaction* to imply *satispassio*. Though the satisfaction theory is modelled on the German penal law, Greshake shows that Anselm corrected it theologically and distanced himself more and more from talking about punishment. Last but not least, Anselm's theory emphasises the free will of the human person, who is not passive but involved in his own salvation and self-emancipation. Greshake underlines that most critics of Anselm read him without taking into consideration his historical social context.

1.3.2. Gerhard Gäde – Another kind of great mercy

Gerhard Gäde had a lot of research interests in the theology of religions as seen from the works he has written, among them: *Islam in christlicher Perspektive*, 2008, *Christus in den religionen*, 2003, *Viele Religionen ein Wort*, 1998. This interest can also be seen in his dissertation written in 1988 entitled *Eine andere Barmherzigkeit*. In this dissertation, in which the interreligious

¹³³ ANSELM OF CANTERBURY, *Meditatio Redemptionis Humanae*, in: Complete Philosophical and Theological Treatises of Anselm of Canterbury, Translated by Jasper Hopkins and Herbert Richardson, Minneapolis 2000, 422.

¹³⁴ Gisbert GRESHAKE, *Erlösung und Freiheit*, 101.

¹³⁵ Cf. Gisbert GRESHAKE, *Erlösung und Freiheit*, 101.

dialogue is present, he does justice to *Cur Deus Homo* by digging deeper into the historical background to understand Anselm better and fairly. Unlike Greshake, who tied the sociological context of *Cur Deus Homo* to German penal law, Gäde tied it to the Jewish-Christian¹³⁶ and the Muslim -Christian¹³⁷ polemics or dialogue. In it, a detailed historical context arising from their objections to the doctrine of the incarnation, as well as a reconstruction of his soteriology, was handled. Here we are going to focus our attention on the conclusion to find out what his new findings on Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo* are.

Gäde mentions, firstly, that the thought pattern in *Cur Deus Homo* is very close to that of the *Proslogion*, which forms a basis for understanding the latter. The *sola ratione* method is a good example of this relationship between the two writings. The description of God in the *Proslogion* as *quo maius cogitari nequit* provides a basis for understanding the image of God in *Cur Deus Homo* especially in relation to the concept of *honor Dei*. Sin is injuring the honor of God. For Gäde, sin is an injustice done to God's honour, meaning not acknowledging the honour of God and, thereby, God's absoluteness. In other words, sin amounts to idolising a creature.¹³⁸

Coming to the concept of satisfaction, Gäde says redemption at first sight in CDH appeared like a legal business between God and man. This was later cleared after Anselm underlined the hopelessness of the *conditio humana*. Despite the *conditio humana*, man's responsibility towards his own restoration is not dropped but emphasised even more. This leads then to the necessity of satisfaction as a way out for man. Recognising the necessity of satisfaction is nothing other than recognising one's injustice and the rights of God for His honour. With regard to the material satisfaction that man has to bring, Anselm once more uses the language in *Proslogion*: the satisfaction must be something greater than anything outside of God. This links us to the incarnation of the God-man. Gäde thus next looks at the incarnation of Christ, which is the only hope for the salvation of man. In the incarnation of Christ, man receives a share in the relationship of God with Jesus. By this participation, man can share in the love of God, who turned towards His son in love from eternity. This communion (of man) with God established through Jesus Christ is greater than anything that can be conceived of, so incomprehensible like God Himself.¹³⁹

¹³⁶ Gerhard GÄDE, *Eine andere Barmherzigkeit. Zum Verständnis der Erlösungslehre Anselms von Canterbury*, Berlin 2018, 75.

¹³⁷ Gerhard GÄDE, *Eine andere Barmherzigkeit*, 84.

¹³⁸ Gerhard GÄDE, *Eine andere Barmherzigkeit*, 307.

¹³⁹ Gerhard GÄDE, *Eine andere Barmherzigkeit*, 310.

When it comes to understanding the implications and reasons for the death of Jesus, Gäde says in the understanding of Anselm, Christ's death was not a ransom paid to the Devil. It is also not an offering to placate the anger of God but an expression of God's relationship with Jesus, who could not be distracted by any power of the world from recognising the honour of God and living for Him, thereby avoiding any idolatry.¹⁴⁰ That is the exact meaning of preserving rectitude for rectitude's sake. Gäde, therefore, contrary to the stereotype painted by Anselm's critics, says the death of Jesus on the cross was the inevitable consequence of a life lived in truth and justice. According to Gäde, Jesus was the only just man.¹⁴¹ He who enters in this only right relationship with God, which death cannot destroy, receives a share in the love of God, which has its measure not in man or the satisfaction offered but only in the son, who is greater than anything that exists outside God. Gäde comes to the defence of Anselm by holding that in *Cur Deus Homo*, God proves Himself in His unsurpassable justice, at the same time as unsurpassable mercy. In this Trinitarian redemption model, Anselm finds the mercy which he had been searching for, which is greater and more just than can be conceived. It is unsurpassable because it is identical to God. Gäde concludes by saying that God has no other mercy for mankind than the love for His son.¹⁴²

In summary, Gäde brings in a Trinitarian aspect to the redemption of man. It is sharing in that communion through Jesus. He struck a balance between justice and mercy, making both to be identical, i.e., God is both justice and mercy. He differs here from critics who only equated God with justice and totally paid a blind eye to mercy. Mercy has been mentioned more here than by others. God is made identical to mercy, for the mercy of God is greater than can be conceived. The relationship between *Cur Deus Homo* and *Proslogion* is more stressed here than in others.

1.3.3. Peter Hünemann: Death of Jesus as perfect freedom and obedience to the Father

In his book, "*Jesus Christus Gottes Wort in der Zeit*," Hünemann analyses Anselm's soteriology as presented in the *Cur Deus Homo* from pages 197 to 203. After presenting the structure of *Cur Deus Homo*, he goes directly to analyse the content of the *work*. According to him, the central point of Anselm's Christology is the honour of God. He states that Anselm

¹⁴⁰ Gerhard GÄDE, *Eine andere Barmherzigkeit*, 310.

¹⁴¹ Gerhard GÄDE, *Eine andere Barmherzigkeit*, 311.

¹⁴² Gerhard GÄDE, *Eine andere Barmherzigkeit*, 311.

tried to view God's honour from both divine and human perspectives. Beginning with his interpretation of Anselm from God's perspective, he indicates that God created the world and humanity for His honour's sake. From a human perspective, he asserts that humanity is specifically created for blessedness. However, this blessedness involves the human person participating in the life of God. Hünemann observes that from this angle, Anselm asserts that God cannot allow the destiny of His creation to be radically thwarted by human sin. His honour forbids this.¹⁴³ If He is to remain true to Himself, moral necessity demands that God saves the human person.

i) *Freedom vis-à-vis honour*

From the human perspective, God's honour is the inner measure of human freedom. Only where man preserves God's honour, does he give God what is God's, i.e., giving God His due. Freedom for Anselm means the full powers of man to fulfil justice for justice's sake.¹⁴⁴ He ties God's honour and human freedom together. Withholding God's honour by man is a breach of one's freedom and a reversal of man's true being. Therefore, God's honour is the measure of the free-acting God and man. It is from this background that Anselm came up with the inner material logic of salvation through Jesus. Hünemann says that of the many possibilities which were there, Anselm excluded those solutions which would contradict the freedom structure of God and man. So, from this freedom perspective, God could not have simply reacted toward man's sin with his mercy. He could have overlooked the sin of man had He wanted. However, Anselm argues that no real restoration could have taken place which corresponds to the order of creation and its relation to God. God's honour would not have been acknowledged as a constitutive element of human freedom but would have been something externally imposed on man. Man would not have been taken seriously as a human being. Therefore, God would have been untrue to Himself as well.¹⁴⁵

ii) *Death of Jesus as perfect obedience*

Hünemann, after arguing against the possibility of having another new created creature, as redeemer, instead of the God-man, now turns to look at the concept of satisfaction. Unlike the critics who said satisfaction is a demand for sacrifice by an offended, bloodthirsty God or a

¹⁴³ Cf. Peter HÜNNERMANN, *Jesus Christus Gottes Wort in der Zeit. Eine Systematische Christologie*, Münster 1997, 199.

¹⁴⁴ Cf. Peter HÜNNERMANN, *Jesus Christus Gottes Wort in der Zeit*, 200.

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Peter HÜNNERMANN, *Jesus Christus Gottes Wort in der Zeit*, 201.

revered cannibal in heaven,¹⁴⁶ Hünemann says the death of Christ on the cross is an expression of the perfect obedience of Jesus. Not his death as such amounts to satisfaction but, above all, the freely willed demonstration of perfect obedience.¹⁴⁷ Expanding the aspect of freedom further and its relation to God's honour, Hünemann says that God, who is free in Himself, possesses His own honour, which cannot be robbed from Him by anyone.¹⁴⁸

Hünemann, who strongly defends Anselm throughout, says the freedom of God and the freedom of man show an identical measure when this measure is offered from the side of God and accepted from the side of man. What is particular about Anselm's argumentation, and at the same time his limitation, is that this relationship of freedom between God and man is expanded in the field of law. In the field of law, what is involved is the mutual recognition of the involved parties as free-acting subjects. From this perspective, the sin of man is taken as the refusal to recognise God. Restoration, however, demands this unconditional recognition. The death of Christ on the cross is the perfect recognition of the Father, which could benefit man.¹⁴⁹

When the speculative Christology and soteriology of Anselm are characterised as a reflection in the field of law, some misunderstandings are bound to arise and may need to be cleared: Anselm did not simply carry the German legal thinking into theology. Hünemann comes to the defense of Anselm, saying: Anselm thinks of freedom and mutual recognition in such a radical manner that it reaches that level of modernity like the legal philosophy of Kant and its principles.¹⁵⁰

Summary

This chapter has demonstrated that Anselm's soteriology was received differently by various commentators. There is no uniform interpretation of his theory. The strongest critics primarily focused on and emphasised the flaws they could identify in the Anselmian redemption theory rather than on the positives. The common criticisms being against the concepts of satisfaction, honour of God, and justice, with God being identified more with justice. All these critics cite German constitutional law as the model on which Anselm based his soteriology, employing legal language to explain theological concepts. Most commentators agree with this assertion.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. Ernst BLOCH, *Atheismus im Christentum*, Frankfurt am Main 1968, 223.

¹⁴⁷ Cf. Peter HÜNEMANN, *Jesus Christus Gottes Wort in der Zeit*, 202

¹⁴⁸ Cf. Peter HÜNEMANN, *Jesus Christus Gottes Wort in der Zeit*, 202

¹⁴⁹ Cf. Peter HÜNEMANN, *Jesus Christus Gottes Wort in der Zeit*, 202.

¹⁵⁰ Cf. Peter HÜNEMANN, *Jesus Christus Gottes Wort in der Zeit*, 203.

However, most strong and some mild critics merely stop at that, failing to consider the modifications Anselm made to these ideas, as noted by Greshake and Hünemann. The mere use of juridical concepts to explain profound theological matters is insufficient reason to dismiss his theory. Many of his critics also contend that his theory pertains only to externalities, such as external satisfaction, neglecting internal matters like the inner disposition of the sinner. This viewpoint is captured by the term "extrinsicism," branding Anselm as one who concentrated more on trivial yet unnecessary external details, overlooking the love and mercy of God and the concept of freedom.

It is with the last group that the theme of freedom came out so strongly, showing a different focus from the strong critics who focused more on justice. Freedom was absent in the strong critics' critiques but made central by the defenders of Anselm. Human freedom is defended by emphasising man's involvement in his own salvation. God cannot overlook man, as that would be equivalent to regarding him as an automaton or a robot. What is surprising about all this is that all these interpretations have been read out from the same document but with different focuses. Every interpreter is biased to read what they want from him. Aware of these different views, we shall now, in the next part of the work, endeavour to reconstruct Anselm from his historical context and then eventually at his teaching emanating from his historical and social context before we could attempt a new interpretation in the last part of this paper.

Chapter two

2.0. Historical and Biographical Background

Understanding the historical background of Saint Anselm, regarded as the father of scholasticism, is indispensable for comprehending his thoughts and teachings within the social context of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. He was a man of his era, addressing a particular audience using the language and concepts of that period. This understanding will help us grasp his perspective more fully and place us in a better position to fairly evaluate his contentious theory of redemption. Given the many criticisms his work has attracted over the centuries, it will only be useful enough if one reads him within the context of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, for that was his primary community of reference. This is what this chapter will endeavour to explore.

We want first to look at his biographical background before looking at the *Sitz im Leben* of his great dogmatic work, the *Cur Deus Homo*, which is the main text in which he presented the soteriological theory in great detail. Thereafter, we will look at the connection or relation of the Proslogion to the *Cur Deus Homo*. Finally, we shall take a look at the unique method of *remoto Christo*, which is usually associated with him and which is particularly unique to the dogmatic work, *Cur Deus Homo*. We are fortunate enough to have several sources of information about him, including Eadmer, his biographer; R.W. Southern, his modern-day biographer; and Hansjürgen Verweyen, among others. We start by reconstructing his biography.

Saint Anselm was born in 1033 in Italy in the Alpine town called Aosta, an ancient Roman town.¹⁵¹ He is, therefore, sometimes referred to as Anselm from Aosta. According to the biography by R.W. Southern, his mother was Ermenberga, a native of Aosta, and his father was a Lombard called Gundulf who came to live in his wife's town of Aosta.¹⁵² The couple had two children, a boy and a girl named Anselm and his sister Richeza¹⁵³ or Richera¹⁵⁴ according to how Anselm addressed her in a letter written to her by Anselm himself. Richera

¹⁵¹ R.W. SOUTHERN, *Saint Anselm. A Portrait in a landscape*, Cambridge 1990, 3.

¹⁵² R.W. SOUTHERN, *Saint Anselm. A Portrait in a landscape*, 7.

¹⁵³ R.W. SOUTHERN, *Saint Anselm. A Portrait in a landscape*, 7.

¹⁵⁴ ST. ANSELM, *To Richera*, in: *Cur Deus Homo*, Edinburg 1909, 178.

later got married to Burgundius and together they had a son also named Anselm after his uncle. It is said that he, too, became a monk later on, just like his uncle. This just demonstrates that Anselm was born into a strong Christian family.

His mother, Ermenberga is described as having been a good and kind woman who awakened the religious desire in her son. Through this religious awakening, Anselm already desired to become a monk while still below the age of fifteen years, but the Abbot could not accept him because his father refused to give his consent.¹⁵⁵ The reasons for his father's refusal could easily be guessed because he is described as having been a rough man and hated his son.¹⁵⁶ According to the chronology provided by Southern, Anselm's mother, Ermenberga, died in 1050.¹⁵⁷ Her death marked the beginning of a new episode of life for Anselm. For if his father was indeed as he has been described above, then it was just a matter of time before Anselm would pick a quarrel with him and part company. In 1056, six years after the death of his mother, to whom he was very much devoted, the inevitable finally happened. Anselm departed from his native land. According to Southern, the main reason is that he had nothing in common with his father but mutual dislike and incompatibility.¹⁵⁸ His leaving home was, therefore, more of a flight from his father than a planned adventure.¹⁵⁹ Southern also underlines this fact when he says, "Anselm quarrelled with his father and left home with little preparation and with only the vaguest plan for his future".¹⁶⁰

His destination after this quarrel was Burgundy, an appanage of the then French royal family.¹⁶¹ Following the account of Hans Jürgen Verweyen, it took him almost three years of searching before he finally found what he was looking for in life.¹⁶² His mother's family lived in the kingdom of Burgundy. It is likely that he could have stayed with them, or at least did receive some support from them, for he could not have survived on the little he brought with him when he left his father in flight. In Burgundy, there was a famous monastery called Cluny, the most famous of all contemporary monasteries, according to Southern.¹⁶³ There were also a number of other schools in Burgundy, among them the school at Auxerre, Autun, Nevers, and just

¹⁵⁵ Cf. Stephan ERNST, *Anselm von Canterbury*, Münster 2011, 12.

¹⁵⁶ Cf. Stephan ERNST, *Anselm von Canterbury*, 12.

¹⁵⁷ R.W. SOUTHERN, *Saint Anselm. A Portrait in a landscape*, xxii.

¹⁵⁸ R.W. SOUTHERN, *Saint Anselm. A Portrait in a landscape*, 11.

¹⁵⁹ ANSELM VON CANTERBURY, *Freiheitsschriften*, übersetzt und eingeleitet von Hansjürgen Verweyen, Freiburg 1994, 8.

¹⁶⁰ R.W. SOUTHERN, *Saint Anselm, A Portrait in a landscape*, 11.

¹⁶¹ R.W. SOUTHERN, *Saint Anselm, A Portrait in a landscape*, 12.

¹⁶² Cf. Hansjürgen VERWEYEN, *Anselm von Canterbury. Denker, Beter, Erzbischof*, Regensburg 2009, 23.

¹⁶³ R.W. SOUTHERN, *Saint Anselm. A Portrait in a landscape*, 12.

beyond its boundary at Besancon.¹⁶⁴ Surprisingly, Anselm never settled at any of them. Such tiny details provided by Southern only go to show that Anselm, for reasons which remain unknown, most probably did not feel attracted to any of them or the teachers or masters in those schools and so continued his search somewhere else.

The search then led him to France Proper. There, too, were a number of famous schools in Orleans, Tours, Angers, Chartres, and Paris. Surprisingly, his search did not lead him to any of those schools and their masters but, instead, led him to the most unlikely of places, to Avranches in the west of Normandy, a cathedral city with a school.¹⁶⁵ He was, however, not to pitch his tent here either, but it served as a place where he would probably come to learn about one of the famous teachers who once taught at this cathedral school twenty years ago. His name was Lanfranc of Pavia, a fellow Italian and countryman now a monk and the Prior of Bec. This was probably a strong drawing force that made Anselm move on to Bec, a place where his search would finally end, and it would become his home for more than three decades.

According to what has been passed on by his former student, who later became his biographer, Eadmer, Anselm was torn apart between a desire for intellectual eminence and religious dedication.¹⁶⁶ These two desires ultimately compelled him to choose to come to Bec and to Lanfranc. It was there that his search would conclude, but not until a year had passed. Fortunately, not just one but both of his desires were to be fulfilled there.

2.1. The meeting of Anselm and Lanfranc

The arrival of Anselm at Bec would mutually enrich both him and Lanfranc through each other's intellectual gifts. Lanfranc was renowned as a successful lawyer, scholar, teacher, administrator, policymaker, and disputant - outstandingly successful in all.¹⁶⁷ This is the reputation he built for himself while at Avranches Cathedral School. On the other hand, the twenty-six-year-old Anselm was never successful at anything and left no mark in Aosta. He was still on a search, not sure of what he should do or become. It is on this account that Southern paid great tribute to Lanfranc, who, after noticing Anselm's intellectual giftedness, "took him in hand and in the course of a year, he had given him a direction that would last his whole

¹⁶⁴ R.W. SOUTHERN, *Saint Anselm. A Portrait in a landscape*, 12.

¹⁶⁵ R.W. SOUTHERN, *Saint Anselm. A Portrait in a landscape*, 12.

¹⁶⁶ R.W. SOUTHERN, *Saint Anselm. A Portrait in a landscape*, 12-13.

¹⁶⁷ Cf. R.W. SOUTHERN, *Saint Anselm. A Portrait in a landscape*, 14.

life.”¹⁶⁸ This encounter took place in 1059 when Anselm arrived at Bec. In the next four years, Anselm received from Lanfranc all the necessary intellectual equipment necessary for his future. When looking at the influence Lanfranc had on him, Anselm admitted that “Bec for him meant Lanfranc and nothing else.”¹⁶⁹

Hansjürgen Verweyen notes that Lanfranc also greatly benefited from Anselm's presence. When Anselm reached Bec, he was burdened with a demanding workload and was in need of an assistant. This is attributable to the fact that he served not only as a teacher for those students destined to become monks, referred to as the Oblates, but also a teacher for external students, many of whom were later highly considered for appointments to senior roles in public administration and as clerks within both the states and the church.¹⁷⁰ Anselm was also enrolled at the Bec monastic school as an external student, not as an oblate. A large number of students obviously meant more work for Lanfranc. It is clear that the overburdened Lanfranc needed an assistant, and one of the best places to find an assistant, just like today, was among his students. On this account, he was so overjoyed when he noticed, with great surprise and admiration, the capacity of Anselm to grasp perfectly the knowledge of logic and analytical philosophical rhetoric in such a short period.¹⁷¹ It became self-evident to Lanfranc that Anselm was a genius due to what Anselm had acquired in the span of a year. This prompted Lanfranc to appoint Anselm as his assistant professor¹⁷², a position similar to what is known today as a university assistant. Anselm readily accepted the honour of assisting his greatly admired teacher. As part of his assignments in that role, Anselm helped Lanfranc with teaching and correcting manuscripts.¹⁷³ Despite teaching under the mentorship of Lanfranc, Anselm had not yet decided whether he should become a monk or not. He still remained an external student and an assistant but eventually needed to make that decision.

2.1.2. Decision time

Anselm did not initially arrive at Bec with the intention of entering the monastic life; rather, he sought to obtain an education. Similar to numerous other young men across Europe, he came to study under a renowned and great teacher. His future aspirations, however, remained vague. However, after one year of stay at Bec, the time to make a decisive decision eventually arrived.

¹⁶⁸ R.W. SOUTHERN, *Saint Anselm. A Portrait in a landscape*, 14.

¹⁶⁹ R.W. SOUTHERN, *Saint Anselm. A Portrait in a landscape*, 15.

¹⁷⁰ Cf. Hansjürgen VERWEYEN, *Anselm von Canterbury*, 24.

¹⁷¹ Cf. Hansjürgen VERWEYEN, *Anselm von Canterbury*, 24

¹⁷² Cf. Hansjürgen VERWEYEN, *Anselm von Canterbury*, 24

¹⁷³ Cf. R.W. SOUTHERN, *Saint Anselm. A Portrait in a landscape*, 30.

It was not an easy decision for him, as one might assume, because he was considering four options. Each option seemed appealing and admirable, which complicated his choice and led him to seek counsel from others. The first option he considered was to become a monk. It was not a far-fetched idea, for it had been his childhood dream, but during his period of crisis and growing up, it had completely shut out, only to be re-awakened in Bec, where he now had daily contact with the monks. The second option is related to the first one: If becoming a monk were to be the option, Anselm thought, then not in Bec but probably in Cluny. Eadmer tells us that this is “because he feared that he would be overshadowed by Lanfranc’s brilliance at Bec.”¹⁷⁴ To create his own intellectual legacy, he felt he needed to be in another place away from his master. The fears that his desires for intellectual eminence might not be realised in Bec if he stayed with Lanfranc were strong. In other words, he might not have a professorial chair.

The thought of going to Cluny, good as it may be, had but one disadvantage for him: it might not allow him enough time to think. During his three-year residence in Burgundy, it is likely that he could have visited Cluny and acquired knowledge regarding their daily routines. Southern notes that: “The exhausting daily routine would leave him no time to think.”¹⁷⁵ The realisation of his dream of intellectual eminence would not be supported there either. Nonetheless, it is a dream that he was not ready to easily give up on. This threw him into a dilemma, as observed by William Aird: “Anselm was fearful of living in obscurity, his own light put into the shade by the personal charisma of Lanfranc on the one hand, or obscured by the rigorous regime and collective charisma of the monks of Cluny on the other.”¹⁷⁶

Faced with that dilemma, Anselm thought it would probably be best to give up the whole idea of intellectual eminence and of becoming a monk and simply become a hermit instead. That became his third option. Sir Richard William Southern notes that, in Anselm’s future writings, there is much which suggests that “a life of solitary contemplation might have suited his natural inclinations better than the life of a monastic community.”¹⁷⁷ Hermitages at the time were viewed in a positive light, no longer as battlefields in a savage war against demons and evil spirits but as places where one can enjoy the sweetness of solitude, the pleasing springs, and refreshing breezes and the unhindered communion with God.¹⁷⁸ It is not surprising, therefore, that Anselm saw this as an attractive option. The fourth and final option he contemplated was

¹⁷⁴ William M. AIRD, *Saint Anselm of Canterbury and Charismatic Authority*, in: *Religions* 5 (2014) 90-108.

¹⁷⁵ R.W. SOUTHERN, *Saint Anselm. A Portrait in a landscape*, 30.

¹⁷⁶ William M. AIRD, *Saint Anselm of Canterbury and Charismatic Authority*, 95.

¹⁷⁷ R.W. SOUTHERN, *Saint Anselm. A Portrait in a landscape*, 31.

¹⁷⁸ Cf. R.W. SOUTHERN, *Saint Anselm. A Portrait in a landscape*, 31.

to probably go back to his small family property (in Aosta), found a hospital, and dispense alms to the poor.¹⁷⁹

All of the above options appeared highly appealing to him. Consequently, this presented the challenge he encountered in reaching a conclusive decision. At this point, he felt he needed to obtain advice from a spiritual director, counsellor, or someone experienced enough to guide him and help him discern. Hence, with total openness, Anselm first approached and asked his adored master, Lanfranc, to help him choose, or rather, “he left the choice to Lanfranc. Lanfranc, in turn, referred the matter to Maurilius, archbishop of Rouen.”¹⁸⁰ Although Lanfranc was the best person to advise Anselm, he prudently avoided imposing his will on Anselm as an interested party, having already appointed him as an assistant professor and therefore referred Anselm to the archbishop, a neutral person. It was the archbishop who made the final decision. Anselm was ready and open to embracing whatever suggestion he would be given from the four options. And the advice that came, given to him by Archbishop Maurilius, was that he should become a monk and in Bec.¹⁸¹ That is what Anselm followed despite his earlier reservations about staying at Bec and living in the shadow of the famous Lanfranc. With the decision made, he converted to the monastic life and thus ended his search. He was to remain a monk at Bec. Thus began his journey as a Benedictine monk. The monks, and Lanfranc in particular, to whom he was no stranger, were happy to have him among them. This is seen in the responsibilities they entrusted to him just after a few years of being among them. It was not only a great gain for the monastery but also for the monastic school, given that Lanfranc already identified and admired his intellectual giftedness and had already made him his university assistant, a role which he continued to play even after becoming a monk. His arrival in Bec was in 1059, and his decision to become a monk was made in 1060, a year after his arrival.

Three years later, Lanfranc left Bec to go and open a new monastery at Caen as its first Abbot. This was due to the political state-church relations and circumstances of that time, which we shall look at shortly. This then paved the way for Anselm to become the Prior of Bec, taking over from his master. Consequently, the fears he had earlier of permanently living in the shadows of Lanfranc suddenly vanished completely. His role as an assistant professor also came to an immediate end or rather got upgraded, for he was now to assume the full-time role

¹⁷⁹ R.W. SOUTHERN, *Saint Anselm. A Portrait in a landscape*, 31. See also: Hans Jürgen VERWEYEN, *Anselm von Canterbury*, 25.

¹⁸⁰ R.W. SOUTHERN, *Saint Anselm. A Portrait in a landscape*, 31.

¹⁸¹ Cf. R.W. SOUTHERN, *Saint Anselm. A Portrait in a landscape*, 31.

of the in charge as the master of the school at Bec. During the three years he worked with Lanfranc as his assistant (1060-1063), he wrote his first work, *De Grammatico*.¹⁸² Verweyen is of the view that this first work was probably the master's thesis or *Philosophische Diplomarbeit* which he wrote under Lanfranc.¹⁸³

2.1.3. The political climate of the time, Church-state relations

The political climate and relations between Normandy and England deserve a mention here, for they also influenced and affected the church-state relations. The political events directly affected Lanfranc and Anselm, later leading to their separation. The papacy was also at the centre of the political happenings. Three main persons at the centre of these relations deserve mention. They were Pope Nicholas, Duke William of Normandy, who was eyeing to succeed Edward the Confessor as the king of England, and the third player was the Count of Flanders, whose daughter Matildah was married to Duke William.

Southern reports that "since 1050, Duke William had been living in a state of an illicit marriage with Matildah, daughter of the Count of Flanders, which had been condemned by Leo XI and subsequently by the Church in Normandy."¹⁸⁴ The precise nature of the illicitness still remains unclear. Nevertheless, he was unwilling to discontinue his marriage for political reasons, specifically to maintain amicable relations with the Count of Flanders, who is his father-in-law, but more importantly, because he was relying on his military support. Prince William, who was eyeing the throne of England, was a political strategist. He knew that ascending to that throne would not be without struggle, hence counting on the military support of the Count of Flanders.¹⁸⁵ On the other hand, the military support from the Count of Flanders notwithstanding, William also needed papal support and blessings for his claim to the throne of England.¹⁸⁶ It was thus imperative for him to maintain warm relations with the Pope.

The Pope was, however, hesitant to offer his support to that marriage for fear of acting contrary to his predecessor's decision unless the impediment or irregularity was removed or a dispensation was granted. Despite the impediment to the marriage, Pope Nicolas also needed and wished to maintain friendly relations with the Normans, since the Normans of southern Italy were closely related to the Normans of Normandy. The Pope counted on the support of

¹⁸² Hans Jürgen VERWEYEN, *Anselm von Canterbury*, 40.

¹⁸³ Cf. Hans Jürgen VERWEYEN, *Anselm von Canterbury*, 92.

¹⁸⁴ R.W. SOUTHERN, *Saint Anselm. A Portrait in a landscape*, 21.

¹⁸⁵ Cf. Hans Jürgen VERWEYEN, *Anselm von Canterbury*, 21.

¹⁸⁶ Cf. R.W. SOUTHERN, *Saint Anselm. A Portrait in a landscape*, 21.

the Normans to defend the Roman Church and the freedom of the Pope, especially against the Germans.¹⁸⁷ Therefore, good reasons for maintaining mutual and cordial relations existed on both sides. This is reflected in the letter which Pope Nicholas wrote to Lanfranc, where some details related to the above are also explicitly expressed:

Bishop Nicholas, servant of the servants of God, to Brother Lanfranc, greetings and apostolic benediction.

I would gladly, dearest brother, have your presence with me here to give advice on our ecclesiastical cares, in which, as we have heard, you have already given opportune help. But since this may not easily be possible, we wish you to be fruitful to us and to the Roman Church in your present position. In this way, the Roman Church will have the double advantage of your being both here and where you are. With this in mind, we are sending to you these well-beloved imperial and papal chaplains to be taught the arts of dialectic and rhetoric, in which, as we have heard- God has given you special excellence. As soon as may be possible, let us see you and these pupils in Rome, unless, as may happen, we ourselves come to you.

We have heard that you are now fully occupied with the study of the bible. If this is the case, we order you in the name of St Peter and ourselves, to give us your obedience in teaching the two chaplains those subjects for which we have sent them to you. We commit them to your charity to help them in every way. We have also heard- thanks be to God- that the count (i.e., the Duke) our friend follows your advice in all things. May you so keep him that he may flourish in this world and in Christ. I have great confidence in him and in the counsel and companionship which he has with you. Let the talent which has been committed to you fructify among the clergy and your wild people so that you, at last, hear the words, 'Well done, thou good servant'. Amen.¹⁸⁸

In this personal letter, showing that Lanfranc was an adviser to the pope in ecclesiastical cares, not only does the pope highlight the excellence and mastery of Lanfranc in liberal Arts and give evidence that external students, earmarked for high positions in administration were sent to him, but also mentions, that among other duties, Lanfranc was an advisor to the Duke. He was thus an adviser to two very important persons, i.e., the pope and Duke William, and therefore an obvious link between them. The letter similarly shows that there existed good church-state relations, i.e., good friendship ties between Duke William and the Pope. The fragile relationship which existed before seems to have already been repaired by the time this letter was written, for the letter already refers to him as "our friend". The illicitness of their marriage was also apparently corrected according to Verweyen, who records that the marriage

¹⁸⁷ Cf. Hansjürgen VERWEYEN, *Anselm von Canterbury*, 29.

¹⁸⁸ R.W. SOUTHERN, *Saint Anselm. A Portrait in a landscape*, 20-21.

of the Duke was legitimised in 1059 in Rome on Easter day.¹⁸⁹ In what appeared as an apparent gesture of reciprocal appreciation for the dispensation that was granted for their marriage, Duke William pledged to build an Abbey for the men, and Matildah pledged to build another one for women. Matildah built one for women in 1060, and the one for men was built three years later by William in 1063, two years after the death of the pope, both of them in the ducal city of Caen.¹⁹⁰ This is what necessitated Lanfranc's move from Bec to Caen to become its first abbot, as mentioned above.

According to Verweyen, the other reason was that he (Lanfranc) should continue accompanying William as his adviser and friend and stay at his side in his future assignments.¹⁹¹ Hence, the move to go and stay near the Duke in his ducal city. Lanfranc would later, as fate would have it, leave Caen and follow William to England four years after William had assumed the throne of King of England in 1066 under the title of William the Conqueror. Lanfranc came to England after being appointed as Archbishop of Canterbury in 1070 by William the Conqueror himself. At that time, kings had the authority to appoint not only bishops but also abbots. So, William the Conqueror appointed his long-time adviser as archbishop of Canterbury. This development is what necessitated the ascension of Anselm to the position of the prior of Bec and also as the master of the school of Bec. Because of this, Saint Anselm is also sometimes referred to as Anselm from Bec.

2.1.4. Anselm thinker, Theologian, Monk and Archbishop

When Lanfranc moved from Bec to Caen, he went along with a number of Monks from Bec to go and establish the new monastery community there as demanded by their monastic rule of life or constitution. Anselm was not among those, among other reasons, to carry on the running of the school of Bec. This is because Lanfranc had already identified and initiated him into teaching and so purposely left him behind to carry on running the school. On the other hand, Anselm, now no longer a novice but a professed monk, as Prior for the community of monks and master at the monastery school of Bec must have been overwhelmed by this sudden assumption of responsibilities to the extent that a long period elapsed before he wrote his next work.

¹⁸⁹ Cf. Hansjürgen VERWEYEN, *Anselm von Canterbury*, 29.

¹⁹⁰ Cf. Hansjürgen VERWEYEN, *Anselm von Canterbury*, 30.

¹⁹¹ Cf. Hansjürgen VERWEYEN, *Anselm von Canterbury*, 30.

It took a total of thirteen years after he had written *De Grammatico*, a purely philosophical work which never concerned itself with theology¹⁹² before this silence was broken. However, as a monk, one following the rules of St. Benedict of *Ora et Labora* i.e., prayer and work, he committed himself to prayer and meditation and composed a number of prayers and meditations. He started writing these prayers and meditations for persons outside his monastery of Bec for the first time in 1070 to the monks whom Lanfranc went with to England to found a new monastery after King William the Conqueror appointed him as archbishop of Canterbury. He equally kept copies of these letters. These are, however, not counted as scholarly works but personal and not necessarily meant for the public. It is in this sense that one can say that it took about thirteen years after *De Grammatico* was written, for another scholarly work to appear. Verweyen calls it the thirteen years of silence. At the end of this period, Anselm wrote the *Monologion* in 1076, his first philosophical - theological work.¹⁹³

From the systematic point of view, the *Monologion* is considered to be the main work of Anselm.¹⁹⁴ The *Proslogion* followed a year later, written between 1077 and 1078.¹⁹⁵ It was a rational attempt to prove the existence of God with the famous ontological proof that God is that, than which nothing greater can be thought of. In 1078, following the death of Abbot Herluin, Anselm was elected abbot of Bec.¹⁹⁶ He reluctantly accepted the election result since ascendancy to the office of Abbot meant more responsibilities for him. The next works were written between 1080- 1085, these are *De veritate*, *De libertate arbitrii* and *De casu diaboli* written between 1085 and 1090. These are described by Ernst Stephan as a second group of writings in which Anselm never so much preoccupied himself with the themes about the existence and nature of the Trinity but as writings more preoccupied with the human person or the rational creatures, angels and demons included.¹⁹⁷ These three dialogues plus the latest work of Anselm -*De concordia praescientia et praedestinationis et gratiae dei cum libero arbitrio* (1107-1108)¹⁹⁸ form a group of works referred to as the *Freiheitsschriften* by Verweyen.¹⁹⁹ The reason is that they devote their attention to the freedom of rational beings.

¹⁹² Cf. Hansjürgen VERWEYEN, *Anselm von Canterbury*, 71.

¹⁹³ Hansjürgen VERWEYEN, *Anselm von Canterbury*, 43.

¹⁹⁴ Cf. Hansjürgen VERWEYEN, *Anselm von Canterbury*, 93.

¹⁹⁵ Hansjürgen VERWEYEN, *Anselm von Canterbury*, 70.

¹⁹⁶ EADMER, *Das Leben des Hl. Anselm*, übersetzt von Günther Müller, München 1923, 55.

¹⁹⁷ Stephan ERNST, *Anselm von Canterbury*, 16-17.

¹⁹⁸ ANSELM VON CANTERBURY, *Freiheitsschriften*, 12.

¹⁹⁹ ANSELM VON CANTERBURY, *Freiheitsschriften*, 12.

In the year 1089, Lanfranc, who had been the archbishop of Canterbury since 1070 died.²⁰⁰ This created a vacancy in the episcopal see of Canterbury. It was, however, only four years later, in 1093, that the vacancy was filled up by the appointment of Anselm as a successor of Lanfranc, his teacher. He once more succeeded his teacher. As the practice was at that time, it was the king who appointed Bishops. According to Aird's dramatic description, Anselm had gone to England for the usual monastery's business only to find the king, William Rufus, dangerously ill. Anselm was summoned to the king's bedside. After counselling the King, St. Anselm prepared William's soul for its seemingly imminent encounter with God the Almighty, received the king's confession, and witnessed his pledge that he would make amends for the wrongs he committed. While on his supposed deathbed, William further agreed to release prisoners, remit fines, and pardon all offences.²⁰¹

As a gesture of goodwill, William Rufus further responded to the people's urgings by agreeing to appoint the archbishop of Canterbury. William Aird recounts that: "The king of his own accord declared that the best man for the job was the Abbot of Bec."²⁰² Anselm was taken by surprise by this sudden and unexpected announcement and vehemently refused the appointment. The bishops of England tried to persuade him for the sake of Christianity in England, which was dying out. Seeing that he was not giving in, the crowd called for the pastoral staff to be brought and literally forced it into his hands and then carried him off into a neighbouring Church.²⁰³ In the face of this event which was taking place before him, Anselm compared himself to a weak sheep that should now pull, next to an untamed bull (the king of England, William Rufus) the plough of the church of England.²⁰⁴ Not able to resist the pressure any longer, Anselm finally gave in, but on one condition, namely, that church lands that William II - the red king,²⁰⁵ had repossessed from the church should be given back. The king granted him his wishes. He thus became the archbishop and was known as Anselm of Canterbury from that time onward, a name by which he became known. However, the king's repentance was short-lived. He recovered from his sickness and soon afterwards started

²⁰⁰ Cf. Hansjürgen VERWEYEN, *Anselm von Canterbury*, 160.

²⁰¹ Cf. William M. AIRD, *Saint Anselm of Canterbury and Charismatic Authority*, 91.

²⁰² William M. AIRD, *Saint Anselm of Canterbury and Charismatic Authority*, 91.

²⁰³ Cf. William M. AIRD, *Saint Anselm of Canterbury and Charismatic Authority*, 92.

²⁰⁴ Cf. Martin KIRSCHNER, *Gott-größer als gedacht. Die Transformation der Vernunft aus die Begegnung mit Gott bei Anselm von Canterbury*, Freiburg 2013, 72. See also: Hansjürgen VERWEYEN, *Anselm von Canterbury*, 140-141.

²⁰⁵ Robinson, J. ARMITAGE, *Gilbert at Westminster*, in: Gilbert Crispin Abbot of Westminster. A Study of the Abbey under Norman Rule), Cambridge, 2010, 19-27. He was nicknamed the red king because of his red face-see also: Stephan ERNST, *Anselm von Canterbury*, 17.

demanding money from the church in exchange for the Lands and property that he gave to it. Anselm refused to bow to those demands. That sparked controversies and rivalry between the two.

His reign as Archbishop can, therefore, be described as having been rough, as seen by the controversies which arose between him and the kings of England. Anselm was an adversary of William II and also of his young brother, Henry, who would succeed him. Twice, he left his seat and went into exile. The first exile was from 1097 to 1100. While still in exile, he completed the writing of his famous dogmatic work on salvation called *Cur Deus Homo* in the year 1098. A year later, he wrote *Meditatio Redemptionis Humanae* in 1099. His exile ended in 1100 following the death of William II, who died on 2nd August 1100.²⁰⁶ The successor of William II, his young brother King Henry, and son of William the Conqueror, desired the presence of Anselm back at Canterbury. He, therefore, returned again to England in September 1100.²⁰⁷ Three years later, in 1103, he was forced yet again to go into exile due to the investiture controversy and homage issues he had with King Henry. It was three years later, in 1106, that he would set foot in England again. Three years later, he would again leave England, this time not into exile, but departure through death, which took place on 21st April 1109 in Canterbury.²⁰⁸ He was canonised in 1163 by Pope Alexander III²⁰⁹ and named Doctor of the church in 1720 by Clement XI.²¹⁰

2.2. The Sitz im Leben for *Cur Deus Homo*

Having looked at the biographical and historical background of Anselm and the list of his many works, we now turn our attention, in particular, to his dogmatic work focused solely on soteriology, written in 1098, namely the *Cur Deus Homo*, which is our primary source and focus in this work. McIntyre described it as the first systematic exposition of the theory of redemption.²¹¹ To understand this dogmatic book well, it is essential to understand the historical context of its composition. Specifically, we wish to examine the most likely reasons and circumstances that prompted and compelled Anselm to write it in the style and form in which it was composed or in its *Sitz im Leben*. There were both external and internal factors or

²⁰⁶ R.W. SOUTHERN, *Saint Anselm, A Portrait in a landscape*, xxiii

²⁰⁷ Cf. R.W. SOUTHERN, *Saint Anselm, A Portrait in a landscape*, xxviii

²⁰⁸ Cf., R.W. SOUTHERN, *Saint Anselm, A Portrait in a landscape*, xxix

²⁰⁹ Stephan ERNST, *Anselm von Canterbury*, 22.

²¹⁰ Cf. F. S. SCHMITT, *Anselm of Canterbury*, in: *New Catholic Encyclopedia*² 1, 495-497.

²¹¹ Cf. John MCINTYRE, *St. Anselm and his critics*, 2.

influences at play. One thing which we already know is that it was written while he was in exile, probably that is when he found ample time to write. Of the two kinds of influence, the external was weightier than the internal. Had they not been there, Anselm would probably not have written this systematic work on soteriology, or it would have taken another form than the one it has. Should there just have been internal influences, i.e., from Christians only, would he have written this work? The probability is he would not have done it. This is shown by his hesitation to write this work because he believed that the church fathers had handled all the matters that one needed to know on the topic of redemption. But because of the weightier external influences, he felt compelled to write *Cur Deus Homo*. Let us begin, therefore, with the external influences.

2.2.1. External influences

The external influences on Anselm which led to the writing or composition of the *Cur Deus Homo* were mainly two, according to some scholars, or three, according to others. Southern, who argues for the view that there were two external influences, states that the first influence was from “the theological debates of the secular schools; and the second one, from the criticisms of the Christian doctrine coming from the growing Jewish communities in Western Europe.”²¹² Today, one would say they were external influences arising from the interreligious dialogue. The Jews are even mentioned by name in the *Cur Deus Homo*, confirming the fact that they were indeed an indisputable and direct major external influence. Remotely, Muslims are also thought to have had some influence on the composition of *Cur Deus Homo*. This is the view from some of the latest research works like that of Gerhard Gäde,²¹³ Julia Gauss, and Katrin König, among others.²¹⁴ Though not mentioned by name in the *Cur Deus Homo* text, there is a high possibility that Muslims may also be another external influence owing to their presence in Europe at that time and for holding similar objections raised in this book against Christianity like Jews. Should that be correct, then the number of external influences comes to three, namely secular schools and Jewish and Islamic criticisms. We now take a closer look at each of the external factors, starting with the indisputable influence and criticism of the Jews.

²¹² R.W. SOUTHERN, *Saint Anselm, A Portrait in a landscape*, 197.

²¹³ Cf. Gerhard GÄDE, *Eine andere Barmherzigkeit*, 85.

²¹⁴ Katrin KÖNIG, *Begnadete Freiheit. Anselm von Canterburys Freiheitstheorie*, Tübingen 2016, 176.

2.2.1.1. Criticism of the Jews

Many scholars agree that Jews had an indisputable and upper-hand influence on Anselm, which led to the writing of Anselm's main dogmatic book. Boso, in commending Anselm for convincingly proving why God became man, explicitly mentions the Jews in the *Cur Deus Homo* in the last chapter, saying: "...you would yet by argument alone satisfy not only the Jews but *pagans* also."²¹⁵ There is no mention, however, in the biography of Southern and even in the *vita Anselmi* by his former student Eadmer that Anselm ever personally came in contact with Jews before writing the *Cur Deus Homo*. The possibility of him meeting the Jews later on after the composition of this work, however, may not be ruled out. However, before its composition, he most probably did not. If he did, then he did not directly engage in dialogue with them on faith matters. A question arises then: How did he learn about the criticisms of the Jews? According to Southern, there is one person among the monks who had personal contact with a certain Jew and held a religious dialogue with him. This monk then became the link between Anselm and the Jews. He was a fellow Benedictine monk, an old friend of Anselm, and his former student, named Gilbert Crispin, who was now the abbot of Westminster. "By the time Crispin was called to England by Lanfranc (1080), Anselm had been his fellow monk for three years, his prior for fifteen years, and his abbot for two."²¹⁶ Gilbert Crispin first went to Canterbury, where he was at the service of Archbishop Lanfranc. As an advisor to the monarchy, Lanfranc instigated the king to appoint Gilbert Crispin as Abbot in Westminster in the year 1085.²¹⁷ It was the king's prerogative at that time to appoint Abbots and Bishops to serve within his territory. Abbot Anselm is reported to have visited his former student, who was now a fellow Abbot, Abbot Gilbert Crispin, at least twice, i.e., in 1086 and also in 1093 in Westminster.²¹⁸ During one of those visits, Anselm could have learnt about the Jews from Gilbert Crispin. As a former student and now a fellow Abbot, Crispin held Anselm in high esteem and also regarded himself as a spiritual son to Anselm, as we shall see in one of their correspondences. It is through him that the Jewish criticisms reached Anselm. The nature of the criticisms was serious; they needed serious attention and consideration, for if they were not responded to, they had the potential to challenge and threaten the central Christian beliefs.

²¹⁵ CDH II. XXII.

²¹⁶ R. J. Zwi WERBLOWSKY, *Crispin's Disputation*, in: JJS 11 (1960) 69-77, Here:76.

²¹⁷ Cf. Robinson, J. ARMITAGE, *Gilbert at Westminster*, in: Gilbert Crispin Abbot of Westminster. A study of the Abbey under Norman Rule, Cambridge 2010, 19-27.

²¹⁸ Cf. Robinson, J. ARMITAGE, *Gilbert at Westminster*, 20.

But what really were those objections of the Jews against the Christian beliefs, which challenged the central Christian belief? The doctrine of the incarnation is cited as one of their major objections. R.W. Southern recounts that “Gilbert Crispin was engaged in a new controversy about the incarnation, which had arisen from the arrival in London of some learned Jews from Mainz. He wrote an account of the argument and dedicated it to Anselm.”²¹⁹ This particular Jew and other learned Jews were trained at a Talmud school of Rabbis in Mainz. Though Anselm received these criticisms about the incarnation from Jews through Gilbert Crispin when he visited Westminster at the end of 1092²²⁰ or the beginning of 1093,²²¹ it was only later in 1098, after he was already Archbishop of Canterbury and in exile at the time, that he responded to those criticisms in writing in the form of a dogmatic book.

The actual fundamental problems regarding incarnation posed by the most uncompromising opponents of Christianity in Europe at the time were as follows: “Why was it necessary? Was it possible? Was it not derogatory to the dignity and impassibility of God? Was it not idolatrous?”²²² Gilbert wrote down his dispute with his Jewish friend and passed it on to Anselm. It contained seven objections from the Jew and seven responses from the Christian. An extract of that dialogue containing the introductory paragraph and part of the first and third objections of the Jew reads as follows:

To the Rev. Father and Lord Anselm, Archbishop of the holy Church of Canterbury, his servant, and son, Brother Gilbert [Crispin], Proctor and servant of Westminster Abbey, wisheth prosperous continuance in this life and a blissful eternity in the future one.

I send you a little work to be submitted to your fatherly prudence. I wrote it recently putting to paper what a Jew said when formerly disputing with me against our faith in defence of his own law, and what I replied in favour of the faith against his objections. I know not where he was born, but he was educated at Mayence; he was well versed even in our law and literature, and had a mind practiced in the Scriptures and in disputes against us. He often used to come to me as a friend both for business and to see me, since in certain things I was very necessary to him, and as often as we came together we would soon be talking in a friendly spirit about the Scriptures and our faith. Now on a certain day, God granted both him and me greater leisure than usual, and soon we began questioning as usual. And as his objections were consequent and logical, and as he explained with equal consequence his former objections, while our reply met his objections foot to foot and by his own confession seemed equally supported by the testimony of the Scriptures, some of the bystanders

²¹⁹ R.W. SOUTHERN, *Saint Anselm. A Portrait in a landscape*, 198.

²²⁰ R.W. SOUTHERN, *Saint Anselm. A Portrait in a landscape*, 198.

²²¹ Robinson, J. ARMITAGE, *Gilbert at Westminster*, 20.

²²² R.W. SOUTHERN, *Saint Anselm. A Portrait in a landscape*, 198.

requested me to preserve our disputes as likely to be of use to others in future... Yet [poor as my work is] one of the Jews who were then in London, the mercy of God helping, was converted to the Christian faith at Westminster; professing before all the faith of Christ he asked for baptism and received it, and being baptized vowed him to the service of God, and becoming a monk has remained with us. Some of the Arguments:

(1) **The Jew:** With what reason or by what show of authority do you blame us Jews because we observe the Law given by God? For if it be a good law and given by God it should be observed, for whose command is to be observed if the orders of God be not to be obeyed? But if the Law should be observed, why do you treat those who observe it like dogs, thrusting them forth with sticks and pursuing them everywhere? ...

(3) **The Jew:** What reason, what Scripture forces me to believe that God can become a man? ... If there is no transmutation in God nor any shadow of change how could so great a change occur in Him that God could become man, the Creator a creature, and the incorruptible become maculate. "Thou, O Lord, art always the same," [Ps. 101:27]. How could God be always the same although He become a man? If He is infinite how could He be circumscribed in the mean and small dimensions of human limbs?

The Christian: We do not fear any opposition in this... For openly and without the ambiguity of any equivocation Jeremy the prophet thus speaketh, 'This is our God, and none will be likened to Him. He has found the whole way of knowledge, and gave it to Jacob his son and Israel his elect: after this He was seen on earth and conversed with men' [Baruch 3:36-8]. ...²²³

The Jew stands for the Rabbi, a friend of Crispin whose name we do not know, and the Christian stands for Gilbert Crispin. What we have here is a covering letter of the disputation addressed to Anselm, followed by the selected parts of objections one and three. Their exchange is conducted in a friendly atmosphere and devoid of violence. The Jew wondered why they were ill-treated for observing the law, as though it was revoked.²²⁴ It remains a valid point, as evidenced by the interest that Vatican II also devoted to this matter in *Nostra Aetate*. Further, he questions the rationale of the incarnation and seriously points out the loopholes contained in it. In this text, Crispin requested Anselm to let him examine if he had answered every criticism satisfactorily. No one claimed to have won or lost the debate or argument from the dialogue. Despite that, Crispin is desirous to have his argument confirmed and refined

²²³ St Anselm Opera ed. 1744, v. ii, 255; ed. Joseph Jacobs, *The Jews of Angevin England. Documents and Records*, London 1893, 7–12.

²²⁴ Vatican II in *Nostra Aetate* affirmed that the covenant made to Israel remains irrevocable, the chosen people still remain dear to God. Cf. SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, *Declaration on the relation of the Church to non-Christian Religions Nosta Aetate* (28 October 1965), in: Vatican Council II. The Basic Sixteen Documents of Vatican II, ed. by Austin FLANNERY, Northport/NY-Dublin, (art. 4). This demands that Jews should be treated with respect by Christians.

somehow by his teacher. The Jew's objections are said to be consequent and logical, suggesting that "biblical knowledge was almost logically connected with proficiency in polemics",²²⁵ while Crispin argued only from the traditional and exegetical point of view. Though he mentions that his replies met the objections of the Jew's foot to foot, he still was not so satisfied with his own responses, hence seeking the opinion of his spiritual father, St. Anselm. He indicates his intention in the words "submitted to your fatherly prudence." And the word prudence, according to Webster's dictionary, means "careful, good judgment that allows someone to avoid danger or risks."²²⁶ In other words, therefore, Crispin is asking Anselm to judge and confirm if the answers he provided contained no errors or heresies, and further ask for his contribution on the matter.

Crispin had rated his own answers as poor, though he managed to convert one Jew to Christianity. This rating seems to be an expression of a genuine self-critique or an attitude of humility, avoiding praising himself. The former impression seems to be correct, as observed by John Marenbon, who said: "Gilbert lacked his master's powers of analysis and original thought,"²²⁷ This is confirmed by the fact that the responses of Gilbert Crispin to the Jewish friend were purely traditional, adding nothing new. Novikoff affirms this observation, saying, "from a theological and exegetical perspective, Gilbert contributed nothing original to that long-standing tradition of polemics."²²⁸ It is for this reason that Southern also says of Gilbert that Anselm refuted some of Crispin's answers when he says: "but on the question of the devil's rights over mankind, Gilbert adopts the traditional view which Anselm's work refutes."²²⁹ Refutation is a sign that Anselm did not agree with Gilbert on everything, even if tradition held it so. Regarding the traditional view of the devil's rights, the very fact that it was refuted by Anselm is an indication that it did exist in the first place and was quite popular. Anselm refuted the traditional view because he did not agree with its content, which he found contradictory to his image of God. Anselm will, later on, interrogate the traditional view. Here, Crispin did not quote scriptures as he had done in other responses but quotes from tradition.

Crispin did particularly make mention of the devil's rights in response to the third objection of the Jew, which talks about the fall of man and further about the incarnation. In a continuation

²²⁵ R. J. Zwi WERBLOWSKY, *Crispin's Disputation*, in: *Journal of Jewish Studies*, 11 (1960) 69-77, here: 71.

²²⁶ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/prudence>

²²⁷ John MARENBOON, Review of: Anna Sapir ABULAFIA, *The works of Gilbert Crispin, Abbot of Westminster*, Oxford 1986, in: *The English Historical Review* 105/414 (1990) 152-53.

²²⁸ Alex J. NOVIKOFF, *Anselm, Dialogue, and the Rise of Scholastic Disputation*, in: *Speculum* 86 (2011) 387-418, here: 408.

²²⁹ R.W. SOUTHERN, *Saint Anselm. A Portrait in a landscape*, 201.

of his dispute with the Jew, in responding to the third objection, Crispin describes the fall of man and its aftermath in relation to the devil's rights over man as follows:

The Christian: ... by it, the Enemy (the Devil) acquired juridical rights over sinful men, but that God by the Incarnation satisfied those rights, thus making Atonement. In His death, the entrance to Paradise was unlocked; the flaming sword that turned every way was removed.²³⁰

This response is a confirmation of the statements above by Novikoff and Southern that Crispin was simply restating the traditional view and was not innovative. Crispin attributed the devil's rights over man to the fall and that the incarnation was the antidote or the remedy to the fall of man and the reversal of the devil's rights. The traditional view, which can be traced back to Origen, held "the death of Christ as the ransom paid to the devil for the souls of men."²³¹ This position assumed that the devil had the right to name a price, and that price happened to be the life of Jesus Christ, and it was paid in exchange for the souls of men. According to Werblowsky, this classical ransom theory had held the field since the days of Gregory of Nyssa and Gregory the Great in spite of the violent protests of Gregory of Nazianzus.²³² Gregory Nazianzen from the Eastern school of thought vehemently criticised the entire idea of God paying satisfaction to Satan. However, it was not challenged in the West, and Crispin dogmatically repeats it here. Anselm will be the one to break this tradition in the West. In his soteriological theory, Anselm will vehemently criticise and totally eliminate all the claimed rights that are assigned to the figure of Satan. He will replace it with the satisfaction theory, which states that satisfaction has to be made to God instead of Satan. Coming back to the role of Crispin, Southern firmly states that "it has been convincingly argued that he was instrumental in triggering Anselm's interest in the *Cur Deus Homo* questions."²³³ His disputation with the Jew inspired the disputation that Anselm will have in the *Cur Deus Homo* with the Jews and pagans over the same topics. His questions prompted answers from Anselm. This was a common way of doing theology in the Middle Ages; questions prompted intellectual debates or disputations. Novikoff affirms this, saying: "Anselm clearly regarded disputation as an integral component of his philosophy and methodology."²³⁴ The same methodology would

²³⁰ Lukyn A. WILLIAMS, *Gilbert Crispin, Abbot of Westminster. A Discussion of a Jew with a Christian concerning the Christian Faith. Probably before A.D. 1098*, in: *Adversus Judaeos. A Bird's-Eye View of Christian Apologiae until the Renaissance*, Cambridge 2012, 375-380, here: 378.

²³¹ John MCINTYRE, *The shape of Soteriology. Studies in the Doctrine of the death of Christ*, Edinburg 1995, 4.

²³² Cf. R.J. Zwi WERBLOWSKY, *Crispin's Disputation*, 75.

²³³ G.R. EVANS, *Anselm's life, works and immediate influence*, in: *The Cambridge Companion to Anselm*, edited by Brian Davies and Brian Leftow, Cambridge 2004, 25.

²³⁴ Alex J. NOVIKOFF, *Anselm, Dialogue, and the Rise of Scholastic Disputation*, 404.

also be employed in the composition of his theological treatise, the *Cur Deus Homo*. The monastic school at Bec, where Crispin was formed, was renowned for using disputation to make the students active participants in the classroom. He also used this method when engaging in polemics with a Jewish friend.

The above text by Crispin remains one of the primary convincing reasons which compelled Anselm to compose the *Cur Deus Homo*; however, it is not the only source of objections against the Christian faith. Despite Crispin being the undisputed source of information for Anselm regarding the Jewish objections, it is noteworthy that in the *Cur Deus Homo*, his name is never mentioned. Instead, Boso is mentioned as the one who engages Anselm in dialogue. Are Boso and Crispin the same person? According to Southern, Boso arrived in Bec in 1085 and became a student of Anselm.²³⁵ On the other hand, King William the Conqueror appointed Gilbert Crispin as Abbot in Westminster in 1085.²³⁶ This indicates that the two were in different locations in 1085 and cannot, therefore, be the same individual. They are not the same person; rather, they are all connected to Anselm. The paradox of how Boso becomes the dialogue partner instead of Crispin could be resolved by the text of *Cur Deus Homo* itself. The first line of *Cur Deus Homo* may provide a clue to this paradox: “Often, both by word of mouth and by letter, have I been eagerly asked by many to write down the explanatory arguments with which I am accustomed to answer those who ask about various points of our faith.”²³⁷ The keyword from this sentence is the word ‘many.’ It suggests and indicates that Anselm had more than one source of information and informants regarding objections against Christianity. Boso is, therefore, indirectly counted here as one among those many who were a source through which criticisms from the infidels would reach Anselm by word of mouth or letter. Since Boso is the only one in the text who is raising objections, it is safe to say he was raising the objections on behalf of all the infidels.

2.2.1.2. The Pagans- infidels

While many scholars agree that the Jews were the direct addressees, as confirmed by the text of the *Cur Deus Homo* itself, they were not the only audience Anselm had in mind when formulating his treatise on the Incarnation of Christ. There was also another audience he had in mind, and therefore the second external influence, according to Southern, which led to the composition of the *Cur Deus Homo*, namely: “the theological debates of the secular

²³⁵ R.W. SOUTHERN, *Saint Anselm. A Portrait in a landscape*, 202.

²³⁶ Cf. Robinson, J. ARMITAGE, *Gilbert at Westminster*, 19-27.

²³⁷ CDH I, I.

schools.”²³⁸ But what do secular schools have to do with theology? What kind of secular schools were they? Before we look at what these secular schools had to say about theological issues that could lead to the writing of the *Cur Deus Homo*, it would be necessary first to define what is meant by secular schools and to distinguish them from the monastic schools of the time. What sort of schools were the secular schools?

According to Hansjürgen Verweyen, there were mainly two kinds of schools common in the Middle Ages, which can also be considered as predecessors of modern-day universities.²³⁹ These are Cathedral schools and monastic schools. We have already encountered them with Lanfranc, who first taught at the cathedral school in Avranches and the monastic school in Bec. There is a clear distinction between cathedral schools, which were mainly centres of learning for secular academic studies²⁴⁰ and monastic schools, whose primary business was the formation of oblates i.e., those to become monks. Lanfranc, for example, was a master at a secular cathedral school of Avranches, and he taught secular courses there, such as dialectic, rhetoric, and the liberal arts. On the other hand, the school at Bec was a monastic school.

Students at the cathedral schools were not necessarily Atheists. This can be seen from their arguments, which already show that they possessed a certain kind of belief in the almighty God, except they did not just share the conviction that God could become man. As was shown in the biography above, those external students who were not planning to become monks were also welcome at the monastery-run schools. This was done as an exception to the rule, in order, among other reasons, to raise money for the monastery for their running costs and funding the construction of new buildings. During his tenure as master of the monastic school at Bec, Anselm continued allowing external students like his former master Lanfranc did. Some of these admitted external students were also in some secular schools before. These are the ones whom Southern said raised questions about the Christian faith when they came to Bec. These could possibly be the ones referred to as “pagans” in the last chapter of *Cur Deus Homo* where it is stated that; “you would yet by argument alone satisfy not only the Jews but *pagans* also.”²⁴¹

The Jews are clearly distinguished from the pagans here. This strongly suggests that the pagans were a different group of people, distinct from the Jews, but a group that nonetheless had similar *perplexae questiones* about the Christian doctrines, especially those concerning the

²³⁸ Cf. R.W. SOUTHERN, *Saint Anselm. A Portrait in a landscape*, 197.

²³⁹ Cf. Hansjürgen VERWEYEN, *Anselm von Canterbury*, 21.

²⁴⁰ Cf. Hansjürgen VERWEYEN, *Anselm von Canterbury*, 21.

²⁴¹ CDH II. XXII.

incarnation of God and redemption of man. But who exactly could these pagans be to whom Anselm was referring? Did he have a direct or even an indirect encounter with them or their representatives, as was the case with the Jews? Richard Southern identifies them as the freethinkers of the secular schools and convincingly answers the follow-up question in the affirmative. He says that Anselm did have indirect contact with them through their representatives. He then goes on to name three of the representatives, among others, as Boso and his two brothers. Southern states that; “He (Boso) had come to Anselm with his two brothers in about 1085, troubled with doubts.”²⁴² These doubts or *perplexae questiones* had the secular schools as their breeding grounds. Hence, through these former students of secular schools, he had indirect contact with those cathedral schools.

One such secular school is none other than the school of Laon in northern France. What Boso brought out through his interventions in the *Cur Deus Homo* are, therefore, mainly the opinions of such secular schools as the cathedral school of Laon.²⁴³ To underline this fact more, Southern says: “In Boso’s interventions, Anselm was faced with the opinion of the most respected and responsible school of the day.”²⁴⁴ Interestingly enough, the celebrated master of this cathedral school of Laon was called Anseau but confusingly referred to as Master Anselm. He was helped in the running of the school by his brother Ralph.²⁴⁵ Of great interest to our subject of discussion here, is that there were at this school extensive glosses on the Bible, which later came to be known as *Glossa ordinaria*.²⁴⁶ It was both like a bible commentary and a collection of sentences (*Sentenzensammlungen*).²⁴⁷ It contained mainly general or miscellaneous questions generally arising from biblical texts, and short answers to these questions were generally summed up in a *sententiae* by one of the masters. Worthy mentioning here is the teaching contained in one *sententiae* of this school attributed to Ralph, which coincidentally bore the title –*Cur Deus Homo*, similar to the work of Anselm of Canterbury.²⁴⁸ In that *Glossa ordinaria*, Ralph put up an argument which ran as follows:

God became man because Adam’s sin had delivered mankind into the dominion of the Devil, and it is only by trapping the Devil into overstepping his authority and

²⁴² R.W. SOUTHERN, *Saint Anselm. A Portrait in a landscape*, 202.

²⁴³ Cf. R.W. SOUTHERN, *Saint Anselm. A Portrait in a landscape*, 202.

²⁴⁴ R.W. SOUTHERN, *Saint Anselm. A Portrait in a landscape*, 203.

²⁴⁵ R.W. SOUTHERN, *Saint Anselm. A Portrait in a landscape*, 204.

²⁴⁶ R.W. SOUTHERN, *Saint Anselm. A Portrait in a landscape*, 204.

²⁴⁷ Cf. Martin KIRSCHNER, *Gott-größer als gedacht*, 74.

²⁴⁸ R.W. SOUTHERN, *Saint Anselm. A Portrait in a landscape*, 204.

subjecting a sinless man to death, which was the punishment for sin, that mankind could be rescued from the devil's dominion.²⁴⁹

This sounds very similar to the traditional Christian view on the rights of the devil as was taught by Origen and as also repeated by Crispin in his dialogue with his Jewish friend. Going on a little bit further, Southern records that this view also said to be a traditional view, further records that: "He whom the devil had unjustly condemned to die inherited the Devil's jurisdiction and, under whatever conditions He wished, He could restore mankind to the end for which the human race had been created."²⁵⁰ This view would directly be mentioned almost word for word and responded to in the *Meditatio Redemptionis Humanae* by Anselm. The *Meditatio Redemptionis Humanae*, as noted by Sandra Klinge, is a further transmission of the developed teaching in *Cur Deus Homo* in the form of liturgical prayers.²⁵¹ The similarity, therefore, makes it highly probable that the *sententiae* was indeed at the back of the mind of Anselm when he was formulating his redemption theory. This opinion from the *sententiae* is one among the many thoughts that secular schools of the time debated at length, which Boso would raise before Anselm. This idea would be picked up in the *Cur Deus Homo* by Anselm and also expressly in the *Meditatio Redemptionis Humanae*.

Boso is one such student who was distinguished from the other students of Anselm because he was able to analyse issues critically, thereby making a positive contribution. His background as a former student of secular schools probably influenced this. Southern lauds Boso's contribution in the *Cur Deus Homo* stating: "the central argument of the whole work, in the first formulation, is put into his mouth."²⁵² That means he cited the opinions of the pagans as they held them, analysed them critically, pointed out their flaws, and then presented his analysis to Anselm so that he could either refute or confirm it or further refine it. Most times, Anselm agreed with his analysis and then made further additions.

As concerns external influences, therefore, which gave rise to the composition of *Cur Deus Homo*, it clearly emerges that Boso and Gilbert Crispin played a major role among many others in feeding Anselm with the objections of the non-Christians. Gilbert brought more Jewish

²⁴⁹ R.W. SOUTHERN, *Saint Anselm. A Portrait in a landscape*, 204.

²⁵⁰ R.W. SOUTHERN, *Saint Anselm. A Portrait in a landscape*, 208. See also: Gilbert CRISPIN, *Religionsgespräche mit einem Juden und einem Heiden*, Freiburg 2005, 79.

²⁵¹ Sandra KLINGE, *Die Erlösungsvorstellung Anselms von Canterbury in seiner Meditatio Redemptionis Humanae und das Verhältnis zu Cur Deus Homo*, in: *Archa Verbi* 8 (2011) 58. This view of Klinge is partially contradicted by Kirschner who is of the view that his prayers are instructions (*Anleitungen*) for personal meditation, not liturgical texts. See Martin KIRSCHNER, *Gott ist größer*, 77.

²⁵² R.W. SOUTHERN, *Saint Anselm. A Portrait in a landscape*, 203.

criticisms, and Boso made Anselm aware of the opinions of the pagans from secular schools, which are surprisingly very similar. Since the objections of the Jews and the pagan schools were similar, Boso represented both when he raised the objections before Anselm.

2.2.1.3. *Muslims*

The two above external influences have generally been accepted by church historians and scholars as convincingly proven by Southern and Verweyen, among others. There are, however, additionally, other scholars who think that Muslims are also implied under the group of people classified as infidels. In his preface, Anselm had mentioned infidels as being among his addressees. The term infidel was used as a general term to cover all who were not Christians. At the end of his book, however, he qualifies whom he meant by the term infidels as being Jews and pagans. It becomes clear that Jews are not counted among the pagans of Anselm's book. That means pagans for Anselm refers to non-Christians and non-Jews. The students from secular schools have already been singled out as pagans who questioned the incarnation, but are they the only ones? Could there be another category of people who are also included under the umbrella of pagans? Could the Muslims be the pagans or part of the group referred to as pagans? Some scholars are of this view. This is because the pagans of Anselm's time were not necessarily atheists nor were they idol worshippers or adherents of primitive religions in the Christianised Europe of that time. According to Gäde, in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the Western world was extensively Christianised, thereby ruling out the possibility of having followers of heathen cults or natural religions.²⁵³ The pagans of Anselm's time could, therefore, not have been heathens. They seemed to ascribe to a belief in the divine, except not in Jesus's divinity and his incarnation. For Julia Gaus, it was crystal clear that the term pagan, as used in *Cur Deus Homo* stood for the Muslims.²⁵⁴ This assertion by Gaus holds water, seeing that though they are not mentioned by name, the objections of the Jews against the incarnation and the doctrine of the Trinity are equally shared by the Muslims. This makes them likely candidates for the group referred to as pagans or at least part of that large group. It is this sharing of the same objections that makes Muslims qualify as possible candidates for the group of persons Anselm referred to as pagans.

²⁵³ Cf. Gerhard GÄDE, *Eine andere Barmherzigkeit*, 85.

²⁵⁴ Julia GAUS, *Anselm von Canterbury. Zur Begegnung der Religionen*, in: *Saeculum*, 17 (1966) 277-363, here: 293.

Klaus Kienzler, Julia Gauss and Gerhard Gäde are among the scholars who support this view. The possibility of an encounter therefore, between Muslims and Christians in general in Europe during that time is supported owing to their presence in the Christian-dominated Europe of the tenth, eleventh and twelfth centuries. Their presence in Europe was first recorded when they conquered Spain and southern Italy in the eighth and ninth centuries.²⁵⁵ Though they were reconquered in the period 1062-1100 in Spain during the *Spanish Reconquista*, and in southern Italy between the period 1061-1072, encounters with them afterwards cannot totally be ruled out.²⁵⁶ This encounter, like any encounter among people of different faiths, also naturally provided opportunities for polemics between Muslims and Christians. These polemics would be enhanced through rational reasoning regarding their matters of faith. Gauss records that already in the ninth and tenth centuries, both the Jewish and Islamic religions did turn to classic philosophy as a means or tool to help them rationally understand their beliefs, especially their monotheistic belief.²⁵⁷

The intellectual landscape of the Middle Ages was undergoing significant transformation. In their attempts to keep pace with the times, Jews and Muslims specifically employed new Platonism and Aristotelian metaphysics to systematically formulate their beliefs and thoughts claims.²⁵⁸ This common quest somehow drew them closer to their objective of wanting to understand their faith through reason. It appeared to work well for them to philosophically shed more light on their belief in the all-embracing God the creator, in His act of creation and in guiding it to its end. However, this philosophical reasoning seemed highly contradictory to the doctrine of the Trinity and the incarnation of God as upheld by Christians. This appeared to be a scandal according to philosophical thought reasoning.²⁵⁹ In other words, the doctrine of the Trinity and the incarnation sounded completely illogical from the Jewish and Muslim perspectives. Hence, disputing with the Christians when an opportunity availed itself.

There was a perceived necessity, therefore, among Christians to catch up to the Jews and Muslims, particularly in seeking the light of reason to comprehend the mysteries of faith. Crispin's Jewish friend seized this opportunity wholeheartedly to challenge the Christians, as noted above. However, Gilbert Crispin appeared ill-equipped for this challenge; he was primarily an exegete who relied solely on scripture and tradition when confronting the Jews.

²⁵⁵ Cf. Klaus KIENZLER, *Gott ist größer. Studien zu Anselm von Canterbury*, Würzburg 1997, 123.

²⁵⁶ Cf. Klaus KIENZLER, *Gott ist größer*, 123.

²⁵⁷ Cf. Julia GAUSS, *Anselm von Canterbury. Zur Begegnung der Religionen*, 282.

²⁵⁸ Julia GAUSS, *Anselm von Canterbury, Zur Begegnung der Religionen*, 282.

²⁵⁹ Cf. Julia GAUSS, *Anselm von Canterbury, Zur Begegnung der Religionen* 282.

Anselm, on the other hand, as both a philosopher and theologian, was ideally suited for this moment and task. St. Anselm was well-prepared for the challenge, given his philosophical background, as demonstrated by his motto of *fides quaerens intellectum*. Due to Boso's insistence and encouragement, Anselm reluctantly agreed to address the pressing challenge of reconciling faith with reason. Anselm's response to this polemical challenge involved the method of *sola ratione* and *remoto Christo*. Often referred to as the father of scholasticism,²⁶⁰ he felt compelled to rationally illuminate the doctrine of the incarnation of Jesus in *Cur Deus Homo*, partly as a polemic against the Jews, Muslims, and representatives of the secular schools.

König confidently sums up all three external influences on Anselm, saying, “Anselm was trying to figure out a theological explanation of the Christian faith in order to engage in philosophical and religious dialogue against the critical objections of the *Jews, Muslims, and representatives of the secular schools*. ”²⁶¹ She confidently names all three external influences on Anselm with certainty, which seems to reflect the general consensus among scholars today. However, this view is not without a few dissenting voices, such as Abulafia, who objected to this thesis, stating the contrary that “Anselm’s unbelievers cannot be real non-Christians”.²⁶² She was instead of the opinion that infidels referred to by Anselm are Christians who have strayed from the true Christian faith, such as Roscelin,²⁶³ a position that many commentators on Anselm support less. It is safe to say that the general consensus among scholars regarding Anselm today is that there truly existed external influences, namely from non-believers comprised of Jews, Muslims, and secular schools. In addition to the aforementioned external influences, Anselm also considered influences arising from within the believers themselves. Unlike those Christians who deviated, as suggested by Abulafia, the Christians Anselm referred to here are those within the church who harboured some doubts concerning their faith. Anselm, through the objections presented to him by Boso, felt compelled to address their doubts. This brings us to internal influences.

²⁶⁰ Cf. Martin KIRSCHNER, *Gott ist größer*, 76.

²⁶¹ Katrin KÖNIG, *Begnadete Freiheit. Anselm von Canterburys Freiheitstheorie*, 176. Translation is mine.

²⁶² Anna Sapir ABULAFIA, *Christians disputing disbelief. St Anselm, Gilbert Crispin and Pseudo-Anselm*, in: Bernard LEWIS - Friedlich NIEWÖHNER (Hrsg.), *Religionsgespräche im Mittelalter*, Wiesbaden 1992, 133.

²⁶³ Cf. Anna Sapir ABULAFIA, *Christians disputing belief*, 134. See also: Gerhard GÄDE, *Eine andere Barmherzigkeit*, 92.

2.2.2. Internal influence - The Faithful

In his preface to *Cur Deus Homo*, Anselm states: “The unbelieving (*Infidels*) often question, and the *faithful* ponder in their own hearts, for what reason and by what necessity God was made man, and by His death, as we believe and confess, gave life to the world.”²⁶⁴ The term ‘*faithful*’ here refers to loyal believing Christians who harboured some doubts about their faith, or rather who struggled to fully comprehend what they believed in. In the same preface, Anselm elaborates further: “On this point, not the learned only, but also many unlearned persons inquire much and ask the reason for it.”²⁶⁵ Given the shifting intellectual landscape of the time, where Platonism and Aristotelian metaphysics were gaining prominence,²⁶⁶ as noted by Gauss, enlightened Christians began to develop doubts and question certain doctrines. They craved a deeper understanding of the mysteries of faith. He places greater emphasis on the learned faithful by mentioning them first, as having experienced more doubts compared to the less learned, thus making them the main targets. The less learned, however, were not entirely exempt from questioning some doctrines. This observation is echoed by Thomas Finger, who remarked: “During the eleventh century, western Christians with some education were becoming less content to believe things simply because traditional authority had taught them and were searching for reasons for their faith.”²⁶⁷ These individuals were largely not rejecting their Christian faith; neither were they lapsed Christians, but rather they were seeking a deeper understanding of their beliefs through the light of reason.

It called for a quick response from the teaching authority. Being a revered teacher of the time and one whom even Pope Urban II looked up to as a champion and defender of the faith, Anselm took up the responsibility challenge.²⁶⁸ It is from such a need that Anselm stepped up with the methodology of *remoto Christo* and *sola ratione* as a continuation of his *fides quaerens intellectum* motto from his previous works to handle these dogmatic concerns as well. In the *Cur Deus Homo*, he tries to give further rational arguments to address such doubts of faith.

The aforementioned reasons, both internal and external, initially compelled the hesitant Anselm to try to address the enquiries of both the inquirers and the critics. Anselm’s hesitance stemmed from his awareness that the patristic fathers had thoroughly examined many matters of faith.

²⁶⁴ CDH I, I.

²⁶⁵ CDH I, I.

²⁶⁶ Cf. Julia GAUSS, *Anselm von Canterbury. Zur Begegnung der Religionen*, 282.

²⁶⁷ Thomas N. FINGER, *Christian Theology. An Eschatological Approach*, Scottsdale, 1987, 304.

²⁶⁸ Cf. Julia GAUSS, *Anselm von Canterbury. Zur Begegnung der Religionen*, 292.

Since not all of their responses were sufficiently compelling for a twelfth-century audience, given the changed intellectual landscape, he took the bold step of offering his own answers from a fresh perspective and a new approach, seemingly diverging from the patristic tradition in several respects. A gap had been identified, needing reconciliation of faith and reason. He attempted to bridge this gap by inculturating the faith for his audience, adapting it to contemporary understanding while employing rational concepts familiar to them. Living in a feudal society with a monarch holding absolute power over vassals, such as dukes and counts, with the commoners at the base, Greshake points out that Anselm inevitably drew upon concepts from this societal context in his inculturation efforts.²⁶⁹ Given the diversity of his audience, he was driven to adopt a methodology that was new, original, and revolutionary, specifically the approach known as *remoto Christo*. However, before discussing this, we recognise that Anselm's distinctive language closely relates to that found in his earlier work, the *Proslogion*. This suggests a profound connection between *Cur Deus Homo* and the *Proslogion*. Therefore, it is essential to briefly explore the relationship between these two works of Anselm.

2.2.3. Relation between *Proslogion* and *Cur Deus homo*

Although the criticisms of the infidels and *perplexae questiones* provided Anselm with material for presenting his theory of redemption, he did not have to start with a blank page or develop the theory from scratch. For example, he did not have to define who God was; instead, he assumed that his readers were already familiar with the concept of God presented in his earlier work, the *Proslogion*. In that work, he defined God as “a being than which nothing greater can be conceived.”²⁷⁰ This definition, famously known as the ontological proof of God’s existence, would become fundamental to Anselm’s explanation of God’s attributes in the *Cur Deus Homo*, where attributes are used almost as synonyms for God. He would explore this definition to convey his ideas about God’s attributes, such as His love, mercy, and justice. A few examples will succinctly highlight this.

In objecting to Anselm’s negative view of the *sola misericordia*, Boso formulated his objection in this form: “God is so free that He is subject to no law, nor to the opinion of anyone, and so *benign that nothing benign may be sought to be imagined*.”²⁷¹ The structure of this objection

²⁶⁹ Cf. Gisbert GRESHAKE, *Erlösung und Freiheit*, 92.

²⁷⁰ ANSELM OF CANTERBURY, *Proslogion* 2.

²⁷¹ CDH I, XII.

is so identical to that of the *Proslogion*. Benign can also be translated as compassionate or kind-hearted, and this understanding led Boso to believe that God would forgive man's sin *sola misericordia*. Another explicit connection between the *Proslogion* and the CDH can be seen in Anselm's description of God's Mercy at the end of CDH as follows: "So the mercy of God, which whilst we were considering God's justice and man's sin seemed to vanish away, we now find to be so great and so consonant with justice as that neither greater nor juster could be conceived of."²⁷² Here, not only is the structural formulation identical to that of the *Proslogion*, but the theme of the relationship between justice and mercy is also briefly treated in the *Proslogion*. According to Gäde, this sentence's structural form is merely a repetition of the *Proslogion*.²⁷³ As contradictory as the two concepts of justice and mercy appear, the *Proslogion* did not give a satisfactory treatment to the relationship of the two seemingly antinomies, but *Cur Deus Homo* apparently managed to find an answer to the problem.²⁷⁴ In a way, then, CDH can be considered a continuation of the *Proslogion*.

Furthermore, while discussing the satisfaction that has to be offered for the sin of man, Anselm gives one condition that has to be met, saying: "But it is not possible that this should be unless there be someone who can repay to God for the sin of man *somewhat which is greater than all that is not God*."²⁷⁵ This clearly *Proslogion* language recurs again when Anselm discusses the voluntary act of Jesus' death as satisfaction, saying: "Reason taught us also that he ought to have *something greater than anything which is not God*, which he may offer to God of free will and not as a debt owed to God."²⁷⁶ He underlined again here using the *Proslogion* language that the saviour of mankind needed to be God in order to offer satisfaction. Finally, while talking about death, Anselm said: "But *nothing harder or more difficult* could man suffer of free, being under no necessity, for the glory of God, than death; in no way could man give himself *more fully to God than by yielding himself to death* for His honour."²⁷⁷

The excerpts from *Cur Deus Homo* presented above, which exhibit a linguistic structure similar to that previously coined and used in the *Proslogion*, serve as compelling evidence to assert with certainty that a strong relationship exists between the two works. Not only because the author is the same, but more importantly, because the author assumed that the readers of *Cur*

²⁷² CDH II, XX.

²⁷³ Cf. Gerhard GÄDE, *Eine andere Barmherzigkeit*, 99-100.

²⁷⁴ Cf. Gerhard GÄDE, *Eine andere Barmherzigkeit*, 100.

²⁷⁵ CDH II, VI.

²⁷⁶ CDH II, XI.

²⁷⁷ CDH II, XI.

Deus Homo already had knowledge of the *Proslogion* and its contents. For example, he did not define God in *Cur Deus Homo* but continued with the same definition he had presented in the *Proslogion*. Thus, it is expected of the reader of *Cur Deus Homo* to be familiar with the *Proslogion*. Apart from being familiar with the *Proslogion*, one also needs to understand the method used in the *Cur Deus Homo*, namely the *Remoto Christo*.

2.3. Methodology: *Remoto Christo* and *sola ratiōe*

Considering that Anselm was confronted with external influences from Jews, Muslims, and secular schools of thought, directly responding to them with evidence from the New Testament would render him irrelevant, unclear, and remote. The point of departure would not be the same. Hence, he shows his intention to go about the issue at hand by using rational grounds. Some critics have criticised Anselm's dogmatic book as not being biblical because of this methodology of *remoto Christo*. This Latin phrase *remoto Christo*, literally translated as "without Christ", in the sense it is used in this book, implies setting aside or eliminating Christ from the disputations. That means removing or setting aside or eliminating Christ from the arguments for the time being. In his preface, Anselm clearly stated his intention in his response to the objections of the unbelievers, that he shall try "setting Christ aside (as though He had never been) proves by logical arguments that it is impossible for any man to be saved without him".²⁷⁸ This approach implies almost obviously that he intends to go about his argumentation in a rational way, i.e., *sola ratiōe*.

McIntyre, while commenting on this *remoto Christo* methodology, asserts that through the application of this method, it is as if Anselm is stating, "we who believe in Christ shall, for the present place ourselves where the unbeliever is, denying Christ yet accepting many other facts of the Christian faith."²⁷⁹ Schwager further elaborates by noting that Anselm in CDH only brackets or sets aside those Christian truths that have something to do with the incarnation in relation to salvation.²⁸⁰ In utilising this methodology, it becomes abundantly clear that Anselm avoids appealing to the authority of scripture (particularly the New Testament) and tradition in his argumentation for the moment, in stark contrast to Gilbert Crispin, who relied exclusively on scripture and tradition. According to Hoping, the Christian scriptures could not be used as a point of departure for dialogue between Christians, Jews and Muslims.²⁸¹ Thus, Anselm

²⁷⁸ CDH. xxvii.

²⁷⁹ John MCINTYRE, *St. Anselm and his critics. A re-interpretation of the Cur Deus homo*, 53.

²⁸⁰ Cf. Raymund SCHWAGER, *Der wunderbare Tausch*, 286.

²⁸¹ Cf. Helmut HOPING, *Jesus aus Galilea*, 284.

endeavours to think outside the box and experiments with reason alone (*sola ratione*) to engage with his critics, namely, the Jews, Muslims, and students from secular schools, on a rational level, hoping to persuade them. He refrains from invoking the New Testament scriptures²⁸² as his intended audience does not believe in them. The Jews, to be precise, do not recognise the New Testament scriptures. Since the matter at hand is one of faith, the use of *sola ratione* here is meant to serve faith rather than oppose it, as the subject of the discussions is religious in nature. In other words, it is *fides quaerens intellectum* – faith seeking understanding. Anselm does not relinquish his faith; however, as noted by McIntyre, he emphasises *Christo* for a reason. McIntyre asserts, “by emphasising the *Christo* in the phrase *remoto Christo*, St. Anselm does not exclude from his premises all the tenets of the faith.”²⁸³ He continues to address God and the salvation of humankind. A closer examination of the text reveals that *remoto Christo* strictly applies to CDH I, XI –XXIV of the first book, that is, only in fourteen chapters. This indicates that the name of Christ appears in the chapters preceding chapter eleven, is absent in the subsequent fourteen chapters, and is then reintroduced until the conclusion of the book. In the first ten chapters of the first book, which serve as the main introduction to the entire work, Christ is mentioned several times. It is accurate to state that *remoto Christo* does not apply to the entirety of the book but is relevant solely to a specific section. With this observation, we can already counter the critics who accuse Anselm of having entirely packaged his theory using *remoto Christo* and of seemingly being a rationalist.²⁸⁴

Remoto Christo is therefore not a denial of Christ but rather “a willing suspense of judgment while awaiting the argument’s conclusion.”²⁸⁵ Anselm does not, in this section (CDH I: XI–XXIV), explicitly repeat or reiterate biblical or creedal statements as Gilbert Crispin attempted to do when responding to his Jewish friend. Even after Christ has been reintroduced into the discussion, *sola ratione*, i.e., logical argumentation regarding matters of faith, continues to shape the book. During the period when *remoto Christo* methodology is in play, God (the Father) occupies a central position in discussions, and various approaches to redeeming the world are proposed, evaluated, and subsequently dismissed as insufficient.

²⁸² This is only between CDH I, XI up to I, XXV when looking at sin and his arguments of coming out of it. After his argumentation that there is no way out for sin, Anselm re-introduced Christ back in the discussion as the only way out. CDH I, I–X is considered by Plasger as the introduction to the whole book where the fundamental question of God’s incarnation is raised and some further clarifications. Cf. George PLASGER, *Die Notwendigkeit der Gerechtigkeit*, 110.

²⁸³ John MCINTYRE, *St. Anselm and his Critics*, 53.

²⁸⁴ Cf. Martin KIRSCHNER, *Gott- größer als gedacht*, 393.

²⁸⁵ John MCINTYRE, *St. Anselm and his critics*, 53.

Conclusion

In contrast to the *Proslogion*, where Anselm addressed an imaginary or hypothetical audience, in the *Cur Deus Homo*, he confronts a real audience, specifically Christians seeking a deeper understanding of their faith, alongside Jews and pagans. The term “pagan” was somewhat veiled and did not immediately clarify to whom it referred. Recent studies, however, have shown that two groups, namely, Muslims and the free thinkers of the cathedral schools (secular schools), who engaged in theological debates, were among the diverse groups referred to as pagans, thus distinguishing them from Jews. This detail will prove helpful in unpacking Anselm of Canterbury’s theory of redemption. By addressing the concrete issues raised by these specific groups, Anselm formulated his theory of redemption primarily for this diverse audience, utilising the language of the time. This was necessary, as De Gaál points out: “With the transition from antiquity to the Middle Ages, the Christian understanding of redemption had to develop a different interpretative image to convey the same ageless Christian message of atonement.”²⁸⁶ This is where he “uses the Germanic understanding of law to bring this about...introduces the notion of ‘satisfaction’ to explain the Christian mystery of redemption to the Franks, Anglo-Saxons, and other Germanic tribes.”²⁸⁷ In other words, he inculturated the Christian message of redemption into the Germanic context; for as a Lombardian, he had a “thoroughly Germanic pedigree.”²⁸⁸ However, the inculturation he accomplished has now run its course. Some of the concepts he employed then may differ in meaning in today’s 21st-century context and thus require further clarification; yet they do not alter the ageless Christian message of redemption. Understanding his context is essential for appreciating his theory of redemption.

We have endeavoured to reconstruct his biography here by examining his family and educational background, his life as a monk, philosopher, and theologian, as well as the various individuals he encountered who challenged him to write the famous yet controversial dogmatic work, *Cur Deus Homo*. The unique methodology of *remoto Christo* that he employed to convey his message was shaped by the audience he addressed. With this perspective in mind, we can

²⁸⁶ Emery DE GAÁL, *Anselm of Canterbury and the Third Reich. Gottlieb Söhngen on upholding the Humanum Amid the Inhumane*, in: *Rocznik Teologii Katolickiej*, XX (2021) 34-48, here: 43.

²⁸⁷ Emery DE GAÁL, *Anselm of Canterbury and the Third Reich*, 43.

²⁸⁸ Emery DE GAÁL, *Anselm of Canterbury and the Third Reich*, 41.

now understand him more comprehensively and evaluate him within the same context. This approach enables a fair assessment based on his circumstances. From this standpoint, we shall now proceed to reconstruct his main arguments in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0. RECONSTRUCTION OF THE MAIN SOTERIOLOGICAL TEACHING OF ST. ANSELM

3.1. Introduction

Having established the historical context of *Cur Deus Homo*, we now proceed to examine the actual content of Anselm's soteriology by undertaking a reconstruction of his principal arguments concerning the doctrine of the Incarnation and soteriology. At the centre of all the arguments is the question: *Cur Deus Homo*? Why did God become man? Our primary focus will be on the text of "*Cur Deus Homo*" to reconstruct its central soteriological arguments while also considering the sociological and historical contexts of its composition. *Cur Deus Homo* is divided into two books: Book One has twenty-five chapters, and Book Two has twenty-two chapters bringing the total number of chapters to forty-seven. Commentators such as Georg Plasger,²⁸⁹ John McIntyre,²⁹⁰ and Hans Kessler classify the first ten chapters of the first book as an extended introductory section to the entire work. In these initial chapters, Anselm attempts to lay the groundwork for the discussion and the preconditions that the reader must keep in mind before approaching the main issues presented in the body. Predominantly, Anselm explores the question of the incarnation of God, and through his accompanying arguments, he continues to refine this inquiry in the subsequent introductory chapters. He elaborates on the goal of the incarnation, justifies it, and defends the immutability of God in light of the incarnation, while also clarifying the prerequisites for the ultimate restoration of mankind. It is noteworthy to mention that, in the course of refining the question, he counters the views previously held regarding atonement. While still establishing the foundations for the main body, Anselm cannot help but articulate the doctrine of God, expressed concretely through some of His attributes, which he firmly reaffirms and repackages using language reminiscent of the "*Proslogion*," describing each attribute as being greater than can be conceived. The objections raised by the infidels prompt Anselm to expound the attributes of God reiterated here. Chapter Eleven marks the beginning of the main body of the *Cur Deus Homo*, which aims to address the question advanced in the introduction. It begins by stating God's purpose

²⁸⁹ Cf. Georg PLASGER, *Die Notwendigkeit der Gerechtigkeit. Eine Interpretation zu „Cur Deus Homo“ von Anselm von Canterbury*, Münster 1993, 110.

²⁹⁰ Cf. John MCINTYRE, *St. Anselm and his critics. A re-interpretation of the Cur Deus Homo*, 56.

for man before discussing the nature of sin and God's reaction to it. We shall now turn our attention to the first ten chapters, examining the attributes of God highlighted there.

3.2. The attributes of God

The first argument, stemming from the infidels' initial objections, concerns the understanding of God's image or the doctrine of God, highlighting some of God's attributes, such as omnipotence, immutability, justice, love, compassion, mercy, and freedom.

3.2.1. The omnipotence and immutability of God

The belief that God is omnipotent or maximally great is central to the Christian, Jewish, and even Islamic faiths. When someone questions this belief, they not only provoke those who have faith in an omnipotent God but also position themselves as antagonists opposing the believers. Such provocations, however, can be anticipated and are regarded as normal when they originate from atheists; yet the situation differs when they come from fellow believers. This is the scenario that Anselm faces here. The objections arise not from atheists but rather from what might be described as a form of interreligious dialogue, thus taking the shape of apologetics. The infidels criticise and object. Anselm responds and defends the Christian belief in the incarnation.

The very first objection raised by non-Christians (infidels) in the text *Cur Deus Homo* critiques the image or concept of the Christian God, who becomes a man and thus seems somewhat mutable. The immutable God apparently becomes mutable through the incarnation event. Anselm endeavours to refute their attack by emphatically affirming the image of God as immutable. But how can one explain away the challenge that God has not changed through the incarnation? This challenge provides Anselm with an opportunity to present his image of God. But what sort of image of God does Anselm portray in *Cur Deus Homo*? Is it that of an offended private man full of wrath?²⁹¹ Or is it that of a merciless creditor?²⁹² Or is it that of an omnipotent and powerful God? Or is it that of a weak and powerless God? The objections raised by the non-Christians, the infidels, as presented by Boso as their representative, directly provoke and challenge the Christian image of a seemingly powerless God. In particular, they assert that the God of Christians is weak. This entire suspicion arises from the Christian doctrine of the incarnation of God in the New Testament. From a Jewish perspective, the doctrine of the

²⁹¹ Cf. Georg PLASGER, *Die Notwendigkeit der Gerechtigkeit*, 13.

²⁹² Cf. Jürgen WERBICK, *Soteriologie*, 244.

incarnation is perplexing because it appears to dilute the attribute of God's omnipotence. In other words, the doctrine of the incarnation, contrary to the image of God held by Jews, Muslims, and secular schools, portrays the God of Christians as weak and powerless, leading to ridicule of Christians for it. Boso captures their provocative objections as follows:

Unbelievers, mocking at our simplicity, reproach us with doing God wrong and putting Him to shame when we assert that He descended into the womb of a virgin, was born of a woman, grew, was nourished with milk and the ordinary food of man, and ... that He suffers weariness, hunger, thirsty, scourging, and death with the thieves on the cross.²⁹³

The term "unbelievers" or "infidels" here refers to all non-Christians in general, encompassing Jews, Muslims, and free thinkers from secular schools.²⁹⁴ Their mockery also critiques the doctrine of incarnation in relation to the immutability and omnipotence of God. The argument from the infidels, which directly addresses the attribute of omnipotence, suggests that the incarnation seems to undermine the image of the omnipotent God. This viewpoint was also held by Crispin's Jewish friend and continues to represent the Jewish perspective to this day, as the Jewish religion does not accept the doctrine of the incarnation of God. In his earlier dialogue with his Jewish friend, Gilbert Crispin recorded the following objection to the doctrine of incarnation:

What reason, what Scripture forces me to believe that God can become a man? ... If there is no transmutation in God nor any shadow of change how could so great a change occur in Him that God could become man, the Creator a creature, and the incorruptible become maculate. ... How could God be always the same although He become a man? If He is infinite how could He be circumscribed in the mean and small dimensions of human limbs?²⁹⁵

It can be seen from the closeness of the two texts, that what Boso raised in the *Cur Deus Homo* was simply paraphrasing this Jewish objection as well as that from the *Sententiae*. The main argument remains the objection of the Jews challenging the perceived distortion of the image of the all-powerful, immutable, and infinite God by the Christians. The Jews and Christians jointly believe in the same all-powerful God. However, the suspicions of the Jews, like those of the Muslims, are that the Christians have now departed from holding on to this image of the almighty God for introducing the doctrine of the incarnation of God. According to Jews and

²⁹³ CDH I, III.

²⁹⁴ Cf. Katrin KÖNIG, *Begnadete Freiheit. Anselm von Canterbury's Freiheitstheorie*, 176.

²⁹⁵ St Anselm Opera ed. 1744, v. ii, 255; ed. Joseph Jacobs, *The Jews of Angevin England*. Documents and Records (London, 1893), pp. 7–12.

Muslims, an incarnated God who becomes a subject of human parents cannot be considered to be almighty anymore. One confined in a small space of a woman's womb cannot be the infinite God anymore. It is their argument, therefore, that a God that is not Almighty and not infinite anymore cannot continue to be God. If He is immutable, then He would not even have been God in the first place, for God is immutable. Incarnation to the unbelievers appeared to be an affront against His dignity and immutability. Holding such a being as God is, therefore, tantamount to idolatry. They hereby accuse Christians of idolatry for holding a man born of a woman to be the almighty God. The incarnation and omnipotence seem incompatible from both their religious perspective and that of rational reflection. Anselm briefly responds to this objection in two parts, firstly by justifying the incarnation and secondly by defending the immutable omnipotence of God, defending the fact that God never ceases to be God.

3.2.1.1. Justification of the incarnation

In response to this objection regarding the greatness and almighty status of God, Anselm begins by justifying the incarnation of God, stating that: "God's ineffable heights of mercy made Him come down to redeem man who had sunk so low in evil... He showed forth for us the greater love and compassion."²⁹⁶ In this brief reply, Anselm spelt out the motive behind the incarnation. In the incarnation, God's infinite mercy and love respond to the plight of man, who had sunk so low in evil, by also condescending to the level of the human being in need of restoration. Anselm further justifies the incarnation by using typological parallels, specifically drawing comparisons between Eve and Mary, as well as the fall and justification of man, when he states: "just as sin had its beginning from a woman, so the author of our justification and salvation should be born of a woman; and that the devil vanquished man by tempting man to eat of the fruit of the tree should also be conquered by man by that death which he bore on the tree."²⁹⁷ He emphasises here that redemption must be achieved by man, hence the incarnation of God. This is a profound statement that Anselm will endeavour to unpack gradually in the forthcoming topics.

²⁹⁶ CDH I, III. This is one of the few moments when Anselm would use the word love and compassion in the *Cur Deus Homo*. These sparingly used words will be silent in the most part of the *Cur Deus Homo* text, only to resurface again almost at the very end of the book when he proclaims the love and mercy of God, greater than can be conceived of.

²⁹⁷ CDH I, III. He argues using the analogies similar to those employed by the church fathers like St. Athanasius. Nicholas Cohen in his dissertation has shown the many similarities in terms of language and approach between Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo* and Athanasius' *De Incarnatione (DI)*. See Nicholas COHEN, *Patristic Analogues in Anselm of Canterbury's Cur Deus Homo*, 50.

If the doctrine of the incarnation is termed as being simplistic, as alleged by the infidels, then Anselm accepts it for the time being. This is the simplicity of the God of the Christians who emptied Himself to become a man and die on the cross as reasserted by Anselm. But can God still be regarded as the Almighty even after exhibiting such simplicity? Can simplicity and omnipotence be paired together? Is it not a contradiction in terms? Could the infidels understand and accept this simplicity? Does God still remain omnipotent, if at all He qualifies to still be called God, after this simplistic act of the incarnation?

3.2.1.2. *Defending the omnipotence of God*

God's omnipotence is put on trial by pagans and infidels. They (the infidels) demonstrate through their attacks that they reject the idea of the incarnation and consequently do not accept that God can lower Himself to such a simplistic level; hence, they vehemently object in chapter six with two sharp criticisms against the perceived powerlessness (*impotentem*) of God and His motive of love for the incarnation, when they assert: "If you say that God could not do all these things by His word alone, He who you say created all things by His word, you contradict yourselves, for you assert Him to be powerless."²⁹⁸ Through this objection, Boso reveals a significant aspect of the relationship between Christology and the doctrine of God.²⁹⁹ In the eyes of the infidels, the incarnation is nothing but a mark of powerlessness. A powerless God, however, is a contradiction in terms. To say that God is powerless contradicts the fundamental understanding of His nature. This amounts to saying that He is no longer God. This serious objection demands a deeper, more rational and logical response from Anselm. The aspect of love that Anselm proposes as the motive for God's simplicity, which renders Him seemingly powerless, needs to be solidly justified and defended. For it is equally strongly refuted by the unyielding objection of the unbeliever as follows: "Therefore, your assertion that God thus showed forth how much He loved you, can be defended by no argument unless it be shown that man could not possibly have been saved otherwise."³⁰⁰

It is indeed Anselm's strong conviction that man cannot be saved otherwise. He will labour throughout the rest of the book to prove that the incarnation was a necessity for the salvation of man. Here, he chooses to respond to the objections step by step, laying the foundation before reaching his conclusion. Since Anselm's initial response has been rejected and seemingly

²⁹⁸ CDH I, VI.

²⁹⁹ Cf. Georg PLASGER, *Die Notwendigkeit der Gerechtigkeit: Eine Interpretation zu „Cur Deus Homo“ von Anselm von Canterbury*, 74.

³⁰⁰ CDH I, VI.

dismantled by the objections of the unbelievers, who argue it is indefensible, a question now arises: could a convincing and defensible position be developed? Through these objections, Boso exerts even more pressure on Anselm. Anselm has yet to state his position on the objection regarding God being weak as opposed to all-powerful.

At this point, in response to the objection of a weak God (the *powerlessness of God*), Anselm felt compelled to delve deeper in order to counter the unbelievers strongly and to articulate a bold statement about the image of God he holds. While addressing this objection, he also seizes the opportunity to touch upon the classical motive of salvation, which he believed needed correction. Similar to the objection raised by the Jews concerning the omnipotence of God, classical theology also engaged with this attribute of God in relation to the salvation of humanity. The prevalent classical teaching, as maintained and taught by St. Augustine, posited that salvation is a struggle for power (*Macht-Kampf*) between God and the devil, aimed at wresting the fallen man from him.³⁰¹ This classical understanding presupposed that man is held captive by the devil and that God must battle the devil to liberate humankind. It suggests that God faces a challenger named Satan. Furthermore, it implies that God must demonstrate His omnipotence by competing with and ultimately defeating the devil. If this classical teaching is extended further, it would mean that the powerful one, the victor in this cosmic battle, automatically assumes rights over the human person and the cosmos at large. The prevailing assumption is that Satan holds legal rights over human beings. This is further articulated in the traditional teaching recorded by Southern, stating that Christ inherits the rights of the devil after defeating him. This summarises the essence of the traditional teaching:

Adam and Eve, in following the Devil's counsel instead of God's command, had made themselves and their descendants outlaws from God, and subjects of the Devil in perpetuity. Their sin created a new social contract of the universe: so long as the Devil kept within the bounds of his jurisdiction, the arrangement freely entered into by the ancestors of the human race could not justly be overturned. The Devil had a just dominion as long as he kept within the limits of those over whom his jurisdiction extended. As soon as he unjustly extended the exercise of his jurisdiction to the sinless Christ, the condition on which he held a just dominion over the human race was broken. When this happened, He whom the Devil had unjustly condemned to die inherited the Devil's jurisdiction and, under whatever conditions He wished, He could restore mankind to the end for which the human race had been created.³⁰²

³⁰¹ Cf. Klaus KIENZLER, *Gott ist größer*, 130.

³⁰² R.W. SOUTHERN, *Saint Anselm. A portrait in a landscape*, 207 -208. See also Gilbert CRISPIN, *Religionsgespräche mit einem Juden und einem Heiden*, 79.

Anselm finds the above traditional theory, persuasive as it may sound, not only injurious to the concept of the God of Christians but also entirely incorrect. It claims that after the fall of man, there exists a social contract that places mankind under the dominion of Satan and that God is bound to respect this contract. This presumed contract further suggests that God has relinquished all rights over mankind to the devil by virtue of man's fall. What is even more appalling is the association of God with deceit, as it claims that God deceived the devil by disguising Himself as a weak human being in order to reclaim His rights after being unjustly killed.

The objection of the infidels at first rejected the doctrine of the incarnation of God as something demeaning. But they now, seemingly reaching a concession with the Christians, temporarily agree that God becomes incarnate. They then criticise it, saying, is that not deceit against Satan? Going by the traditional ransom theory, is it not a deception to deceive the devil by God disguising Himself as a mortal man? Anselm, in the *meditatio redemptionis* vehemently rejects the above assumptions by holding deceit far away from God, firmly stating that: "Truth deceives no one; someone deceives himself if he does not know the truth. He deceives himself if, seeing the truth, he hates it or despises it."³⁰³ From the two possibilities, we rule out ignorance of the truth. The devil knew the truth about Jesus but deliberately refused to accept it and so deceived himself. This is reminiscent of the temptations of Jesus, where Satan challenged and despised the divine sonship of Jesus when he provocatively said, "If you are Son of God" (see Matthew 4:1-10). The second possibility of knowing the truth but despising it is what is applicable hereto Satan. Anselm argues, therefore, that deceit is never to be associated with God. If anything, it is associated with Satan, who is called the father of lies. He deceived himself first before deceiving others and becoming a father of lies.

On the other hand, Anselm refers to God as the truth, acknowledging another attribute of God. Regarding the notion that Satan possesses legal rights over mankind, which God must respect, and that God thus owes something to Satan, Anselm firmly asserts that "God did not owe the devil anything except punishment."³⁰⁴ Similarly, even man did not owe the devil anything save conquest.³⁰⁵ Anselm's resolute response eliminates the potential for dualism, where two

³⁰³ ANSELM OF CANTERBURY, *Meditatio Redemptionis Humanae*, 420. See also Matthew 4:1-10 The temptations of Jesus where Satan challenged and despised the divine-sonship of Jesus

³⁰⁴ ANSELM OF CANTERBURY, *Meditatio Redemptionis Humanae*, 420.

³⁰⁵ Cf. CDH I, XIX.

sovereign powers, good and evil, would coexist.³⁰⁶ If the theory of the *Machtkampf* between God and the devil were accurate, the battle's outcome would be predictable, with God as the perennial victor. For Anselm, it is evident that the devil cannot defeat God; he never has and never will. Anselm thus affirms the omnipotence of God, who owes the devil nothing except punishment. He considers it a grave affront to suggest that God, having triumphed over the devil, would inherit his power, thereby gaining jurisdiction over humanity and reclaiming His rights over them. The *Machtkampf* theory implies, therefore, that God initially possessed less power yet now seeks to increase His authority by acquiring power from the devil. To employ the language of *deceit* and *conquest* when referring to God and His relationship with Satan would be tantamount to levelling accusations at God for employing dishonest methods. Anselm, who holds a profoundly elevated view of God as the being greater than which no greater can be conceived, finds such language deeply offensive and boldly asserts that the actual battle exists between creatures, between Satan and man, and never between God the creator and Satan, a creature.³⁰⁷

Thus, Anselm begins correcting this misrepresentation of the unchallengeable omnipotence of God by first placing the Devil in his rightful position as a creature who owes his existence to God. “Neither devil nor man exists but by God, and that neither subsists outside His power.”³⁰⁸ Here, Anselm boldly affirms that the devil is not a sovereign. He further succinctly confirms that God is the only omnipotent and sovereign Being and the source of all power. Moreover, the power of God is such that it cannot be lost. To demonstrate that God is all-powerful, Anselm strips the devil of any power and rights he is assumed to possess and allegedly uses in a power struggle with God. Instead, he regards the devil as a slave, a thief, and a traitor³⁰⁹, as titles befitting his status, far below that of the sovereign and omnipotent God, and far from being a challenger of God's omnipotence, which remains unchallenged and immutable. At the same time, he dismisses the devil's claim for rights over mankind.³¹⁰ Here, Anselm seeks to emphasise that the devil, a slave, cannot engage in a power struggle with God, his master, to challenge Him. In other words, before God, the devil is powerless. He cannot be thrown into the ring to battle it out with God. If we imagine that such a battle could take place, it would be a one-sided beating and therefore unjust and thus unworthy of God, who is justice itself.

³⁰⁶ Cf. Hans KESSLER, *Die theologische Bedeutung des Todes Jesu*, 77.

³⁰⁷ Cf. CDH I, XXIII.

³⁰⁸ CDH I, VII.

³⁰⁹ CDH I, VII.

³¹⁰ Cf. Georg PLASGER, *Die Notwendigkeit der Gerechtigkeit*, 74.

Anselm does not, therefore, find it fitting for God to prove His unchallengeable might. It is utterly inconceivable for Anselm that one could challenge the power of God. Anselm firmly and rationally believes that God is all-powerful and has no challenger, and He does not need to demonstrate that in any way. For him, God is that than which nothing greater or more powerful can be conceived.³¹¹ This leads Anselm to clarify that the devil cannot be engaged in a cosmic struggle for power with God because, from the outset, he did not possess any powers or rights over humanity. Since mankind has never been under Satan's dominion, according to Anselm's assertion, it does not occur to him that God should wrest mankind from the devil's dominion. Anselm thus considered it a great misconception to claim that "the devil, by slaying Him in whom was no cause of death, and who was God, had justly lost power which he had over sinners."³¹² Anselm unequivocally rejects the notion that the devil held any such dominion over humanity. Logically, it follows that the devil could not lose possession of that which he never originally held. Consequently, Anselm concludes that God has never forfeited His rights over humanity to the devil.

With this rebuttal of the objections of the infidels, Anselm makes no further references to the question of God's omnipotence. He is satisfied with having made a strong case. It is a closed case needing no further debate. With that, as noted by McIntyre, he makes a break with the eleven centuries-old patristic traditions regarding the battle for power.³¹³ Thus, to close the debate on the omnipotence of God, Anselm argues that God's immutable omnipotence was never lost through His incarnation, as feared by non-Christians when He says: "No humiliation of God is to be understood to have been involved in the incarnation, but it is believed that the nature of man was exalted."³¹⁴ No debasement of God nor loss of power on God's side but the exaltation of man. After closing the debate on the omnipotence of God, objections that follow now shift their attention to justice (*Iustitia*) or equality (*aequalitas*).

3.2.2. Justice (*Iustitia*)

After succinctly clarifying that there is never a battle for power between God and the devil, Anselm completely sets aside the question of a power struggle. He continues to develop the theme of the incarnation in subsequent discussions, intensifying his justification for it. In response to the objections of the infidels, he now focuses on justice. He connects the

³¹¹ Cf. ANSELM OF CANTERBURY, *Proslogion* 4.

³¹² CDH I, VII.

³¹³ Cf. John MCINTYRE, *St. Anselm and his Critics. A Re-interpretation of the Cur Deus Homo*, 61.

³¹⁴ CDH I, VIII.

incarnation to justice. Justice, which is not only an attribute of God but also His name,³¹⁵ is a theme that occupies much of the first book of the *Cur Deus Homo*, while the second book concerns itself with God's mercy.³¹⁶ The most prominent question in the first book is: would God not have saved mankind by any means other than the death of a just man? "What justice is in his suffering for the sinner, who was the most just of all men? ... Could he not save sinners in any other way than by condemning the just?"³¹⁷ Here, we observe a leap from the incarnation directly to the passion of Jesus Christ, skipping the public ministry.

Beginning with the question of whether God could not have saved mankind through other means, Anselm does not outrightly say yes or no but instead contemplates what those possible alternatives might be. After identifying and naming the options that one can consider, apart from the God-man, he subjects all of them to scrutiny. He momentarily acts as if nothing is known of Christ, *remoto Christo*. The three suggested options are: 1) Through an angelic being, 2) through another human being created without sin, and 3) through God's sole will.³¹⁸ From Anselm's perspective, it is not merely a question of whether there are no other ways of saving sinners, but, more importantly, the efficacy of the chosen way to achieve the intended goal without inadvertently creating new problems. That method must be perfect, create no loopholes or further issues, and preserve the dignity of humanity. In his examination, Anselm finds all three options to be inadequate and, therefore, rejects them. They do not pass his scrutiny because they would undermine the nature of the relationship between God and humanity, and the requirements of justice would remain unfulfilled. Any other being, for example, that were to step up to save mankind, would assume mastery over humanity, thereby radically altering the existing relationship between God and man. The kind of salvation must be such that it restores the relationship between God and man rather than severing it. Forgiveness by God's sole will might encourage laxity within fallen humanity. Consequently, all three options fall short of satisfying the justice of God. Anselm disqualifies the suggested alternatives by asserting that, if an angelic being were to redeem humanity, then mankind would become indebted to that angelic saviour.

Concerning the option of God creating a perfect human being, as He did with Adam, Anselm argues that such an individual would not belong to the lineage of the human race that descends

³¹⁵ Cf. Felix HAMMER, *Genugtuung und Heil*, 133. „Gott muss nicht nur gerecht, sondern die Gerechtigkeit schlechthin genannt werden.“

³¹⁶ Cf. Klaus KIENZLER, *Gott ist größer. Studien zu Anselm von Canterbury*, 129.

³¹⁷ CDH I, VIII.

³¹⁸ CDH I, I.

from Adam.³¹⁹ Additionally, humanity would, in the end, be indebted to that new, non-Adamic human being. He, therefore, emphatically rejects the above options when he states:

If any other being should rescue man from eternal death, man would rightly be adjudged as the servant of that being...if it be so, he would in no wise be restored to that dignity which would have been his had he never sinned. For he, who was to be through eternity only the servant of God and an equal with the holy angels, would now be the servant of a being who is not God, and whom angels did not serve.³²⁰

If an angel or another newly created human being were to have redeemed humanity, this action would have diverted man's loyalty from God to that angel or non-Adamic human saviour. Consequently, this would have led to idolatry, as humanity would ultimately worship another being rather than God. It would not only constitute idolatry but also diminish man's dignity by subjecting him to being a servant of another being other than God. Only God can restore man to that dignity and original status; no one else can. Anselm's contention, therefore, was that the means chosen for mankind's redemption should be such that it does not demean mankind at all but maintains his status and dignity. Anselm's fears could only be alleviated if the saviour of mankind were none other than the God-man. Only the God-man can redeem man; his sacrifice through death makes man indebted to Him and to the Trinity without altering the original purpose of man and his relationship to God. No idolatry would be committed, when mankind's allegiance is given to Christ, the God-man, as that allegiance does not shift away from the Godhead to another being that is not God. Anselm thus argued passionately that it was, therefore, necessary for the God-man alone to restore mankind. He is the only one who can do so, and no one else can. Anselm will elaborate on this later when discussing the satisfaction offered by the God-man and His merits.

Having thus justified the incarnation of God as a necessity, from the options proposed by the infidels, Anselm now attempts to respond to the last sentence in the above objection: "Could God not have saved the sinner in any other way than by condemning the just?"³²¹ The catchword here is "*condemn*." Its use here is not accidental but deliberate and suggests that God the Father condemned His Son to death. The death of Christ on the cross seems to be a condemnation of the son by the Father. But was it really the case as most critics have also asserted that God condemned the just one? Would God really take pleasure in condemning His Son? Similar to how he has handled the objections above, Anselm does not provide a single-

³¹⁹ Cf. CDH II, VIII.

³²⁰ CDH I, V.

³²¹ CDH I, VIII.

word answer to the allegation but raises the issue of the freedom on the parts of both the Father and Jesus, which must be considered before answering the question. He looks at what Balthasar would call the encounter between the absolute and the finite or human freedom.³²² Thus, Anselm looks at the allegation of the condemnation of the just by the Father by bringing in the question of freedom, specifically the freedom of the God-man, Jesus Christ. Because the condemnation in the objection has something to do with death, Anselm draws our attention specifically to the freedom of Jesus to die. Anselm here limits his focus to interrogating the freedom that the God-man had with regard to dying for the salvation of mankind. Did He lay down His life voluntarily, out of His free will, or was he compelled to do so out of obedience? Was it a unilateral decision from the Father such that it can be said that God condemned the just to save sinners? This is what Anselm next cross-examines.

3.2.3. The Free Will of Jesus Christ

In his examination of the person of Jesus, Anselm specifically highlights the freedom of Jesus to die or not to die, which is very cardinal if the salvific works of Christ are to have any credibility. He begins from the common premise that a sinless man ought not to suffer death. As noted by Wiese, death, according to Anselm, belongs only to *natura corrupta* and not to *natura pura*.³²³ This is an acceptable matter of faith for both Christians and Jews and a logical conclusion to the biblical premise that, “the wages of sin is death”(Rom 6:23). The death of Jesus, a sinless man, contradicts this logic and raises several questions: Why did He have to die when He ought not to? Or rather, who was responsible for the death of the God-man? Is it the Father, or was it human authorities, or Jesus himself? If it is the Father, would it not merely confirm Him as the cannibal in heaven, as alleged by Bloch?³²⁴ Could the Father have ordered His death? Was there no compulsion of some sort, either directly or indirectly? What is the relationship of the death of Jesus to the will of God, and what are the implications of that concerning Christ’s freedom in choosing to die?

³²² Cf. Hans Urs von BALTHASAR, *Theo-Drama III*, 199.

³²³ Hans-Ulrich WIESE, *Die Lehre Anselm von Canterbury über den Tod Jesus in der Schrift Cur Deus Homo*, in: Wissenschaft und Weisheit. Zeitschrift für Augustinisch-Franziskanische Theologie in der Gegenwart, 41. Band 1978, 155.

³²⁴ Ernst BLOCH, *Atheismus im Christentum. Zur Religion des Exodus und des Reiches*, Frankfurt am Main 1968, 223.

Since the Father has directly been targeted in this objection as one who condemned his son to death, Anselm responds to these questions by first ruling out the thought that God the Father ordered the son's death when he states emphatically that :

God the Father did not treat that man as you seem to think, nor did He deliver up the innocent to die for the wicked. For He did not either compel Him to die, nor permit Him to be slain, unwilling; but... Himself bore His death by His own free will that He might save mankind.³²⁵

With the above unambiguous statement, Anselm absolves God the Father from the perception that has been painted of Him that He compelled His son Jesus to die. He further absolves God from the common insinuation that He condemned His innocent son to death in order to save humanity. Condemnation presupposes sentencing, yet the Father is absolved from ever passing sentence on the Son. Neither did God express His anger towards the Son, as though He were a bloodthirsty God, as insinuated by Harnack.³²⁶ Having absolved the father from the insinuations, someone else must be responsible. Anselm argues that the action of crucifying Jesus was not carried out nor sanctioned by the Father but by the Jews and Roman authorities or rather by human authorities of his time because He adhered to His obedience.³²⁷ Responsibility for the death of Jesus is therefore pushed to human authorities. Jesus was, therefore, a victim of those Jewish and Roman human authorities of His time and not a victim of His father. Similar to the theology found in the book of Job, where the innocent suffer, Anselm is, however, quick to assert that God permitted the slaying of Jesus, the innocent one, when he states: "he who can prevent a thing but does not, desires the thing which he does not prevent."³²⁸

Anselm here has tried to account for both the Father's non-involvement and indirect participation in the death of Jesus by not preventing the death. Anselm means to imply that, since the Father is all-powerful and could have prevented the death of Jesus but did not, He is rightly asserted to have indirectly willed the death of His son.³²⁹ Though the father is said to have willed it, it cannot properly be said that He is the causer. It is, however, clear for Anselm that to will is not the same as to compel. Therefore, the Father's will is to be understood as permitting but not compelling, for the choice did not originate from the Father. Meaning the

³²⁵ CDH I, VIII.

³²⁶ Cf. Adolph HARNACK, *History of Dogma, Vol III. 312*. Harnack had insinuated that His suffering and death constituted a sacrifice presented to the angry God whom it was necessary to propitiate.

³²⁷ Cf. CDH I, IX.

³²⁸ CDH I, X.

³²⁹ Cf. CDH I, X.

Will of the son remained free to act independently without external influence. Here, Anselm is playing with the natural Will of the Father who did not will the death of His son but did also not will to prevent Him from being killed. This then entails that Jesus, on his own, must have willingly willed his own death. He had anticipated it and foretold it several times. Had He not willed it, He could have escaped it as he did many times before when he would sneak through the crowd (Lk 4:20). The wills of both the father and the son are active and not in conflict, but are mutually respectful towards one another. This aligns with the comment of Maximus the Confessor that, in the prayer at Mount Olives, Christ accepted his suffering in two ways: through his divine will, which is identical to the Father's, and through his human will, which overcame its own resistance and submitted fully to the Father's will.³³⁰

In as much as death can be said to have been permitted by the father, by not preventing it from occurring, it was, according to Anselm, the son's self-initiated free choice, and so he was responsible for his own choices. The Father need not be held responsible for the son's choice. Given that the father permitted his son to die, and the son voluntarily met his own death, how does Anselm reconcile this with the prayer of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane that not His will but the Father's will should be done? Did Jesus relinquish His right to exercise free choice? This inquiry leads us to explore the relationship between the Father's will and Christ's freedom in the decision to die, a matter which Anselm sought to examine more thoroughly. What are the implications of this prayer in Gethsemane for the son's free will in relation to the father's will? Did Jesus relinquish his will at that time? Or was Christ's will submissive, in obedience, to the will of the Father? Anselm and his dialogue partner, Boso, present two distinct perspectives for consideration: (a) the first viewpoint emerges from the father's will, to which the son willingly submits, and (b) the second viewpoint arises from the son's autonomous choice.

A) The Father's Will

Setting aside the method of *remoto Christo*, which does not apply in the first ten chapters of Book one, but only in CDH I, 11-25,³³¹ Anselm cites two key biblical passages as examples that demonstrate how the Son's will subjects and surrenders itself to the Father's will. These passages are (i) The Prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane and (ii) St. Paul's Kenosis passage in the Epistle to the Philippians.

³³⁰ Cf. Raymund SCHWAGER, *Der wunderbare Tausch*, Freiburg i. Br. 2015, 243-244.

³³¹ Cf. Martin KIRSCHNER, *Gott-größer als gedacht*, 269.

i) *Agony in the Garden of Gethsemane*

During the scene of agony in the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prayed: “Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me, nevertheless, not my will but yours be done” (Luke 22:42).³³² This is the passage that Anselm has in mind when considering the two wills; that of the Father on one hand and that of the Son on the other, all within this single verse. According to Anselm, this cry arises from Jesus’ “natural desire for safety, in accordance with which human nature shrank from the anguish of death.”³³³ In this moment, Jesus, in His humanity, is depicted as actively submitting His will to that of His Father if the cup cannot pass Him by. The implication here is that the Father has the final word. The Father responded to the Son’s cry with silence, symbolising consent. Jesus then freely accepted the Father’s consent obediently with the attitude of, “*Your Will be done.*” He remained obedient unto death.

Since Jesus is fully divine and fully human as was defined by the councils of Nicaea and later also by Chalcedon, Anselm links the will of Jesus to the two natures in a way that seems to split them, when he argues that: “that Man owed that obedience to God His Father, and humanity to Deity; and His Father required it from Him.”³³⁴ Anselm, here, implies that Jesus the man, owed obedience to the Father just as the human race, in general, are obliged to submit their will to the Deity as a debt of honour. In particular, he implies that Jesus’ will submits to the Father’s will. What is not implied, however, is that the human will of Jesus owes obedience to the divine will of Christ. That would appear to make Jesus submit to himself. Implied, as Maximus had earlier affirmed in the seventh century, is that both the human and divine will of the God-man owed obedience to God the Father.³³⁵ The position of Maximus, the confessor, affirmed that in the Garden of Gethsemane, Christ’s divine will affirmed the Father’s will, and the human will overcame its resistance and equally submitted to the will of the Father.³³⁶ Sticking to Jesus alone in this scene at the garden of Gethsemane, Anselm magnifies Jesus’ unwavering submission to the will of the Father, saying: “God did not compel Christ to die, but Christ of His own will bore death... on account of the obligation He was under to fulfil righteousness.”³³⁷ The underlying point, nevertheless, remains that Jesus died in obedience to the Father’s will.

³³² CDH I, IX. See

³³³ CDH I, IX.

³³⁴ CDH I, IX.

³³⁵ Cf. Raymund SCHWAGER, *Der wunderbare Tausch*, 247.

³³⁶ Cf. Raymund SCHWAGER, *Der wunderbare Tausch*, 244.

³³⁷ CDH I, IX.

ii) *Kenosis as a voluntary act of self-humiliation.*

In the second example, Anselm brings in the Pauline passage on the kenosis, which further emphasises the obedience of the son to the father. He quotes the following Pauline passage: “Though he was in the form of God, he did not count equality with God as a thing to be grasped... he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, death on a cross, and the Father therefore highly exalted him and gave him a name that is above all names” Philippians 2:6-8)³³⁸ Here, Jesus is depicted as being fully in charge of His decision to submit in obedience to the Father. He is the free-acting agent, while the father readily accepts his death on the cross and rewards him for that. It is this perfect free obedience to the Father that drove him to death. What also clearly emerges from this passage is that the Father did not demand the death of Jesus.

In these two above-cited passages, Anselm views Jesus as having submitted his Will to the Father and, therefore, left the final decision in the hands of his Father, to whom he totally remained obedient. Anselm emphasises Christ’s free and perfect choice to submit to death on the cross even more when he says: “He could have escaped death had he chosen to, but because, the world could not otherwise have been saved. He indefectibly willed rather to suffer death than that the world should not be saved.”³³⁹ Anselm argues that the death of Christ is the only option available for the salvation of mankind.³⁴⁰ His death can, therefore, be said to be a necessity and the only option for our salvation, hence His death in obedience to the Father. Anselm here tied the free will of Jesus together with obedience to His Father. It was also very clear to Anselm that obedience to the father’s will is never to be confused with compulsion. In the next scriptural texts, Anselm strongly advances arguments that dying on the cross was Jesus's free choice.

B) Free choice of Jesus as the basis for the offering of satisfaction

This brings us to the second perspective, where Anselm further interrogates the free will of Jesus from Jesus’ own perspective. Predominantly, Anselm here presents Jesus as one who is in command of his final decision, unlike in the above two examples where the Father had the last say. This is supported especially by the following Johannine words of Jesus, where he is presented as being in charge of his own decision: “I lay down my life that I may take it again;

³³⁸ Anselm did not explicitly state the passage because he was also addressing non-Christians. However, the content referred to this kenosis text.

³³⁹ CDH I, X.

³⁴⁰ This is however not to the exclusion of his works which were also salvific. See CDH II, XII.

no man taketh away from me, but I lay it of myself; I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again.”³⁴¹ Reference to obedience to the father is completely absent in this declaration. This statement of Jesus, which is a bold declaration and not a prayer, comes from one fully aware of his identity and dignity and who possesses authority on his own accord. In other words, as observed by Visser, Anselm is saying that Jesus has the power to initiate self-initiated action that is not compelled by any external agency.³⁴²

With regard to the capability to will, Jesus states that no one takes life away from Him, including the Father, for He is a respecter of free will and does not interfere with the exercise of freedom.³⁴³ Not even the human authorities nor the devil can compel Him to will against His will. He Himself had to will it. What happened to Him is to be understood as having been permitted by Himself. With regard to free will, Jesus gave away His life of His own will. From the foresaid, Anselm argues strongly that it was the will of the son to die, for he was in charge of his own decisions and not as an automaton or a marionette.

Further, Anselm strongly argues for the independence of Jesus's will when he says, “He was not compelled, but it was of his own accord that he endured death for the salvation of men.”³⁴⁴ To emphasise the independence of the will of Christ, he does not bring in the issue of obedience to the Father. A question that may arise here then is: since Jesus is in charge of his final decision and will, where does that place the will of the Father? Is He delinked from the Father? Does the Father have no role to play in the death of Jesus? What sort of relationship is there between the father’s will and that of the son? According to Anselm, there is a mutual relationship among the equal persons of the Trinity. Whatever choices Jesus makes would not dishonour the Father nor go against the common programme or goal of the Trinity for humanity. He argues that the relationship that exists is such that, though the son self-initiates his own personal choices, the Father gives His approval. Therein lies the relationship. The Father does not remain ignorant of the son’s actions but is fully aware and gives His approval or consent. This choice of Jesus to die on the cross for the sake of mankind’s salvation was approved and can, therefore, in this sense, be said to have been desired by the Father. Anselm justified it in the following words: “He had agreed with the Father and the Holy Spirit that there was no other way to reveal to the

³⁴¹ CDH I, X. See *also* John 10:18.

³⁴² Cf. Sandra VISSER and Thomas WILLIAMS, *Anselm’s account of freedom*, in: *The Cambridge companion to Anselm*, Cambridge 2004, 183.

³⁴³ Cf. Magdalini TSEVRENI, *A systematic Reading of De Libertate Arbitrii. The Ideas of freedom and the Will of saint Anselm*, in: *Initial. A Review of Medieval Studies* 2 (2014) 61-78, here: 72.

³⁴⁴ CDH I, VIII.

world the height of his omnipotence than by his death.”³⁴⁵ Though not involved in His son’s death, the Father (and the Holy Spirit) was aware of the son’s choice of sacrificing His life and granted His approval.

The Father approved and agreed with the son’s proposal. Anselm is trying to say by this that the will of the father, therefore, lies in approving the desire and sacrifice of the son to suffer for the redemption of mankind. In his own words, Anselm further states: “We say that he desires a thing who approves of the desire of another, though he does not cause the desire.”³⁴⁶ By asserting that the Father is not the cause of Jesus's desire to sacrifice His life, it confirms that Jesus self-initiated it. Using a similar expression from *De casu diaboli*, Jesus can be properly said to be the cause of His death. At the same time, the Father is only improperly referred to as the cause for not preventing it when He could.³⁴⁷ This occurrence evokes the case of Abraham, where God prevented the death of Isaac at a critical hour. In the case of Jesus, however, the Father chose not to interfere in his death to respect and support his choice but would intervene at a later stage, that is, by raising Him from the dead. Anselm’s theory, however, does not reach thus far, thus being incomplete, as rightly observed by critics, labelling his theory as staurocentric.³⁴⁸

In this instance of the Father’s non-intervention, Anselm emphasises that the desire originated from the son’s own will. For this reason, it can be asserted that Jesus's desire to lay down His life arises from His natural will and not from the Father. The Father simply agrees to and supports the son’s desire. Therefore, no conflict should exist between the Father’s and Son’s wills. Anselm highlights that although God the Father did not wish for His son’s suffering, He respected the son’s choice. “He took no pleasure in his suffering but in his choice.”³⁴⁹ Unlike in the first two biblical passages, namely, the prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane and the kenosis text of St. Paul to the Philippians, here, Anselm does not tie the son’s choices to the obedience of his father’s will. Jesus does not give His life because he was commanded. Instead, the Father supports the son’s choice by granting consent or approval. With this discourse on the free will of Jesus, the introductory part of Book One comes to an end.

³⁴⁵ CDH I, IX. Schwager must have overlooked this passage when he said that the Holy Spirit is not mentioned even once in CDH. He was, however, right to say the Holy Spirit received no systematic function in Anselm’s theory of redemption. See: SCHWAGER, *Der wunderbare Tauch*, 308.

³⁴⁶ CDH I, X.

³⁴⁷ Cf. ANSELM OF CANTERBURY, *De Casu diaboli*, in: Complete philosophical and theological treatise of Anselm of Canterbury, translated by Jasper Hopkins and Herbert Richardson, Minneapolis 2000, 216.

³⁴⁸ Cf. Hans KESSLER, *Die theologische Bedeutung des Todes Jesu*, 158.

³⁴⁹ CDH I, X.

According to Plasger, the first ten chapters of *Cur Deus Homo* serve as an introduction to the entire book.³⁵⁰ They seek to raise and clarify one question: why did God become man, thus making Himself lowly and powerless? From CDH I, XI onwards, the text responds to this question. According to McIntyre, this marks the beginning of a systematic account of Anselm's theory of atonement.³⁵¹

This brings us to the core matter of the book, namely the answer to the question *Cur Deus Homo*? A short answer is that man, created blessed, had sinned and dishonoured God, damaged the order of creation and could not come out of the self-created disorder. Hence, God came down to save man and restore him to blessedness.

3.3. God's purpose for man - created for blessedness

In addressing the central question of *Cur Deus Homo*, Anselm first reminds us of the dignity of man and the purpose for which man was created, placing particular emphasis on the term "man" (*homo*). Who is this man whom God so deeply cares for, seeking to restore to a state of blessedness? What was the aim of his creation? What led to his fall? And why, of all rational beings, did God choose to become man?

Anselm structures the main body of his work according to the book of Genesis, which presents the narrative of man's creation in the Garden of Eden, followed by the fall of man, God's response to sin, and, ultimately, God's intervention for man's restoration. He centres his discussion on man, seeking to awaken self-awareness and foster a strong sense of self-worth regarding individual dignity and status. Anselm thus emphasises that man is God's masterpiece, carefully created and endowed with great capabilities, including free will and reason. He stresses the importance of man fully knowing himself and not losing sight of the purpose for which he was destined and created, namely that of blessedness.

Thus, Anselm defines mankind as God's precious creation.³⁵² He further emphasises this description of the preciousness of humanity when he states, "God has made nothing more precious than a rational nature formed to rejoice in Him."³⁵³ The phrase "to rejoice in Him" indicates the purpose or goal of humanity. In other words, "man was created for

³⁵⁰ Cf. Georg PLASGER, *Die Notwendigkeit der Gerechtigkeit. Eine Interpretation zu „Cur Deus Homo“ von Anselm von Canterbury*, 74.

³⁵¹ John MCINTYRE, *St. Anselm and his critics*, 56.

³⁵² Cf. CDH I, IV.

³⁵³ CDH II, IV.

blessedness.”³⁵⁴ This implies that man existed in a state of blessedness before the fall. This definition of man as the most precious rational creature is deeply biblical, as it aligns with what is recounted in the creation narratives in Genesis, where God consistently remarked at the end of each creation day saying: “*It was good.*” However, on the sixth day after creating man in His image, God declared, “*It was very good*” (Gen 1:31). This clearly distinguishes human beings from other creatures of God on earth. This underscores Anselm’s deliberate characterisation of man as the “most precious rational creature.” He seeks to emphasise that humanity is at the apex of creation on Earth.

In the words of McIntyre, man is a sublime being created by God.³⁵⁵ Eager to emphasise this point even further, Anselm subsequently articulates the expanded and refined purpose of humankind’s creation. In his introduction to book two, Anselm asserts that “man was created upright by God that he might be blessed in the enjoyment of God... created rational that he might discern between just and unjust, between good and bad, between a greater good and a lesser good”.³⁵⁶ Anselm here links blessedness to uprightness, indicating that the loss of uprightness would imply the loss of blessedness. In addition to stating the purpose of humankind’s creation, Anselm also remarks on the state in which mankind was created: upright and suitably equipped for his unique role in that state of blessedness. As paraphrased by Cohen, “for Anselm, the most basic purpose of the creation of human beings was to bring *honour* to God who created them.”³⁵⁷

Great expectations were placed on man due to the exalted dignity and capabilities bestowed upon him among the creatures at the time of creation. For to whom much is given, much is expected. One such ability granted to man is the power of discernment.

3.4. *Libertas et humana voluntas* - Freedom and human will

Created for blessedness by God, man was endowed with the ability to appreciate this state and to pursue that goal of blessedness. The means to achieve this are liberty and human will. Anselm asserts that man possesses liberty or freedom and human will, making these key distinguishing features of what it means to be human. Commenting on this, Schönborn states

³⁵⁴ CDH I, X.

³⁵⁵ John MCINTYRE, *Cur Deus Homo. The axis of the argument*, in: Sola Ratione. Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, 1970, 118.

³⁵⁶ Cf. CDH II, I.

³⁵⁷ Nicholas COHEN, *Patristic Analogues in Anselm of Canterbury’s Cur Deus Homo*, 43.

that freedom and our human will are the greatest gifts we have received from God.³⁵⁸ Anselm highlights that mankind “received the power of discernment that it might hate and avoid evil and might love and choose good, and might love most the greatest good and choose that.”³⁵⁹ Two forms of understanding freedom are articulated here. The first is the capacity to choose between good and evil. This is the common definition of freedom and applies to mankind but never to God.³⁶⁰ The second, described at the end of the last sentence of the definition, concerns the choice between the good and the greatest good; this is a broader definition of freedom that applies to God, the good angels, and humanity as well.³⁶¹ This freedom, which pertains to all rational beings, aligns with Anselm’s definition of freedom as “the ability to keep uprightness of will for its own sake.”³⁶² According to Anselm, the love of and choice for goodness is a decision that arises from a process of discernment. Discernment involves possessing the knowledge upon which free choices are based. With this power of free choice and human will, man can shape his present and future for better or worse, depending on individual choices. This power is also important for reclaiming the goal of blessedness when it is lost since no restoration would be possible without the cooperation and participation of man’s liberty and human will. Blessedness is, therefore, linked to man’s free choices to preserve or regain it after it has been lost. This implies that freedom comes with responsibility.

Anselm, however, asserts that man cannot, unfortunately, attain this blessedness in this life and that no being can ever achieve happiness or blessedness unless he is freed from sin.³⁶³ This implies that before the Fall, man possessed this original blessedness perfectly. However, he lost it after the Fall, and to regain it, sin must be remitted. With this assertion, Anselm introduces sin into the discussion, particularly as an obstacle to realising this blessedness. The Fall of man in the Garden of Eden resulted in humankind losing original blessedness because, from that moment on, “no man passes this life without sin.”³⁶⁴ Anselm makes it abundantly clear that sin is incompatible with blessedness; the two are mutually exclusive. In his theory,

³⁵⁸ Cf. Christoph SCHÖNBORN, *Gott sandte seinen Sohn*, 247.

³⁵⁹ CDH II, I.

³⁶⁰ Cf. Stanley G. KANE, *Anselm’s definition of freedom*, in: *Religious Studies* 9/3 (1973) 297-306, here: 299.

³⁶¹ Cf. Stanley G. KANE, *Anselm’s definition of freedom*, 299.

³⁶² ANSELM OF CANTERBURY, *De Concordia Praescientiae et Preadestinationis et Gratiae Dei cum Libero Arbitrio*, in: *Complete philosophical and Theological Treatises of Anselm of Canterbury*, translated by Jasper HOPKINS and Herbert RICHARDSON, Minneapolis 2000, 531-574, here: 252, (Par. 6.)

³⁶³ Cf. CDH I, X.

³⁶⁴ CDH I, X.

Anselm emphasises the restoration of happiness and blessedness as a necessity, but under one condition: that the sins of humankind are remitted.

3.4. The nature of man's sin and its consequences

The remission of man's sin is an absolute necessity; that is, blessedness can only be regained through the forgiveness of sins. Anselm thus shifts his focus to the sin of humankind, which must be remitted for the restoration of blessedness to occur. Beginning with chapter eleven (CDH I, XI), Anselm concentrates exclusively on understanding the sin of mankind and its consequences.

3.4.1. *Peccatum* – Sin as not remitting the debt

What is sin according to Anselm's understanding? His interpretation of sin is quite unique and distinct from others, as he looks at it from the perspective of justice, illustrated by his choice of language, which is predominantly legal in nature. The influence of German law believed to have sociologically shaped his viewpoint, as Greshake pointed out,³⁶⁵ is clearly evident in his definition of sin. He perceives sin as arising from the relationship established between God and humanity. Like any other relationship, including feudal ones, the involved parties have obligations and duties. This holds true for Anselm, who regards sin as man's failure to fulfil his obligations and duties as they ought to in that divine-human relationship. Man's failure to meet these obligations amounts to an offence against God. Therefore, he understands sin as a form of debt or obligation owed. Thus, Saint Anselm defines sin as “not to pay to God one's debt.”³⁶⁶ This is the most common definition of sin, according to Anselm, yet it is quite pregnant and requires further elaboration on what that debt entails. Consequently, Anselm states: “The whole will of a rational creature ought to be subject to the will of God. This is the debt which angels and men owe to God... This is the sole and whole honour which we owe to God, and which God requires of us.”³⁶⁷ Anselm here situates man's sin within the will of the rational creature. There would be no discussion of sin without the will being involved. If the rational creature submits its entire will to God, it honours God and does not sin. However, if the rational creature refuses to submit its will to God, then sin is committed.

³⁶⁵ Cf. Gisbert GRESHAKE, *Erlösung und Freiheit*, 330-332.

³⁶⁶ CDH I, XI.

³⁶⁷ CDH I, XI.

The above definition further illustrates that, for Anselm, sin is inextricably linked to God's honour. Logically speaking, this means that sin inflicts an injury to God's honour. From this definition, Anselm asserts that the obligation of obedience to God's will rests solely upon rational creatures, namely, human beings and angels. The rest of creation is presumably exempt. To whom more is given, more is expected. For this reason, Anselm insists that this most precious, rational, and sublime creature ought to submit to God's will. Specifically concerning mankind, this obligation is placed upon man's free will. When man willingly pays his debt, that is, when he voluntarily yields his will to the will of God, then no sin is committed. Saint Anselm describes such a state as "uprightness or rectitude of will."³⁶⁸ Such an upright will is said to be just and fulfilling the law of justice, i.e., preserving rectitude for rectitude's sake.³⁶⁹ Failure to fulfil one's obligations to pay this debt to God constitutes sin. This sinning can occur either through commission or omission. This fits in well with the definition of sin he gave in his earlier work, *De libertate Arbitrii*, that sin is when the will wills what it ought not to will.³⁷⁰ This is an example of a sin of commission. That is, the capacity to actively choose to go against what is expected of one.

On the other hand, there is the sin of omission, which Anselm elaborates on when he states: "Whoever renders not unto God this due honour, takes away from God that which is His and does God dishonour: and this is sin."³⁷¹ Therefore, one sins by omitting to give God due honour. To use a strong term, Anselm says that to sin is to withhold (sin of omission) or to rob (sin of commission) God of His honour. This is confirmed when he later states that: "*Each sinner ought to repay the honour of which he has robbed God.*"³⁷² It becomes even clearer that Anselm links man's debt to God's honour. If man pays his debt, he honours God; if he does not pay, he dishonours God. For Anselm, this borders on the law of justice. It constitutes an injustice not to give God what is due to Him; hence, sin is seen as an injustice. Anselm does not stop at defining sin merely as injustice, i.e., not submitting one's will to God, but also sees it as withholding God's honour, which amounts to robbing God of the honour due to Him, the *honor Dei*.

³⁶⁸ CDH I, XI.

³⁶⁹ Cf. ANSELM OF CANTERBURY, *De libertate Arbitrii*, III, In: Complete Philosophical and theological treatises of Anselm from Canterbury, translated by Jasper Hopkins and Herbert Richardson, Minneapolis 2000, 191-213, here: 197.

³⁷⁰ Cf. ANSELM OF CANTERBURY, *De Libertate Arbitrii* V, 201.

³⁷¹ CDH I, XI.

³⁷² CDH I, XI.

3.4.2. *Honor Dei*

Since the sins of man and other rational beings are directly linked to the honour of God, it follows that man's sin affects God's honour. In other words, man's sin injures God's honour. Given this, Anselm now gives special attention to the honour of God. But what exactly is meant by 'honour of God' or *Honor Dei* ³⁷³ by Anselm? In responding to Boso's question of whether the punishing of sin is tantamount to honouring God, Anselm does not answer with a no or yes response, for that will be insufficient. He also notices a flaw in the question which has been raised, for it suggests that the honour of God is something that is dependent on any creature. He thus begins by correcting that impression when he makes an emphatic assertion that: "*it is not possible for anything to add or to diminish the honour of God, in so far as it appertains to Himself.*"³⁷⁴ The words "as it appertains to Himself" add an extra detail which is cardinal to understanding the Honour of God. According to Cohen, the essence of God is implied here, which cannot be affected.³⁷⁵ It can thus be paraphrased as saying that, as far as His essence is concerned, God remains unaffected by sin. Schönborn interprets it to mean God's divinity cannot be destroyed by human sin.³⁷⁶ By this emphatic but quite often overlooked assertion by critics, Anselm corrects Boso's assumption that sin diminishes God's honour, and punishment restores it back. Anselm's response considers both what cannot diminish and what cannot add to God's honour. By diminishing, Anselm implies that God cannot lose His honour because of man's sin, nor can it be restored through the punishment of the same sin.³⁷⁷ Anselm contends that what cannot add to God's honour cannot subtract from His honour either. Thus, human activities, whether good or bad, neither diminish His honour nor add to it. This is contrary to the conclusion drawn by critics like Kessler that punishment of sin was a way of honouring God.³⁷⁸ He reinforces this point further when he states: "For that same honour of His is incorruptible and in no way mutable."³⁷⁹ His honour thus remains constant.

³⁷³ Greshake made a distinction between *Honor Dei* and *gloria Dei*. *Honor Dei* affects only creation and is mutable while *Gloria Dei* only affects God and this is immutable. Hans Ulrich Wiese also makes a similar distinction between the immanent glory of God which cannot be affected and the passing glory (*transeunter Ehre*) of God which affects the order of creation. See Hans-Ulrich WIESE, *Die Lehre Anselms von Canterbury über den Tod Jesu in der Schrift „Cur Deus Homo“* in: WiWei 41 (1978) 149-179. Here: 154.

³⁷⁴ CDH I, XV.

³⁷⁵ Nicholas COHEN, *Patristic Analogues in Anselm of Canterbury's Cur Deus Homo*, 46.

³⁷⁶ Cf. Christoph SCHÖNBORN, *Gott sandte seinen Sohn*, 249. „Gottes Gottsein kann nicht durch die menschliche Sünde zerstört werden.“

³⁷⁷ Cf. Georg PLASGER, *Die Notwendigkeit der Gerechtigkeit*, 112.

³⁷⁸ Cf. Hans KESSLER, *Die theologische Bedeutung des Todes Jesu*, 162.

³⁷⁹ CDH I, XV

Considering that which cannot contribute to His honour, aside from the punishment which He has already refuted, Anselm also considered a rational creature that obeys God's will and is said to honour God by doing so. He stated, "When any creature follows its own course, as it were, marked out for it, whether in the natural or rational order, it is said to obey God and to honour Him."³⁸⁰ This seems to contradict the earlier assertion that nothing can add to or diminish God's honour. However, Anselm quickly clarifies this by stating: although man honours God, this honouring adds nothing to God's honour. Anselm argues that just as sin never impacts God's honour by diminishing it, neither can something good, such as obedience, add to it.³⁸¹ Nevertheless, obedience to God's will is praised and required by God and is indeed regarded as honouring God, though it does not add to God's honour. Further extending this thought, Anselm implies that God's honour is not dependent on man or any other rational creatures and their actions.

How, then, can one understand the relationship between sin and the honour of God? Should the earlier statement linking sin to the honour of God be withdrawn? Anselm did not see it that way and so never withdrew the statement but maintained it in view of the fact that the honour of God can only be improperly said to be affected by sin. In a proper sense, it was the external honour of God that was impacted by sin. This *honor Dei externa* (external glory of God) is, however, nothing other than the order of the universe or *ordo universi*.

3.4.3. *Ordo Universi*

It is an undeniable fact for Anselm that human sin directly affects the order of the universe, the *ordo universe*, which Hans Kessler and Felix Hammer called the *externa gloria Dei*³⁸² or the external honour of God.³⁸³ According to Anselm, sin has a direct effect on the order of the universe, which is ultimately linked to the *honor Dei*.³⁸⁴ When humanity chooses not to obey and submit fully to the will and wisdom of God, that is, when it "attempts to disturb the regular order of things, there would be caused in that universe, which God should rule, a certain

³⁸⁰ CDH I, XV.

³⁸¹ This is the theology contained in the common preface IV of the Roman missal: "For, although you have no need of our praise, yet our thanksgiving is itself your gift, since our praises add nothing to your greatness, but profit us for salvation, through Christ our Lord." See: The Roman Missal, *Common Preface IV*, http://www.liturgies.net/Liturgies/Catholic/roman_missal/prefaces.htm#common4 downloaded on: 20.12.2021.

³⁸² Cf. Felix HAMMER, *Genugtuung und Heil*, 139.

³⁸³ Cf. Hans KESSLER, *Die theologische Bedeutung des Todes Jesu*, 162.

³⁸⁴ Greshake distinguishes *gloria Dei* from *honor Dei*. "*Honor ist nicht gloria*". For him Gloria is reserved only for God and is immutable. *Honor* in the sense applied by Anselm refers to man and this is mutable. Cf. GRESHAKE, *Erlösung und Freiheit*, 331.

deformity from this violated symmetry of its order, and God would seem to fail in His government.”³⁸⁵ Although man’s actions destroy the order of the universe, it may appear that God created the universe with defects or that He has failed to preserve what He has created.

What seems to be an act of dishonour to God, that is, man’s disobedience or insubordination to God’s will, actually turns out to be a dishonour to man himself, for it is the human person, not God, who ultimately suffers the injuries of sin. Olsen notes that through disobedience, the sinner destroys the order in himself which God has given.³⁸⁶ Through sin, man injures himself and the order of the universe. Honouring God, on the other hand, means that the creature stays in his own lane and does what is expected of him as a creature by freely submitting to the will of God. When man, as a good steward, upholds the order and beauty of the universe, he honours God, but he also upholds his own honour as God’s precious creature. To deviate from the course is what is equivalent to dishonouring God. However, as observed by Plasger, the phrase dishonouring God by man is improperly said to apply to God but properly or rightly applies to man, for it is a man who destroys his relationship with God and ultimately destroys himself.³⁸⁷ Man runs away from God and hides, as seen in the case of Adam in the Garden of Eden, as a sign of a broken relationship. In this case, a deformity is caused to creation, including to mankind, but not to God.³⁸⁸ According to Olsen, “the sinner is like a spoiled work of art, which instead of reflecting the beauty which it received from its creator, seems to mute whatever praise one might be inclined to render to that creator.”³⁸⁹ In his interpretation of Anselm on this point, Plasger says that: “God’s honour is not affected as such, but the honour of man to be God’s partner is affected.”³⁹⁰ Anselm argues that God’s Lordship, His honour does not suffer any injury and does not also need to be restored through satisfaction.

Injuring the honour of God rather concerns mankind. It concerns the order and beauty of the world, which was entrusted to man but is now destroyed through sin.³⁹¹ The sin of man thus affects man himself deeply and does not remain external to him as Hammer and Kessler hold.³⁹²

³⁸⁵ CDH I, XV.

³⁸⁶ Cf. Glen W. OLSEN, *Hans Urs von Balthasar and the rehabilitation of St. Anselm’s Doctrine of the Atonement*, in: *Scottish Journal of Theology* 34 (2009) 49-61, here: 52.

³⁸⁷ Cf. Georg PLASGER, *Die Notwendigkeit der Gerechtigkeit*, 129.

³⁸⁸ George Plasger’s view is that man also took his own future away by sin. (see, *Die Notwendigkeit der Gerechtigkeit*, 112.

³⁸⁹ Glen W. OLSEN, *Hans Urs von Balthasar and the rehabilitation of St. Anselm’s Doctrine of the Atonement*, 52.

³⁹⁰ Cf. Georg PLASGER, *Die Notwendigkeit der Gerechtigkeit*, 114.

³⁹¹ Cf. Gisbert GRESHAKE, *Gottes Heil-Glück des Menschen*, 86.

³⁹² Cf. Hans-Ulrich WIESE, *Die Lehre Anselms Von Canterbury über den Tod Jesu in der Schrift „Cur Deus Homo“*, 152.

The Consequences of sin are thus bone and felt by mankind itself. These may be consequences like natural catastrophes and climate change. Since God is not affected by sin, but man is, it is man who needs his honour restored. So, it is man, not God, who needs satisfaction.³⁹³ Not God, therefore, requires restoration, but the world does.

As explored above, the consequences of man's sin range from losing blessedness to disrupting the order of the universe, which is equivalent to man taking his own future away. Restoration demands that sin be forgiven. That leads us to a critical question that Anselm now raises: Should God have compassion and unconditionally forgive man via *sola misericordia*?

3.4.4. *Sola misericordia*?

Saint Anselm vehemently rejects the thought that God should forgive man's sins *sola misericordia*,³⁹⁴ i.e., by mercy alone, without any action on man's part, for the reasons that he is ready to provide and justify. While still sticking to his method of *sola ratione* and *remoto Christo*, i.e., of leaving Christ out of the solutions for the time being, Anselm argues that God cannot simply grant amnesty to sinners for the following four rational grounds: Firstly, Anselm while focusing on man as the object argues that, if God does not punish sinner, then He (God) will treat both the righteous and the sinners in the same way.³⁹⁵ Such a treatment would be unbecoming of God, and it would be an injustice if God treats sinners in the same way as the righteous. It will be an injustice against the righteous. The righteous would, as a consequence, be demotivated to continue striving for uprightness and blessedness. As rightly observed by Plasger, here, Anselm focuses not on the contrasting words of mercy and justice but rather on mercy and injustice.³⁹⁶ According to Anselm, therefore, sin forgiven without being punished is unjustly forgiven.³⁹⁷

Secondly, while focusing on sin as an object, Anselm argues further that if sin is not punished, then it becomes elevated above the law, just like God is above the law. This then gives "transgression a likeness to God, for like as God is subject to no Law, so also it is with wickedness."³⁹⁸ This would be tantamount to sin challenging the omnipotence of God. If we postulate this further, it will mean that sin also becomes sovereign like God is sovereign.

³⁹³ Cf. Gisbert GRESHAKE, *Erlösung und Freiheit*, 328.

³⁹⁴ The negative response of Anselm received many criticisms that he was putting mercy at play against justice here. Cf. Georg PLASGER, *Die Notwendigkeit der Gerechtigkeit*, 111.

³⁹⁵ Cf. CDH I, XII.

³⁹⁶ Cf. Georg PLASGER, *Die Notwendigkeit der Gerechtigkeit*, 111.

³⁹⁷ Cf. Georg PLASGER, *Die Notwendigkeit der Gerechtigkeit*, 111.

³⁹⁸ CDH I, XII.

Thirdly, while still emphasising this same point further, Anselm says, “Therefore wickedness, if it be forgiven solely on account of mercy, is freer than righteousness.”³⁹⁹ The obvious consequences to follow as a result are that no one will care anymore to be righteous. This could lead to the break-up of law and order in society. If we postulate this further, it could even lead to the destruction of the world, for sinning may be taken as a mark of freedom. Freedom would be equated with lawlessness.⁴⁰⁰ Fourthly, Anselm says, the places left vacant in heaven by the fallen Angels have to be filled up by man. Hans Blumenberg links it to the mythical background that “after the fall of Lucifer and his followers, the number of angels foreseen, in God’s divine plan, to constitute His eternal choir of jubilation had to be brought again to the *status quo ante* [to their prior state], and this was supposed to occur through the promotion of men who had been tested in blamelessness.”⁴⁰¹ Therefore, a sinner who would be forgiven by God’s mercy alone - *sola misericordia* - could not take the place of the fallen angels and join the choir of the blameless Angels. This would set an unpleasant contrast with the holy angels and disrupt the heavenly harmony, which would be absurd.⁴⁰²

For the aforementioned four reasons, Anselm vehemently rejects the notion of God forgiving sins *sola misericordia*, believing it to be unjust for Him to do so. To preserve the beauty and order of the world, God cannot simply forgive.⁴⁰³ According to Kirschner’s interpretation, Anselm intended to emphasise that salvation through *sola misericordia* contradicts the dignity of human freedom.⁴⁰⁴ The autonomous free will of man must not be overlooked in the forgiveness process, for as Kirschner notes, there can be no salvation past freedom.⁴⁰⁵ As Greshake rightly pointed out, Anselm linked God’s mercy to justice, meaning that mercy must also be just. Since all four reasons presented are, in his judgment, lacking in justice, Anselm outrightly rejects any concept of God’s mercy that merely forgives without punishing sin. It is clear that Anselm is not opposed to God’s compassion or mercy, contrary to the interpretations of some critics.⁴⁰⁶ His rejection of *sola misericordia* is in favour of another form of mercy, one that also accounts for freedom and justice, which he continues to seek. Developing a theory

³⁹⁹ CDH I, XII.

⁴⁰⁰ Cf. Hansjürgen VERWEYEN, *Anselm von Canterbury*, 117.

⁴⁰¹ Hans BLUMENBERG, *Work on Myth* [trans. by Robert M. WALLACE], Massachusetts 1990, 248.

⁴⁰² CDH I, XIX.

⁴⁰³ Cf. Hans-Ulrich WIESE, *Die Lehre Anselm von Canterbury über den Tod Jesus in: „Cur Deus Homo“*, 154-155.

⁴⁰⁴ Cf. Martin KIRSCHNER, *Gott - größer als gedacht. Die Transformation der Vernunft aus der Begegnung mit Gott bei Anselm von Canterbury*, Freiburg 2013, 287.

⁴⁰⁵ Cf. Martin KIRSCHNER, *Gott – größer als gedacht*, 269. „Keine Erlösung an der Freiheit vorbei.“

⁴⁰⁶ Cf. Hans KESSLER, *Die theologische Bedeutung des Todes Jesu*, 158. Kessler accused Anselm of rejecting *sola misericordia* in order to bring forth the demands of a sacrifice to placate God’s wrath.

for this alternative type of mercy that is rationally acceptable becomes Anselm's primary concern, and such a theory will be presented at the very end of the book.

The rejection of *sola misericordia*, however, not only causes alarm but also raises a few questions that need to be clarified before we completely dispose of this theme and look at what Anselm proposes as an alternative. One question arises: How does Anselm defend the seeming contradiction that God calls upon us in the prayer of "*our Father*" to forgive those who trespass against us, yet He Himself does not and cannot forgive without punishing sin? Anselm justifies this apparent contradiction by saying that it is the right of God alone to take vengeance.⁴⁰⁷ Though God has this right, it does not necessarily mean that He uses it. Having ruled out forgiveness by *sola misericordia*, Anselm advocates for either punishment or satisfaction as a precondition for the forgiveness of sin.

3.5. God's reaction to sin -*Aut Poena aut Satisfactio*

Having rejected *sola misericordia*, Anselm adopts for the meantime the maxim of *aut poena aut satisfactio* as a solution to sin, a statement first coined and used by Tertullian before Augustine also made reference to it, as well as Lanfranc.⁴⁰⁸ Hoping says it was borrowed from Roman law before it was incorporated into the sacrament of penance.⁴⁰⁹ According to the principle of strict legal justice, the correct and logical course of action is either for one to be punished for sin or to offer satisfaction for it.

3.5.1. *Aut Poena* - Punishment

After ruling out the possibility of mercy alone (*sola misericordia*), Anselm addresses the question of how to rectify sin, specifically through punishment or satisfaction. This is necessary for justice to be served. He considers punishment and compensation side by side. In the name of justice, Anselm asserts that satisfaction must be rendered to God. Otherwise, remission will not occur, and punishment will follow. In his arguments, Anselm prioritises satisfaction over punishment. He underscores this point when he states, "either the honour abstracted shall be restored, or punishment shall follow."⁴¹⁰ This implies that punishment should only be considered as a last resort if the first option is unmet or unfulfilled.

⁴⁰⁷ Cf. Hans KESSLER, *Die theologische Bedeutung des Todes Jesu*, 158.

⁴⁰⁸ Cf. Hans KESSLER, *Die theologische Bedeutung des Todes Jesu*, 129.

⁴⁰⁹ Cf. Helmut HOPING, *Jesus aus Galiläa*, 285.

⁴¹⁰ CDH I, XIII.

Nevertheless, the crucial question remains: How does Anselm defend punishment? Would God truly take pleasure in punishing sinful humans? Does not this contradict the nature of a loving and merciful God? Does not punishment cast God in a sinister light, as Ratzinger had observed?⁴¹¹ Anselm argues from the perspective of justice, highlighting the grave consequences of sin that can follow if punishment is not inflicted. He argues that if God does not punish sin, then two negative impressions of Him are created, namely that “God were either unjust to Himself or were powerless... which is a shame to even imagine.”⁴¹² As earlier alluded to, this would mean that iniquity will seem to have the upper hand and will be sovereign. But Anselm firmly insists that sin cannot be sovereign; it cannot be identical to or equal to the dominion of God.⁴¹³ Anselm is arguing here from the background of defending the image of the omnipotence of God against the Jews, who accused the Christians of portraying a weak God. Being entitled to His honour, Anselm says, God must protect it or even reclaim it by compulsion if necessary. Here, Anselm magnifies God's power and authority, which he freely wields to justly demand that which belongs to Him. He highlights this in the following words: “For either man spontaneously of his own free will yields due submission to God (whether by not sinning, or by satisfying for his sin), or God subjects him unwillingly by compulsion, and thus declares Himself to be His Lord.”⁴¹⁴

Coming back to the theme of punishment, the question that arises is: What kind of punishment does Saint Anselm have in mind here? Is it a reformatory kind of punishment, or is it eternal damnation? Anselm's response tends towards the latter. This is evident in his words: “wherein it is to be noticed that as man by sin takes what belongs to God, so God in punishing takes away that which is man's own.”⁴¹⁵ Anselm understands punishment as a deprivation of some good. Thus, God does not punish by inflicting pain or anything of that sort but by depriving man of something to which he was or should have been entitled. The next question that arises is: What is it that belongs to man that God takes away as a means of punishment? As we have seen above, the purpose for which man was created is eternal blessedness. This blessedness is what Anselm is now alluding to when he states that God takes away what is man's own or what man aspires to when he dishonours God. This withdrawal of blessedness, or deprivation, reduces man to nothingness. Though Saint Anselm does not use the word ‘hell,’ this loss or

⁴¹¹ Cf. Joseph RATZINGER, *Introduction to Christianity*, 233.

⁴¹² CDH I, XIII.

⁴¹³ Cf. Georg PLASGER, *Die Notwendigkeit der Gerechtigkeit*, 112.

⁴¹⁴ CDH I, XIV.

⁴¹⁵ CDH I, XIV.

deprivation of blessedness is equivalent to final damnation in hell, also referred to by Greshake as eternal punishment.⁴¹⁶ Hell is nothing other than a deprivation of blessedness. However, final damnation does not follow man immediately after committing sin, not until all the options are exhausted. In other words, punishment only becomes an option if satisfaction does not work out. This brings us now to the subject of satisfaction.

3.5.2. *Aut Satisfactio*

What is satisfaction, according to Anselm? Who makes satisfaction and to whom? A small background would be necessary to understand satisfaction from Anselm's perspective. According to Anselm, only man ought to make or offer satisfaction. To make up for sin, man(kind) needs quite well to bring back or repay what he robbed from God. However, Anselm argues further that it is not enough to just repay or return to God the exact measure of what was taken away from Him, but that more needs to be paid for the injury that was caused by the sin. In other words, as observed by Rosato, "satisfaction requires performing a supererogatory act of sufficient goodness to pay the debt of sin."⁴¹⁷ He says: "When anyone repays what he took unjustly, he ought to give somewhat which could not have been required of him had he not taken that which was another's."⁴¹⁸ Anselm hereby suggests that an additional payment, a form of compensation, needs to be made to God. This compensation is what he calls satisfaction.⁴¹⁹

Furthermore, Anselm points out that "Each sinner ought to repay the honour of which he has robbed God: and this is the satisfaction which every sinner ought to make to God."⁴²⁰ Anselm draws a distinction here between a debt (of obedience) which mankind naturally owed to God, which does not amount to satisfaction, and the debt of sin, which he refers to as satisfaction. Therefore, satisfaction is always tied to the debt of sin. Here, satisfaction refers to both the repayment of what was taken away from God and additional compensation.

Satisfaction is proposed as the first solution for restoring blessedness. According to Anselm, not only does satisfaction make reparation to God's injured honour, but it also purifies the

⁴¹⁶ Cf. Gisbert GRESHAKE, *Erlösung und Freiheit. Zur Neuinterpretation der Erlösungslehre Anselm von Canterbury*, 326.

⁴¹⁷ Andrew ROSATO, *The interpretation of Anselm's teaching on Christ's satisfaction for Sin in the Franciscan Tradition from Alexander of Hales to Duns Scotus*, in: *Franciscan Studies* 71 (2013) 411-444, here: 414.

⁴¹⁸ CDH I, XI.

⁴¹⁹ Satisfaction was introduced into theology by Tertullian to refer to the practice of penance in order to placate God the law giver, especially for sins committed after baptism. See John MCINTYRE, *St. Anselm and his critics*, 1954, 83.

⁴²⁰ CDH I, XI.

person who makes it. Sin makes man impure, and satisfaction reverses this by purifying or washing away the guilty.

To emphasise this point further, Anselm moves briefly from the use of *sola ratione* method to the use of a parable or metaphor. Anselm uses the metaphor of a rich man who has a precious pearl, untouched by pollution, saying it cannot be placed in his treasury chamber containing his other precious possessions after being maliciously snatched and soiled by the devil unless it is first thoroughly washed. This washing is compared to the satisfaction which must be made before man can be admitted to paradise and enjoy bliss.⁴²¹ This metaphor, however, has its own limitations, as observed by Plasger in that the pearl is only externally affected.⁴²² It could confirm the suspicions that sin is external to man. The key point, which Anselm was driving home, was to explain that it is impossible to think of sin and beatitude together.⁴²³ The two are mutually exclusive. In CDH I, XIX, Anselm wants to concretise that a remission of sins has to take place, one that purifies mankind from its sins and makes communion with God possible. Anselm names this as satisfaction.⁴²⁴ Through the above metaphor of the contaminated pearl, Anselm laboured to explain and justify the necessity of satisfaction in the redemption equation of man to blessedness.

Through the above arguments, Anselm is confident and satisfied that he made a good case of rationally justifying and explaining the need for satisfaction. He now takes us a step further in advancing this theory of satisfaction by bringing in the question of proportionality. Following strict justice, and influenced seemingly by the feudal social context he lived in, Anselm argues that the Satisfaction offered must be proportional to the sin committed. He narrows his focus to two specific points, namely satisfaction to man on the one hand and satisfaction to God on the other hand. He further gives two criteria for determining the proportionality of the satisfaction to be offered: (i) for an offence against a fellow human being, (ii) for an offence against God.

i) *An offence committed against man*

Since the Benedictine monk began discussing the subject of satisfaction, he has never mentioned the satisfaction owed to a fellow human being. It has always been in relation to God.

⁴²¹ Cf. CDH I, XI.

⁴²² Cf. Georg PLASGER, *Die Notwendigkeit der Gerechtigkeit*, 105.

⁴²³ Cf. Georg PLASGER, *Die Notwendigkeit der Gerechtigkeit*, 105.

⁴²⁴ Cf. CDH I, XIX. *See also:* Georg PLASGER, *Die Notwendigkeit der Gerechtigkeit*, 115.

Here, he makes a single reference to satisfaction on the horizontal level before returning to the satisfaction to be given to God on the vertical level. In relation to an offence committed against a fellow human being, on the horizontal level, Anselm says that an equivalent or proportional satisfaction needs to be offered. To concretise and support the idea of proportionality, Anselm cites the Golden Rule as the basis for this rule of justice when he says: “Do to your fellow servant, that is one man to another, that which you would have another do to you; and ... he who will not give what he has, ought not to accept what he has not.”⁴²⁵ By this, Anselm means that if a person does not give another what is due to him, he should equally not receive what is due to him from others. This is a measure between people on a horizontal level. Its application is, however, limited, for man can repay to another man anything else done to him except vengeance. Anselm is quick to strongly oppose revenge among humans when he says: “Vengeance in no way can belong to you; for neither are you your own, nor is he who injured you, yours or his own; you are both servants of one God... if you revenge yourself on your fellow servant, you arrogantly assume over him a jurisdiction which only belongs to God and judge of all.”⁴²⁶

This prohibition of revenge by man against another man, both of whom are servants of the same God, could be linked to the *gloria Dei externa*, that is, the sin which disturbs the regular order of things in the world and disturbs its symmetry.⁴²⁷ Anselm argues that if everyone were permitted to take revenge, humanity could eliminate itself from the face of the earth. As a safeguard against such an occurrence, Anselm emphatically reserves vengeance solely for God, which can be regarded as a measure of preservation. In his prohibition of revenge, he firmly forbids violence and its spread.

ii) *An offence against God*

According to Anselm, the status of the injured person also determines the gravity of the sin committed against them. To put this idea into concrete terms, Anselm argues that a sin against God differs from a sin against a fellow human being because the two hold different statuses. Any sin against God, even if it seems very small, is exceedingly serious if committed against His will. For such an offence, one must not only repay what is owed to God for the sin but must

⁴²⁵ CDH I, XX.

⁴²⁶ Cf. CDH I, XX. This prohibition is similar to Satan’s claim of having jurisdiction over man, which Anselm sharply rejected.

⁴²⁷ Cf. CDH I, XV

also pay more.⁴²⁸ In contemporary language, one might say that first, one pays an admission of guilt fee or fine, and subsequently, one compensates for damages. This principle also applies to sins committed horizontally against fellow human beings. However, while one can make amends for a sin against another person, Anselm dismisses the idea that humans can ever render sufficient satisfaction to God. This is because there is absolutely nothing that mankind can offer God that does not already belong to Him.⁴²⁹ Thus, man has nothing to return to God in satisfaction. Anselm suggests that it is nearly impossible for humans to be reconciled with God after sinning, as they have nothing to offer Him in compensation. Is mankind then ultimately doomed forever after succumbing to sin? Does this imply that there is no way out for humankind?

Before we can consider the way out, it is essential to pay particular attention to the sin that has led man into this predicament. Until now, sin has been discussed in a general manner, but Anselm now seeks to examine the specific sin that has caused man to fall into this state. Identifying this sin is crucial to finding a solution for its reversal or correction. Therefore, the question is: What exactly is the sin that man has committed against God? Is there truly a way out of this abyss of sin?

3.5.3. Disobedience as the sin of man

Anselm delves into the very root and source of sin by naming, singling out, and identifying disobedience as the sin of man. According to Anselm, man particularly dishonours God when he, without being coerced, willingly allows himself to be persuaded by the will of the devil and against the will of God.⁴³⁰ Disobedience is the voluntary act of going against the will of God. Schönborn formulates sin, in other words, as a misuse of human freedom.⁴³¹ Anselm emphasises that man was not coerced, which renders him guilty. He makes it clear that persuasion or temptation is not equivalent to compulsion. Satan used persuasion to entice man but never forced him to sin. Anselm believes, therefore, that man could have resisted and defied Satan.

Thus, although Satan tempted man, man was never compelled by Satan. This is reminiscent of Anselm's earlier argument in *De libertate Arbitrii* that: "When the will is overcome, it is

⁴²⁸ Cf. CDH I, XXI.

⁴²⁹ Cf. CDH I, XXIII.

⁴³⁰ CDH I, XXII.

⁴³¹ Cf. Christoph SCHÖNBORN, *Gott sandte seinen Sohn*, 249.

overcome not by another power, but by its own.”⁴³² Anselm does not seem to place blame on Satan for man’s fall but rather on man’s free will. Man chose to disobey of his own volition, which ultimately led him into an inescapable situation. Man sinned out of his own free choice, which was indeed free, not compelled by any external agency.⁴³³ Therefore, responsibility must rest with man. According to Anselm, this sin of disobedience, being the very first sin or original sin of man,⁴³⁴ was regarded as a very grave sin and an affront to God. God harboured high hopes that man would honour Him by defeating the devil, who had sinned in heaven without being tempted by any external force. However, by consenting to the devil’s persuasions to sin, man failed to vindicate and honour God. Anselm considers this disobedience, which led to the vanquishing of man by the devil, not only as a scandal but also as an affront to God.⁴³⁵ Having thus sinned so gravely, is there any escape for man from this predicament?

3.5.4. Way out for man – vanquish the devil

In addressing the question of a way out for man, Anselm asserts that there is indeed a way out. This route involves vanquishing the devil, a task that must be accomplished by none other than man himself. The question that arises is: Can a human person truly defeat the devil? If so, how? Anselm insists that man should conquer the devil, although he does not yet clarify the means to achieve this. At this stage, it remains uncertain whether man alone can defeat the devil. Regarding the question of how, since disobedience is clearly identified as a sin that constitutes a scandal and an affront to God, resulting in the loss of bliss, strict justice demands that man rectify this through obedience, thereby reversing the situation. This, according to Anselm, is the remedy for disobedience. Saint Anselm thus argues that this satisfaction for sin must be paid by man, specifically man must “vanquish the devil by that very thing which he took from God by allowing the devil to conquer him... now by this other fact of man being victorious, the devil may lose, and God may regain His own.”⁴³⁶ What man had usurped or withheld from God is his obedience to God's will. Anselm’s insistence on man’s obligation to make satisfaction is based on his conviction that what man can willingly withhold, he can equally give if he only wills. It is a question of simply being willing. He contends that man possesses the willpower to resist the devil and thus to dishonour and defeat him. This strong belief of Anselm is reinforced by his earlier work - *De libertate Arbitrii*, where he states the following

⁴³² ANSELM OF CANTERBURY, *De Libertate Arbitrii*, V, 201.

⁴³³ Cf. ANSELM VON CANTERBURY, *De Libertate Arbitrii*, II, 194.

⁴³⁴ Cf. Hans-Ulrich WIESE, *Die Lehre Anselm von Canterbury über den Tod Jesu*, 155.

⁴³⁵ Cf. CDH I, XXII.

⁴³⁶ CDH I, XXIII.

about the will: “If it were to see ... both the eternal glory which it would immediately attain upon keeping the truth and the torments of Hell to which it would be delivered upon telling a lie, then, without doubt, it would readily be seen to have sufficient strength to keep the truth.”⁴³⁷ In essence, Anselm suggests that if man were granted the privilege of glimpsing what awaits him based on his present choices, no one would sin but would resist disobeying God, even to the slightest degree.

It was Anselm’s firm conviction that man possessed within himself the inner power of the will to resist the devil’s temptation and thus vanquish him, just as he possessed the inner ability to freely disobey God in the first place. Anselm argues that what man required was the impetus or a push to realise his potential. He thereby draws the battle line between man and the devil, rather than between God and the devil. By this, Anselm implies that God regains His honour when a human being offers his total free obedience to God to undo the sin of disobedience. This stands in contrast to the traditional understanding, which depicted salvation as a power struggle between God and the devil.⁴³⁸ Here, Anselm does not suggest that God fights the devil; instead, man must contend with and defeat the devil, thereby restoring lost honour. This demand is not unrealistic, for Anselm believed that man continues to possess free will even after sinning.⁴³⁹ Using this free will to resist the devil by disobeying him constitutes defeating the devil, and triumph over the devil is precisely what honours God.

In a bid to convince his audience that man possesses sufficient power to resist the devil, Anselm refrains from heaping blame on the devil for enticing humanity, instead holding man fully responsible for his choices and for succumbing to temptation. This is because human beings have the power to vanquish the devil.⁴⁴⁰ It lies within man’s willpower to choose against disobedience. Disobedience is ultimately a matter of choice made by man or a misuse of freedom⁴⁴¹, as Schönborn observes. Failing to vanquish the devil results in the loss of the blessedness intended for humanity. “Therefore, no man... can receive from God that which God intended to give him, unless he restores to God all which he took away from God, so that, as God lost by him, so by him should God recover what was lost.”⁴⁴² Here, man is placed at the centre stage as a key player and part of the solution to restoring God’s honour. Anselm has

⁴³⁷ ANSELM VON CANTERBURY, *De Libertate Arbitrii*, IX, 207.

⁴³⁸ Cf. CDH I, VIII.

⁴³⁹ Cf. ANSELM VON CANTERBURY, *De Libertate Arbitrii* III, 195.

⁴⁴⁰ Cf. CDH I, XXII.

⁴⁴¹ Cf. Christoph SCHÖNBORN, *Gott sandte seinen Sohn*, 249.

⁴⁴² CDH I, XXIII.

great faith in mankind's capabilities and firmly argues that humanity must vanquish the devil to fill the vacant places in heaven left by the fallen angels. What Anselm seeks to awaken is mankind's self-awareness and dignity. He asserts that man is key to his own salvation. Furthermore, Anselm emphasises that man must take responsibility, and he can only be held accountable because the choices originate from him. In other words, man can only enter into blessedness if he honours God as the angels who never fell do, by continuously obeying His will.

Anselm, however, bemoans that having been corrupted by sin, man's capability was weakened and, consequently, is no longer able to vanquish the devil, offer satisfaction to God, and restore His honour. Mankind cannot, on its own defeat the devil. Anselm underlined this in his earlier work *De Libertate*, saying: "But when free will deserts uprightness because of the difficulty of keeping it, then, assuredly, free will subsequently serves sin because of the impossibility of recovering uprightness through its own efforts."⁴⁴³ Notwithstanding this realisation, Anselm continues to insist that man cannot, however, be excused for the lack of ability to make satisfaction.⁴⁴⁴ Just like the standard rule in the legal practice states that ignorance is no defence, so also does Anselm say that lack of ability is no excuse for not paying satisfaction, especially since man put himself in this situation. He seems to say that this inability is self-inflicted and a self-made choice. He justifies this by saying that if God omits depriving the debtor of blessedness against the debtor's will, that would be more like imposing his forgiveness.⁴⁴⁵ Man's Will cannot be healed or reformed if forgiveness is imposed. Ernst Stephan, in commenting on the same, said if God forgives man without satisfaction or punishment, not just God's justice but man's free will would not be taken seriously.⁴⁴⁶ In other words, he is suggesting that the mercy of God has to be earned, not freely given or imposed. That would be tantamount to not respecting the free will of the recipient. Such a form of mercy, which forgives without punishment, is not appreciated and is unworthy of God. Gäde says it would be a cheap kind of mercy or grace.⁴⁴⁷ Anselm argues that forgiveness offered cheaply may not be appreciated or valued for its true worth and could easily be taken for granted. In light of these circumstances, how, then, can man be saved, considering that he cannot offer

⁴⁴³ ANSELM OF CANTERBURY, *De Libertate Arbitrii*, X., 208.

⁴⁴⁴ Cf. CDH I, XXIV.

⁴⁴⁵ Cf. CDH I, XXIV.

⁴⁴⁶ Ernst STEPHAN, *Anselm von Canterbury*, Münster 2011, 74.

⁴⁴⁷ Gerhard GÄDE, *Eine andere Barmherzigkeit*, 10.

satisfaction to God and that mercy cannot be imposed but must be earned? How can it be earned, given that man cannot provide satisfaction? Is mankind doomed forever?

It is at this point, towards the end of book one, when all hope seems to be lost, that Anselm asserts that there is only one way through which man can be saved, namely through Jesus Christ. Anselm says the salvation of man “must of necessity be through Christ.”⁴⁴⁸ At this point, the methodology of *remoto Christo* becomes obsolete because Christ is now re-introduced in the debate. The way out for man could not be found while using this method of *remoto Christo*. Christ is presented as the solution and the only way to the salvation of mankind. Let us now look closely at the words, “Salvation must of necessity be through Christ”. This sentence is rich with meaning and requires unpacking, i.e., the terms “necessity” and “Christ”. By necessity here, Anselm indicates that it is the only remaining option available; otherwise, no salvation would be feasible. An apologetic nuance lies hidden within this statement directed towards the Jews, Muslims, and pagans, who do not accept or believe in Christ as the redeemer. Anselm emphasises this point to challenge the non-Christian religions. The necessity of Christ is linked to the need to restore that precious rational creature of God on earth.

In book two, immediately following the introduction, Anselm affirms that: “God has made nothing more precious than a rational nature to rejoice in Him; it is very unlike Him to suffer that nature to perish utterly.”⁴⁴⁹ The term ‘*utterly perish*’ here indicates final damnation in hell. Therefore, Anselm’s firm hope is that God’s intention is not for humanity to be condemned to final damnation. In his prayer to the cross, where he dialogues with God, Anselm explicitly expresses this hopeful conviction, saying: “For why was I conceived and born, and given life if afterwards, I am to descend to hell? If that is to be my fate, it were better if I was not conceived.”⁴⁵⁰ Anselm vehemently argues against such a scenario. According to Anselm, God must conserve His creation, for “a being cannot at all remain what it was made except by His conserving.”⁴⁵¹ Conserving human nature is an obligation which God has laid on Himself. It

⁴⁴⁸ CDH I, XXV. It is at this point that the name Christ is re-introduced back into discussion. *Remoto Christo* ceases to apply from this point onwards.

⁴⁴⁹ CDH II, IV. We see close parallels here to Athanasius. Athanasius of Alexandria lays the groundwork for discussing the incarnation in the book on the incarnation (*de incarnatione*), where he said: “For it were not worthy of God’s goodness that the things he had made should waste away, because of the deceit practiced on man by the devil.” See: ST. ATHANASIUS, *De Incarnatione*, 6, 5.

⁴⁵⁰ *The Prayers and meditations of St Anselm with the Proslogion*, Translated and with an introduction by Sister Benedicta Ward, S.L.G., London 1973, 156. (4 prayer to the holy cross)

⁴⁵¹ ANSELM OF CANTERBURY, *De Casu Diaboli*, in: Complete Philosophical and Theological Treatises of Anselm of Canterbury, 214-261, here: 217.

is, therefore, necessary and imperative that God intervenes to save and preserve His most precious rational creature. It would be unworthy of God to allow precious humanity to perish without making any attempts to save it. Hence, the intervention to save His precious creation through Christ only as a necessity. This brings us to the next term: *Christ*. Why is salvation of necessity through Christ? What qualifies Christ to undertake such a mission? Or, in other words, what conditions must be met by Christ for the salvation of man to occur?

3.5.5. The conditions for the satisfaction of sin by the Christ

There are several conditions that must be fulfilled by the redeemer for the work of restoration to take place through him. Anselm thus proceeds to outline specific and indispensable qualities that Christ must possess to qualify for offering the necessary satisfaction for man's salvation. This should be understood against the backdrop of other beings whom Anselm has already disqualified from redeeming mankind. Anselm disqualified an angelic being or another sinless created human being from being the saviour of mankind due to their lack of descent from the stock of Adam and Eve.⁴⁵² For if a newly created man without sin, who is not connected to the stock of Adam, cannot save those who are from the stock of Adam, it follows that only one descended from Adam can rightly offer satisfaction. Anselm's argument aimed to assert that it was God's will and wise plan for man to be restored to his proper status by the action of a member of Adam's race.⁴⁵³ It is Adam's race that sinned; therefore, the same race must partake in the process of restoration and in making satisfaction. Connection to the Adamic nature, therefore, is, according to Anselm, the first indispensable precondition that the would-be saviour should possess.

3.5.5.1. He must be fully God and fully human

Taking as our point of departure the frequently repeated assertion of Anselm that man ought to make satisfaction but cannot, leaves us only with the option of a person "who can repay to God for the sin of man somewhat which is greater than all which is not God."⁴⁵⁴ But the only person who can do this must be greater than anything that is not God, that is, greater than the whole of creation, which means that he must be God himself.⁴⁵⁵ Combining these two conditions points us to a being that must be both God and man. Anselm thus arrives at the conclusion that:

⁴⁵² Cf. CDH II, VIII.

⁴⁵³ Cf. John MCINTYRE, *St. Anselm and his critics*, 125.

⁴⁵⁴ CDH II, VI.

⁴⁵⁵ John MCINTYRE, *St. Anselm and his critics*, 122.

“satisfaction, which God only can, and man only should make, it is needful that it should be made by one who is both God and man.”⁴⁵⁶ The possession of two natures, the Adamic human nature and the divine nature, thus becomes an indispensable qualification for the role of saviour. In this way, the equation is balanced. The two-nature theory, therefore, fits very well into the theology of redemption. This is the first and most important precondition for the person who is to offer satisfaction for sin.

Next, Anselm now labours to unpack and expand this necessary precondition of the God-man, who should offer satisfaction by further justifying how the two natures he possesses are to be rationally comprehended. Taking recourse to the definitions of the God-man (*Deus -Homo*) by the council of Chalcedon 451, Anselm reformulates the definitions of the council. In this reformulation, Anselm attempts to show how indispensable it is to understand the nature of the God-Man and its relationship to His soteriological role. He discusses firstly that in the person of Christ, the divine and human natures cannot be mutually interchanged, that is, God, by becoming man, does not cease to be God so that in the end, He exists only in one nature as man, nor does it imply that man becomes God so that ultimately there exists only (divine nature) God. If it were so, satisfaction would not happen, for though God can, He ought not to, whereas man ought to but cannot.⁴⁵⁷ Anselm thus underlines that it is not a swapping of natures and that Satisfaction would not be accomplished by and in one nature only. He hereby preserves the orthodox teaching against monophysitism by asserting that the God-man was not in one (divine) nature as though the other nature (human) dies out by being absorbed in the divine.

Next, Anselm argues against the formation of a third nature from the two natures, asserting that they cannot be intermingled to create a third nature that is neither God nor man.⁴⁵⁸ In other words, he argues that it must not be a hybrid nature. If it were a hybrid, then it would not qualify to offer satisfaction to God, for that hybrid being would neither be God nor man. He asserts that the two natures must remain perfectly preserved in the unity of one person who will provide the required satisfaction. Thus, Anselm states: “Since he cannot do it unless he be very God, nor ought, unless he be very man... a God-man should be found, no less needful is it that these two natures should meet in one person, as the body and the reasonable soul meet in one being.”⁴⁵⁹ Here, Anselm articulates and emphasises the hypostatic union from a soteriological

⁴⁵⁶ CDH II, VI.

⁴⁵⁷ Cf. CDH II, VII.

⁴⁵⁸ Cf. CDH II, VII.

⁴⁵⁹ CDH II, VII.

point of view, for only if this person is both perfect God and perfect man can he make satisfaction to God for man. Though Harnack criticises this two-nature theory as not assimilable in Anselm's satisfaction theory,⁴⁶⁰ McIntyre states the exact opposite, asserting: "It is essential to his whole scheme of salvation that the nature which has the power to make the satisfaction should be united through one person with the nature which bears the responsibility for the sin."⁴⁶¹ In his reformulation of the doctrine of the Council of Chalcedon, Anselm is confident that he has made a compelling case regarding the two natures of Christ.

Next, Anselm goes a step further to provide another (but less significant) detail concerning the logical possibilities of the conception of the God-man. He briefly discusses the four possible ways of becoming man to justify the way in which Christ became one. The first one is through man and woman, through normal procreation. This is the usual normal, ordinary way of procreation for the rest of mankind. The second way is by neither man nor woman, as was the case with the creation of Adam by God. The third way is by man without a woman, as was the case with the creation of Eve from Adam. The fourth possibility, which had never been explored before, i.e., not yet taken place before, but which completes the logical possibilities for the generation of human beings, is by a woman alone without man, that is, virginal birth. This is the option that Anselm says God preferred to use for the birth of Christ, to complete the four possibilities, and so, God became man by being born of a virgin.⁴⁶² That is the logical justification and a demonstration of the ability of God to accomplish the fourth way, i.e., virginal birth through the Blessed Virgin Mary.

In the next chapter, IX, the archbishop of Canterbury raised a question concerning which person of the trinity should become man. In a similar vein, utilising rational grounds, Anselm dismissed the possibility of either the Father or the Holy Spirit assuming human form, arguing that if either of the other two Persons were to become incarnate, it would result in the existence of two Sons within the Trinity: one eternally generated by the Father and one born of the virgin.⁴⁶³ To prevent the existence of this duplicity, Anselm argues that an individual who has been the Son from eternity is most appropriately suited to become Man. From a soteriological perspective, Anselm further strives to justify the incarnation of the second person of the Trinity when he states: "Man, for whom the supplication had to be made, and the devil, who was to be

⁴⁶⁰ Cf. Martin KIRSCHNER, *Gott – größer als gedacht*, 192. Kirschner has in a table form listed all the criticisms of Harnack on *Cur Deus homo*.

⁴⁶¹ John MCINTYRE, *St Anselm and his critics*, 128.

⁴⁶² Cf. CDH II, VIII.

⁴⁶³ Cf. CDH II, IX.

expelled, had both set up a false idea of God by their own will whereby they sinned... peculiarly against the person of the son, who is believed to be the true image of God.”⁴⁶⁴ Although the sins committed by the devil and man in wanting to be like God have offended the Trinity collectively, Saint Anselm says that the son has been especially injured. This is because He is the very likeness of God, while man and the devil put on a false likeness to God by their own will.⁴⁶⁵ Anselm here makes reference to the temptation of man in Genesis, where he was told by the snake that he would be like God if he ate of the fruit.⁴⁶⁶ Thus, both man and the devil were in some way directly challenging the Son or trying somehow to impersonate the Son, who is the very image of God. The son, being the more offended of the Trinity, is, according to Anselm, the best suited to become man and so bear man’s punishment or forgiveness for the fault.⁴⁶⁷ Being content that he has made a good case regarding the matter of the nature of Christ and how he became man and which person of the trinity was qualified or suited to become man, Anselm now brings us to the next precondition of Christ, namely being sinless.

3.5.5.2. *He must be without sin – Hebrews 4:15*

This precondition touches on the more interior aspect of Christ, namely, his free will, vis-à-vis, the ability to sin or not to sin. A question that may arise, however, is whether Christ possessed freedom since He was not able to sin. Anselm had addressed this question earlier in *De Libertate* where he said that the ability to sin and not to sin does not constitute freedom of choice, for if that were the case, then God and the good angels would be considered not to possess freedom of choice.⁴⁶⁸ By that assertion, as observed by Tsevreñi, Anselm critiqued “the commonly accepted definition of Augustinian origin whereby freedom entails the power both to sin and not to sin.”⁴⁶⁹ Anselm’s contention was that the traditional definition was narrow, for it applied to man but not to God and the good angels. Instead, as observed by Kane, Anselm was searching for a general definition of freedom that would apply not only to man but also to God and the angels.⁴⁷⁰ Having refuted the traditional definition, Anselm took on the task of proposing and providing a broader understanding and definition of freedom. Again, looking

⁴⁶⁴ CDH II, IX

⁴⁶⁵ Cf. CDH II, IX.

⁴⁶⁶ Since Anselm was also addressing non-believers, he avoided giving direct biblical quotes but drew the content from scripture. Thus, his words here point to Genesis 3:5 and Colossians 1:15 “He is the image of the unseen God”, and to 2 Cor 4:4 “Christ, who is the image of God”.

⁴⁶⁷ Cf. CDH II, IX.

⁴⁶⁸ Cf. ANSELM OF CANTERBURY, *De Libertate Arbitrii*, I, 192.

⁴⁶⁹ Magdalini TSEVRENI, *A Systematic reading of De Libertate Arbitrii. The ideas of freedom and will of saint Anselm*, in: Initial. A Review of Medieval Studies 2 (2014) 61-78, here: 69.

⁴⁷⁰ Cf. Stanley G. KANE, *Anselm’s Definition of Freedom*, in: Religious Studies 9 (1973) 297-306, here, 299.

back at his earlier work, *De Libertate*, Anselm states, “Freedom of choice is the ability to keep uprightness of will for the sake of this uprightness itself.”⁴⁷¹ From this understanding, it can be said that Christ possessed the freedom of choice, for He did preserve righteousness for righteousness or rectitude’s sake. He remained sinless not by necessity but by choice, hence qualifying to offer satisfaction.

In order for the God-man to make satisfaction for humanity, he needed to be without sin, since, if he were to have any sins, he would need to offer satisfaction for himself first and then for others (Hebrews 7:27). In other words, as formulated by Hans-Ulrich Wiese, a sinner cannot justify another sinner.⁴⁷² This would automatically disqualify Christ from offering satisfaction, for it will make Him no different from the Jewish high priest who once every year would offer a sin sacrifice for himself and then for others in the temple on the day of *Yom Kippur*. Given that Christ was fully divine and fully human, a man like us in all things but sin (Cf. Hebrew 4:15), the question that arises is as follows: Can He will to sin? Anselm takes us through a discussion regarding his capability to sin or not to sin.

He begins by making a distinction between sinning by necessity on the one hand and the power to will sin on the other hand. In other words, the capacity to sin on the one hand and the capacity to be willing to sin on the other hand. He implies by ‘necessity’ that there is no willpower employed, whereby one is always predisposed to do what is right. By willpower, however, one has the capacity and option to do what is not right but chooses what is right.⁴⁷³ Anselm here falls back on his thought in *De libertate arbitrii*, where he argued that no temptation forces anyone to sin unwillingly. One sins because he is willing. Speaking about a man in general, he says: “But a man cannot will against his will, because he cannot will if he is unwilling to will. For everyone who wills, wills that he will.”⁴⁷⁴ In other words, willingness is voluntary, with no compulsion.

Relating this to Christ’s will, when we take the sin of lying as an example, Anselm says: “We may say of Christ that He could lie if we imply ‘if he willed it,’ and since He could not lie against His will nor could will to lie, no less exact is it to say that He could not lie. Thus, He *both could, and could not, lie*.”⁴⁷⁵ That means, though he could will the act to lie, meaning

⁴⁷¹ ANSELM OF CANTERBURY, *De Libertate Arbitrii*, III, 197.

⁴⁷² Hans-Ulrich WIESE, *Die Lehre Anselms von Canterbury über den Tod Jesus in der Schrift „Cur Deus Homo“*, 156.

⁴⁷³ Cf. CDH II, X.

⁴⁷⁴ ANSELM OF CANTERBURY, *De Libertate Arbitrii* V, 199.

⁴⁷⁵ CDH II, X.

having the ability, he willed the act of not lying. Taking again into consideration His unity of natures, the human nature of Christ, just like that of the rest of mankind, possesses human will and could will to sin but did not. He, therefore, has righteousness by free will.⁴⁷⁶ On that account, Anselm affirms that: “that man who would also be God, would, since he would have every virtue he possessed from himself, be righteous not of necessity but of free will and by his own power, and would therefore be worthy of praise.”⁴⁷⁷ Therefore, it can be said of Christ that while He was able to sin, He could not will to sin.⁴⁷⁸ He was sinless and remained sinless by free choice and therefore qualifies to offer satisfaction and to receive praise for it. But being sinless, did he still have to die?

3.5.5.3. *Christ was not obliged to die*

Being a human being like us in all things but sin, can then the God-man be obliged to die? Without any doubt and hesitation, Anselm responds with an emphatic no! He states unambiguously that Christ was not obliged to die because “mortality belongs not to pure, but to corrupted, humanity.”⁴⁷⁹ Since Christ maintained His purity by free choice, He was not obliged to die. Using the same structure of argument he applied when analysing the possibility of whether Christ could sin, Anselm similarly asserts that the God-man could not die out of necessity. As it has already been established, necessity is incompatible with freedom.⁴⁸⁰ If something occurs out of necessity, it implies that there are no other available options or alternatives. In the case of Christ, however, He had the alternative of not dying, and rightly so, because He had no sin. As Christ had no sin, which alone attracts the penalty of death, He was consequently not obliged to die as any other human being is. Death could only occur to Him if He voluntarily (*sponte*) willed and permitted it. If He does not will to die, He would not; and if He wills to die, it would be death by free will. Considering that Jesus possesses two natures, divine and human, Anselm states of Him: “He ought to have something greater than anything which is not God, which He may offer to God of free will, and not as a debt owed to God.”⁴⁸¹ Anselm points out that this is precisely the satisfaction we have been seeking, which we now find in the God-man. That something which Christ possesses, which is higher than everything

⁴⁷⁶ Cf. CDH II, X

⁴⁷⁷ CDH II, X.

⁴⁷⁸ Cf. CDH II, XVII.

⁴⁷⁹ CDH II, XI.

⁴⁸⁰ Cf. Sandra VISSER, Thomas WILLIAMS, *Anselm's account of freedom*, in: *The Cambridge companion to Anselm*. Edited by Brian DAVIES and Brian LEFTOW, Cambridge 2004, 188.

⁴⁸¹ CDH II, XI.

which is not God, must be His life itself or something that is part of Him.⁴⁸² When offered to God, that greater something which Christ possesses qualifies as the required satisfaction. And that something which the God-man offered is nothing other than His life on the cross.

Before we examine the death of Christ on the cross, it's essential to briefly consider a synopsis of Jesus' public life and ministry. Anselm acknowledges that, prior to willingly dying on the cross, Christ first needed to share life with humanity; this includes His interactions, teachings, and the demonstration of the way of righteousness that leads to salvation, serving as an example for mankind. This, too, is a cardinal aspect that needs not be forgotten or overlooked. Anselm highlights this cardinal but mostly overlooked aspect in the following words:

For who can show forth how necessarily, how wisely, it was ordered that he who was to redeem man from the way of death and perdition, and to bring him back into the way of life and eternal glory, should abide among men, and while thus abiding, whilst *he taught them by word* how they ought to live, should present himself as *an example*? How indeed could he have held up himself as an example to weak mortals, showing that they should not depart from righteousness on account of either injuries, insults, sufferings, or death, unless they had known that the Lord himself felt all these?⁴⁸³

Anselm highlights in these few words that the life of Christ, His teachings, and His example of perseverance in obedience despite suffering and in righteousness were also integral to His salvific work.⁴⁸⁴ The theme of chapter XVIII(b) unambiguously states that “the life of Christ atoned to God for the sins of men.”⁴⁸⁵ In these few but largely overlooked words, Anselm endeavoured to explain the salvific value of Jesus' life, who not only preached about salvation but also presented Himself as a model to be emulated.⁴⁸⁶ His words matched His actions. Anselm also indicated that both the life and death of Christ, which served as an atonement for the sins of mankind, provided an example for mortals to imitate⁴⁸⁷ in their perseverance and righteousness while also signifying solidarity with the weak. He took part in our infirmities,

⁴⁸² Cf. CDH II, XI.

⁴⁸³ CDH II, XII.

⁴⁸⁴ Thomas Pröpper overlooked the teachings and works of Jesus when he said; “*for that he became man that he should die - “Denn dazu War er Mensch, daß er stürbe”*. (Thomas PRÖPPER, *Theologische Anthropologie*, 673.)

⁴⁸⁵ CDH II, XVIII(b).

⁴⁸⁶ This is contrary to what Hans Kessler said in his critique on staurocentricism that; the incarnation, as well as the life and works of Jesus, have no soteriological meaning or importance at all except to serve as a good example.(Cf. Hans KESSLER, *Die theologische Bedeutung des Todes Jesu*, 135).

⁴⁸⁷ Hammer in his critique acknowledged imitation but in a limited way when he said that : the only real relationship of the death of Christ to humanity is that of a good example of Christ. (Cf. Felix HAMMER, *Genuugtuung*, 145).

including death, but not in our wretchedness or ignorance.⁴⁸⁸ Following this brief but necessary diversion, Anselm shifts his focus to the death of the *Deus -Homo*.

3.6. The Death of the God-Man

It now remains for Saint Anselm to investigate the value and meaning that can be ascribed to the death of Jesus Christ. He attempts to explore whether this value can be quantified rationally. Given that every sin committed against God is infinite, Anselm states that, “It is even more evil to slay him who can save the world.”⁴⁸⁹ Here, Anselm clarifies that the God-man did not commit suicide, nor did the Father order the death of His Son; instead, it was carried out by mankind, and slaying Him constitutes an even greater evil. According to Anselm, those who killed the God-man committed an infinitely evil act. Thus, although all sins, according to Anselm, are considered infinite, this particular sin of slaying the God-man is even graver or ranks higher. This is because the value of His life is infinite. What we have here is an infinite sin of killing an infinite life.

Furthermore, to illustrate that any sin committed against the God-man is unlike any other sin, Anselm states: “No enormity or multitude of sins,... can for a moment be compared with a bodily injury inflicted upon that man.”⁴⁹⁰ If injuring him represents such a grave sin, how much greater is the sin of killing him? In his commentary on this matter, Cohen remarks, “The sin of slaying one whose life’s value is infinite is as high as an infinite multiplicity of universes.”⁴⁹¹ This highlights how profoundly serious a sin it was to kill the God-man. Nonetheless, on the other hand, Saint Anselm also observes that Jesus Christ, in addition to his life being of infinite value, was also replete with goodness, and his goodness was such that He could pay what is owed for the sins of the entire world. Therefore, Anselm concludes: “as the gift of his life surpasses all the sins of men, so will also the suffering and death.”⁴⁹² Using the *Proslogion* formulation, it can be said that the value of his life, as well as that of His death, is greater than can be conceived, surpassing the sins of the entire world. Being greater than the sins of the world, the infinite value of his life, suffering, and death satisfies the requirements for the atonement of human sins, as it is greater than anything that is not God.⁴⁹³ This same infinite

⁴⁸⁸ Cf. CDH II, XII-XIII

⁴⁸⁹ Cf. CDH II, XIV.

⁴⁹⁰ CDH II, XIV.

⁴⁹¹ Nicholas COHEN, *Patristic Analogues in Anselm of Canterbury’s Cur Deus Homo*. Boston College Electronic Thesis or Dissertation, 2011, 9. Persistent link: <https://hdl.handle.net/2345/1829>

⁴⁹² CDH II, XIV.

⁴⁹³ Cf. CDH II, XI.

value of his life now translates into the infinite value of his death. His infinite value never diminishes, and on top of that, the infinite value of his death is added. Consequently, this infinite value of the life and death of Christ possesses the power to fully atone for the sins of mankind.

Furthermore, Anselm makes a strong assertion that, being of infinite value, this death of the God-Man can also atone for the sins of those who ignorantly slew him. He emphasises the atoning power of Christ's death with the following words: "Those who ignorantly slew Christ did not fall into that infinite sin to which no other sins can be compared."⁴⁹⁴ This echoes the words of Jesus on the cross when he said, "Father, forgive them; they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:24). Killing Jesus undoubtedly constitutes sin, but this sin is absolved on the basis of the ignorance of his killers. Here, Anselm diminishes the magnitude of the sin of killing Jesus due to the ignorance exhibited by the perpetrators. He states that it becomes a venial sin if committed in ignorance, regardless of how grave the act may be.⁴⁹⁵ Anselm, therefore, softens his stance on sin more than he had previously before this point, where he regarded every sin against God as infinite. He seems to suggest that this position is an exception to the rule.

Setting aside the sin of killing Jesus, Anselm now turns to examine the positive aspect of that death, specifically its atoning power. He argues that the atoning power of Jesus's infinite satisfaction is not constrained by time and space. It can be extended retrospectively to those who lived before His incarnation, life, and death. It can also be applied prospectively to those born later, up to the time of the second coming of Christ. He boldly states this in the following words: "So great was the power of his death that the effect thereof is extended to those absent, whether as to place or time."⁴⁹⁶ He suggests that those who lived outside the Holy Land on this planet, as well as those who lived before Christ, including Adam and Eve, and those yet to be born, are all encompassed by His infinite satisfaction. Anselm asserts here the universal impact of Jesus' death on the world.

Through His life and death, Jesus accomplished an extraordinary feat by providing satisfaction to the Father for humanity's sins. Anselm contends that the Father, being the just God that He

⁴⁹⁴ CDH II, XV.

⁴⁹⁵ Cf. CDH II, XV. Anselm only highlights ignorance and makes no mention of free will by his killers to commit the crime hence calling it venial. However, despite who is killed, killing remains a grave matter. Infinite sin was also covered in His infinite satisfaction.

⁴⁹⁶ Cf. CDH II, XVI.

is, ought to demonstrate His appreciation by rewarding Jesus for His voluntary salvific acts. This entails granting Jesus a reward. Anselm refers to these rewards as the merits that Jesus deserves to receive from His Father.

3.7. The merits of the death of Jesus

Anselm understands and employs the term 'merit' to signify reward. He was firmly convinced that Jesus' self-giving to God for the satisfaction of humanity's sins should be recognised and rewarded in accordance with strict justice. A good deed or virtue merits a reward, just as a vice warrants punishment. Therefore, Anselm argues that Jesus, having freely offered up his life as a great offering to God, greater than can be conceived, ought to receive a reward for that from the Father. Focusing on the offering of Jesus, Anselm argues that it would be in vain for Jesus to give up His life if He would not be rewarded for it.⁴⁹⁷ However, a question may arise as to whether Jesus did all he did for a personal reward. One may say He did it for personal gain or selfish interests. That can only stand if he indeed received or even demanded those merits. To remove himself from a seemingly new problem he created for himself, Anselm draws our attention to the type of reward that he anticipates that the Father will or has to give to His Son. It must be such that He receives what He does not have, or remittance of a debt is granted if required, should he be in need of such. However, since Jesus Christ is God, He lacks nothing, for everything of the Father is also His. Thus, the question of any selfish motive is ruled out. He also does not need remittance for any debt because He never owed God any debt of sin and had always persevered in obedience and righteousness. He always preserved the blessedness that the human being in need of redemption had lost. Therefore, He chose instead to petition for the restoration of the blessedness which humanity had lost. This is because He is now at liberty to pass on this reward or merit, which he deserves but is not in need of, to whomsoever He wishes, and the Father cannot forbid Him.⁴⁹⁸ Similarly, he can pass on to whomever he wishes the remittance which should have been given to him but which, being sinless, he does not need. On the other hand, humanity, having fallen into debt and unable to come out of it on its own, was in dire need of remittance of sin. Thus, just like the son had the liberty out of His free will to give up his life, so too has He the freedom to pass on His merited merits freely to His preferred recipient, the human race.

⁴⁹⁷ Cf. CDH II, XIX.

⁴⁹⁸ Cf. CDH II, XIX.

When it comes to assigning this reward for the remittance of sin, the God-man has a bias towards mankind, the reason being that he shares the same Adamic nature with the human person. This reason further justifies the incarnation of God into a human being. Anselm thus argues that Jesus fittingly assigned the remittance of sins to those whose nature He shares, those whom He gave the example of persevering in obedience and dying righteously. He underlines this in the following words: “In vain... would they be imitators of Him if they are not sharers in His merits.”⁴⁹⁹ Thus, apart from sharing the same Adamic nature, becoming imitators of Christ is also one precondition for being recipients of the merits or rewards of Christ for the human person. This is clearly in contrast to another group of rational creatures, the fallen angels, who sinned without an impulse from another towards their fall and are not His imitators, nor does He share the same nature with them as He shares the same Adamic nature with mankind.⁵⁰⁰ Here, Anselm once again emphasizes the critical importance of imitation. He underscores that man ultimately becomes the favoured recipient of the reward. Contrary to the belief that Christ acted for his personal gain, Anselm illustrates that this was not the case, as Christ does not retain the reward for himself but instead grants it entirely to humanity. The death of Jesus is, therefore, a testament to selflessness. This favouritism of passing on the merit to the human being by Jesus and to which the Father has no objection is nothing else but an expression of His great love and mercy towards mankind, which is so just and so great than can be conceived.

3.8. The mercy of God - So great and so just than can be conceived

While we were looking at the death of Jesus, it was established that the infinite value of the life and death of Christ can or has the power to atone for the sins of mankind. It now remains to be rationally demonstrated how this was or is to be practically actualised. According to Anselm’s theory of redemption, that actualisation takes place when it translates into the just mercy of God for mankind. This, consequently, brings us to the theme of mercy, which is greater than we can conceive.⁵⁰¹ It is only towards the end of *Cur Deus Homo* that Anselm reveals this greater mercy of God. He first mentioned it in passing at the beginning of Book I, Chapter III,

⁴⁹⁹ CDH II, XI

⁵⁰⁰ Cf. CDH II, XXI.

⁵⁰¹ This expression is borrowed from the Proslogion where he first used it when describing God as “a being than which nothing greater can be conceived.” *Proslogion XV*.

while contemplating the incarnation, where he proclaimed the ineffable heights of God's mercy, who lowered Himself by becoming man, thereby demonstrating greater love and compassion.

Having outrightly rejected the option of *sola misericordia* in I, XII., Anselm had consistently been laying the groundwork for the presentation or unveiling of another form of mercy, which is neither free of charge, nor cheap, nor imposed, but is one that is justly earned and justly and freely given, meant to be freely received. How is it earned? It is earned by the merits of Christ, which He imparts to humanity, and by His satisfaction. Anselm argues that the fact that it is earned makes it greater than any mercy one can conceive of. That being the case, Saint Anselm now emphatically declares: “So, the mercy of God, which, while we were considering God’s justice and man’s sin, seemed to you to vanish away, we now find to be so great and so perfectly consonant with justice as that neither greater nor juster could be conceived of.”⁵⁰² The mercy of God had seemed to vanish when he rejected *sola misericordia* and insisted upon an infinite satisfaction that man could not offer. However, it now reappears here at the very end in a superior form. Even Anselm's language transforms into that of adoration and wonder, which evokes the form of the first meditation, the *Proslogion*, as Kirschner sometimes refers to it.⁵⁰³ Using the *Proslogion* form of expression, Anselm argues that this divine mercy, just like God Himself, is greater than can be conceived and, therefore, superior to any other form of mercy because it is more just than can be conceived. The two poles of justice and mercy have been harmoniously reconciled. It now becomes abundantly clear that for Anselm, God’s mercy must always be tied to justice. This contrasts with *sola misericordia*, which Anselm declared to be unjust, especially towards righteous human beings and angels. Instead, he favoured this mercy, which is just. What makes it more just is that satisfaction has been rendered for it. Anselm is here restating his earlier position from the *Proslogion*, where he remarked about God’s mercy or pity: “If it were not just for You to pity the wicked, You ought not to pity them; and if You ought not to pity them, it would be unjust for You to pity them.”⁵⁰⁴ In this theory of redemption presented in *Cur Deus Homo*, Anselm has laboured to demonstrate that God, whose other name is justice,⁵⁰⁵ ought now to pity the wicked in a just manner because satisfaction has been offered to that end. The Satisfaction of Christ meets the grounds on which God’s pity can now be dispensed justly. In *Cur Deus Homo*, Anselm has passionately made his case for demonstrating

⁵⁰² CDH II, XX.

⁵⁰³ Cf. Martin KIRSCHNER, *Gott – größer als gedacht*, 400.

⁵⁰⁴ ANSELM OF CANTERBURY, *Proslogion* IX.

⁵⁰⁵ Cf. Felix HAMMER, *Genugtuung und Heil*, 133.

how just the mercy of God is. The *sola misericordia*, which he previously vehemently rejected, serves as a good example of what is meant by forgiving unjustly.

Since all preconditions have been met, Anselm now finds it proper and fitting for God to justly pity the weak mortal man and grant him mercy. From the perspective of the Son, He also confers His merits upon mankind, which is just and acceptable according to strict justice. According to Saint Anselm, therefore, all the conditions outlined were perfectly fulfilled in the person of Christ and His sacrifice. God's mercy is thus more just and greater than any other mercy. In his conclusion, Anselm endeavours to account for both the justice and the mercy of God. The last word, however, is that of mercy. Hoping points out that Anselm's decisive last word is not one of satisfaction in the sense of judicial repayment, but rather the mercy or compassion (*alia misericordia*) of Christ, which is demonstrated in the death of Christ.⁵⁰⁶ However, in relation to the person to be restored, this last word of divine mercy does not imply automatic restoration, for although the God-man has rightly offered satisfaction, man must claim or accept it for his salvation to be realised. Otherwise, he would be labelled a passive recipient of salvation, a designation that Anselm endeavoured to eliminate.

To avoid creating the impression that mercy is imposed or that man's freedom is overlooked, Anselm argues that mankind must respond freely and positively to the invitation of the non-violent Father, who calls out to the sinner, saying: "Take my Only-Begotten Son and offer Him for thyself."⁵⁰⁷ Salvation is thus revealed as an invitation rather than an imposition from God the Father. An invitation, however, can be accepted or rejected. Man is therefore challenged to exercise his rights of free choice to either accept and offer Christ to the Father as a means of actively participating in his own redemption, or to turn the offer down. Saint Anselm similarly states that the same invitation is graciously extended by the Son Himself, who became man for the sake of mankind. He, too, extends the invitation to man, saying: "Take me and redeem yourself."⁵⁰⁸ Redemption is here directly connected to the invitation of the Father and the Son, and to the free, positive response of the human person endowed with free will. The Holy Spirit is not mentioned. Kirschner speculates and somehow associates the Holy Spirit with the gift

⁵⁰⁶ Cf. Helmut HOPING, *Jesus aus Galiläa*, 286-287.

⁵⁰⁷ CDH II, XX.

⁵⁰⁸ CDH II, XX.

which the Father and the Son offer to the sinner.⁵⁰⁹ The Father and the Son take the initiative, and man is invited to cooperate and respond in order to be redeemed.

The critique that Anselm portrays man as passive has been proven wrong here by this double invitation to man. The dual invitation from the Father and the Son urges man to actively participate in his own restoration by freely responding to the call of both the Father and the Son. Ansorge remarks on this dual offer, stating that God's work of redemption effectively empowers the sinner to become the subject of his own redemption through the free acceptance of that work. Redemption is not achieved merely by the outward bestowal of the merits of the God-man; rather, the sinful individual must willingly accept these merits. The grace of God allows the sinner to turn to God apart from his own strength.⁵¹⁰

3.9. Appropriation of the Mercy of God vis-à-vis *Meditatio Redemptionis Humanae*

Given the circumstances under which *Cur Deus homo* was composed, namely in haste, since he was exiled at the time of its composition, Anselm did not expand in detail on how mankind can concretely respond to the invitation of the father and the son. For example, when the Father extends His invitation to man, saying take my son and offer Him for thy self, a question that arises is: offer the son to who? The same can be said about the Son's invitation and offer to man, saying: *take me and redeem yourself*. The question is: take Him where? With these questions, what was apparently obvious turns out not to be so obvious. It still remains unclear in *Cur Deus Homo* how the event of redemption inwardly transforms the sinner and how salvation is subjectively appropriated on a personal level. According to the latest research however, this hanging conclusion finds its completion in the *Meditatio Redemptionis Humanae*, which speaks of an inner connection between Christ and the human being in need of redemption. He speaks of this inner connection as follows:

Behold, O Christian soul, this is the strength of your salvation, this is the basis of your freedom, this is the cost of your redemption. You were in bondage, but in this way you have been redeemed. You were a servant, but in this way set free. You are an exile who in this manner has been led back home, someone lost who has been found, someone dead who has been revived. O man, let your heart *feed* upon these thoughts, let it *chew* continually upon them, let it *suck* upon them and *swallow* them whenever your mouth *receives the flesh and blood of your redeemer*. In this life

⁵⁰⁹ Cf. Martin KIRSCHNER, *Gott – größer als gedacht*, 401. This view interestingly corresponds with the Council of Lyons II declaration that "The Holy Spirit proceeds eternally from the Father and the Son (DH 460). Similarities can be observed with the mercy proceeding from the Father and the Son.

⁵¹⁰ Cf. Dirk ANSORGE, *Gerechtigkeit und Barmherzigkeit Gottes. Die Dramatik von Vergebung und Versöhnung in bibeltheologischer, theologie -und- philosophiegeschichtlicher Perspektive*, Freiburg i. Br. 2009, 276.

make these thoughts your daily bread, your nourishment, your provision. For through these thoughts and only through them will you remain in Christ and Christ in you.⁵¹¹

In the *Meditatio Redemptionis Humanae*, which is a sequel to *Cur Deus Homo*, Anselm seizes the opportunity to bring the conclusion of *Cur Deus Homo* to a personal level by addressing the Christian individually and offering concrete steps that one must take. Contrary to Felix Hammer, who labelled his theory as extrinsic,⁵¹² Anselm specifically addresses the Christian soul directly, which is the innermost part of a human being. The soul is referenced sixteen times in this short treatise. His intention is made succinctly clear: the soul of the human person needs to be restored and healed by uniting itself with Christ. The verbs used in both writings evoke the metaphors and imagery of the sacramental language of the Eucharist. In *Cur Deus Homo*, he employs the verb ‘take’ in two instances: “Take my only begotten son” and “Take me and redeem thyself” (CDH II, XX), which become more comprehensible when considered in the context of the eucharistic celebration. Here, “take” is almost unmistakably understood as receiving and consuming, similar to the invitation in the words of consecration, “take and eat” or “take and drink.” This resonates clearly with terms found in *Meditatio Redemptionis Humanae*, such as “feed,” “chew,” “suck,” and “swallow.” “Feed” and “chew” pertain to the body of Christ, the Eucharist, while “suck” refers to the fluid element, that is, the blood of Christ, and “swallow” applies to both species of body and blood. These terms evoke the words of consecration at every Eucharistic celebration. The eucharistic connection becomes even more evident when he states: “...whenever your mouth receives the flesh and blood of your redeemer.”⁵¹³ During the eucharistic celebration, Christ offers himself to the Father as both priest and offering. The human person in need of redemption is invited to participate in the offering of Jesus to the Father (in response to the Father’s invitation) and to receive the Eucharistic gifts (in response to the Son’s invitation) that unite him intrinsically with his Redeemer rather than extrinsically. Anselm thus concretises how one can realise, on a personal level, not merely theoretically but practically, the redemption that God offers.⁵¹⁴ In the Eucharistic reception, mutual integration of the sinner into the body of Christ and Christ into

⁵¹¹ ANSELM OF CANTERBURY, *Meditatio Redemptionis Humanae*, in: Complete Philosophical and theological Treatises of Anselm of Canterbury, translated by Jasper Hopkins and Herbert Richardson, Minneapolis 2000, 419-426, here: 423.

⁵¹² Cf. Felix HAMMER, *Genugtuung und Heil*, 139.

⁵¹³ ANSELM OF CANTERBURY, *Meditatio Redemptionis Humanae*, 423.

⁵¹⁴ Cf. Jan-Heiner TÜCK, *Crux. Über die Anstößigkeit des Kreuzes*, Freiburg 2023, 176-177.

man takes place, leading to the configuration of man's mortal body into the resurrected body of Christ.⁵¹⁵

Subsequently, Anselm demonstrates that the act of redemption does not merely constitute an external acquittal of sins based on the Saviour's act of satisfaction. Rather, as noted by Tück, there is a personal appropriation of redemption, further elaborated by Anselm at the beginning of MRH, utilising metaphors of tasting spiritual food. Remembrance (*memoria*), contemplation (*meditatio*), and prayer (*oratio*), along with the reception of these transformed gifts, enable humanity to experience the salvific events of the Redeemer.⁵¹⁶ As Sandra Klinge rightly observes, in the *Meditatio Redemptionis Humanae*, Anselm summarises and reiterates the most important points of the *Cur Deus Homo*, now articulated in the spiritual form of prayer.⁵¹⁷ Thus, the *Meditatio Redemptionis Humanae* serves as a significant interpretative aid for understanding his soteriology.

The *Meditatio Redemptionis Humanae*, as rightly noted by Kirschner, thus serves as an essential hermeneutical key to unlocking Anselm's soteriology,⁵¹⁸ for in this brief script, Anselm reiterates the fundamental arguments of *Cur Deus Homo*. This clearly indicates that Anselm aimed to recapture his main points and provide a concise conclusion to his theory of redemption, which he could not fully articulate in CDH. While *Cur Deus Homo* primarily focuses on the justice and mercy of God, in *Meditatio Redemptionis Humanae*, the love and goodness of God emerge as the actual reason for the act of redemption. When one reads *Cur Deus Homo* alongside *Meditatio Redemptionis Humanae*, many of the criticisms aimed at his soteriological theory tend to lose their strength.

Summary

The father of scholasticism is a figure who maintained consistency in the positions and views he held on philosophical and theological matters, and his corpus of works complements one another. His later works build upon his earlier writings. This is also true of his main dogmatic work, the *Cur Deus Homo*. It is not a stand-alone piece but rather expands on his previous works, as evidenced by some overlapping themes with the *Proslogion*, the *Freiheitsschriften*,

⁵¹⁵ Cf. Martin KIRSCHNER, *Gott – größer als gedacht*, 402.

⁵¹⁶ Cf. ANSELM OF CANTERBURY, *Meditatio Redemptionis Humanae*, 419. See also: Jan Heiner-TÜCK, *Crux. Über die Anstößigkeit des Kreuzes*, 177.

⁵¹⁷ Cf. Sandra KLINGE, *Die Erlösungsvorstellung Anselms von Canterbury in seiner Meditatio Redemptionis Humanae und das Verhältnis zu Cur Deus homo*, in: *Archa Verbi* 8 (2011) 33-63, here, 58.

⁵¹⁸ Cf. Martin KIRSCHNER, *Gott-größer als gedacht*, 399-400.

and the *Meditatio Redemptionis Humanae*. In CDH, Anselm does not define the concept of God; he goes directly to defending God and His attributes, as the *Proslogion* had already addressed the definition. *De libertate Arbitrii* extensively discusses the theme of freedom of choice, just as *De Casu Diaboli* addresses freedom and the fall of the angels. What he does not fully deliberate upon or explore in CDH is examined in depth or in summary form in his earlier works. *Meditatio Redemptionis Humanae*, on the other hand, can be regarded not only as a summary but also as a continuation of CDH, or more precisely, as its second conclusion. In it, he does not merely repeat his theory of redemption concisely; he further expands on how a human person can receive and appropriate the salvation offered by God through prayer, particularly the sacramental reception of the Eucharist. In other words, he brings the conclusion arrived at in CDH down to a personal level in the *Meditatio Redemptionis Humanae* by offering practical steps for individuals to appropriate the redemption wrought by Jesus Christ.

In the dogmatic work *Cur Deus Homo*, Anselm illustrated God's infinite mercy towards His most precious creature on earth, the rational human being. He revolutionised the understanding of ransom by rejecting it totally and proposing what became a controversial theory of salvation. This theory of restoration marked a breakup with the traditional theory, which considered salvation to be a battle of power between God and the Devil. Instead, Anselm shifted the battle from God to man, making it a battle between man and the devil. The two rational creatures are considered equals,⁵¹⁹ and man was capable of vanquishing the devil by not obeying him (the devil). After the fall, however, mankind, though still considered as an equal to the (fallen) Angels and not a slave of Satan, is now weaker than before, hence being referred to as a weak mortal,⁵²⁰ and became susceptible to death because of sin. The human person has also become weak to defeat the devil on his or her own, and has found himself in a situation where he cannot save himself and therefore needs help. This help came through Jesus, who assumed the Adamic human nature, lived in solidarity with man, and made himself a model for man to follow. He exalted human nature without debasing his divine nature.⁵²¹

The assumption of human nature was carefully thought out, not from any person newly created but from the stork of Adam, the nature which bears responsibility for the sin.⁵²² The nature that was assumed was the one to be healed. Of the two kinds of rational creatures, that is, angels

⁵¹⁹ Cf. CDH I, V.

⁵²⁰ Cf. CDH II, XII.

⁵²¹ Cf. ANSELM OF CANTERBURY, *Meditatio Redemptionis Humanae*, 422.

⁵²² John MCINTYRE, *St. Anselm and his critics*, 128.

and human beings, Anselm argues that Jesus is more concerned and sympathetic with the fallen and weak mortal man than with the fallen angels. Anselm clearly expresses this favouritism in this sentence from *Meditatio Redemptionis Humanae*: “A man condemned with thieves saves men condemned with demons.”⁵²³ Though both man and the devil (demons) were condemned for a similar offence, that is, for disobedience, and could both undoubtedly be saved, it is only the human person who is singled out and saved by Christ. According to Saint Anselm, the demons or the fallen angels remain unredeemed. Though the sacrifice of Christ has infinite value, Anselm excludes them (fallen angels) from being covered by the redemptive act of Christ. This is because the latter sinned without being tempted by anyone, unlike mankind, who got tempted by the devil.⁵²⁴ In becoming man, not only did Christ become one with humanity but also empowered the sinful man with the divine grace to turn to God and so come out of his predicament⁵²⁵, whereas “the angel, without any preceding sin, merited the suffering of some evil.”⁵²⁶ Secondly, Christ did not take on the nature of the fallen Angels. The devil and other fallen angels cannot be saved unless by one who should be God and an angel.⁵²⁷ Michael Barnwell notes that “since the devil is not infinite, he would have nothing with which to repay his debt. For his debt to be paid, there would need to be a God-angel.”⁵²⁸

A loving plan that God devised for coming closer to humankind was by being one with it through incarnation. God, the son, became man and a descendant of Adam. He lived with mankind and became a model of perseverance in obedience and righteousness to be imitated. His two natures, hypostatically united in one person, perfectly qualified Him to offer satisfaction for man. One is a nature that can but ought not to, while the other is the nature that ought to but cannot. His life of total and free obedience to God, sinlessness, and innocent death was assigned an infinite value.

After honouring His Father through His life and death, the Father deemed it fit and necessary to reward Him (the Son). Having no need for recompense, however, the God-man passed the merit on as a gift to mankind, who is called upon to imitate Him. This preferential option for the poor, the fallen, and weak mortal man by God is nothing but an expression of His greater love and mercy. Anselm does not depict man as a spectator in his own salvation, but places

⁵²³ ANSELM OF CANTERBURY, *Meditatio Redemptionis Humanae*, 419.

⁵²⁴ Cf. CDH II, XXI.

⁵²⁵ Cf. Dirk ANSORGE, *Gerechtigkeit und Barmherzigkeit Gottes*, 276.

⁵²⁶ CDH II, XXI.

⁵²⁷ Cf. CDH II, XXI.

⁵²⁸ Michael BARNWELL, *Why can't the Devil get a second chance? A hidden contradiction in Anselm's account of the Devil's fall*, in: *The Saint Anselm Journal* 13.1 (2017) 39-56. Here: 44.

him at the centre stage as one who ought to fight the devil and defeat him to restore honour to God. Man is challenged to awaken, for, through the example of Christ, he can regain his willpower to submit to God, with the help of the merits and satisfaction of Christ, and attain blessedness. It is a theory that encourages man to actively participate in his own salvation.

Anselm's theory of restoration emphasises the infinite sin of humanity on the one hand and presents an infinite and corresponding satisfaction and mercy on the other. He deliberately over-emphasised sin in order to awaken in man a sense of horror and compunction at the recollection of sin and its magnitude and later to make man appreciate God's great mercy. For he who is forgiven less loves less, but he who is forgiven more loves more (Luke 7:47). Salvation is a free offer of God but requires man's free acceptance, for there is no salvation bypassing freedom.⁵²⁹

3.10. Intermediate reflection

It is abundantly clear that Anselm's theory is not flawless, as evidenced by the disputes surrounding its interpretations. However, it is not entirely exempt from criticism, despite what some may suggest when we analyse the challenging task Anselm set for himself in presenting the first systematic theory of redemption. From a hermeneutical perspective, the distinctiveness of the language he employs is a notable aspect. It is worth mentioning that many of the concepts Anselm uses are far from obvious today. Terms such as honour (*honor*), order (*ordo*), rectitude of will (*rectitudo voluntatis*), punishment (*poena*), and satisfaction (*satisfactio*) were plausible in the historical context of early medieval feudalism, yet today require explanation.⁵³⁰ With that said, we will now highlight and summarise the strengths and weaknesses of Anselm's theory, beginning with the rehabilitation of the ransom theory.

The foremost strength and most significant aspect of Anselm's theory of satisfaction is its ability to address and rectify the contentious traditional interpretation of the ransom theory and the devil's supposed rights over humanity. Even the most radical critics have refrained from disputing this emphatic assertion of Anselm, denying all rights of the devil over humankind. The ransom theory imagined that the devil possesses the right to torment transgressors. Through a presumed social contract, God is said to have granted him the role of tormentor. Sinners can only be freed from the devil's domain because he has unlawfully overstepped his

⁵²⁹ Cf. Martin KIRSCHNER, *Gott – größer als gedacht*, 269.

⁵³⁰ Cf. Jan Heiner-TÜCK, *Crux. Über die Anstößigkeit des Kreuzes*, 177.

bounds by assaulting an innocent person, Christ. Because of this transgression, he must release the sinners. In his doctrine of redemption, Anselm replaces this narrative with the concept of satisfaction, which the God-man voluntarily offers to God, rather than to Satan (CDH I, 6-7). This represents a logical shift and an appropriate course of action to provide restitution to the person whom one has offended or wronged. Since Satan was not the one wronged by man, Anselm saw no justifiable reason for a ransom to be offered to him. God was the one offended, and therefore it was fitting that man should offer satisfaction to God.

Besides, the criticism that the theory of satisfaction promotes the idea of a God who is in need of retribution does not apply to Anselm but to a caricature or the images of God portrayed, especially by the liberal interpreters who misinterpreted Him and based their later criticism on the caricature they created and perpetuate.⁵³¹ This led, for instance, to the transformation of *satisfactio* into *satispassio*.⁵³² Satisfaction was reduced to the passion, implying that God's wrath could only be appeased by a bloody sacrifice of the son. They speak of the father's placation through the son's sacrifice. On the other hand, Anselm traces the motive of the incarnation and the death on the cross from the agreement of the Trinity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. According to this understanding, the son is not the passive agent of a cruel Father who delights in the son's suffering; instead, the son voluntarily took upon himself the act of redemption associated with the incarnation.⁵³³ As highlighted by Tück, the word Voluntarily "*sponte*", becomes the keyword of the Anselmian doctrine of redemption. It is the leitmotif of the dramatic action.⁵³⁴ It absolves the father from carrying on the image of being a cruel God.

Another of Anselm's strengths lies in his effort to inculturate the belief in salvation and redemption within the framework of Germanic legal thought, which was underpinned by the mutual obligation of loyalty between the feudal lord and the vassal. Just as the vassal, by breaking the law, undermines his lord's honour and disrupts the system's social harmony, sin represents a violation of the order of freedom between the Creator and the creature, which cannot simply remain inordinate. From a governance perspective, the punishment of sin restores order and prevents further disorder; however, from a soteriological standpoint, it signifies definitive condemnation to hell. That, however, could not be God's intention in

⁵³¹ Cf. Stephen R. HOLMES, *The Upholding of Beauty. A Reading of Anselm's Cur Deus Homo*, in: Scottish Journal of Theology 54.2 (2011), 189-203, here: 190.

⁵³² Cf. Gisbert GRESHAKE, *Erlösung und Freiheit*, 101.

⁵³³ Cf. Jan-Heiner TÜCK, *Crux. Über die Anstößigkeit des Kreuzes*, 179.

⁵³⁴ Cf. Jan-Heiner TÜCK, *Crux. Über die Anstößigkeit des Kreuzes*, 179.

Anselm's theory. God cannot passively observe His creation descending into ruin without intervening to save it. Anselm thus distances God from being a God who rejoices in condemning (punishing to hell) for it does not restore His honour, which cannot be diminished or injured in the first place. God's honour remains immutable.⁵³⁵ He cannot be dishonoured or injured except the external order. Anselm sets the records straight by emphasising that it is man that, in reality, injures the human honour to be God's partner, and man, therefore, is the one standing in need of satisfaction, not God.⁵³⁶

Fourthly, against the common tendency for people to shift their responsibility and blame the devil for their wrongdoing, Anselm has sought to move away from this blame game and encourage individuals to take responsibility both for the fall and, equally, for their own salvation. Anselm emphasises the importance of free choice and of taking full responsibility for one's own sin (not attributing it to the devil). He highlights the necessity for individuals to be accountable for their own restoration and emancipation.⁵³⁷ This is because man still possesses free will even after the fall. These points remain relevant even in contemporary times.

Having highlighted some of the strengths of Anselm's theory, which we do not claim to be exhaustive, we now want to highlight his weaknesses. The term or concept of satisfaction, in particular, the application of the concept of sacrifice, is always used in reference to the death of Christ. The fact that this sacrifice is offered to the Father evokes images of a wrathful God, a cannibal in heaven, a bloodthirsty God who is obsessed with his honour, a merciless creditor and an offended private man. This picture emerges when one chooses to look at God solely from the perspective of justice prevailing over mercy. Although Anselm endeavoured to show another point of view from the son's perspective, that Jesus voluntarily gave Himself up of His own free will and not under coercion to die under Pontius Pilate, the demands of justice and the legal language he used in packaging his concept overshadowed the core content of mercy. There is a need to narrate Anselm's theory of soteriology from the freedom perspective of the God-man. This can be counterbalanced by amplifying the view from the son's perspective and freedom's perspective, as the mimetic theory and dramatic theology attempt to do.

Secondly, under the theme of *aut poena*, punishment is mentioned as a consequence of sin. However, only one punishment is clearly mentioned or implied by Anselm, namely the loss of

⁵³⁵ Cf. CDH I XV.

⁵³⁶ Cf. Georg PLASGER, *Die Notwendigkeit der Gerechtigkeit*, 114.

⁵³⁷ Cf. Gisbert GRESHAKE, *Gottes Heil-Glück des Menschen*, 100-101.

blessedness or eternal damnation. The idea of punishment, however, has attracted much negative criticism to the Father, who is accused of being obsessed with His honour and of being cruel for demanding the death of His son. Critics put the blame on God, who they say condemned the son to death. Emphasis on punishment seems to overshadow the mercy of God, which Anselm presented at the end, and even overrides the concept of punishment. There is a need to counterbalance the blaming of God for eternal damnation by magnifying the dramatic response and choices of man and responsibility in his own salvation story.

Thirdly, Anselm somehow contradicts himself when he states in one place that man cannot save himself, and in another, he argues that man must save himself because he still possesses the ability to defeat the devil by disobeying him, thereby honouring God and liberating himself. This emphasis on man saving himself risks being misinterpreted, as it is only separated by a thin line from the heresy of Pelagianism. One needs to tread carefully on this line. However, this threat would not arise if one employs the language of dramatic theology, which focuses on the freedom of choice and describes man as a co-agent of his salvation, who can be saved only through his cooperation with God, the co-actor in this drama of salvation on the same stage.

The other limitation is the omission of the Holy Spirit in Anselm's redemption theory. It is noteworthy that the Holy Spirit is mentioned at the beginning of the plan for mankind's restoration as a project of the whole Trinity. However, in between and at the end, the role of the Holy Spirit is completely absent. Only the Father and the Son appear to present the offer of divine mercy to humanity, inviting mankind to accept Jesus for man's own redemption. The Holy Spirit seems to have no systematic role or function.⁵³⁸ This omission of the Holy Spirit at the conclusion renders his theory incomplete and somewhat hanging. The resurrection and Pentecost, if considered, could have highlighted the Holy Spirit's role in the history of mankind's salvation and also vindicated the death of Jesus, thereby protecting the image of the Father from unjust criticisms that have been directed at Him.

Last but not least, while Anselm acknowledges both the life of Jesus and His public ministry as having salvific significance, the space dedicated to that section of life in *Cur Deus Homo* renders them nearly insignificant within the entire narrative of the salvation event.

Considering the strengths and weaknesses noted above, which we do not claim to be exhaustive, it is evident that Anselm's theory of redemption still requires further strengthening

⁵³⁸ Cf. Raymund SCHWAGER, *Der wunderbare Tausch*, 308.

and attention to its weaknesses. We therefore propose to employ the mimesis theory to re-examine concepts such as satisfaction, sacrifice, offering, and sin in the new context of this theory. Our objective is to utilise the mimesis theory as it emphasises the free will of Jesus and does not subject the Father to the harsh criticisms often associated with the satisfaction theory. Additionally, it mitigates the dangers of Pelagianism by highlighting that man's role in redemption is not solely based on his own efforts but rather in collaboration with God in his redemption narrative. It positions man as a key participant and co-actor in his redemption. The concepts of sacrifice or offering should not be replaced but interpreted in a new light to safeguard the image of the Father from the current critiques to which He has been subjected. Unlike the satisfaction theory of Anselm, where critics unleash various attacks against God the Father due to an insistence on honour, the mimesis theory does not expose the image of the Father to such criticism, as He is consistently presented as being on the side of the victims. This approach dissociates God the Father from violence, for violence is attributed to the mimetic contagion associated with Satan, while God is revealed to be radically non-violent. Interestingly, like in Anselm's restoration theory, the mimesis theory also features the same characters or *dramatis personae* of God, the devil, and man.

PART II

RENÉ GIRARD AND THE MIMESIS THEORY

Chapter Four

4.0. Mimesis

In this second part of our work, we wish to reinterpret Anselm's soteriological theory through the lens of Raymund Schwager's dramatic theology. Our goal is to translate Anselm's twelfth-century concepts, which are now less clear, into modern language that is easily understandable. A thorough discussion of Raymund Schwager's dramatic theology would not be complete without referencing René Girard's ground-breaking mimesis theory, which serves as its foundation. At the core of his dramatic theology is the mimesis theory, which, while applicable to various disciplines, dedicates a significant portion of its writing to the Bible and Christianity. In particular, in his book *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning*, Girard identifies himself as an apologist for Christianity.⁵³⁹ In the mimesis theory, Girard seeks to demonstrate that the Bible clearly reveals the mystery of mimetic violence for what it is. This stands in contrast to what occurred in archaic societies and may still be occurring in certain segments of society today. After uncovering the mimetic desire and the resulting violence through the lens of the Bible, Girard proposes a method for overcoming or counteracting it in order to prevent its escalation into violence.

Since imitation is natural to man, as part of the learning process as asserted by Aristotle,⁵⁴⁰ Girard's theory identifies Jesus as a role model to imitate in order to counteract the violent contagion of mimetic violence and ultimately to bring it to an end. It seeks to propose a replacement of the violent mimesis model, traceable to Satan, with the non-violent model embodied in Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, Jesus became a victim of the same mimetic violence; however, instead of escalating the violence, He fully unveiled it for what it was during His passion and death on the cross. The passion and death of Jesus Christ, therefore, occupy a central role in unveiling the mimesis or scapegoating mechanism for what it is. The analysis of the events surrounding his passion is thus central in Girard's treatment of the subject. To answer

⁵³⁹ Cf. René GIRARD, *I see Satan fall like lightening*, New York 2001, 3.

⁵⁴⁰ George WHALLEY, et al.(eds.), *Aristotle's Poetics*, Montreal 1997, 57.

the question of what mimesis is and how it came to be, and before attempting to resolve it, it is necessary to turn briefly to the theory's founder, René Girard.

4.1. Who is René Girard? Notes on his biography

According to Wolfgang Palaver, the famous and widely known concept of mimesis in academic circles today was founded by the French anthropologist René Girard.⁵⁴¹ He, therefore, earned for himself the title of “*Vater der Mimetischen Theorie*”,⁵⁴² as Niewiadomski referred to him. Since its inception, the mimesis theory has attracted a great deal of interest not only from theology but also from various other academic fields, including philosophy, politics, anthropology, psychology, and sociology. Our interest in this paper will be to draw insights from it that are of theological relevance, particularly concerning the controversial soteriological theory developed by Saint Anselm. Before delving deeper into Girard's theory of mimesis, it is essential first to establish the biographical background of the Father of mimetic theory, his discovery of the theory of mimesis, and its distinctive features. Later, we will explore the reception of his mimetic theory in theology, especially by Raymund Schwager in his dramatic theology. Subsequently, we will attempt a reinterpretation of Anselm in the context of the dramatic theology of Raymund Schwager. Now, let us examine who Girard is.

René Girard was neither a theologian nor an exegete but rather an anthropologist, historian, ethnologist, literary critic, philosopher, and professor of French in the United States.⁵⁴³ Born on Christmas Day in 1923 in Avignon, in the south of France,⁵⁴⁴ he obtained his baccalaureate in 1941 in Avignon. From 1943 to 1947, he pursued a doctorate in medieval history in Avignon. Between 1947 and 1950, he earned another doctorate in contemporary history from Indiana University, USA, where he also taught French during the same period. However, the university dismissed him for failing to publish, a consequence of the “publish or perish”⁵⁴⁵ policy prevalent in American universities. He then taught French at Duke University for a year before moving to Bryn Mawr College from 1953 to 1957. Subsequently, he spent eleven years as an

⁵⁴¹ Wolfgang PALAVER, *René Girard's mimetic theory*, [transl. by Gabriel Borrud], Michigan 2013, 3.

⁵⁴² Jozef NIEWIADOMSKI, *Figurationen mimetischer Rivalität in der Literatur als Anstoß für die Theologie. Assoziationen im Anschluss an das Werk eines Literaturwissenschaftlers, eines Theologen und eines Schriftstellers*, in : Wolfgang Braungart et.al. (Hg.), *Literatur / Religion, Bilanz und Perspektiven eines interdisziplinären Forschungsgebietes*, Bielefeld 2018, 198.

⁵⁴³ Cf. Raymund SCHWAGER, *Must there be scapegoats? Violence and Redemption in the Bible*, [transl. by Maria Assad], New York 1987, xii.

⁵⁴⁴ Michael HARDIN, (ed.), *Reading the Bible with René Girard. Conversations with Steven E. Berry*, Lancaster PA 2015, 22.

⁵⁴⁵ Michael HARDIN, (ed.), *Reading the Bible with René Girard*, 24.

associate professor and later professor of French at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore from 1957 to 1968. He then left Johns Hopkins for eight years, during which he served as a Professor of Arts and Letters at the State University of New York from 1968 to 1976. Girard returned to Johns Hopkins as a professor of French and Humanities from 1976 to 1980. His longest and most recent teaching position was at Stanford University, where he held the role of Professor of French and Civilization from 1980 until his retirement in 1995.⁵⁴⁶

Throughout his teaching career, from 1947 to 1995, particularly as a professor of French language and literature, Girard deviated from the usual standard practice of looking for singularities in literary works. Instead, he was more inclined to identify similarities across all novels, irrespective of their genres, whether romantic or Greek tragedy and mythology. He believed that his pursuit of similarities was not misguided, as novelists clearly examined the same social context, critiqued similar issues, and, above all, addressed love affairs. His literary approach, focusing on the search for similarities rather than singularities, proved fruitful, ultimately guiding him to the discovery of mimetic desire.⁵⁴⁷ He articulated this discovery in the following words, as noted by Palaver: “It all began for me in 1959. I felt that there was a single whole there that I had penetrated little by little. It was there in its entirety from the beginning, all parts together in one.”⁵⁴⁸

According to Girard, this mimetic behaviour in human beings has existed since the foundation of the world. However, it was not known and was not given a name, and therefore, little or no attention was paid to it. He referred to it as things that have been hidden since the foundation of the world. He even wrote a book with the exact wording.⁵⁴⁹ Mimetic desire must be as old as mankind itself. However, as a defined theory, it can be said that the mimesis theory, as we know it today, was born in 1959 when he was teaching at Hopkins University. It was already present in the literature and myths of different cultures, traditions, and civilisations but remained hidden and undiscovered. Although Girard primarily used French literature for his teaching materials, he was not limited to them; he also utilised novels from the Romantic period. Girard observed that certain tendencies were similar in all these works, which he termed mimetic. He was also greatly influenced by his studies of the works of the Russian author

⁵⁴⁶ Cf. René GIRARD et. al. *René Girard and Raymund Schwager. Correspondence 1974-1991*, [Translated by Chris Fleming], New York 2016, 10-11.

⁵⁴⁷ Cf. Michael HARDIN (ed.), *Reading the Bible with René Girard. Conversations with Steven E. Berry*, Lancaster PA 2015, 27.

⁵⁴⁸ Wolfgang PALAVER, *René Girard's Mimetic Theory*, viii.

⁵⁴⁹ René GIRARD, *Things Hidden since the foundation of the world*, London 2017.

Dostoyevsky and others.⁵⁵⁰ Other authors whose novelistic creations he systematically analysed included Cervantes, Flaubert, Stendhal, and Proust.⁵⁵¹

Palaver notes that in analysing these literary works, Girard argues that their authors demonstrate in their novels that “human beings base their desires on the desires of others, contradicting the romantic lie of the autonomy of mankind.”⁵⁵² Here, Girard indirectly critiques the concept of human autonomy, contending instead that individuals are dependent on the desires of others, which shape their own desires. In other words, as Tück succinctly noted, a person’s desire is initially directionless; it wanders aimlessly. Only when one registers what someone else possesses does he yearn to have it for himself.⁵⁵³ Girard underlines the dependence of desire on the desires of others. He notes that the novels of the Russian writer Dostoyevsky, in particular, consciously or unconsciously, almost always present human passions in the form of triangular relationships: “the desiring hero, the model who is simultaneously a rival, and the person desired.”⁵⁵⁴ Despite the fact that the literature books were works of fiction and mythology, they contained and portrayed some true elements that depicted the true nature of human behaviour. They gave Girard insights into the structure of mimetic human desire, which he earnestly pursued. Girard called this behaviour of humans simply as *mimesis* or the *mimetic triangle*.

4.2. Mimesis triangle

In light of Girard’s discovery of mimesis and his firm conviction that what people imitate from others is desire, we now focus more closely on the triangular pattern of mimesis. Girard described this human behaviour as a mimesis triangle because it involves three objects or players: the object of desire, the first admirer who also serves as a model, and the second admirer, who imitates the first admirer’s desire. The object of desire is neutral in itself. Girard argues that it becomes desirable through the desire expressed by the first admirer. Its desirability hinges on the first admirer. The one who first desires it conveys this desire to others, who subsequently imitate the first admirer’s desire to wish for what he desires. However, if there is only one person or object to desire, competition and rivalry are bound to arise between the model or medium of the desire and the imitator. According to Girard, the medium tends to

⁵⁵⁰ Raymund SCHWAGER, S.J., *Must there be Scapegoats?* 9.

⁵⁵¹ Wolfgang PALAVER, *René Girard's Mimetic Theory*, 8.

⁵⁵² Wolfgang PALAVER, *René Girard's Mimetic Theory*, 8.

⁵⁵³ Cf. Jan-Heiner TÜCK, *Crux. Über die Anstößigkeit des Kreuzes*, 98.

⁵⁵⁴ Cf. Raymund SCHWAGER, S.J., *Must there be Scapegoats?* 9.

become an obstacle or is viewed as an obstacle by the second admirer. To illustrate this point, let us consider the case of two men and one woman. If the first man desires a woman, the second man will imitate the desire of the first man to desire that particular woman. The imitator makes the desire of the model his desire as well. The desire of the model mirrors that of the imitator and vice versa. Since both now desire the same woman, and she can only belong to one man, competition and rivalry arise between the two men. If left unchecked, this can lead to violence between the model and the imitator. Sometimes, but not always, this violence can even lead to murder. It could lead to what are now classified as crimes of passion. Menke remarks that, for Girard, a temptation to imitate and compare oneself with others resides within every individual. This comparison gives rise to rivalry; from rivalry emerges aggression, from aggression stems violence, and from violence destruction.⁵⁵⁵ However, this occurs on an individual level. A similar phenomenon also manifests at the community or societal level. There are instances, particularly in archaic societies, of collective violence and the lynching of an individual who is perceived as a scandal or an obstacle. In such cases, the single victim of collective violence and lynching is referred to as a scapegoat. And the mechanism becomes known as the single-victim mechanism or a scapegoat mechanism. Wandinger sums up the scapegoat mechanism as “a shifting of the blame and unloading of the violence onto a single, innocent member of the community.”⁵⁵⁶ Such a mechanism can be observed in most mythological texts.

4.3. Mimesis in mythological texts

With his newly discovered theory, Girard became interested in analysing various texts of violence through the lens of mimesis theory, including Greek mythologies and Sophocles’ account of the myth of Oedipus in *Oedipus Rex*.⁵⁵⁷ He also identified other texts of violence in Thucydides, Lucretius, Boccaccio, Shakespeare, Defoe, Thomas Mann, and Antonin Artaud, among many others.⁵⁵⁸

⁵⁵⁵ Cf. Karl-Heinz MENKE, *Jesus ist Gott der Sohn. Denkformen und Brennpunkte der Christologie*, Regensburg 2012, 134.

⁵⁵⁶ Nikolaus WANDINGER, *Raymund Schwager, S.J. Dramatic Theology*, in: Lonergan Workshop 19 (2006) 325-346. Here: 327.

⁵⁵⁷ René GIRARD, *The Scapegoat*, [transl. by Yvonne Freccero], Baltimore, Maryland 1986, 25.

⁵⁵⁸ René GIRARD, *The Scapegoat*, 13.

In Sophocles' account of the myth of Oedipus in the play *Oedipus Rex*, which Aristotle considered the perfect tragedy,⁵⁵⁹ Oedipus is said to have committed parricide by killing his father and subsequently marrying his mother, which constitutes incest.⁵⁶⁰ This narrative has even given rise to a well-known concept in psychoanalytic circles, as adopted by Freud, known as the *Oedipus complex*.⁵⁶¹ The scene opens with a crowd gathered around the altar, offering their supplication to their god Zeus. Oedipus, the king of Thebes, approaches the assembled crowd, and a priest of Zeus steps forward to meet him, explaining the primary reason for their gathering: to seek a solution to a crisis that has befallen Thebes. The priest of Zeus describes the situation to Oedipus in the following words:

Your own eyes must tell you: Thebes is tossed on a murdering sea and cannot lift her head from the death surge. A rust consumes the buds and fruits of the earth. The herds are sick, children die unborn, and labor is in vain. The god of plague and pyre raids like detestable lightning through the city and all the house of Kadmos is laid to waste, all emptied and all darkened. Death alone battens upon the misery of Thebes. You are not one of the immortal gods, we know; yet we have come to you to make our prayer as to the man surest in mortal ways and wisest in the ways of God.⁵⁶²

From the above description, it is evident that the city of Thebes is in a great crisis. Nothing seems to be going on well. In the middle of this crisis, the residents of the city of Thebes entreat their king to save them. Remembering how he once saved the whole city from the Sphinx,⁵⁶³ they employed, "Find us our safety, find us a remedy, whether by counsel of the gods or of men."⁵⁶⁴ This direct and painful plea from the people truly moved the king, who responded by sending his brother-in-law Kreon to go and consult the oracle of the god Apollo about the plague that had struck them. There, at the oracle of Apollo, it was revealed that everything that was happening was as the result of an old defilement they were harbouring. According to the oracle, the only way to end the misfortune was to expose the defilement and then expel the defilement from Thebes "by exile or death, blood by blood."⁵⁶⁵ For it was a murder that brought

⁵⁵⁹ Cf. J. L. STYAN, *Drama, a guide to the study of plays*, New York, 2000, 3.

⁵⁶⁰ Cf. J. L. STYAN, *Drama, a guide to the study of plays*, 3.

⁵⁶¹ René GIRARD, *Violence and the sacred*, London 2021, 191.

⁵⁶² SOPHOCLES, *Oedipus Rex*, Translated by Dudley Fitts and Robert Fitzgerald, Harcourt 1977, 2-3.

⁵⁶³ SOPHOCLES, *Oedipus Rex*, 3. The sphinx was a "mythological winged creature with lion's body and human head that had tormented the residents of Thebes by demanding the answer to this riddle: what has one voice and yet becomes four-footed and two-footed and three-footed? When the riddle was answered incorrectly, she ate the respondents. Oedipus solved the riddle: A man crawls on all fours in infancy, walks on two feet when grown, and leans on a staff in old age. After Oedipus answered correctly, the Sphinx killed herself." He thus became a hero and was made the king of Thebes and married the widowed Queen.

⁵⁶⁴ SOPHOCLES, *Oedipus Rex*, 3.

⁵⁶⁵ SOPHOCLES, *Oedipus Rex*, 5.

the plague wind upon the city. As the truth was uncovered piece by piece, and all signs pointed to Oedipus as the murderer, both Oedipus and Iokaste were seized with horror and shame.

The man Oedipus had killed on the road while fleeing from Corinth was his biological father, King Laios of Thebes, and his current wife, whom he had inherited, was, in fact, his biological mother. Following what he was told years ago by the oracle that he would be killed by his own son, King Laios had his three-day-old baby's ankles pierced and left in the forest to die.⁵⁶⁶ However, King Laios' servant, who was assigned to carry out the task, felt pity for the baby and decided to give him to a wandering shepherd, believing that this shepherd would take the baby far away to his own country. The wandering shepherd took the baby to the king of Corinth, Polybus and Queen Merope, who had no child and readily adopted and raised Oedipus as their own.⁵⁶⁷ The king of Corinth, whom he believed to be his father, was not his biological parent but rather his adoptive one. Oedipus admitted, with deep remorse, his grave wrongs and guilt, thereby acknowledging his part in the suffering of the people of Thebes. The whole situation was nothing more than a perfect illustration of an abominable taboo. "This unconscionable crime of patricide and incest"⁵⁶⁸, as revealed by the oracle, is believed to have brought a curse upon the community. In addition to being a scandal or taboo, his actions were inevitably linked to the contamination of the community of Thebes. Oedipus took responsibility by blinding himself and was eventually exiled from Thebes at his own request and in accordance with the orders of the oracle.⁵⁶⁹ Moreover, his mother, Iocasta, could not live with the truth and so committed suicide shortly before Oedipus blinded himself and was banished from the city.

This mythical story begins with a crisis and concludes with a collective murder or expulsion.⁵⁷⁰ This structure typifies what Girard perceives as a myth. The crisis culminates in the expulsion or death of the individual accountable for the community's pollution or contamination. Upon examining various other narratives in literature, which Girard referenced in his lectures, the story of Oedipus Rex stood out for him as the prototype of all mimetic texts.

In this myth, we clearly see the four stereotypes of mimetic persecution illustrated as developed by Girard in his book *The Scapegoat*, which are also reiterated in his later works and interviews. The first stereotype suggests that there is a plague or crisis affecting the entire community. This

⁵⁶⁶ SOPHOCLES, *Oedipus Rex*, 17.

⁵⁶⁷ Cf. SOPHOCLES, *Oedipus Rex*, 31-40.

⁵⁶⁸ J.L. STYAN, *Drama, a guide to the study of Plays*, New York 2000, 3.

⁵⁶⁹ Cf. SOPHOCLES, *Oedipus Rex*, 5-40.

⁵⁷⁰ Cf. Michael HARDIN (ed.), *Reading the Bible with René Girard. Conversations with Steven E. Berry*, 71.

crisis is so severe that it compels people to unite in search of a solution. In the case of *Oedipus Rex*, it is the plague in *Thebes* that causes the convergence of the people. Secondly, the community begins to speculate about the cause or source of the crisis. They harbour suspicions, but these must be confirmed or validated in some way. Consequently, the oracle arrives and substantiates their suspicions by interpreting the plague as having been caused by Oedipus's criminal acts, specifically, parricide and incest. This exemplifies the second stereotype, which assigns blame to a single individual for the community's evils and misfortunes, identifying one person as responsible for all the troubles that have befallen the community. Thirdly, this inevitably involves the banishment of the identified offender or victim, whether through collective persecution or expulsion. The community turns against the one who has defiled the land and lynches him or her. The fourth and final stereotype is the deification of the very victim whom the community lynched and expelled.⁵⁷¹ They attribute the newly restored peace to that same victim they expelled or lynched, hence the divinisation. According to Girard, this is characteristic of most myths from archaic communities.

From the myths which he analysed in the novels containing persecution texts, Girard drew the following general conclusions:

The community is united in the lynching of their identified victim. In his own words, he says:

In order for the persecutors to be inspired by the same faith in the evil power of their victim, the latter must successfully polarize all the suspicions, tensions and reprisals that poisoned those relationships. The community must be emptied of its poisons. It must feel liberated and reconciled within itself. This is implied in the conclusion of most myths.⁵⁷²

A community where everyone does not agree that one person can be so evil as to contaminate the whole community must first try to persuade everyone to agree. When unanimity has been achieved, they then collectively lynch the victim who is believed to be guilty of the crime brought against him or her. This is still a common occurrence even today in some communities that still practice witch-hunting. In their lynching, they vent their collective anger against the victim. Not only does the community get rid of the contamination of the community, but also, on an individual level, they also get their anger out of their chest. According to Girard, "Murder acts as a kind of analgesic or tranquillizer, for when murderers satisfy their appetite for violence on a victim... they are sincerely convinced that they have rid their community of someone

⁵⁷¹ René GIRARD, *The Scapegoat*, 24-25.

⁵⁷² René GIRARD, *The Scapegoat*, 42.

responsible for their misfortunes.”⁵⁷³ What follows is a kind of temporary peace both at the level of the individual and at the level of the community. Girard refers to this kind of peace as a catharsis.⁵⁷⁴ Such an event is repeated after some time again when a new crisis arises. From time to time, this is made into a common practice and ritualised through a ritual sacrifice. Animals are used in place of humans, and this is the birth of ritual sacrifices, according to Girard.

From this conclusion of most myths, Girard notes that the most immediate result is that the community is healed after the victim is expelled.

Once the victim is killed the crisis is over, peace is regained, the plague is healed, all the elements become calm again, chaos withdraws, what is blocked or locked or paralyzed is opened, the incomplete is completed, gaps are filled, and the confusion of differences is restored to proper differentiation.⁵⁷⁵

The subsequent tangible results of the victim’s expulsion led the lynching community to firmly believe that their victim was indeed the cause of the crisis. They feel vindicated that their judgement and the subsequent action they took of lynching or expelling the victim was correct. However, this suggests something more about the power of the victim, even after his or her death. Girard states: “It is conceivable that a victim may be responsible for public disasters,... but in myths, and only in myths, this same victim restores the order, symbolises it and even incarnates it.”⁵⁷⁶ If the victim can be credited with the power to restore order, not only does he or she earn the admiration and respect of the very community that killed him or her, but the community begins to see the victim in a new light, namely, as a benefactor of that very community.

Girard also discovered that “beyond a certain threshold of belief, the effect of the scapegoat is to reverse the relationship between the persecutors and their victims, whereby producing the sacred, the founding ancestors and the divinities.”⁵⁷⁷ The victims are somehow ascribed omnipotence because they can bring both loss and health, punishment and recompense.⁵⁷⁸ According to the consequences that followed in the community after the death of the scapegoat, human communities were somehow led to temporarily invent the victims as divinities or gods. If the victim, whom Girard also calls the scapegoat, can extend his or her benefits beyond death

⁵⁷³ René GIRARD, *I see Satan fall like lightning*, 87.

⁵⁷⁴ Cf. René GIRARD, *I see Satan fall like lightning*, 131.

⁵⁷⁵ René GIRARD, *I see Satan fall like lightning*, 65.

⁵⁷⁶ René GIRARD, *The Scapegoat*, 42.

⁵⁷⁷ René GIRARD, *The Scapegoat*, 44.

⁵⁷⁸ Cf. René GIRARD, *The Scapegoat*, 44.

to those who have killed him or her, then he or she is not only divine but also immortalised, transcendent and supernatural.⁵⁷⁹ This realisation leads to a situation in which the victim eventually begins to be worshipped or venerated. According to Girard, this is how most primitive societies created their gods or divinities. Girard believed and passionately endeavoured to show that “all myths of persecution must have their roots in real acts of violence against real victims.”⁵⁸⁰ In other words, in primitive societies, there must have been founding murders, which are linked to the creation of divinities. Girard believes this may have been the case with the Babylonian myth of the origin of the world, summarised by Williams as follows: The god Marduk defeats Tiamat, the goddess of the salt water, splits her body in two, and places half of it above the sky and half beneath the earth. He then kills Tiamat's consort, Kingu, and uses his blood to create human beings.⁵⁸¹ Girard hypothesises that these victims may have been human beings prior to their recognition as deities. In this context, Girard speculates about the genesis of divinities in ancient religions through founding murders, the underlying cause of which is rooted in the mimetic mechanism. However, one may question whether mimesis and founding murders can also be found in non-archaic religions, specifically within the Bible. This question led him to search the Bible. Using the lenses of mimesis, Girard examined the biblical texts and identified numerous instances across both the Old and New Testaments.

4.4. Mimesis in the Bible

In addition to examining the founding murders and the origins of deities in primitive societies, Girard now directs his inquiries towards the Bible to investigate whether the patterns identified in mythological literature, which outlines the life of archaic societies rooted in mimetic violence and desire, are also present within the Biblical scriptures. Specifically, he focuses on texts that depict violence, aiming to understand the underlying causes behind these narratives. To his surprise, he discovered not only one text but an entire series of such texts in the Bible, where mimetic desire and violence are clearly articulated. These range from the stories of the brothers Cain and Abel, Jacob and Esau, and Joseph and his brothers, as well as the murder of all the prophets since the foundation of the world, among others in the Old Testament, to the beheading of John the Baptist in the New Testament. They culminate in the crucifixion of Jesus in the New Testament, where the mechanism of all against one is even more evident.

⁵⁷⁹ Cf. René GIRARD, *The Scapegoat*, 44.

⁵⁸⁰ René GIRARD, *The Scapegoat*, 25.

⁵⁸¹ James G. Williams, *Foreword* in: René Girard, *I see Satan fall like lightning*, xvi.

Unlike the suspicions of Christianity and religion, in general, which sees the Bible, because of its apparent similarities with myths, as just another myth of mimetic desire and violence, Girard repeatedly makes it clear and insists that the Bible, though it may contain some myths, is not a myth.⁵⁸² One fundamental difference that is clearly evident is that, whereas in the archaic communities, the victims were always guilty, in Christianity, the victims were always innocent. For example, Abel, the first victim of murder, was not guilty of any crime and yet was the victim of his brother's murder. Cain, the guilty one, was instead spared and even offered protection by the non-violent God, and he went on to become the father of a new civilisation (Cf. Gen 4:15). In contrast to the myths in which the gods demanded blood for blood, the God of the Bible is presented as a non-violent God. Not only did God not demand the blood of Cain, but he even went further and put a seal on him so that no one could kill him when they met him. In this way, a whole chain of violence and murder was prevented. The mimesis in the Bible seems to be the exact opposite of that found in myths.

Another example of sibling rivalry is that of Joseph, who was not guilty of any wrongdoing when all his brothers turned against him simply because he was favoured by their father. They initially planned to kill him but later decided to sell him instead. Nor was he guilty of incest when Potiphar's wife (who became his quasi-adoptive mother) accused him of the crime in Egypt. In contrast to Oedipus, who was guilty of incest, Joseph was innocent of the allegation fabricated by Potiphar's wife. Moving on to the New Testament, John the Baptist, who was innocent, was also killed under the mimetic mechanism of all against one, although this is not immediately perceptible.⁵⁸³ Likewise, Jesus was innocent, as Pilate confirmed after his interrogation. However, he too was subjected to the mimetic mechanism of collective murder. The instances highlighted above led Girard to the realisation that, in the Bible, there are victims who were not guilty, yet were ultimately victims of violence, with God always on their side. This realisation strengthened Girard's conviction that the Bible was not a myth. Furthermore, Girard defines myth as "texts in which a god is generated as the victim is turned into a god."⁵⁸⁴ In Christianity and its scriptures, however, no victim of violence is created into a god. Therefore, according to Girard's criteria, the Bible does not qualify as a myth. The Bible reveals

⁵⁸² Cf. Michael HARDIN (ed.), *Reading the Bible with René Girard. Conversations with Steven E. Berry*, 71.

⁵⁸³ Cf. René GIRARD, *The Scapegoat*, 125-148. A criticism against Girard is that he saw mimesis even where it did not exist. This story is one such example. Girard argued that Salome had no desires of her own, but copied and appropriated those of her mother Herodias. Herod, because of the oath, joined Herodias' contagion, as did the court officials who expected Herod to keep his promise. By their silence, they acquiesced, so that it became a mechanism of all present -against-one.

⁵⁸⁴ Michael HARDIN (ed.), *Reading the Bible with René Girard. Conversations with Steven E. Berry*, 72.

the one and only God, the creator of heaven and earth; it does not create a god. Abel, the prophets, and John the Baptist were not made into gods by mankind after their deaths. Likewise, Jesus was not made into a god by man or the lynching community either; He merely revealed His divine nature, which He possessed from eternity.

Having outlined the main differences between the myths and the Bible that Girard presents, we now take a closer look at selected texts of mimetic rivalry and violence in the Bible and analyse how mimetic desire was behind all the founding murders and subsequent murders. We begin with some of the selected Old Testament texts Girard identified.

4.4.1. Mimetic desire and violence in the Old Testament

We begin our analysis with the first murder, which Girard also calls the founding murder. It is so called because “the first human culture has its roots in an initial collective murder similar to the crucifixion.”⁵⁸⁵ This is the murder of Abel by Cain.

4.4.1.1. Cain and Abel – The Mimetic rivalry of the brothers

The first recorded case of murder in the Bible is that of Cain who killed his brother Abel. Armed with the tools of mimetic theory, Girard seeks to demonstrate that Abel's murder was preceded, or rather driven, by mimetic desire, as envy and jealousy are merely manifestations of that desire. This story of the sibling rivalry clearly illustrates the consequences of mimetic desire. According to the Genesis account, Cain, a farmer by profession, became envious of his younger brother Abel, a shepherd whose burnt offering to God was accepted, while his own sacrifice was not. The account states:

Cain brought some of the produce of the soil as an offering for Yahweh, while Abel for his part brought the firstborn of his flock and some of their fat as well. Yahweh looked with favour on Abel and his offering. But He did not look with favour on Cain and his offering, and Cain was very angry and downcast. (Gen 4:4-6).

Cain envied his brother, and his envy evolved into anger towards him, who had found favour with God. Cain's anger is directly linked to his envy. The question arises: why would he be angry with Abel? From the passage, it is not because Abel offended him in any way or acted improperly. The only apparent reason is that Cain's sacrifice did not find favour with God, while Abel's did. God distinguished between the sacrifices of the two brothers; Abel's was accepted, whereas Cain's was rejected. At the core of Cain's actions against his brother was

⁵⁸⁵ René GIRARD, *I see Satan fall like lightning*, 85.

the mimetic desire to assume Abel's position and be the one to receive favour. This mimetic desire (envy or jealousy) is, therefore, the root of the rivalry. Although God warned him against nurturing this desire and instructed him to subdue his burning desire, saying, "Sin is crouching at the door hungry to get you. You can still master him" (Gen3:7), Cain disregarded this warning and failed to subdue sin, leading to the founding murder. Cain's mimetic desire here manifests as sin. A desire for violence is termed sin. The gravest consequence of failing to control mimetic desire is violence and the death of the perceived obstacle or rival. From this narrative of sibling rivalry, Girard identifies two elements that render this murder the foundation of a new society: the murder itself and the law enacted in the immediate aftermath of the founding murder. Hardin observes that "The first consequence of the murder of the brother is also a law against murder. Therefore, it's the foundation of the human community."⁵⁸⁶ This provision of the law presupposes the existence of a community, which was seemingly not well organised, to which these laws are directed. The pertinent question that may arise is: To whom was this law given? Girard would assert that it was given to a group of people he simply refers to as the Cainites, and the culture born from it is referred to as the Cainite culture.⁵⁸⁷ Girard views the law as the inception of an ordered and structured community and, thus, the beginning of civilisation.

Hence, law became the link between the first murder and the first civilisation. Commenting on this, James Williams made two critical observations: "Insofar as Cain's murder of Abel is a founding act,... it is not concealed or given any sort of justification in the biblical narrative. Nor is it the act that founds the people of Israel or any of its great institutions."⁵⁸⁸ It was neither concealed like that of Oedipus nor justified like the expulsion of Oedipus from Thebes. The culture formed by this act of murder is recognised as the Cainite culture, not that of the Hebrews or Israelites. The Israelite culture to which Jesus belonged is traced back to Seth, the son of Adam, son of God, as outlined in the genealogy provided in Luke (Luke 3:38). Seth was born after Abel's death and is acknowledged as Abel's successor. The decision made by God to convey His blessings and promises through Abel's successor, Seth, signifies His support for the victims of violence and conveys a profound disapproval of such violent acts.

Secondly, Williams notes that the founding murder "is the human act of one who is typical in the measure that he desires what his brother has, and when he cannot perceive himself as

⁵⁸⁶ Michael HARDIN (ed.), *Reading the Bible with René Girard*, 75.

⁵⁸⁷ Cf. René GIRARD, *I see Satan fall like lightning*, 87.

⁵⁸⁸ James G. WILLIAMS, *The Bible, Violence and the Sacred. Liberation from the myth of sanctioned violence*, New York 1991, 38.

different from his brother as his equal or superior, he kills him. He cannot tolerate the differentiation that God has made, so he slays his brother.”⁵⁸⁹ Cain sees his brother as his double, or as a mirror, a model, a rival and a competitor.

If we continue to focus our attention on the founding murder, following Girard’s theory that desire is always borrowed, the question that arises is: Was Cain’s act of murder a spontaneous act? Did he invent the murder independently, or was it also a borrowed desire? If it was borrowed, from whom was it copied or borrowed? Although Abel’s murder is the first recorded act of human killing in scripture, Girard, in his theory, strongly argues that Cain imitated the Devil’s desire to kill his brother. This raises the question: Was the devil a murderer for him to convey or transmit this murderous desire? Girard, who is aware that a person who claims must provide proof, boldly answered in the affirmative, basing his assertion on the words of Jesus about Satan where He said, “He the devil was a murderer from the beginning” (John 8:44). Girard goes on to make his point more concrete by taking time to unpack the word ‘*beginning*’. He says: “The word here translated ‘beginning’ is ‘*arche*’ in the Greek [language], which means ‘origin’, ‘first appearance’ or beginning.”⁵⁹⁰ In other words, Girard’s interpretation of Jesus’ statement points to the devil as the origin of the murder. By this interpretation, however, Girard in no way removes Cain’s responsibility for the sin but merely points to the source of the influence. Schwager called this source of influence “Satan’s spirit, a murderous spirit.”⁵⁹¹

Girard does, however, take away from Cain the label of being the origin of both the act and the desire to murder, which Girard attempts to trace back to Satan. Not only does Girard associate the original murder with Satan, but he also attributes subsequent murders to him when he states: “The murder and the origin are the same thing. If the devil is a murderer from the origin, that means that he continues to be during the rest of the time.”⁵⁹² This indicates that he continues to pass on the desire to kill. Thus, all subsequent murders, like the founding murder of Cain, must have originated from the source of all murders: Satan, who persists in his murderous actions. For these reasons, Girard dismisses the founding murder of Cain as an accident, based on the accounts of the Evangelists Luke and John, who refer to Satan as the murderer from the foundation of the world. Referring to the evangelists, he says: “They indicate that between the

⁵⁸⁹ James G. WILLIAMS, *The Bible, Violence and the Sacred*, 38.

⁵⁹⁰ René GIRARD, *I see Satan fall like lightning*, 86.

⁵⁹¹ Raymund SCHWAGER, *Must there be Scapegoats? Violence and Redemption in the Bible*, New York 2000, 159.

⁵⁹² René GIRARD, *I see Satan fall like lightning*, 86-87.

origin and the first collective murder, there is a relation that is not accidental.⁵⁹³ If murder is accidental, it does not necessarily need to be attributed to the one who committed it, as there was no prior plan in place. It could even be reduced to a lesser charge of manslaughter. However, if Cain's murder was not accidental, then it was premeditated, which implies prior contemplation. According to the Genesis narrative, there was a period between when Cain and Abel offered their sacrifices and when Cain killed Abel, suggesting that he had been planning to murder his brother for some time. Girard implicitly suggests that Cain was dependent on the devil for his act of murder, which he imitated and that it was premeditated. Responsibility is not taken away from the individual who commits murder. However, Girard alludes to the primary way in which one acquires desire, which is then appropriated and becomes one's own.

Commenting on the original murder, Schwager made a remarkable observation linking murder to deception. Cain attempted to conceal the murder when he responded to God's question with another question: "Am I my brother's keeper?"⁵⁹⁴ Concealing the murder is tantamount to deceit. In the same passage where Jesus referred to Satan as a murderer from the beginning, He made this connection explicit. He described Satan as a liar and the father of lies (John 8:44). Thus, not only did Cain commit murder, but he also engaged in deceit by pretending to be unaware of his brother's whereabouts. Ultimately, Cain emulated both murder and deceit from Satan, who is the murderer from the beginning and simultaneously the father of lies. Fundamental to the original murder committed by Cain, which Girard traces back to Satan, is the underlying desire to possess what his brother had. However, antecedent to his mimetic desire was the desire of Adam and Eve, which arose from being deceived by the father of lies.

4.4.1.2. Adam and Eve - Mimetic desire

René Girard shows that the sin committed by Adam and Eve, commonly known as the original sin, is directly related to mimetic desire and rivalry. Eve and Adam were moved by the mimetic desire to disregard the prohibition that God had placed there. They sinned when they desired and eventually ate the forbidden fruit. Although this is the first documented account of human sin in the Genesis account, Girard, through the lens of the mimesis theory, attempts to look beyond the actual sin and investigates what happened before it in order to uncover the proper *arche*, the origin. His reasons for looking beyond the actual sin of the human person stem from

⁵⁹³ René GIRARD, *I see Satan fall like lightning*, 86.

⁵⁹⁴ Cf. Raymund SCHWAGER, *Must there be Scapegoats? Violence and Redemption in the Bible*, 159.

his conviction that what human beings imitate from others is fundamentally desire.⁵⁹⁵ According to this assertion, Adam and Eve were not an exception to the rule. Therefore, it follows that Adam and Eve must also have copied this desire from someone else.

The question that arises is: where did Eve acquire the desire to eat the fruit, and how did it develop? Girard hastened to trace its origin with conviction, just as he had with the founding murder, back to Satan as the *arche*. Having made this assertion, Girard sought to demonstrate how Eve came to possess the desire. Referring to the famous story of temptation in Genesis 3, Girard argues robustly that “Eve is not spontaneously attracted to the apple. Eve is advised by the serpent, is counselled by the serpent, and is under the influence of the serpent.”⁵⁹⁶ The emphasis Girard places on the word “serpent,” evident from its three mentions in a single sentence, underscores his strong belief that this is the source of the sin committed by Eve. The mediation of the serpent is conveyed through *advice*, *counsel*, and *influence*. From this, Girard boldly asserts that Eve’s desire is not really her desire; it does not belong to her in the strict sense because it is suggested to her by another.⁵⁹⁷ She did not independently discover what the consequences of eating the forbidden fruit would be. The serpent’s mediation instils in Eve a desire for the fruit to which she had previously been indifferent. Having appropriated this desire from the serpent and made it her own, Eve does not stop there. She, in turn, serves as a medium or a model of the same desire for the person next to her, Adam. This indicates a progression and transmission of desire; it influences Adam, who similarly develops a longing for the fruit. Girard argues that Adam is indirectly influenced by the serpent through the mediation of Eve.⁵⁹⁸ A chain of mediation is thus slowly created, beginning with Satan as the source, then to Eve, and finally from both Satan and Eve to Adam. Unlike Eve, who had only one model, Adam has two: the serpent and Eve. Ultimately, both Adam and Eve desire through the serpent, which is the *arche*, the origin of the mimetic desire.

However, upon a thorough examination of the original sin, it becomes evident that, apart from the serpent’s suggestion to Eve and Adam to consume the fruit, the serpent did not present itself as a model for imitation regarding the act of consumption. Notably, the serpent refrained from partaking of the fruit, nor did it express any subsequent desire to partake of it. Consequently, one must inquire as to the true origins of mimetic desire and rivalry in the context of the

⁵⁹⁵ Cf. James G. WILLIAMS, *The Bible, Violence and the Sacred. Liberation from the myth of sanctioned violence*, New York 1991, 27. See also: Michael HARDIN (ed.), *Reading the Bible with René Girard*, 15.

⁵⁹⁶ Michael HARDIN (ed.), *Reading the Bible with René Girard*, 72.

⁵⁹⁷ Cf. Michael HARDIN (ed.), *Reading the Bible with René Girard*, 73.

⁵⁹⁸ Cf. Michael HARDIN (ed.), *Reading the Bible with René Girard*, 72.

commission of the first human sin. Oughourlian, in his book *'The Genesis of Desire'*, comes in to shed light on how original sin was mimetic and rivalistic at its core. He makes the remarkable observation that the serpent deceived Eve into believing that God was a rival by portraying Him as such to humanity. He asserts that the serpent was able to convince Eve to eat the fruit, contrary to God's prohibition, "by creating the illusion that the other (God) is the rival who desires the object with such virulence that He forbids it to any other."⁵⁹⁹ The serpent's argument is based on the fact that the tree of Knowledge is supposed to make it possible to know good from evil. And having the wisdom to know good from evil is an attribute of God. Ultimately, the serpent is insinuating that God deliberately wants to preserve divinity for Himself and so remain alone God, thus preventing man from becoming divine like Him and from being ambitious. The Genesis account records that: "Then the snake said to the woman, No! You will not die. God knows in fact that the day you will eat it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like gods, knowing good from evil" (Gen 3:4-5). The serpent links knowing good from evil with being like God. From this narrative, Oughourlian goes on to point out that:

It is by making Eve believe that God has kept the object for himself, and thus by inviting her to seek an increase of being, that the serpent draws forth her desire to model herself on the figure (actually invented by him) of God to imitate the imaginary desire that is supposedly that of God himself.⁶⁰⁰

From this perspective, Eve appears to be rebelling against or competing with God. The serpent has succeeded in awakening in Eve a mimetic desire to desire what she is led to believe is the desire of God. On the contrary, God neither desires the fruit nor seeks an increase in his being because he is already that greater than which nothing greater can be thought of. It turns out that the desire to seek an increase was, in fact, the desire of the serpent itself. The serpent succeeded in transforming the image of God from being a non-greedy model whose counsel should be obeyed into a greedy rival, which man should regard as an obstacle to his independence, greatness and emancipation. Deceived by the serpent and adopting an attitude of appropriative mimesis,⁶⁰¹ Eve decides to eat the fruit in order to become like God, attempting to seize that which belongs to God alone and claim it as her own, specifically, divinity. She desired to increase her being, took one fruit of the forbidden fruits from the tree for herself and also gave

⁵⁹⁹ Jean-Michel OUGHOURLIAN, *The Genesis of Desire*, East Lansing, 2010, 66. Oughourlian and Guy Lefort undertook the research together with Girard and so authored together the book "Things hidden since the foundation of the world." See: René Girard and Raymund Schwager correspondence 1974-1991, 45.

⁶⁰⁰ Jean-Michel OUGHOURLIAN, *The Genesis of Desire*, 67.

⁶⁰¹ Jean-Michel OUGHOURLIAN, *The Genesis of Desire*, 46.

one to Adam. However, as noted by Girard, the moment “when Adam and Eve eat the apple, they gain nothing and lose everything.”⁶⁰² Instead of increasing their being, they ended up decreasing it. They were deceived by “this clever being who ‘knows already’ and has long ceased to be innocent...,”⁶⁰³ the father of lies. Desire, deceit and rivalry have been played out so well by the serpent on Adam and Eve in this one incident. The father of lies aroused a desire in Eve, deceiving her and Adam, eventually setting them up as rivals against God.

The mimetic rivalry against God that ensued at the end by Eve and Adam is reminiscent of the mimetic rivalry of Satan against God as poetically recorded in Isaiah:

How did you come to fall from the heavens, Daystar, son of the Dawn? How did you come to be thrown to the ground, conqueror of the nations? You who used to think to yourself: I shall scale the heavens; higher than the stars of God I shall set my throne. I shall sit on the mount of Assembly far away from the north. I shall climb high above the clouds; I shall rival the Most High. Now you have been flung to Sheol, into the depth of the abyss! (Isaiah 14: 12-15).⁶⁰⁴

Satan regarded God as his rival, thereby positioning himself as an adversary of God. He had long sought an increase of his being. Not content with his current state as a creature, he and other fallen angels competed with God. He is the first creature to rebel against God, desiring not only independence from God but, even more so, equality with Him. Moreover, he aspired to be even higher than God. His greedy and ambitious desire to appropriate what solely belongs to God was ultimately what he proposed to Eve and Adam. In this sense, he indeed became a model for Adam and Eve, who, much like Satan himself, disobeyed God. This aligns well with Girard’s thesis that “our models suggest their own desires to us.”⁶⁰⁵ The serpent transmitted its greedy desire to Eve in a cunning yet disguised manner. In commenting on this, Schwager similarly notes, “The one who was jealous was not God, however, but the one from whom the idea came.”⁶⁰⁶ It was Satan who burned with jealousy towards God for His divinity and sovereignty, yearning to possess it, yet unable to do so. Therefore, what Satan (the serpent) suggested to Eve was nothing more than his own envious longing, and he succeeded. Niewiadomski similarly affirms this point by observing that the temptation in paradise reflects

⁶⁰² Michael HARDIN (ed.), *Reading the Bible with René Girard*, 74.

⁶⁰³ Jean-Michel OUGHOURLIAN, *The Genesis of Desire*, 61.

⁶⁰⁴ According to biblical scholars, this passage primarily refers to the king of Babylon and only secondarily to Satan. Patristic and medieval interpreters influenced by Jerome and connecting Isaiah 14:12 with Luke 10:18 read this passage as a description of the fall of rebellious angels. Cf. Leslie J. HOPPE, *The Book of Isaiah*, in Daniel DURKEN (series ed.), *New Collegeville Bible Commentary*, Collegeville, Minnesota, 2017, 733-779, here 746.

⁶⁰⁵ René GIRARD, *I see Satan fall like lightning*, 33.

⁶⁰⁶ Raymund SCHWAGER, *Must there be scapegoats? Violence and Redemption in the Bible*, New York, 2000, 74.

a mimetic rivalry between God and man,⁶⁰⁷ rather than between Satan and man. Satan led Eve and Adam away from seeing God as their model to his side and, through his persuasion, offered them new lenses through which to perceive God.

In his conversations with Berry, and contrary to Balthasar's criticism that he traced original sin back to Cain rather than to the first couple,⁶⁰⁸ Girard summarised original sin in the following words: "The couple disobey God. They disobey God through mimetic desire when they shift to another god... which is the serpent... disobedience is this desire... for total independence from God."⁶⁰⁹ Independence from God suggested being gods in their own right rather than subordinates. Thus, from Girard's perspective, original sin can be viewed as directly linked to mimetic desire. The serpent mediated this desire, "operating as a demonic *imago Dei*."⁶¹⁰

The mimetic desire, as already established above, was also at the centre of the founding murder of Cain. Based on the aforementioned situations surrounding the founding murder and original sin, which share mimetic desire and rivalry as their common denominator and underlying cause, a pertinent question emerges: Is mimetic desire and rivalry inherently sinful? To address this question, it is essential to turn to the Ten Commandments, within which Girard uncovered a significant and revolutionary insight related to mimetic desire.

4.4.1.3. The Ten Commandments and prohibition of desire

As highlighted by Girard, the text of the Ten Commandments is one of the important scriptures in the Old Testament concerning mimesis. It is recorded in two places: Deuteronomy chapter five and Exodus chapter twenty. Girard focused his analysis on the version in Exodus, so we shall likewise adhere to that version regarding mimetic desire. Since mimetic desire played a role in the founding murder of Cain and in the original sin of Adam and Eve, the question we face now is whether the devastating effects of mimetic desire can be counteracted, and if so, how? However, before we can address this question, it must first be clarified whether desire in itself is evil or sinful. How does Girard understand the mimetic desire and the roles of imitation and desire in the overall learning process of the human being?

⁶⁰⁷ Cf. Jozef NIEWIADOMSKI, *Figurationen mimetischer Rivalität in der Literatur*, 210.

⁶⁰⁸ Cf. Hans Urs von BALTHASAR, *Die neue Theorie von Jesus als dem Sündenbock*, in: Internationale katholische Zeitschrift *Communio*, 9 (1980) 184-185.

⁶⁰⁹ Michael HARDIN (ed.), *Reading the Bible with René Girard*, 73.

⁶¹⁰ Michael KIRWAN, *Girard and Theology*, London 2009, 34.

According to Girard, mimetic desire is, quite surprisingly, intrinsically good, despite its connections to original sin and the founding murder.⁶¹¹ But how can such an intrinsically good desire be at the centre of violence? Girard qualifies this puzzling assertion of the intrinsic goodness of mimetic desire by referring to Aristotle's description of it and agrees with Aristotle that: "Imitation is natural to man from childhood, one of his advantages over the lower animals being this, that he is the most imitative creature and learns at first by imitation."⁶¹² According to Aristotle, desire is thus part of human nature. Plato, who preceded Aristotle, also saw imitation as absolutely essential to human life.⁶¹³ Girard, however, criticises both philosophers for failing to see that imitation and violence are conjoined.⁶¹⁴ His thesis thus goes one step further by boldly making a connection between imitation and violence.

According to his understanding, imitation and desire are initially neutral and, depending on the circumstances and on what is imitated, can lead to a greater good or, on the contrary, become harmful or problematic. It will become problematic if one desires to possess something that already legally belongs to someone else. In his interview with Steven Berry, Girard takes this into account when he says: "Imitation is the best aspect of humanity but also the worst."⁶¹⁵ The worst scenario would be if mimesis led to negative imitation, endless conflict and violence. Girard also notes that the imitation of desire always presupposes a role model or a medium when he states: "Truly to desire, we must have recourse to people about us; we have to borrow their desires."⁶¹⁶ Girard finds in the bible a perfect example that concisely demonstrates the role of the model in transmitting desire and imitation. This is the story of the adulterous woman who was caught red-handed committing adultery. Commenting on why no one dared to cast the first stone on the woman, Girard said: "*The first stone is decisive because it is the most difficult to throw. Why is it difficult to throw? Because it is the only one without a model.*"⁶¹⁷ In this story, Girard emphasises the influence of a model on others that results in violence through the imitation of violence itself. He illustrates that no one is born with inherent violence. Rather, violence is something that is learned through imitation rather than being an innate trait. The desire conveyed is, therefore, inseparably connected to that of a role model.

⁶¹¹ Cf. René GIRARD, *I see Satan fall like lightning*, 15.

⁶¹² George WHALLEY, et al.(eds.), *Aristotle's Poetics*, Montreal 1997, 57.

⁶¹³ Cf. Michael HARDIN (ed.), *Reading the Bible with René Girard*, 36.

⁶¹⁴ Cf. Michael HARDIN (ed.), *Reading the Bible with René Girard*, 36.

⁶¹⁵ Michael HARDIN (ed.), *Reading the Bible with René Girard*, 37.

⁶¹⁶ René GIRARD, *I see Satan fall like lightning*, 15.

⁶¹⁷ René GIRARD, *I see Satan fall like lightning*, 56.

On the subject of role models or mediums, Girard was aware of the fact that there can be good role models and bad role models. A bad role model is most likely to transmit bad mimesis, that is, negative desire and influence, and could lead imitators to evil. For example, in the story of the adulterous woman, if one person had thrown the first stone at her, he would have elevated himself to a role model and would have directly passed on the violent desire to the next person. Similarly, a good role model can mediate good mimesis, that is, good desire and influence that can lead imitators to goodness, but there are boundaries and a limit as to how far one can go in imitating the model without it turning into rivalry and violence. Safeguards need to be put in place because “humans desire intensely ... for no instincts guide them.”⁶¹⁸ Bad role models almost immediately transmit bad influence on their imitators, while good role models mediate good imitation. However, it sometimes leads to violence when the imitator begins to see the model as an obstacle or a rival. The problem here is then with the imitator and not necessarily with the role model, who the imitator now sees as a rival. The role model becomes a rival when the imitator wants to have what belongs to the role model.

When a role model becomes aware that someone desires his possessions, it intensifies his own desire for those admired possessions and somehow leads him to imitate the desire of his imitator. For example, if the model is a married man who then realises that an imitator is starting to desire his wife, this reinforces the model's desire for her, despite his prior interest in her beginning to wane. In this sense, the model imitates his imitator in desiring his wife. It reawakens the model's desire for his wife, due to his rival's desires. As noted by Williams, one “envies the rival's property, prestige, or power, or in imitating the rival, seeks to gain the same property, prestige, or power that is the object of the rival's desire.”⁶¹⁹ In the end, the model naturally becomes protective, and his desire for what he possesses increases, and he wants to protect what is his by all means. By doing this, he becomes an obstacle for the imitator.

In human relationships, when a role model becomes an obstacle or a rival, conflicts may arise, occasionally leading to fights and, sometimes, but not always, to murder. The question that now emerges is: What kinds of safeguards should be established to prevent the worst from happening, i.e., preventing mimetic desire from evolving into a contagion of violence and conflict? At this point, Girard points to the second half of the Decalogue, where he discovers a thorough treatment of the subject of mimetic desire. What he finds both intriguing and unique

⁶¹⁸ René GIRARD, *I see Satan fall like lightning*, 15.

⁶¹⁹ James G. WILLIAMS, *The Bible, Violence and the Sacred*, 112.

about mimetic desire in the Decalogue is that this form of mimetic desire, which culminates in rivalry, is not only singled out but even explicitly prohibited in the tenth commandment. Girard makes a distinction between the first four prohibitions and the last one. He focuses specifically on the last five of the Ten Commandments. The sixth to the ninth commandments prohibit serious crimes of violence in order of their gravity as follows:

You shall not kill
You shall not commit adultery
You shall not steal
You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour. (Exodus 20:13-16)

These commandments have one thing in common, namely, prohibiting acts or crimes that are, at the same time, sins. However, they differ fundamentally from the tenth commandment because, in comparison to the others, it does not prohibit an act but a desire.⁶²⁰ It reads as follows:

You shall not *covet* the house of your neighbour. You shall not *covet* the wife of your neighbour, nor his male or female slave, nor his ox or ass, nor anything that belongs to him. (Exodus 20:17)

A closer look at the commandments shows that, unlike the previous ones, the last commandment does not forbid an act but a desire or covetousness; “You shall not *covet*”. Girard notes that this commandment directs attention to one’s neighbour. One cannot talk of desire without bringing in the neighbour who draws our attention to the object of desire. Girard makes this connection when he emphasises that; “the neighbour is more important than the object because all the objects of the neighbour are desirable because they belong to the neighbour.”⁶²¹ Stretching this point further, Girard notes that when someone desires what belongs to the neighbour, what is likely to follow is conflict and violence. He says: “Whatever belongs to your neighbour, your neighbour is going to fight for it.”⁶²² Therefore, instead of prohibiting violence, which is inevitable, this commandment directs its attention to the root of violence, which is mimetic desire. This prohibition proves to be the key to resolving and ending violence in the world. For this reason, Girard lauds the prohibition of mimetic desire as revolutionary and a very significant step towards achieving a non-violent society and culture.

He goes on to note that the tenth commandment recognises that desire is key to preventing the violence that is prohibited by the preceding four commandments. He asserts this in the

⁶²⁰ René GIRARD, *I see Satan fall like lightning*, 7.

⁶²¹ Michael HARDIN (ed.), *Reading the Bible with René Girard*, 109.

⁶²² Michael HARDIN (ed.), *Reading the Bible with René Girard*, 109.

following words: “If we ceased to desire the goods of our neighbour, we would not commit murder or adultery or theft or [give] false witness. If we respected the tenth commandment, the four commandments that precede it would be superfluous.”⁶²³ Paying attention to the order of the prohibitions, Girard further observes that the decalogue, rather than beginning with the cause and ending with the consequences, addresses urgent matters first and concludes with the cause. For instance, Girard notes: “In order to avoid violence, it forbids violent acts. It turns then to the cause and uncovers the desire that the neighbour inspires.”⁶²⁴ This is similar to what we saw in the story of Cain after he killed Abel; the immediate step was a law forbidding anyone from killing him. The cause of the murder, namely jealousy or envy, was not addressed at that time but was covered later in the Decalogue and subsequently forbidden.

According to Girard, the unveiling of mimetic desire in the Decalogue is a huge step forward and the key to addressing the problem of violence in society. In this context, Girard suggests that religion should assist in regulating mimetic desire within society. However, one might question whether it is right for God to forbid desire. If it is, could the prohibition of desire in the Decalogue not be seen as an infringement on the freedom of the human person? Girard is aware that some modern critics of religion might call this an “irrational hatred of freedom.”⁶²⁵ However, before addressing the challenge of irrational hatred towards freedom, Girard suggests that one should first assess what might occur in the world if safeguards were absent. The desire in question here is “the desire prohibited by the tenth commandment must be the desire of all human beings.”⁶²⁶ Since this desire is common and is the desire of all humans, what would happen if it were not controlled or regulated as the Decalogue does? Girard says there would be a perpetual war of all against all.⁶²⁷ Ultimately, if desire is left uncontrolled or unregulated, it would pose a permanent threat not only to the harmony of all human communities but also to their very survival. Or, as Anselm aptly stated, it would upset the symmetry of the world.⁶²⁸ What the Tenth Commandment represents, therefore, is a fundamental revolution in the understanding of desire.⁶²⁹

⁶²³ René GIRARD, *I see Satan fall like lightning*, 12.

⁶²⁴ René GIRARD, *I see Satan fall like lightning*, 12.

⁶²⁵ René GIRARD, *I see Satan fall like lightning*, 8.

⁶²⁶ René GIRARD, *I see Satan fall like lightning*, 8.

⁶²⁷ René GIRARD, *I see Satan fall like lightning*, 8.

⁶²⁸ Cf. CDH I, XV.

⁶²⁹ René GIRARD, *I see Satan fall like lightning*, 9.

However, the revolution of desire revealed by the tenth commandment serves merely as preparation for the revolution that, according to Girard, finds its full expression in the New Testament. In the New Testament, Jesus guides us away from mimetic rivalries by urging us to emulate him in his imitation of the Father. Thus, we now turn to the New Testament to explore how mimetic desire is unveiled.

4.4.2. Mimetic Desire in the New Testament

The unveiling of the mimetic desire, which began already in the Old Testament, reached its climax in the New Testament in the person of Jesus Christ. His teachings fully unveiled the hidden mimetic circle and also strongly challenged it. In the Beatitudes, for example, Jesus directly challenged the mimetic cycle of violence when he preached, “If anyone hits you on the right cheek, offer him the other as well” (Matthew 5:39). By not taking revenge or retaliating, the cycle of violence is broken. The non-violence stance of Jesus is further demonstrated in practice when he refuses to participate in the violent stoning of a woman caught in adultery.

Girard observes that “by saving the adulterous woman from being stoned... he prevents the violent contagion from starting.”⁶³⁰ Jesus challenged the mob, saying, “Let he who is without sin cast *the first stone*” (John 8:7). He deliberately puts emphasis here on the word “*first stone*”. This is because the first stone is the most important when it comes to imitation. The challenge of Jesus to the crowd instead set in motion a contagion in the reverse direction, that of a non-violent imitation. Girard states emphatically: “From the moment the first individual gives up stoning the adulterous woman, he becomes a model who is imitated more and more until finally all the group, guided by Jesus, abandons its plan to stone the woman.”⁶³¹ The Evangelist mentions that they went away one by one, beginning with the eldest (John 8:9). The eldest became a model for his juniors.⁶³² With this story, Girard underlines that Jesus came to turn humanity away from mimetic rivalry and violence by presenting himself as a non-violent model and asking us to imitate him. By drawing our attention to the person of Jesus Christ, Girard specifies that it is not a matter of imitating his habits or dressing or eating habits but rather of imitating his desire. “What Jesus invites us to imitate is his own desire, the spirit that directs

⁶³⁰ René GIRARD, *I see Satan fall like lightning*, 57.

⁶³¹ René GIRARD, *I see Satan fall like lightning*, 57.

⁶³² The case of adults passing on imitation to children is common and natural. In the case of Herodias and Salome, Girard argued that Salome had no desires of her own, but copied and appropriated those of her mother Herodias. Cf. René GIRARD, *The Scapegoat*, 131.

him toward the goal on which his attention is fixed: to resemble God the Father as much as possible.”⁶³³ In other words, Jesus, according to the gospels, was always imitating the Father. “My Father goes on working, and I am at work.... the Son can do only what he sees the Father doing...” (John 5:17, 19). He does what he sees the Father doing. Therefore, what Jesus invites us to do is to imitate his own imitation. A question that may arise is: Would one not run into rivalry with Jesus by imitating him?

On the contrary, no rivalry would arise, according to Girard, because imitating Jesus’ desires does not equate to competing with Him, just as Jesus does not compete with His Father. What Jesus reveals is a God who embodies nonviolence, and Jesus himself exemplifies this nonviolence by reflecting the nonviolent nature of the Father. His invitation is thus towards a life of nonviolence. Therefore, imitating Him presents a solution to overcoming the violence in which humanity is ensnared rather than the contrary. Imitating Jesus would, instead of fostering violence, actually terminate the cycle of violence.

Concerning the fear of entering into rivalry with Jesus, Girard overrules these concerns by emphasizing, in fact, that a mimetic conflict would, in this case, never arise “because neither the Father nor the Son desires greedily, egoistically.”⁶³⁴ This contrasts with Satan, who greedily sought to appropriate what belongs solely to God. According to Girard, Satan also surprisingly imitates God but in a whole wrong way and transmits this wrong mimesis on like he did to Eve. “Satan is an imitator in the rivalistic sense of the word. His kingdom is a caricature of the kingdom of God. Satan is the ape of God.”⁶³⁵ Jesus’s desires are far removed from greed and self-serving tendencies, as expressed by Paul in his letter to the Philippians: “Though he was in the form of God, he did not count equality with God as a thing to be grasped. But he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, becoming as human beings are” (Philippians 2:6-7). Rather than being ambitious and striving to become greater than the Father, Jesus humbled himself. The imitation of Jesus is thus the opposite of that of Satan.

Commenting on the same, Palaver states: “Jesus is the only role model who does not instigate violent struggle among those who imitate him; since he knows no ‘conflictual’ desire, it is

⁶³³ René GIRARD, *I see Satan fall like lightning*, 13.

⁶³⁴ René GIRARD, *I see Satan fall like lightning*, 14.

⁶³⁵ René GIRARD, *I see Satan fall like lightning*, 45.

impossible to fall into rivalry with him over any object.”⁶³⁶ Since Jesus’ invitation to imitate his imitation of His Father is in direct opposition to, and therefore in confrontation with, the mechanism of mimetic violence, he naturally provoked it. Consequently, it was unleashed on him in the most violent manner. This is because he had proven to be an obstacle or a scandal in the way of the mechanism. Commenting on the same, Palaver further notes that: “Jesus’s radical nonviolence, which he lived in accordance with his own teaching, is ultimately... what makes him a scapegoat. In a culture rooted in violence, the absolutely nonviolent person is an almost inexorable target for collective persecution.”⁶³⁷ As the single-victim mechanism was increasingly unleashed upon him, it became more exposed and apparent for everyone to recognise its true nature. This was clearly manifested in the passion of Jesus, which represents the culmination of mimetic contagion.

4.4.3. The Passion of Jesus

The story of the passion of Jesus is recorded in all four canonical Gospels, although some variations exist from one Gospel to another. What is common, however, as observed by Girard, is that in all the Gospels, all themes ultimately lead to the Passion of Jesus.⁶³⁸ When we follow the events of his passion, from his arrest to his crucifixion, the law of convergence towards a single victim is unmistakably evident. The disciples will all desert Jesus, and Girard notes that they will all participate, to some extent, in the Passion on the side of the persecutors.⁶³⁹ Judas will explicitly side with the persecutors by selling him for thirty pieces of silver. Peter will deny his Master three times. Even sworn enemies, namely Herod and Pilate, will become friends during the trial, and ultimately, the political and religious leaders will collectively unite against one person. This aligns with the prophecy of the high priest Caiaphas, who stated: “You fail to see that it is to your advantage that *one man should die rather than that the whole nation should perish*” (John 11:50). This prophecy unveils and speaks about the mimetic mechanism that unleashes violence from all against one victim. Here, we observe a close resemblance to the mythological texts surrounding collective murder. The same mechanism is here directed at Jesus, making it all the more evident. Girard highlighted the key moments in the Passion

⁶³⁶ Wolfgang PALAVER, *René Girard’s Mimetic Theory*, 219.

⁶³⁷ Wolfgang PALAVER, *René Girard’s Mimetic Theory*, 216.

⁶³⁸ Cf. René GIRARD, *I see Satan fall like lightning*, 19.

⁶³⁹ Cf. René GIRARD, *I see Satan fall like lightning*, 24. Girard has, however, been criticised on this point in a book review by McDonald for generalising and isolating biblical passages from their contexts. The generalisation of disciples as being on the part of persecutors is cited as one such example. See: Patricia M. McDONALD, Review of: René GIRARD, *I see Satan fall like lightning*, in: *Theological studies* 63 (2002) 208-209.

narratives that explicitly show the mimetic contagion, including the scene of Peter's denial of Jesus.

4.4.3.1. Peter's denial of Jesus

In the episode of the Last Supper, Jesus prophesied that his disciples would abandon him that very night. In making this prophecy, He quoted Zechariah's passage: "I shall strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered" (Zech. 13:7; Mark 14:27). In this case, Jesus represents the shepherd, and his disciples represent the sheep that shall scatter upon His arrest. After his arrest, all his disciples fled, thereby fulfilling the prophecy of Zechariah. Nevertheless, Peter, the prince of the apostles, took a bold step and decided to follow behind discretely to see where the group of soldiers, the tribune, and the Jewish guards were taking his Master and what they intended to do with him. The destination was the residence of the high priest Caiaphas. While they were in the Courtyard of the High Priest, Peter made his way in and joined himself to a group that surrounded a fire, for it was cold. The group around the fire was most probably composed of guards. There is no mention of a fire in Matthew's Gospel. Although Mark and Luke refer to it, only John explicitly states that it was a charcoal fire lit in the courtyard of Caiaphas's house. This fire is of great significance in analysing Girard's mimetic contagion. In addition to the fire, the maid who worked in the high priest's palace also played an important role. In the other three Gospels, three different individuals ask Peter if he is not a disciple of the arrested man; only Mark reports that the same maid posed this question to Peter twice. This small detail will also become significant from the perspective of the mimesis theory in Girard's analysis and application of mimetic contagion. Here is how Mark reports Peter's denial:

While Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the high priest's maids came along. Seeing Peter warming himself, she looked intently at him and said, 'You too were with the Nazarene, Jesus.' But he denied it, saying, 'I neither know nor understand what you are talking about.' So, he went out into the outer court. The maid saw him and began again to say to the bystanders, 'This man is one of them.' Once again he denied it. A little later, the bystanders said to Peter once more, 'Surely you are one of them; for you too are a Galilean.' He began to curse and to swear, 'I do not know this man about whom you are talking.' And immediately, a cock crowed a second time. Then Peter remembered the word that Jesus had said to him, 'Before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times.' He broke down and wept. (Mark 14: 66-72).

Girard observes that Mark's narrative shows how the servant girl unleashes the group mechanism and how she brings collective mimeticism into play.⁶⁴⁰ First of all, he notes that

⁶⁴⁰ Cf. René GIRARD, *The Scapegoat*, 153.

the maid confronts Peter directly for the first time: “You too were with the Nazarene, Jesus”. The bystanders were minding their own business, for they were indifferent and did not seem bothered by her exchange of words with Peter. It appeared to be a private matter between the maid and Peter. When no one seemed to team up with her, she repeated herself. This time, however, she turned her gaze to the bystanders and drew their attention to the fact that Peter is a follower of Jesus. “*This man is one of them*”. By doing this a second time, but now directly addressing the bystanders, she wanted to incite them, to awaken the mimetic mechanism in the bystanders against Peter. They should imitate her and not remain indifferent. Here, she shows herself to be a leader. Girard notes that “leaders know that they must treat those who follow them like children; they must always inspire imitation.”⁶⁴¹ In the end, the bystanders imitate her as they repeat together: “*Surely you are one of them; for you too are a Galilean.*” Girard praises the maid for her role model character for others, comparing her to a teacher and the bystanders to her students. “The students repeat what their mistress tells them. The very words of the servant-[maid] are repeated but with an addition that beautifully reveals what is at work in the scene: *for you are a Galilean.*”⁶⁴² This mimeticism, initiated by the maidservant and subsequently by the bystanders, continued to spread like a ripple and put pressure on Peter, leading him to deny Jesus three times. Engulfed by the wave of the escalating mimetic contagion from the crowd converging on Jesus as the victim, Peter realised he could not swim against the current. He aligned himself with the crowd that was persecuting Jesus by denying his knowledge of him on all three occasions.

However, Girard dismisses fear as a reason for Peter’s denial, as he would not have ventured out in the first place. Nor would he have possessed the courage to enter the high priest’s courtyard. He also critiqued psychological interpretations, arguing instead that it was a form of mimetic contagion. He noted that a community had formed around that fire. “As soon as it is lit, people arrange themselves in a circle around it; they are no longer a mere crowd... they have become a community. Hands and faces are turned toward the fire and in turn, are lit by it...A place of communion and communication is established.”⁶⁴³ This community around the fire is mainly composed of people from Jerusalem.

⁶⁴¹ René GIRARD, *The Scapegoat*, 153.

⁶⁴² René GIRARD, *The Scapegoat*, 153.

⁶⁴³ René GIRARD, *The Scapegoat*, 151.

On the other hand, there is no longer a community around Jesus because they have all dispersed. Consequently, Girard argues that neither Peter nor anyone else is truly with Jesus at this point. Making recourse to Heidegger's concept of *Mitsein*, Girard says, Peter finds himself in search of a new modality of being, which Martin Heidegger referred to as *Mitsein*, literally translated as *being with*.⁶⁴⁴ He seeks another community to which he can belong. With his denial, Peter declared that his *Mitsein*, his sense of belonging or companionship, was not with Jesus at that time. The *Mitsein* for Peter is now re-created but in a different place and with different companions. To secure his place around the fire, he joins a group that is hostile to Jesus. He more or less divorces himself from Jesus in order to join this community around the fire.

As Girard further observed, "The best way to make friends in a hostile world is to espouse the enmities and adopt the other's enemies."⁶⁴⁵ This is what Peter was trying to do at the time. In other words, Peter fell into the network of a mimetic contagion on the opposite side of Jesus, fulfilling the words that Jesus had earlier said to him (Peter) that he would deny him. Moreover, Girard suggests that Peter's third denial carries a kind of religious overtone due to the swearing and cursing. When questioned a third time, Peter, according to Mark's Gospel, called curses down: "He began to curse and to swear, 'I do not know this man about whom you are talking.'" Swearing here has something to do with binding oneself to a group or to the constitution of the association or group to which one belongs. And the word binding in Latin is *religare*, from which the word religion is derived. Thus, Girard interprets the words of Peter's swearing to mean that he is forming a new religious bond with the new community around the fireplace. Girard said, "This is truly a religious bond-*religare*, to bind- and therefore Peter had recourse to curses- like Herod in his exorbitant offer to Salome."⁶⁴⁶ By swearing, Peter was unbinding himself from Jesus or severing his ties with Jesus at that time in order to bind himself to the community around the fire. "When he denies his master so fiercely, it is not to convince anyone but to sever the bonds that unite him to Jesus and to form others with those around him."⁶⁴⁷ It was a case of not serving two masters. Here, we see a minor contagion that draws Peter into a bigger and more significant mimetic contagion centred on Jesus. Eventually, the smaller contagion around Peter is absorbed into a larger contagion around Jesus, and Peter finds himself on the opposite side of Jesus.

⁶⁴⁴ Cf. René GIRARD, *The Scapegoat*, 150.

⁶⁴⁵ René GIRARD, *The Scapegoat*, 154.

⁶⁴⁶ René GIRARD, *The Scapegoat*, 154. Salome is Herod's daughter with Herodias, the one who danced at the birthday party of Herod, leading to the beheading of John the Baptist.

⁶⁴⁷ René GIRARD, *The Scapegoat*, 154.

To conclude the episode on Peter, Girard says: “The best way not to be crucified... is to do as everyone else and join in the crucifixion. The denial, therefore, is one episode of the passion, a kind of eddy, a brief swirl in the vast current of mimeticism of the victim that carries everyone toward Golgotha.”⁶⁴⁸ Peter has been successfully swept up in this current of mimetic contagion, which continues to grow and is now being brought to the political authorities, specifically to Pontius Pilate.

4.4.3.2. Pontius Pilate

After leaving the high priest's courtyard, Jesus was taken to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of the province of Palestine. By virtue of his office as governor, Pilate also held the legitimate authority and power to act as a judge in the territory under his jurisdiction. Since some of the alleged crimes brought against Jesus were capital in nature, it was the responsibility of the Roman governor to adjudicate such cases. Accordingly, Pilate publicly interrogated Jesus but did not find him guilty of any of the charges brought against him. From his perspective, Pilate genuinely believed that the charges brought against Jesus were purely religious in nature and not capital crimes as such, and therefore wished to set Him free. The account of Luke narrates the verdict of Pilate on Jesus as follows:

You brought this man to me and accused him of inciting the people to revolt. I have conducted my own investigation in your presence and have not found this man guilty of the charges you have brought against him, nor did Herod, for he sent him back to us. So, no capital crime has been committed by him. Therefore, I shall have him flogged and then release him. (Luke 23:13-17).

Pilate considered the merits of the charges brought against Jesus and delivered his verdict objectively and fairly, that is, without any external influence at this point. Luke and the other evangelists indicate that Pilate was prepared to release Jesus at this point because he did not find him guilty of any charges. From Girard's point of view, this was before the person with real power, the Roman governor, was influenced by the crowd.⁶⁴⁹ However, under the strong current of the mimetic contagion, which continues to gain momentum like a snowball, Pilate, who initially resisted the desires or wish of the crowd, ultimately gives in to have Jesus condemned. Girard emphasises that the total power of the crowd forces the sovereign authority to yield despite its impulse to resist.⁶⁵⁰ There is a shift here in terms of who holds real and total

⁶⁴⁸ René GIRARD, *The Scapegoat*, 155.

⁶⁴⁹ Cf. René GIRARD, *The Scapegoat*, 105.

⁶⁵⁰ Cf. René GIRARD, *The Scapegoat*, 106.

power. Roles seem to be exchanged or swapped. At this point, we see illustrated the “subordination of the ruler to the power of the crowd and the dominant role of the crowd at the moment of greatest excitement when the mechanism of the scapegoat is set in motion.”⁶⁵¹ The power of the mob or the crowd seems unstoppable.

At the climax of the mimetic snowballing, institutions are *ipso facto* dissolved and disintegrated; they cease to have real power, distinctions disappear, and the crowd has total power.⁶⁵² Pilate was not afraid of Jesus's position in society, nor was he at all fearful that Jesus (who was insignificant in his view) posed a threat to him or the Roman emperor, as he himself stated after the public interrogation of Jesus. Pilate showed little interest in Jesus and his affairs. However, due to the mounting pressure from the crowd, he could not ignore it and risk a riot or allow an uprising to break up for Jesus's sake. The potential outbreak of a riot frightened him the most. Consequently, he altered his stance and permitted the crowd to have their way. Having made up his mind, but before he could pronounce the final verdict on Jesus in favour of the crowd, that is, handing Jesus over to the crowd, the gospel of Matthew brought Pilate's wife into the picture as if to make his decision even more difficult.

4.4.3.3. *The wife of Pontius Pilate*

This incident is only recorded in the Gospel of Matthew.⁶⁵³ According to the interpretation of Girard, the intervention by the wife of Pilate on behalf of Jesus is meant to make the decision of Pilate less easy. “While he was seated on the bench, his wife sent him a message, *Have nothing to do with that righteous man. I suffered much in the dream today because of him*” (Matthew 27:19). The evangelist wants to show that a tug of war is going on in the mind of the governor, i.e., “Pilate [is] torn between two influences, between two poles of mimetic attraction, on the one hand, and the wife who wants to save an innocent man and, on the other, the totally anonymous and impersonal crowd that is even not Roman.”⁶⁵⁴ Although he eventually washed his hands and declared himself innocent of the blood of Jesus, Pilate still sided with the crowd by giving in to the contagion and handing Jesus over to the crowd. The crowd ultimately prevailed. The mechanism of mimetic contagion is further revealed by collectively sticking to the selected victim. This is despite Pilate's last-minute attempts to free

⁶⁵¹ René GIRARD, *The Scapegoat*, 106.

⁶⁵² Cf. René GIRARD, *The Scapegoat*, 106.

⁶⁵³ René Girard mistakenly says the account is recorded only in the Gospel of John. See: *The Scapegoat*, 106.

⁶⁵⁴ René GIRARD, *The Scapegoat*, 106.

Jesus. He attempts to give them another victim who had already been convicted of a crime, namely Barabbas.

4.4.3.4. Barabbas instead of Jesus

Pilate took the initiative of giving the crowd another victim, Barabbas, so that they could unleash their already aroused mimetic violence on him. If it were only for the sake of the crowd's unleashing of its fury and attaining "a kind of relaxation of tension, a sacrificial catharsis that prevents the riot that Pilate fears,"⁶⁵⁵ the execution of Barabbas would have sufficed, according to the thinking of Pilate. So, he offered to give the crowd an already convicted criminal named Barabbas, hoping to appease their anger and end the crisis. In this way, he resisted giving in to the demands of the crowd to hand Jesus over to them. However, contrary to his expectations, the crowd rejected Barabbas, who was offered to be executed in exchange for Jesus. This is because "the crowd seizes on the victim who emerges from the process, and it refuses exchange for another victim."⁶⁵⁶ The contagion had been building since the arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane, and the non-violent Jesus had already emerged from the process as the victim. Thus, when the crowd rejects Barabbas, Pilate realises that he cannot substitute the victim with anyone else and hands Jesus over to them. The contagion, therefore, converges not on Barabbas but on Jesus, intensifying further when an attempt is made to release or exchange him for a substitute. The cries of the crowd became even louder. Faced with the growing mimetic snowballing, Pilate had no choice but to go with the flow, along with the religious leaders and the crowd, including another Roman ruler, Herod.

4.4.3.5. Herod and Pilate

This account of Herod's participation in the trial of Jesus is only recorded in the Gospel of Luke. The other three gospels do not mention his involvement in the trial. A closer examination of Luke's narrative explicitly reveals the mimetic contagion evident in the actions of the two former enemies, Pilate and Herod. Luke narrates that "Herod and Pilate became friends that very day, even though they had been enemies formerly" (Luke 23:12). Herod's role in the trial of Jesus was inconsequential. Luke reports that Herod interrogated Jesus, yet Jesus did not utter a single word, and Herod sent him back to Pilate. Despite Herod's minimal involvement in this entire trial, Girard says, "the only reason for Luke's inclusion of Herod in his account of the

⁶⁵⁵ René GIRARD, *I see Satan fall like lightning*, 131.

⁶⁵⁶ René GIRARD, *I see Satan fall like lightning*, 25.

Passion is his fear of omitting any possible force that contributed to the sentencing of Jesus.”⁶⁵⁷ From the perspective of mimetic theory, Girard asserts that “it is their common participation in the death of Jesus that brings Herod and Pilate together.”⁶⁵⁸ All forces, namely religious leaders represented by the Pharisees and scribes, political leaders Herod and Pilate representing the imperial Roman government, and the Jewish crowds, unite against a single victim. This becomes the climax of unveiling the single victim mimetic mechanism.

The culmination of the mimetic contagion, also referred to as the scapegoat mechanism, culminating in the crucifixion of Jesus, illustrates that various manifestations of mimetic contagion happened at distinct stages, ultimately converging into a more extensive and significant contagion. This can be compared to streams and tributaries merging into a larger river, which subsequently flows into an ocean. However, the gathering together of all forces against one is not unique to the story of the Passion. As we saw at the beginning, this similar gathering is found at the beginning of all founding murder myths. The question that arises is: does this unity and unanimity continue after the death of Jesus and his resurrection, as has been the case in myths?

4.4.3.6. The Death of Jesus

In mythological texts, the entire community that unites to lynch a single victim remains unified for a time, enjoying a period of peace or catharsis, and later collectively proclaims the victim as divine. In contrast, here the unity of the crowd begins to disintegrate almost immediately after Jesus' crucifixion. This distinction marks the death of Christ as fundamentally different from those in myths. While calm returned to the city, as the feared riots did not occur, there was no jubilation or celebrations as anticipated. Soon after Jesus' crucifixion and his subsequent death on the cross, instead of experiencing temporary peace, people walked away, beating their breasts in sorrow, lamenting that they had killed an innocent man. Only Luke's Gospel captures this detail about the crowd's reaction. Other Gospels focus on the centurion's confession that Jesus was indeed the Son of God, a righteous man. However, Luke goes further to reveal the response of the rest of the crowd, which becomes a significant detail in Girard's theory. Immediately after the centurion's confession, Luke records the following: “When *all the people* who had gathered for this spectacle saw what had happened, they returned home beating their

⁶⁵⁷ René GIRARD, *The scapegoat*, 106.

⁶⁵⁸ René GIRARD, *I see Satan fall like lightning*, 132.

breasts.” (Luke 23:48). Unlike in myths where the entire community returns home satisfied after lynching the victim, relishing the *cathartic* atmosphere of temporary peace and eased tensions,⁶⁵⁹ here they do not return home in peace but instead condemn themselves, beating their breasts in regret and sorrow. It dawned upon them that they had killed an innocent man, unlike in myths where the victim was guilty. Rather than the execution resulting in the creation of divinities from their victim, as mythology suggests, they do not declare Jesus divine because Christ’s divinity is not dependent on the crucifixion.⁶⁶⁰ Instead, as Palaver aptly noted, “Christ is God not because he was crucified but because he is God born from God from all eternity.”⁶⁶¹

4.4.3.7. *The Resurrection of Jesus*

While in the myths, the entire community ascribes divinity to the victim, thus creating a god from a victim, here, the contrary is the case. It is not the whole community but a dissenting or protesting minority of his followers who previously attempted to resist his arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane, and some women who, after the resurrection, proclaim his innocence and confess that he is divine but never created him into a God.⁶⁶²

The masses of people who had dispersed shortly after the crucifixion gathered again after his resurrection on the day of Pentecost. The disciples, led by Peter, boldly proclaimed that the one they had condemned and crucified was innocent, and God had raised Him from the dead. The all-against-one victim mechanism is even succinctly unveiled and clearly spelt out in the Acts of the Apostles, in a prayer said after Peter and John’s release from prison following the healing of a crippled man: “Indeed they gathered in this city against your holy servant Jesus whom you anointed, *Herod and Pontius Pilate, together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel*, to do what your hand had long ago planned to take place.” (Acts 4:27-28). The Gentiles mentioned here refer to non-Jewish peoples and nations. Therefore, Gentiles, alongside the people of Israel, symbolise the entirety of the earth. Girard sees here a representation of the universal dimension of Jesus’s crucifixion. This description captures the whole earth as having, in a mimetic manner, collectively turned against Christ. It is not just a given society but universally the whole world. “It demonstrates that the alliance against Jesus has a truly universal character.”⁶⁶³ Schwager remarks that Christ has hereby become a universal scapegoat.⁶⁶⁴ In his

⁶⁵⁹ Cf. René GIRARD, *I see Satan fall like lightning*, 131.

⁶⁶⁰ Cf. René GIRARD, *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World*, London 2017, 224.

⁶⁶¹ Wolfgang PALAVER, *René Girard’s Mimetic Theory*, 217.

⁶⁶² Cf. René GIRARD, *I see Satan fall like lightning*, 2.

⁶⁶³ Scott COWDELL et al. (eds.), *René Girard and Raymund Schwager. Correspondence*, 52.

⁶⁶⁴ Cf. Raymund SCHWAGER, *Der wunderbare Tausch*, 44.

interview with Berry, Girard said this prayer articulates the fulfilment of the prophecy talked about in Psalm 118 regarding the unity of all the murderers against the real God.⁶⁶⁵ The Psalm sums up the list of actors who were involved in the crucifixion of Jesus simply as all nations: “*All the nations* surrounded me; in the Lord’s name I crushed them.” (Psalm 118:10). This figure of speech common in the bible seems to drive at showing that the actions of those who were physically present had effects on the whole universe. Historically, not every single nation on earth was present at the crucifixion but was figuratively represented by those who were there.

The resurrection of Jesus vindicated him as being innocent as it also revealed and crushed the mimetic contagion of violence. The mimetic contagion has thus been unveiled as nothing but an unjust mechanism. What is astonishing about the Gospels, as observed by Girard, is that: “the unanimity is not emphasised in order to bow before, or submit to, its verdict as in all the mythological, political, and even philosophical texts, but to denounce its total mistake, its perfect example of untruth.”⁶⁶⁶

4.4.3.8. *Satan as a deceitful model of imitation*

The mimetic violence or rivalistic contagion is a perfect example of an untruth or deceit that has existed in the world but has remained hidden since the foundation of the world. It is an untruth or a lie because it is a mechanism that is founded on deceit and is perpetrated by the same lies, but is now laid bare in the Bible with the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus as the climax. Apart from the single victim mechanism being a lie, even the people swayed by it and who thus carry it out are considered guilty of deceit. As noted by Jan-Heiner Tück in his commentary on the unveiled mechanism, “It is not the victim who is guilty but the masses that declared the innocent as guilty and brutally expelled him.”⁶⁶⁷ In the case of the crucifixion of Jesus, therefore, the masses that teamed up against the victim are guilty. They returned home, beating their breasts. The masses were wrong for following a deceptive mechanism and allowed themselves to be deceived. According to Girard, mimetic violence is identical to Satan, the father of lies, who is the architect behind the entire mechanism, hence also calling the mechanism “the mimetic or satanic cycle.”⁶⁶⁸ And as it was already established above, that he is the *arche* of the original sin and of the founding murder, so is he also the *arche* of the

⁶⁶⁵ Cf. Michael HARDIN (ed.), *Reading the Bible with René Girard*, 135.

⁶⁶⁶ René GIRARD, *The Scapegoat*, 115.

⁶⁶⁷ Jan-Heiner TÜCK, *Crux. Über die Anstößigkeit des Kreuzes*, Freiburg i. Br. 2023, 99. Translation is mine.

⁶⁶⁸ René GIRARD, *I see Satan fall like lightning*, 43.

rivalistic mimetic contagion. Girard specifically singles out the single victim mechanism as the highest resource of Satan when he said:

What is the cure-all of the prince of this world, his most clever trick, perhaps his only resource? It is the mimetic all-against-one or single-victim mechanism. It is the mimetic unanimity that, at the highest pitch of disorder, brings order back into human communities. This sleight of hand remained hidden until the Jewish and Christian revelation.⁶⁶⁹

The Christian revelation, with the passion of Christ as the climax, has fully and clearly uncovered this single most resource of Satan. The unveiling of the single-victim mechanism is evident in the unjust condemnation of an innocent victim.⁶⁷⁰ The passion of Jesus is clearly a mechanism manufactured by Satan to kill the innocent one.

Having unveiled Satan as the architect behind the violent contagion, Girard turns his attention briefly to this figure. Though Satan has succeeded in establishing himself as a model and establishing a single victim mechanism in human society, his being can only be described as that of a parasite. Girard asserts that “Satan... sustains himself as a parasite on what God creates by imitating God in a manner that is jealous, grotesque, perverse, and as contrary as possible to the upright imitation of Jesus.”⁶⁷¹ Though Satan also imitates God, his imitation is perverse and jealous, he consequently mediates the same to his imitators, thus creating an unending cycle of mimetic desire and violence. Those who are violent imitate the violent one, Satan, because the violent imitate the violent. One certain way to end mimetic violence is to stop imitating Satan, the father of violence. However, simply stopping imitation of him is only half the solution towards overcoming violence. A complete solution must suggest what or whom to imitate in place of what is abandoned or forbidden. Girard's theory thus proposes the key solution: that man must imitate Jesus Christ, the perfect model who is non-violent and does not lead to violence but to righteousness instead. The arrival of Jesus into this mimetic, contagious world marked the beginning of salvation for man, i.e., the end of violence, which he exposed as a mechanism based on deceit.

⁶⁶⁹ René GIRARD, *I see Satan fall like lightning*, 44.

⁶⁷⁰ Cf. René GIRARD, *I see Satan fall like lightning*, 41.

⁶⁷¹ René GIRARD, *I see Satan fall like lightning*, 44.

Summary

The mimetic contagion is a cycle that repeats itself over and over again in society. Man is trapped in it and unfortunately cannot get out of it, except for temporary periods of peace (*catharsis*) after the lynching or expulsion of the victim. If the cycle could be broken, then it would be possible to free man from it. The revelation contained in the Jewish and Christian scriptures exposes the deception of the mimetic contagion and desire, the violence that results from it and the possibility of breaking away from the cycle. It began with Satan's deception of Eve and Adam in the Garden of Eden, leading them to greedily imitate God rebelliously, desiring to be like God, but it did not go so far as to become violent. This sin extended to Cain, who killed his brother out of envy. Hans Urs von Balthasar's critique that for Girard, the typical sin of man begins with the story of Cain and Abel and not with the narrative of the fall in Paradise⁶⁷² is no longer valid. Although this might have been the case in his first two works, *Violence and The Sacred*, and *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World*, his latest books and interviews, especially "Reading the Bible with Rene Girard", take into account the sin of Adam and Eve as the beginning and entry of sin (*mimetic rivalry*) in the human community through mimetic desire mediated to them by the serpent. The unveiling of the mimetic contagion mechanism, ultimately through the life and passion of Christ, is meant to ultimately put an end to the mimetic cycle and violence by imitating Jesus in his imitation of the Father instead of Satan, who imitates the Father greedily. Jesus mediates non-violence, while Satan mediates greed and violence. Jesus came to unveil the satanic cycle and bring it to an end by introducing the Christ-centric cycle, that is, the imitation of Christ. One belongs to this Christ-centred mimesis not only through imitation but also by becoming a disciple of Jesus. The imitation of Jesus, who does not greedily imitate his Father, does not lead to rivalry, as the imitation of Satan does. Imitating Jesus leads to discipleship, and as noted by Kirwan, "discipleship does not produce conflict."⁶⁷³ Man can thus save himself by imitating the model of good mimesis par excellence, Jesus Christ, by being his disciple.

⁶⁷² Cf. Hans Urs von BALTHASAR, *Die neue Theorie von Jesus als dem Sündenbock*, in: Internationale katholische Zeitschrift *Communio*, 9 (1980) 184-185.

⁶⁷³ Michael KIRWAN, *Girard and Theology*, London 2009, 34.

PART III

SCHWAGER AND GIRARD *VIS-À-VIS* ANSELM

Chapter Five

5.0. Introduction

In this third and final part of our work, we want to bring Girard's theory of mimesis, which Schwager incorporates into his dramatic theology, into discussion with Anselm. It is undeniable that there is a huge epochal difference between the two theories, i.e., the twelfth-century medieval work of Anselm and the modern twenty-first-century works of Girard and Schwager. However, this epochal difference is linked to each other by sharing a similar problem that Anselm wanted to resolve at that time, namely how man can be saved from sin, by inculturating his theory in the language and symbols of that time, as Greshake rightly observed.⁶⁷⁴ However, since culture is dynamic, the inculturation done by Anselm at that time has become incomprehensible for the modern audience, thereby necessitating a new inculturation while keeping the main points of his theory preserved. While speaking of the earlier inculturation by Anselm, Gaál observed that: "With the transition from antiquity to the middle ages, the Christian understanding of redemption had to develop a different, interpreting image to convey the same, ageless Christian message of atonement."⁶⁷⁵ That inculturation remained intact until the twentieth century, when it faced criticism from Ritschl and Harnack, as Greshake observed.⁶⁷⁶ In this contemporary period, the *mimesis theory* of Girard is a modern concept that readily offers a new interpreting key to soteriology. The mimesis theory is more relatable than the medieval terminologies of *honor*, *ordo*, *rectitudo voluntatis*, *poena*, and *satisfaction* used by Anselm. The mimesis theory of Girard, as received into theology by Schwager, offers us one of the plausible interpreting images to convey the ageless atonement message for today's contemporary audience. We now turn to the reception of the mimesis

⁶⁷⁴ Cf. Gisbert GRESHAKE, *Gottes Heil- Glück des Menschen*, 92.

⁶⁷⁵ Emery DE GAÁL, *Anselm of Canterbury and the Third Reich. Gottlieb Söhngen on upholding the Humanum Amid the Inhumane*, in: *Rocznik Teologii Katolickiej*, XX (2021) 34-48, here: 43.

⁶⁷⁶ Cf. Gisbert GRESHAKE, *Gottes Heil- Glück des Menschen*, 80

theory into dramatic theology before we bring that theology into discussion with Anselm's redemption theory.

5.1. Reception of the Mimesis Theory in the Dramatic Theology of Raymund Schwager

As Brake observed, Girard's theory of mimesis is one such theory that many Christian scholars find increasingly difficult to ignore.⁶⁷⁷ The compelling nature of the theory can be seen, for example, in the actions of Schwager, who, after coming across an article on mimesis in a journal, could not resist buying Girard's book. "I discovered your book *La violence et le sacré* from reading the journal *Esprit*, I bought it immediately, and what I've read I've found to be admirable."⁶⁷⁸ Although mimetic desire is as old as the world itself, it remained concealed until discovered by Girard, who opened our eyes to a completely new way of perceiving violence in human societies. According to Kirwan, the theory of mimesis is "so energising for some people and so easily and vigorously dismissed by others."⁶⁷⁹ This mixed reaction reception of Girard in the theological world is also observed by Niewiadomski, who states that many see Girard as a genius while others see a charlatan in him.⁶⁸⁰ As energising and revolutionary as the mimesis theory may be, some criticisms have been raised about Girard's theory, such as that of making "broad generalizations... he does a close reading of one story... and draws from it conclusions regarding the mythologies of the whole world."⁶⁸¹ While others describe it as a breakthrough discovery that elucidates the relationships between religion, culture and violence, others, like McDonald, criticise him for isolating bible passages from their contexts and giving them tendentious interpretations, e.g., 'the founding murder' as being Luke's concern in 11:51 and John 8:44.⁶⁸² Many speakers, as reported by Schwager, at the conference of German Old Testament scholars in Brixen (South Tyrol) August 24-28, 1981,

⁶⁷⁷ Timothy Vande BRAKE, Review of: René GIRARD, *I see Satan fall like Lightning*, Maryknoll, NY 2001, in: Christian scholar's Review, Winter 33,2, (2004) 280-281.

⁶⁷⁸ Scott COWDELL et al. (eds.), *René Girard and Raymund Schwager. Correspondence 1974-1991*, trans. Chris FLEMING and Sheelah Trefle HIDDEN, New York 2016, 16.

⁶⁷⁹ Michael KIRWAN, *Discovering Girard*, Plymouth 2005, 5.

⁶⁸⁰ Cf. Jozef NIEWIADOMSKI, *Figurationen mimetischer Rivalität in der Literaturen als Anstoß für die Theologie. Assoziationen an das Werk eines Literaturwissenschaftlers, eines Theologen und eines Schriftstellers*, in: Wolfgang BRAUNGART et.al. (Hg.), *Studien zu Literatur und Religion, Bilanz und Perspektiven eines interdisziplinären Forschungsgebietes*, Bielefeld, 2018, 198.

⁶⁸¹ Leo D. LEFEBURE, Review of: René GIRARD, *I see Satan fall like Lightning*, Maryknoll, NY 2001, in: The Christian Century Foundation 118/34 (2001) 24-25.

⁶⁸² Patricia M. McDONALD, Review of: René GIRARD, *I see Satan fall like Lightning*, Maryknoll, NY 2001, in: Theological Studies 63 (2002) 208.

criticised him for seemingly suggesting a mono-causal explanation of all religious phenomena. Schwager reported about his impression of that meeting of Old Testament scholars in the following words: “*Vor allem aber tauchte immer wieder der Einwand auf, die Theorie möge interessant sein. Und manche Aspekte der Alttestamentlichen Schrift neu zu beleuchten, ihre monokausale Erklärung sei aber abzulehnen.*”⁶⁸³ However, in his correspondence with Schwager of 29th September 1981, Girard refuted this critique and defended himself by saying: “The mimetic is not mono-causal, it is rather a principle of complexity.”⁶⁸⁴ He clarified that it is not the only way of understanding violence, but one of the many ways. He furthermore qualifies what interests him more than mimetic violence when he said: “what interests me are the consequences of mimetic desire for the linking of individuals and societies.”⁶⁸⁵ Even people who are total strangers gather spontaneously together as long as they share the same enemy or obstacle.

Schwager, who popularised Girard’s works in the German-speaking world and theological circles, was also misunderstood for embracing the mimesis theory and became the subject of criticism in a review of his book *Must There Be Scapegoats?* The critique against him was that he was trying to explain all of Christianity by violence.⁶⁸⁶ However, this was in the early stages of the reception of the mimesis theory in theology before many Christian scholars fully understood Girard correctly. It was later favourably accepted by many, as noted by Schwager in his letter to Girard. Speaking about the Old Testament theologians at the conference on violence and nonviolence, Schwager reported to Girard, saying: “I was able to clarify a few things, and several have changed their minds and are now more favourably disposed to your thoughts.”⁶⁸⁷ This suggests that many of the criticisms previously levelled at both Girard and Schwager may no longer apply.

Although not everyone accepts every detail of Girard’s theory, his theory is generally accepted. As Niewiadomski noted, Girard has not only fascinated and disturbed the academic world, but some regard him as a great thinker of our time, equating him with great thinkers like Freud or

⁶⁸³ Raymund SCHWAGER, *Eindrücke von einer Begegnung*, in: Norbert LOHFINK (Hg.), *Gewalt und Gewaltlogik im Alten Testament*, Freiburg i. Br. 1983, 214.

⁶⁸⁴ Scott COWDELL et al. (eds.), *René GIRARD and Raymund Schwager. Correspondence*, 109.

⁶⁸⁵ Scott COWDELL et al. (eds.), *René Girard and Raymund Schwager. Correspondence*, 110.

⁶⁸⁶ Scott COWDELL et al. (eds.), *René Girard and Raymund Schwager. Correspondence*, 107. The letter is dated August 30, 1981.

⁶⁸⁷ Scott COWDELL et al. (eds.), *René Girard and Raymund Schwager. Correspondence*, 108.

Marx.⁶⁸⁸ While comparing him to Freud, Robert J. Daly expressed his admiration and even praised Girard, saying he had made “a similar quantum leap in our understanding of the biblical writings.”⁶⁸⁹

Amid such mixed reactions to the mimetic theory, Schwager not only found the theory to be fascinating but also admirable, with a huge potential to be a key to understanding and interpreting certain biblical and theological themes and mysteries. He had long expressed dissatisfaction with the historical-critical exegesis for its limitations in deciphering human projections in texts that project human violence onto the image of God. Finding Girard, who was thinking along the same lines as him in the mimesis theory, gave Schwager an impetus to vigorously pursue this route of exploring the mystery of violence in the scriptures. Schwager admits to this fact when he says: “I must say that encounter with your thought has influenced in a decisive way my thinking, my work and even my way of experiencing the world.”⁶⁹⁰

The Innsbruck dogmatician took the initiative to get in touch with Girard and initiated a real conversation with him about the mimesis theory. Their conversations through correspondence lasted from 1974 to 1991, including several personal encounters to exchange ideas about the mimesis theory and its relevance to understanding the mystery behind violence and rivalry in human society. Schwager eventually took it up into theology by building his theology around it. Schwager’s admiration is expressed in his first correspondence with Girard, dated 18th March 1974: “Your reflections on the efficacy of Christianity are very much in line with my own thinking.”⁶⁹¹ He made this remark after having read Girard’s *La violence et le sacré* and thus said to him: “I was greatly impressed overall and I am very inclined to accept your theory.”⁶⁹² By inclination, as his writings later confirmed, Schwager accepted many things from Girard’s theory with a critical mind, but not everything. He challenged him on other aspects that he found to conflict with theology. Schwager not only engaged him through correspondence but also in person to clarify some points of concern from a theological perspective. Schwager also introduced Girard to the theological world, especially in the German-speaking world. Through his correspondence with Girard, Schwager managed to get Girard to change his position from considering the death of Jesus as a non-sacrificial offering to accepting it as a sacrifice, albeit

⁶⁸⁸ Cf. Jozef NIEWIADOMSKI, *Figurationen mimetischer Rivalität in der Literaturen als Anstoß für die Theologie*. 198.

⁶⁸⁹ Robert J. DALY, *Foreword*, in: Raymund SCHWAGER, *Must there be Scapegoats? Violence and Redemption in the Bible*, San Francisco 1987 [Reprint: 2000], v.

⁶⁹⁰ Scott COWDELL et al. (eds.), *René Girard and Raymund Schwager. Correspondence*, 36.

⁶⁹¹ Scott COWDELL et al. (eds.), *René Girard and Raymund Schwager. Correspondence*, 16.

⁶⁹² Scott COWDELL et al. (eds.), *René Girard and Raymund Schwager. Correspondence*, 15.

accompanied by some clarifications.⁶⁹³ Based on the mimesis theory, Schwager called the theology he developed dramatic theology. As the name suggests, it is a way of trying to understand the unfolding of God's revelation to humanity using the language of drama or theatre. Having been discovered in novels and plays, the theory of mimesis fits in well with Schwager's theology of drama. This dramatic theology will be used as a tool in our attempt to interpret the soteriology of St. Anselm from Canterbury in a language that can be understood today.

5.2. Dramatic Theology

Schwager incorporated the theory of mimesis into the theology that he developed, which, according to Wandering, is a kind of “mode of arguing he called ‘dramatic’, a term he took from Hans Urs von Balthasar but which he gave a new meaning in his theology.”⁶⁹⁴ However, the term “dramatic” or “drama” was not invented or coined by Balthasar or Schwager but was used much earlier in theology by Karl Barth and Karl Rahner. This is noted by Wandering, who says: “In developing his ideas on dramatic theology, Schwager, ... drew on other theologians, among them Karl Barth, Hans Urs von Balthasar, and Karl Rahner. Yet he further refined and modified their dramatic approach, thus establishing his own dramatic theology.”⁶⁹⁵ Wandering's observation suggests that Schwager's modifications resulted in a final product substantially different from the dramatic theology of his predecessors, even though it continued to bear the same name. The uniqueness of his theology lies in its focus on the mimesis theory as its core element. Before we can proceed to examine Schwager's dramatic theology closely, it will be necessary to trace the usage of the term dramatic theology back to his predecessor and fellow Jesuit in Innsbruck, Karl Rahner, and the former Swiss Jesuit priest and Cardinal-elect, Hans Urs von Balthasar. We begin with Rahner's description of dramatic theology.

5.2.1. Karl Rahner: The creature as a co-performer in the divine-human drama of history

As employed earlier, the term “*Dramatic theology*” referred to a particular way of looking at human salvation history as a drama or a play taking place on a stage called Earth, with human

⁶⁹³ Cf. Scott COWDELL et al. (eds.), *René Girard and Raymund Schwager. Correspondence*, 61-62.

⁶⁹⁴ Nikolaus WANDINGER, *Raymund Schwager. Dramatic Theology*, 337.

⁶⁹⁵ Nikolaus WANDINGER, *Raymund Schwager. Dramatic Theology*, 337.

beings as co-actors or co-agents with God. This is expressed in Rahner's observation of salvation history as follows:

Man takes part in real dialogue with God. ... God's activity in the course of [the] saving history is not a kind of monologue which God conducts by Himself; it is a long, dramatic dialogue between God and his creatures, in which God confers on man the power to make[give] a genuine answer to His word, and so makes His own further word dependent upon the way in which man does in fact freely answer. ... History is not just a play that God puts Himself on the stage and creatures are merely what is performed [his puppets]; the creature is *a real co-performer* in this humano-divine drama of history...⁶⁹⁶

According to the above, God's subsequent actions in this divine-human drama depend on man's actions and are, therefore, unpredictable. By long dramatic dialogue, Rahner suggests that it is an ongoing dialogue between God and the human person. Rahner further concretises his view of God's dramatic action in history by introducing the event of Christ's incarnation, which makes God visible on the earthly stage. He says: "Thinking in retrospect from the NT, we can even say: God exercises His Lordship over the whole of creation by entering into the world with his own personal initiative, He gives up His sovereign grandeur above everything finite by becoming a co-actor in this world Himself."⁶⁹⁷ This is reminiscent of the kenosis in the Philippians hymn describing how Jesus humbled himself and became man (Phil. 2:6-11). The transcendent and invisible co-actor becomes a fellow actor with His creatures on earth visibly in the event of the incarnation. This dramatic view of salvation history and revelation by Rahner had an influence on his fellow Jesuit colleague Raymund Schwager, who would later adopt it in the development of his unique dramatic theology. This is evident in the latter's description of what he understands by dramatic theology. Schwager says: "Dramatic theology is interested not in the unity of a system but in a unity within a dramatic event, in which the connections derive not from logical conclusions but from decisions made by actors responding positively or negatively to other actors."⁶⁹⁸ We can see similarities with Rahner here when he insists that connections are not necessarily logical but dependent on the decisions of actors. In the much broader dramatic theology, Schwager focuses on the dramatic events from Jesus's incarnation to Pentecost, as we will see later in the five acts of his dramatic theology.

⁶⁹⁶ Karl RAHNER, *Theos in the New Testament*, in: DERS., *Theological investigations Vol. 1*, second EDITION, London 1965, 79-148, Here: 110-111. German original: Karl RAHNER, *Theos im Neuen Testament*, in: DERS., *Schriften zur Theologie, Band I*, Einsiedeln 1967, 126-127.

⁶⁹⁷ Karl RAHNER, *Theos in the New Testament*, 121.

⁶⁹⁸ Raymund SCHWAGER, *Christology*, in: Peter SCOTT - William T. CAVANAUGH (eds.), *The Blackwell companion to political theology*, Victoria 348-362, here: 349.

Furthermore, Schwager's view places the freedom of the actors in this drama at the centre. This makes future dramatic actions dependent on the preceding actions of the freely acting actors. The following or subsequent action in this drama thus remains unpredictable and open-ended. According to Kirwan, however, Schwager acknowledges more "his debt to Hans Urs von Balthasar whose *Theo Drama* is the essential backdrop of the emergent project of a dramatic theology."⁶⁹⁹

5.2.2. Balthasar's Theo Drama- as an interaction between infinite and finite freedom

Balthasar's most famous works are his theological trilogy: *The Glory of the Lord*, *Theo-Drama*, and *Theo-logic*. His *Theo-Drama*, which contains the dramatic theology, is in the middle of his trilogy. The five volumes of his Theo-drama are I. *Prolegomena*, II. *The Dramatis personae: Man in God*, III. *The Dramatis personae: The person in Christ*, IV. *The Action*, and V. *The Last Act*. In his theological dramatic theology, unlike Rahner, Balthasar casts his gaze beyond the earth to the inner trinitarian life of God as the first place where the drama unfolds. In presenting his theology, Balthasar adopts the concepts from the world of theatre or drama to communicate and transmit salvation history as a drama. This is clearly illustrated in his *Prolegomena*, where he states as follows: "Life is a comedy, the world is a theatre, people are actors, and God is the author. It is up to Him to assign the roles, but to men to play them well."⁷⁰⁰ A comedy or play, however, also needs a director who works behind the scenes, and Balthasar assigned this role to the Holy Spirit.⁷⁰¹ Having identified the actors in the drama and the stage on which they act, Balthasar proceeds to unfold his Theo-drama in five acts.

- i) *First act: The prelude in heaven: The original drama in God as a precondition for the dramatic interplay between finite and absolute freedom*

In his concise review of the Theo drama, Tück points out that Balthasar's dramatic theory, which consists of five acts, begins in heaven, with the first act being the prelude in heaven: the original drama in God as a precondition for the dramatic interplay between finite and infinite

⁶⁹⁹ Michael KIRWAN, *Girard and Theology*, 36.

⁷⁰⁰ Hans Urs von BALTHASAR, *Theodramatik*. 1. Band, Prolegomena, Einsiedeln, zweite Auflage 2009, 148. My Translation.

⁷⁰¹ Cf. Hans Urs von BALTHASAR, *Theodrama* III, 532.

freedom.⁷⁰² Taking as a point of departure the fact that “God is life, love, an eternal fullness of communion, who does not need the world in order to have another to love... he acts in utter freedom, binding himself freely-not out of compulsion-to the work he has begun,”⁷⁰³ Balthasar proceeds to describe the inner trinitarian life, processions and relations of each person in the first Act in the prelude in heaven.

The act of the Father’s self-giving requires his own space of freedom; the act of the Son’s self-receiving and self-giving also demands its own space of freedom; likewise, the act of the Spirit’s procession, which brings to light the love shared between the Father and the Son, requires its own space of freedom.⁷⁰⁴ The inner Trinitarian relationships, which show the exchange between different persons who at the same time share the unity of nature, also reflect the interaction between finite and absolute freedom. Just as the Father needs free space in his act of self-giving and the Son in his act of receiving and self-giving, so does the human need his own free space. According to Balthasar, God facilitates this by withdrawing into latency.

The concept of latency, similar to the Jewish mystical concept of *zimzum*,⁷⁰⁵ suggests that God creates a space where human beings can act in freedom by going away. A demonstration of this fact is found in the story of the parable of the Talents, where the master of the vineyard goes away to a foreign country, entrusting his servants with different talents. The finite creatures are given enough freedom and space by their master to explore their creativity and actualise their potential without close supervision. Tück notes that the latency of God is the reason why created actors can make mistakes and fall into sin.⁷⁰⁶ God’s absence or his withdrawal creates space for man to expand his freedom. With his expanded freedom, man enters the stage and leads us into the second act.

⁷⁰² Jan-Heiner TÜCK, *Der Abgrund der Freiheit. Zum theodramatischen Konflikt zwischen endlicher und unendlicher Freiheit*, in: Magnus STRIET- Jan-Heiner TÜCK (eds.), *Die Kunst Gottes verstehen*. Hans Urs von Balthasar’s theologische Provokationen, Freiburg i. Br. 2005, 82-116, Here, 88.

⁷⁰³ Hans Urs von BALTHASAR, *Theo-Drama* III, 529.

⁷⁰⁴ Cf. Hans Urs von BALTHASAR, *Theo-Drama* III, 519. See also: Jan-Heiner TÜCK, *Der Abgrund der Freiheit*, 90.

⁷⁰⁵ Christoph SCHULTE, *Zimzum. God and the origin of the world*, Philadelphia 2023, 29. Lurianic Kabbala defines Zimzum as God’s self-contraction, self-delineation and retreat resulting in the creation of space to create the world ex nihilo.

⁷⁰⁶ Cf. Jan-Heiner TÜCK, *Der Abgrund der Freiheit*, 90.

ii) *Second Act: Towards the physiognomy of finite freedom – man enters the stage*

With God's withdrawal into the state of latency, man is given a stage on Earth where he now has the necessary freedom and space to explore and unfold his finite freedom. Through encounters and exchanges with others, man becomes conscious of the freedoms of others and realises that his freedom is both a duty and a gift. A gift and duty, however, point to the existence of the giver. Aware of the freedoms of others, man begins to search for his unique identity and to expand his potential by striving for political power; others strive for outstanding achievements in the fields of arts or sciences in order to be remembered and be entered into the annals of history or have monuments erected in their honour. While others aspire to greatness, some wear masks in order to be seen as more than they are; others play along where they should not because they want to be there at all costs; still, others pretend to be uninvolved so as not to make a fool of themselves.⁷⁰⁷ According to Balthasar, the most important question for man to answer is: Who am I? Why am I here? Man cannot answer these questions, but he must allow himself to be told who he is and why he is here. It is God who tells the individual conscious subject (*Geistsubjekt*) why he exists and gives him a mission authenticated by God Himself.⁷⁰⁸ Personal identity is no longer threatened there where it is anchored in God and allows itself to be fulfilled by God. And with this, God willingly comes historically to share the stage with man.

iii) *Third Act: Jesus Christ – The Protagonist enters the stage*

Jesus of Nazareth, the Father's only begotten son, entered the stage and, by his incarnation, became the protagonist of the entire Theo-drama.⁷⁰⁹ He could not have been the protagonist if he had come to earth as a wandering God endowed with the attribute of foreknowledge. He received, according to Balthasar, the time to be on this stage from the hands of the Father. He is what he is, not of himself, but receives his identity from the Father's sending.⁷¹⁰ In his dramatic life on earth, the Son is always ready to be sent, always at the service of the Father, not pursuing his own will. 'The only thing he does not do is what we human beings in our sin always want to do, which is to skip the time and the ordinances that are in it in order to give

⁷⁰⁷ Cf. Jan-Heiner TÜCK, *Der Abgrund der Freiheit*, 94.

⁷⁰⁸ Cf. Hans Urs von BALTHASAR, *Theo-Drama*, Volume III, 271.

⁷⁰⁹ Cf. Hans Urs von BALTHASAR, *Theo-Drama*, Volume III, 21.

⁷¹⁰ Cf. Hans Urs von BALTHASAR, *Theo-Drama*, Volume III, 153. See also Jan-Heiner TÜCK, *Der Abgrund der Freiheit*, 95.

us an overview and to reassure us in a kind of presumed eternity.’ Balthasar asserts that Jesus’ self-awareness is intimately bound up with the mission of his life. His perfection is his obedience, which is not premature.⁷¹¹

Furthermore, Balthasar compares Jesus’ mission to that of an actor who allows every word which he speaks and every act he performs to be determined by the direction of or at the Holy Spirit’s promptings.⁷¹² In his play, according to Balthasar, Jesus is inspired by the Holy Spirit act by act and scene by scene and step by step.⁷¹³ The play does not exist in advance but is conceived and immediately carried out. The incarnation is not the umpteenth re-enactment of a tragedy that has long been waiting in the archives of eternity. It is the most primordial process, as unique and uncompromising as the eternal birth of the Son from the Father, which is now taking place.⁷¹⁴

In the historical realisation of the mission of Jesus, there is an inversion of the Trinity in terms of the relationships within the Trinity. Balthasar’s point of departure is the Apostle’s Creed article on incarnation: *et incarnatus est de Spiritu Sancto ex Maria Virgine*...translated into English as “conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary.” The Spirit is presented as active in the incarnation process. In contrast, the son is *conceived* and born, is at others’ disposal and submits to events, which is expressed grammatically in a passive form. At the baptism also, “the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form... and *was led* by the Spirit in the wilderness”. The son, therefore, becomes in a certain sense the product of the Spirit who *generates* him *ex Maria Virgine*.⁷¹⁵ Here, then, it is the Son who proceeds from the Father and the Spirit, “although within the trinity itself, the spirit is the product of the united spiration of the Father and the Son.”⁷¹⁶ On the stage in his historical works, Jesus revealed the nature of God when he expelled the merchants from the temple, wept over Jerusalem and rejoiced at the conversion of a sinner. He also showed the human person what he is and what he should become again through the representation of Christ. He describes the Christological movement as a movement from humility to exaltation, as described in the Philippian Hymn that he who

⁷¹¹ Cf. Jan-Heiner TüCK, *Der Abgrund der Freiheit*, 95.

⁷¹² Cf. Hans Urs von BALTHASAR, *Theo-Drama III*, 533.

⁷¹³ Cf. Hans Urs von BALTHASAR, *Theo-Drama III*, 170.

⁷¹⁴ Cf. Jan-Heiner TüCK, *Der Abgrund der Freiheit*, 96.

⁷¹⁵ Cf. Hans Urs von BALTHASAR, *Theo-Drama III*, 186.

⁷¹⁶ Hans Urs von BALTHASAR, *Theo-Drama III*, 186.

never cared for the glory of his name will be crowned with a name above all names, as the firstborn from the dead.⁷¹⁷

iv) *The fourth Act: High and turning point of the drama – cross and descent*

On the cross, we see the unwavering seriousness of God's love. The drama is reversed as Christ takes the place of the people who have closed themselves off from their fellow human beings and from God, giving them the freedom to encounter God anew. Balthasar assumes here that the whole teaching of Jesus, in what it says, promises, and demands, can only be understood from the fall on the cross, from the covering of all exposed actions in word and deed by a passion that explains and makes everything possible. He looks at the cross from a soteriological point of view. Balthasar critiques Rahner's position that Jesus was merely an accidental casualty of the religious-political conflict, or that the cross merely serves as a symbolic representation of the notion that God has already achieved reconciliation with humanity. Similarly, he found Girard's theory that Jesus broke the spiral of violence and counter-violence and exposed the latent scapegoating mechanism inadequate.⁷¹⁸ According to Balthasar, the atonement of the world for its sins does not happen when people throw their sins on the scapegoat Jesus, who accepts them and lets them sit on him, but when Jesus bears the world's guilt. The meaning of Jesus' death can be seen from the New Testament statements, which speak of Him as dying for friends (John 15:13), for many (Matt 10:28; Mark 10:45) and for all (John 12:32; 17:2). In his words and gestures at the Last Supper, Jesus already spoke of his death on the cross, which he willingly accepted for the sins of the world. He consciously sacrificed his life *pro nobis*. Balthasar, therefore, rejects the soteriological meaning of Jesus' death as a post-resurrection interpretation. According to Balthasar, the post-resurrection Jesus cannot be ascribed a completely different consciousness from the earthly one because he is the same person. He must have died consciously for those for whom he gave his life. Otherwise, he is not the one who saved us, and his death would simply remain an external event.⁷¹⁹

Balthasar shows the central meaning of Holy Saturday beyond the theology of the cross. The dead Jesus stands in solidarity with the dead in the place of the neglected and seeks them out. According to the early Church, the reason for Jesus' descent was to redeem the dead. Not only did Jesus suffer extreme abandonment on the cross, but according to Balthasar's Holy Saturday

⁷¹⁷ Cf. Hans Urs von BALTHASAR, *Theo-Drama III*, 521.

⁷¹⁸ Cf. Jan-Heiner TÜCK, *Der Abgrund der Freiheit*, 99.

⁷¹⁹ Cf. Jan-Heiner TÜCK, *Der Abgrund der Freiheit*, 100.

Christology, Jesus also suffered extreme abandonment in death, with a total breakdown of communication.⁷²⁰ He shared the same experience with the dead in hell. Hell, however, is not a place that can be located; rather it is a situation of the loss of God, a loss that now has a place in God through Christ.

v) *Fifth Act: End of the Play: Hope for all or tragedy for God?*

Balthasar's Christology hopes for the salvation of all, asserting that Jesus Christ, the chosen one, was rejected on the cross as our representative or substitute so that the rejected could be chosen, but unmistakably in the direction of universal reconciliation.⁷²¹ Balthasar sees hell as the final loss of God, but the official magisterium has never declared anyone to be condemned to hell. It is only in the divine judgement that sins and their gravity will be revealed before Christ the Judge. Before Christ the Judge, however, salvation is offered to all. "The gift of forgiveness, which is offered to the wrong-doer in spite of his deeds, requires free acceptance, which, however, includes the unreserved acknowledgement of the truth and thus the painful process of conversion and repentance."⁷²² Balthasar underlined that despite knowing the truth, "one who persistently holds on to deceit and ultimately rejects the truth destroys himself in the fires of hell."⁷²³ Through Christ's cross and his descent into death, his broken love, as manifested in his ultimate self-emptying, justifies the hope of universal reconciliation.

Balthasar is, however, criticised when he says that during his descent to the dead, Jesus was abandoned or cut off from the Father by the cutting off of communication. This seems to suggest that the father and the son are separated during the *descensus*.⁷²⁴ This, according to Emerson, is not supported by the early Christian tradition. Having seen the narration of Balthasar's salvation history in five acts, which directly influenced Schwager, we now turn to Schwager's five acts of his dramatic theology.

⁷²⁰ Cf. Hans Urs von BALTHASAR, *Theologie Der Drei Tage*, Einsiedeln, Freiburg i. Br. 1990, 159.

⁷²¹ Cf. Jan-Heiner TÜCK, *Der Abgrund der Freiheit*, 107.

⁷²² Jan-Heiner TÜCK, *Der Abgrund der Freiheit*, 108. Translation is mine.

⁷²³ Cf. Hans Urs von BALTHASAR, *Was dürfen wir hoffen?*, Einsiedeln 1989, 115. My translation.

⁷²⁴ Cf. Mathew Y. EMERSON, *The one who tramped Hades underfoot. A comparative analysis of Christ's descent to the dead and trinitarian relations in second-century Christian texts and Hans Urs von Balthasar*, in: *Scottish Journal of Theology* 72/3 (2019) 277-290, here: 290.

5.2.3. Raymund Schwager's Dramatic Theology

Although Schwager and Balthasar use the same term, *dramatic theology*, to describe their works, Schwager's dramatic theology differs from that of Balthasar's in some respects, as he reveals in his preface to *Jesus in the Drama of Salvation*, where he states that: "The dramatic exegesis that I am attempting here is indebted, on the one hand, to the 'Theodramatik' (God-drama) of Hans Urs von Balthasar, even as I depart from it at points."⁷²⁵ It is worth noting that Schwager calls his work a dramatic exegesis, suggesting that it is more of a form of interpretation of the salvation history as revealed in the scriptures but using drama as a tool. In saying that his work departs from Balthasar, Schwager is already indicating that his new product takes on many things from his predecessors but fundamentally differs from them because of the additional elements or perspectives he incorporated into it. Williams explicitly sums up the two immediate influences on Schwager as being Balthasar and Girard when he says: "The two thinkers who have so greatly influenced Schwager are Hans Urs Von Balthasar and René Girard."⁷²⁶ Balthasar shares a commonality with Schwager in employing theatrical concepts and the notion of dramatic freedom for actors, creating an environment where actions remain open or unpredictable. However, a key distinction lies in Schwager's reliance on mimesis, which underpins his theology. While aware of mimesis theory, Balthasar did not integrate it into his dramatic theology, a point on which Schwager has criticised him.

Schwager's criticism of Balthasar's Theodrama was that it was incomplete because, while he was aware of the mimetic theory, he deliberately chose not to apply it in his works.⁷²⁷ Kirwan noted Schwager's critique as follows:

Schwager suggests that von Balthasar's account would be more balanced if it addressed the theme of mimesis (in its account of sin) and included Jesus' preaching of the kingdom as well as the rejection of that message. As it stands, there is a danger that the violence and the evil of the crucifixion is attributed to God rather than to *sinful human beings*.⁷²⁸

⁷²⁵ Raymund SCHWAGER, *Jesus in the Drama of salvation. Toward a Biblical Doctrine of Redemption*, [trans. by James G. Williams and Paul Haddon], New York 1999, ix.

⁷²⁶ James G. WILLIAMS, *Translator's Preface*, in: Hans Urs von BALTHASAR, *Jesus of Nazareth. How He understood His Life*, New York 1998, 8.

⁷²⁷ Michael KIRWAN, *Girard and Theology*, New York 2009, 37. Balthasar is one of the critics of the mimesis theory, as seen in his critical review of *La Violence et le Sacré* (1972) and *Les choses caches depuis la Fondation du Monde* (1978). See: Hans Urs von BALTHASAR, *Die neue Theorie von Jesus als dem Sündenbock*, in: *IkaZ*, 9 (1980) 184-185.

⁷²⁸ Michael KIRWAN, *Girard and Theology*, 37.

Learning from the critics of Anselm's theory of redemption, Schwager is aware of the strong critique that heaped blame on the Father for the death of Jesus, all in the name of appeasing his wrath or for the sake of His honour. He boldly provides an answer to the perennial question of who is responsible for the violent death of Jesus as being *sinful human beings* and not God. Schwager criticises Balthasar for not clearly distancing the Father from such a perception of being violent. An opportunity to correct that impression was missed by not tapping from the mimesis theory. Therefore, Schwager made it his goal to address Balthasar's shortcomings and concerns in his dramatic theory. The view that Schwager's dramatic theology differs from that of others is also shared and confirmed by Wandinger, who adds that Schwager "further refined and modified their dramatic approach, thus establishing his own dramatic theology."⁷²⁹

The first book that Schwager published after he encountered and came to know Girard's theory tried to employ the drama concept,⁷³⁰ that is, "understanding revelation as a dramatic process involving several agents or actors and as an experiential path and not a matter of intellectualist proclamation."⁷³¹ Schwager initially viewed the dramatic process as occurring in three phases, namely: "Jesus' words and deeds before the passion, during the passion, and at the resurrection."⁷³² The passion of Jesus was placed at the centre of this dramatic theology of Schwager. Though distinct from that of Balthasar, it seems likely that he patterned it on the three-day theology of Balthasar. However, in the next book, which he published in 1978, *Brauchen wir einen sündenbock*, later translated to English as *Must there be scapegoats?* (1987), Schwager expanded this initial structure from three phases to five acts. According to Wandinger, in this book, described as a direct fruit of his conversations with Girard, "Schwager applies Girard's heuristic tools to an in-depth study of the relationship between violence and God's actions in biblical writings".⁷³³ This eventually led Schwager to expand his dramatic theology from the initial three phases to the five acts. One noticeable thing about this evolution or change is that unlike the former, which was centred on the Passion and probably influenced by Balthasar's *Theologie der drei Tage*, the latter is focused on the wholistic Christ

⁷²⁹ Nikolaus WANDINGER, *Raymund Schwager. Dramatic Theology*, in: Lonergan Workshop 19 (2006) 335-346, here, 337.

⁷³⁰ According to Styan, drama is a shared activity dependent on the mutual dependency between an actor and an audience. Needed for the performance in modern drama both behind the scenes and on stage is: Author, words(script), actor, audience, additionally, the stage where the performance is to take place and the director or producer. See: STYAN, J.L., *Drama. A guide to the study of plays*, New York et.al. 2000, 6-8.

⁷³¹ Nikolaus WANDINGER, *Raymund Schwager. Dramatic Theology*, 328.

⁷³² Nikolaus WANDINGER, *Raymund Schwager. Dramatic Theology*, 328.

⁷³³ Nikolaus WANDINGER, *Raymund Schwager. Dramatic Theology*, 329.

event, beginning from the proclamation of the *Basilea* to Pentecost. The five acts that comprise his dramatic theology are the following:

i) *Act I: The Dawning of the Kingdom of God.*

The first act opens with Jesus proclaiming the arrival of the *Basilea* or the Kingdom of God on earth (Mk1:15). God the Father, the King of this kingdom, is presented and addressed by Jesus as the loving Father, stressing his mercy and care. Jesus also announced the liberation of captives and concretely demonstrated this by casting out demons, eating with sinners, tax collectors, and prostitutes, and treating enemies graciously. God shows His love even for His enemies, allowing the rain to fall on good and bad people and the sun to shine on both the good and the evil. The kingdom is concretised by a call on the people to emulate Jesus in their conduct with their fellow human beings. As expressed by Wandinger, there are no preconditions for God's love, but there are post-conditions that enable the kingdom to materialise, such as the challenge to forgive one another as God has forgiven, to love one's neighbour as oneself and to love one's enemies as God because God does the same.⁷³⁴ Imitating the Father and Jesus' imitation of the Father is central in the first act. From the start, God's anger and vengeance are absent from Jesus' messages.⁷³⁵ By preaching on the beatitudes, Jesus declared the future as the time of salvation and immanent expectations. This involves the gathering of Israel through Christ. Jesus defends God's attitude towards sinners by giving the parables of the lost son, the lost sheep, and the lost drachma, indicating the actions of a loving and merciful father who once again wishes to gather the children of Israel. In these parables, Jesus illustrates God as a compassionate Father. The reaction of Jesus's audience remains unknown. It remains open, for it could go either way.⁷³⁶

ii) *Act II: The rejection of the kingdom of God and judgement*

The coming of God's kingdom is depicted as the coming of goodness. However, that goodness was not welcomed. Jesus encountered resistance from the people of Israel, whom he had come to gather together. As a result, based on their reaction of rejection, Jesus uttered harsh words of judgment over the towns of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, in which he was active.⁷³⁷

⁷³⁴ Cf. Nikolaus WANDINGER, *Salvation through forgiveness or through the cross? Raymund Schwager's Dramatic solution to a false alternative*, in: Michael KIRWAN and Sheelah Trefle HIDDEN (Eds.), *Mimesis and Atonement*, London 2017, 95-114, here:97.

⁷³⁵ Cf. Raymund SCHWAGER, *Jesus in the Drama of Salvation*, 36.

⁷³⁶ Cf. Raymund SCHWAGER, *Jesus in the drama of Salvation*, 29-52. See also: Michael KIRWAN, *Girard and Theology*, 37.

⁷³⁷ Cf. Raymund SCHWAGER, *Jesus in the drama of Salvation*, 57.

He wept over Jerusalem; “How often would I have gathered your children about me as a hen gathers her chicks under her wing, but you would not!” (Matt 23:37) He compared its inhabitants to the wicked vine growers who rejected with violence the servants of the owner of the vineyard, ending with the murder of his son whom He sent at last. Rejecting the message also meant rejecting the messenger. The Pharisees, in particular, led the resistance, prompting Jesus to begin speaking of judgment. Talking of Judgement, Schwager discusses at length that it is the people who, in the end, pass judgment on themselves. Jesus’ words sum this up, “The measure you give will be the measure you get.” (Matt 7:2). A question that arises is whether the image of God presented in the judgement parables is consistent with the one in the first act above, of a non-violent God. Schwager firmly states, “God is always in himself the kind Father who meets sinners with anticipatory love; only if the sinners... cling to their own criteria of judgement do they imprison themselves in them.”⁷³⁸ The second act closes with an unresolved question: “Is not Israel itself rejected precisely because of the rejection of the last messenger, who proclaimed God’s unconditional will to save? Does the eschatological mediator of salvation become, in historical fact, the mediator of damnation?”⁷³⁹

iii) *Act III: The bringer of salvation brought to judgment*

Rejecting the message of the *Basilea* also consequently meant rejecting the messenger. And the rejection of the messenger ultimately materialised explicitly in the passion and death of the messenger. The adversaries of Jesus not only attacked him verbally but even proceeded to destroy him physically, making the message in the parable of the wicked tenants killing the son of the master come to pass. “For he who announced the judgement is himself brought to judgment.”⁷⁴⁰ From the arrest leading to his trial, his disciples ran away, and Judas and Peter cooperated with Jesus’ opponents in betraying their master.⁷⁴¹ This shows the building up of a mimetic contagion, as seen from Girard’s mimesis theory. During the trial of Jesus by Pontius Pilate, the Jewish authorities brought the accusation that Jesus claimed to be the Messiah. As noted by Wandinger, “they utilise the vague religio-political connotation of the Messiah- title, thus able to prosecute Jesus as a blasphemer, on the one hand, and as a revolutionary, on the other hand.”⁷⁴² Jesus does not consent to being guilty. However, he maintained that the human

⁷³⁸ Raymund SCHWAGER, *Jesus in the drama of Salvation*, 81.

⁷³⁹ Raymund SCHWAGER, *Jesus in the drama of Salvation*, 81.

⁷⁴⁰ Raymund SCHWAGER, *Jesus in the drama of Salvation*, 82.

⁷⁴¹ Cf. Raymund SCHWAGER, *Jesus in the drama of Salvation*, 91.

⁷⁴² Nikolaus WANDINGER, *Salvation through forgiveness or through the cross?* 100.

actions against him were unjust and opposed God's will.⁷⁴³ Jesus' plea of not guilty distinguishes him from the victims of the scapegoat mechanism in myths, who always admit to being guilty. Jesus further responds with nonviolence and forgiveness, in conformity with the image of God he proclaimed in the first act. He refrained from defensive violence (at his arrest when he ordered Peter to put his sword back in its sheath), but instead, like his father, who loved his enemies, Jesus prayed for his tormentors and for the sins against him.⁷⁴⁴ Wanderinger sums up Schwager's third act as follows:

Jesus conducts himself in full accordance with the message of the first act, while his adversaries behave according to the vengeful image of God contained in the judgement parables. That supports Schwager's claim that in these parables, Jesus does not develop or change his own teaching about God, but he mirrors his opponents' image of God and its social and theological consequences.⁷⁴⁵

Following his passion comes the fourth act, which is the resurrection.

iv) Act IV: Resurrection of the son as judgement of the heavenly Father

The Father, who has been talked about in the first two acts by Jesus and his adversaries, now takes sides in this contention on the side of Jesus unequivocally by raising Jesus from the dead. "This divine act is at the same time an act of judgement, in which God judges in favour of Jesus in the dispute between Jesus and his opponents."⁷⁴⁶ In the resurrection, God the Father vindicates the son against those who opposed him. However, there is also good news for his opponents, according to Schwager, who asserts that:

The verdict of the heavenly father is above all a decision for the son who gave himself up to death for his opponents. It is, therefore, when considered more deeply, also a verdict in favour of sinners. The opponents of the kingdom of God, closing themselves off, had the way to salvation once more opened for them by the Son, who allowed himself to be drawn into their darkness and distance from God. Although they had already turned their backs, as far as they were concerned, the self-giving of the son got around this hardening of hearts once more, insofar as he allowed himself to be made the victim of their self-condemnation.⁷⁴⁷

In this act, Schwager underlines that the Father's image as a non-violent God remains consistent. He asserts that: "the heavenly Father in his easter judgement acted differently from the master of the vineyard ... Even the murder of his son did not provoke in him a reaction of

⁷⁴³ Cf. Nikolaus WANDINGER, *Salvation through forgiveness or through the cross?* 101.

⁷⁴⁴ Cf. Raymund SCHWAGER, *Jesus in the drama of Salvation*, 96.

⁷⁴⁵ Nikolaus WANDINGER, *Salvation through forgiveness or through the cross?* 101.

⁷⁴⁶ Willibald SANDLER, *Divine Action and Dramatic Christology. A Rereading of Raymund Schwager's Jesus in the Drama of Salvation*, in: *Religions*, 14/3 (2023) 390.

⁷⁴⁷ Raymund SCHWAGER, *Jesus in the drama of salvation*, 135.

vengeful retribution, but he sent the risen one back with the message, ‘Peace be with you!’⁷⁴⁸ These words were addressed to his disciples, who had deserted him at the decisive hour. Commenting on the same, Sandler says that Jesus offered his forgiveness, first of all, to his disciples who, according to Schwager, were the first to become personally and subjectively guilty at his [Jesus’s] downfall because, in contrast to the people, they had gained a deeper insight into their master’s mystery during his earthly ministry. Nevertheless, at the crucial hour, they deserted and betrayed him.⁷⁴⁹ The desertion of Jesus by his friends is reversed by a new gathering that follows at Pentecost.

v) *Act V: The Holy Spirit and the New Gathering*

Schwager assigns the fifth act to the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, who until then had worked and dwelt in Jesus in a special way. The act begins with the sending of the Holy Spirit and lasts until Christ’s second return. In this period of time, Jesus’s initiative is to gather the holy people of God, the new post-Easter gathering made possible by the Holy Spirit. Schwager argues that “the heavenly Father answered the rejection of his son and the son’s obedience in a double fashion: through the resurrection of the crucified one and through the sending of the Holy Spirit in those for whom the crucified one surrendered himself.”⁷⁵⁰ The disciples who had deserted him earlier “are transformed into *converted sinners* who proclaim the newly granted forgiveness for all”.⁷⁵¹

In these five acts, Schwager presents a thesis that God is non-violent, backing it up with evidence from biblical passages that show the non-segregative love of God towards both the good and the bad. In the second act, counter texts are presented in the parables of judgement, where God seems to be a wrathful judge; however, that impression is corrected when Schwager argues that it is the image people have of God, not the one presented by Jesus, and therefore not the correct image of God. In the third act, which depicts Christ’s passion and death, Schwager emphasises God’s non-violent nature, who ultimately faced condemnation. In the fourth act, God refrained from enacting vengeful retribution despite the provocation of the murder of His Son, instead extending peace to those responsible. The fifth act illustrates God’s actions as He initiates a new gathering of a new Israel composed of converted sinners after

⁷⁴⁸ Raymund SCHWAGER, *Jesus in the drama of salvation*, 136.

⁷⁴⁹ Willibald SANDLER, *Divine Action and Dramatic Christology*, 5.

⁷⁵⁰ Raymund SCHWAGER, *Jesus in the drama of salvation*, 144.

⁷⁵¹ Nikolaus WANDINGER, *Salvation through forgiveness or through the cross?* 102.

Pentecost. Collectively, these five acts constitute Schwager's dramatic theology, enriched by the theory of mimesis; the structural framework of the book "Jesus in the Drama of Salvation" is modelled upon this framework.

5.3.4. Uniqueness of Schwager's Dramatic Theology

Schwager's dramatic theology is unique due to the mimetic theory interwoven throughout it. This distinction sets apart even his earlier work, specifically his dissertation titled "*Ignatius of Loyola's Dramatic Understanding of the Church*" (1970), from the three subsequent works that are permeated with mimetic theory. In contrast, the former is devoid of such influence. Schwager suffused the mimesis theory into his dramatic theology, particularly in the following three books: *Jesus in the Drama of Salvation* (1999), *Must There Be Scapegoats?* (1987), and *Der wunderbare Tausch* (1986). In these books, the strong influence of Girard on Schwager is clearly visible. Conversely, it is equally accurate to state that Schwager exerted a significant influence on Girard, thereby establishing a mutual exchange of influence between the two individuals. Kirwan confirms and acknowledges this fact when he boldly states that: "Raymund Schwager was a key theological interpreter of Girard."⁷⁵² Kirwan went on to note that "Girard's understanding of sacrifice developed in important respects under Schwager's influence."⁷⁵³

The theory of mimesis, which has emerged as the cornerstone of dramatic theology, is poised to provide a fundamental hermeneutic key for comprehending even the contentious theory of soteriology advanced by Anselm of Canterbury. Schwager undertook a concise examination of the soteriology advanced by Anselm of Canterbury in his work, *Der wunderbare Tausch*. Through the lens of his dramatic theology, we endeavour to interpret the enduring significance of Anselm's soteriology, despite the obsolescence or lack of clarity surrounding some of his medieval concepts for today's audience. We aim to reassess Anselm's theory of salvation through the perspective of this dramatic theology, which is based on the mimetic desires theory.

⁷⁵² Michael KIRWAN, *Girard and Theology*, London 2009, 33.

⁷⁵³ Michael KIRWAN, *Girard and Theology*, 33

5.4. Schwager's view of Anselm's Soteriology

Equipped with the tools of dramatic theology, Schwager now explores Anselm's theory of redemption through novel perspectives. It is in Chapter Seven of *Der wunderbare Tausch* that he looks at Anselm under the title of *Logik der Freiheit und des Natur-Wollen: Zur Erlösungslehre Anselms von Canterbury*. The title he employs to examine Anselm's soteriology suggests the viewpoint from which he intends to approach the theory. One thing is clear from the outset: it does not focus on the sinister wrath of God that demands to be placated by the sacrifice of Jesus as alleged by Kessler, who said Anselm rejected *sola misericordia* to demand a sacrifice to placate God's wrath,⁷⁵⁴ or as asserted by Luther and Calvin, who turned *satisfactio Christi* upside down to *satispassio*, i.e., that Jesus suffered God's wrath for us in order to secure God's mercy for us.⁷⁵⁵ Rather, he emphasises the freedom and the natural will, or human will, of the protagonist and the co-actors involved in this historical event of salvation.

In his evaluation of Anselm's doctrine of redemption, Schwager highlights the concept of Christ's human freedom. However, before concentrating on Jesus's human freedom, Schwager seeks to establish whether Jesus possesses a human will at all. He attempts to trace the evolution of the understanding that Jesus has a human will, as this was not immediately obvious given the duality of his divine and human nature. Free human choice presupposes the existence of a human will. The inquiry pertains, therefore, to the nature of Jesus, specifically whether he possessed a singular will or dual wills. Although many Church Fathers did not acknowledge Jesus's real human will, Origen distinctly recognised it. Nevertheless, his thesis was contentious and tainted, as it suggested that the human will of Jesus was pre-existent.⁷⁵⁶ Among the post-Nicene Fathers, it was Maximus the Confessor who articulated the belief that the God-man possessed a true human will. However, he refrained from attributing any genuine freedom of choice to this human will. Instead, he dismissed the notion that this human will in Jesus could independently make decisions.⁷⁵⁷

According to Schwager, when Maximus contemplated the genuine freedom of choice among rational beings (*geschaffenen geistigen Wesen*), he understood it to signify the ability to discern

⁷⁵⁴ Cf. Hans KESSLER, *Die theologische Bedeutung des Todes Jesu*, 158.

⁷⁵⁵ Cf. Gisbert GRESHAKE, *Gottes Heil- Glück des Menschen*, Freiburg 1983, 101.

⁷⁵⁶ Cf. Raymund SCHWAGER, *Der wunderbare Tausch*, 308.

⁷⁵⁷ Cf. Raymund SCHWAGER, *Der wunderbare Tausch*, 308.

between good and evil. However, the likelihood of Christ committing sin is deemed impossible. Thus, Maximus refrained from attributing this possibility to the human will of Jesus regarding the making of independent choices. Schwager contends that Anselm redefined the understanding of free choice by characterising the freedom of choice expressed by Jesus not as a choice between good and evil but rather as a choice “between a greater good and a lesser good.”⁷⁵⁸ From this perspective, there would be no problems or apprehensions regarding the attribution of free will to the human nature of Jesus. According to Schwager, this represents a significant advancement or progression in the field of Christology.⁷⁵⁹ Jesus possessed the natural human will and thus was free to make free human choices. Hünemann agrees with Schwager on Anselm’s bold step of asserting the freedom of Christ to make choices when he says: “Anselm thinks of freedom and mutual recognition in such a radical manner that it reaches that level of modernity like the legal philosophy of Kant and its principles.”⁷⁶⁰

From this perspective of the new logic of freedom, Schwager reassesses Anselm’s fundamental expression of *aut poena aut satisfactio*. He asserts that the widely used phrase *aut poena aut satisfactio* appears to be fundamentally incompatible with the *Basilea* Good News. By the *Basilea* good news, Schwager has in mind the first act of his dramatic theology, which highlights how God treats both good and bad people with love, providing them with rain and letting the sunshine on both the just and unjust without discrimination. It also highlights God’s forgiveness of His enemies. God actively seeks out sinners, as illustrated in the parables of the Prodigal Son, the Lost Sheep, and the Lost Coin or drachma. Focusing specifically on the parable of the Prodigal Son, Schwager observes how the sinner receives forgiveness even before confessing his transgressions, or taking a moment for introspection, or performing acts of penance.⁷⁶¹ In these parables, it is evident that God does not demand satisfaction. Having said that, the principle of *aut poena aut satisfactio* appears to contradict the good news of God’s kingdom. It appears contradictory because the God Jesus preached about is the Father, who lovingly reaches out to the sinner without ever demanding satisfaction. In his preaching, Jesus equally invited the sinners to freely accept the good news of the Kingdom and lead them to a new way of conduct towards God and their neighbour.⁷⁶² However, when the conversion of His audience did not occur, Jesus consequently pronounced words of judgment in the second

⁷⁵⁸ Cf. CDH II, I.

⁷⁵⁹ Cf. Raymund SCHWAGER, *Der wunderbare Tausch*, 308.

⁷⁶⁰ Peter HÜNNERMANN, *Jesus Christus Gottes Wort in der Zeit*, 203. My translation.

⁷⁶¹ Cf. Raymund SCHWAGER, *Der wunderbare Tausch*, 286-287.

⁷⁶² Cf. Raymund SCHWAGER, *Der wunderbare Tausch*, 309.

act of the dramatic theology. Schwager remarks that it was evident in the preaching of Jesus that there was no mercy, which would have disregarded the negative choices made by humanity. Such a concept of mercy would not align with the nature of God, as it would imply that sinners are regarded as children who are dumb and not treated with the seriousness they deserve.⁷⁶³ Schwager supports the rejection of the *sola misericordia* here from the freedom perspective. It is not only the free human will of Jesus, but Schwager also highlights man's free will. In this event, similar to Balthasar's description of a dramatic encounter between infinite and finite freedom,⁷⁶⁴ we have a dramatic encounter of the human freedom of Jesus and that of man, who are all co-actors in this redemption act. Anselm, so argues Schwager, moved along the lines of the New Testament when he many times raised the question of freedom.

Concerning the case that man ought to offer satisfaction yet is unable to do so, whereas God can but ought not to, a pertinent question emerges: What measures can be taken to get out of the predicament? Schwager also sees this as a question of freedom. The seat of freedom in man, namely, the human will, has to be addressed to resolve man's predicament. Thus, viewing it through the lens of freedom, which is central to the salvific event, Schwager reframed this question as follows: In what manner can the human will be reclaimed or restored once an individual has ultimately closed himself off (in light of the Good News of the Kingdom), as long as it lies in him? Schwager answers this question from the mimesis theory of Girard's perspective: "Jesus allowed himself to enter the mechanism of sin and into the closed world of human freedom in order to open this (human freedom) up from the inside."⁷⁶⁵ Before this point, humanity's freedom, although consistently present, was unable to choose God due to its being closed off as a consequence of humanity's transgression against God. Schwager's response here relates to the fourth act of his dramatic theology, in which he stated:

The opponents of the kingdom of God, closing themselves off, had the way to salvation once more opened for them by the Son, who allowed himself to be drawn into their darkness and distance from God. Although they had already turned their backs, as far as they were concerned, the self-giving of the son got around this hardening of hearts once more, insofar as he allowed himself to be made the victim of their self-condemnation.⁷⁶⁶

⁷⁶³ Cf. Raymund SCHWAGER, *Der wunderbare Tausch*, 309.

⁷⁶⁴ Cf. Hans Urs von BALTHASAR, *Theo-Drama III*, 199.

⁷⁶⁵ Raymund SCHWAGER, *Der wunderbare Tausch*, 309.

⁷⁶⁶ Raymund SCHWAGER, *Jesus in the drama of salvation*, 135.

With the realm of human freedom open and Jesus having set an example, man is confronted with the imperative of emancipating himself from this contagion by imitating Jesus and transcending the mimetic contagion through the exercise of free will to extricate himself from its influence. Jesus opened the door, but man must take responsibility for stepping through that door to self-freedom. Greshake calls it emancipation or the self-liberation of man.⁷⁶⁷ It underlines that man now needs to use his freedom of choice to escape this situation. Man must imitate Jesus and break out from the mimetic or satanic contagion in which he has been chained. This entails salvation for Schwager.

Regarding the theme of *honor Dei*, Schwager emphasises that, for Anselm, freedom also plays a central role in the act of honouring God. According to Anselm, a rational creature honours God “when he freely yields himself to the will and decisions of God.”⁷⁶⁸ When the opposite happens, that is, when man freely refuses to yield himself to the will of God, he commits sin. Talking of sin, which is said to cause an injury to God’s honour, Anselm not only emphasises that it is not possible to add or diminish the honour of God, but Schwager observes that the material aspect of sin plays no role in the gravity of sin. A slight sin and a serious sin like murder are all classified as grave, and their damage is beyond comparison.⁷⁶⁹ It is more a question of the right order only from the formal aspect of the relationship between (uncreated)free will and (created)free will. Order is preserved when the created freedom yields itself to the uncreated freedom.⁷⁷⁰

Continuing to view Anselm from the freedom perspective, Schwager next looks at Anselm’s argument that the sinner cannot, on his own, restore the destroyed order. He notes that man’s expression of regret for his actions and re-subjecting his will before the will of God alone is not enough. Linking this insufficiency with the effects of sin on man, Schwager asserts that through man’s rebellion, the whole of human nature is corrupted and, at the same time, contaminated by sin. The freedom of the sinner has not just turned itself away but has thereby poisoned the whole of human nature. It is, therefore, not enough for the freedom of man to convert, but the decay of nature also needs to be healed.⁷⁷¹ An even more direct reference to freedom is made when Schwager, basing himself on Anselm’s *De conceptu virginali et de*

⁷⁶⁷ Cf. Gisbert GRESHAKE, *Gottes Heil-Glück des Menschen*, 100-101.

⁷⁶⁸ CDH I XV.

⁷⁶⁹ Cf. CDH I XXI.

⁷⁷⁰ Cf. Raymund SCHWAGER, *Der wunderbare Tausch*, 289.

⁷⁷¹ Cf. Raymund SCHWAGER, *Der wunderbare Tausch*, 290.

originali peccato, asserts that sin is an injustice and exists in the rational will.⁷⁷² This means that to deal with sin, we must first address the rational will that is responsible for free human choices. Two implications can be drawn from this, i.e., sin is a personal free decision, and it affects nature. Following this argument about restoration, Schwager draws the conclusion that “the assertion that repentance is not sufficient to make amends is plausible if the natural will has also been distorted by sin and personal freedom, which,... is incapable of restoring the distorted natural will.”⁷⁷³ This suggests that while a man ought to atone for his sins, he cannot do so because the natural will is incapable due to its distortion. So, how can he achieve salvation?

Anselm dismissed achieving salvation through other religions. He also rejected the notion of letting humanity fall into despair. Such an outcome would be unworthy of God, as creation must ultimately fulfil its purpose. Thus, the only way that remains is salvation through the God-man, who is the Christ. The salvation through Christ, however, cannot be looked at in isolation from the human will of the God-man. To understand the human will of the God-man, understanding the created rational man also becomes inevitable and fundamental. Thus, Schwager, in his argument, selects those texts of Anselm that reiterate the detailed definition of the rational nature of man. The rational nature, according to Anselm, was created in order “that it might discern between good and bad, between a greater good and a lesser good, that it might hate and avoid evil and might love and choose good, and might love most the greatest good and choose that.”⁷⁷⁴ According to this definition, freedom of choice is at the heart of being human. As Schönborn puts it, freedom of choice is the greatest gift man has received from God.⁷⁷⁵ Schwager identifies two implications from this definition. If man chooses the good, the greater good, and loves the greatest good, then he deserves to live eternally. Man, however, sinned and was obliged to provide restitution in order to rise from the justly deserved death. Otherwise, the work God began would remain uncompleted, a thing that contradicts His wisdom and power.⁷⁷⁶

Instead of making God seem compelled to work out man’s salvation, Anselm asserts that creation is a voluntary self-obligation of God. God promised (covenant) to lead the rational

⁷⁷² ANSELM OF CANTERBURY, *Virgin conception and Original sin*, in: DERS. The Major Works, edited by Brian Davies and G.R. Evans, Oxford 2008, 357-389, here: 362. (*De conceptu virginali et de originali peccato* III).

⁷⁷³ Raymund SCHWAGER, *Der wunderbare Tausch*, 291. My translation.

⁷⁷⁴ CDH II, I.

⁷⁷⁵ Cf. Christoph SCHÖNBORN, *Gott sandte seinen Sohn*, 247.

⁷⁷⁶ Cf. Raymund SCHWAGER, *Der wunderbare Tausch*, 293.

creature to its end, i.e., to save man. It can be firmly asserted, so argues Schwager, that the whole creation and the work of salvation arises from a free decision of God.⁷⁷⁷ With that said, Schwager brings up the reason for the incarnation of God. He postulates the Christology of the two natures of Christ from a soteriological point of view, stating that the sinner and the one who can make satisfaction must be identical or be from the same Adamic nature. This small detail of the saviour being of the Adamic nature is very important in understanding the human freedom of the God-man. It makes us understand the distinction between natural will and the personal will. Adam, through his personal Will, seemingly imposed an obligation on the natural will of another bearer of the same Natural Will who, out of his own free act, can redeem it. Schwager stresses that the God-man, who should offer satisfaction, must not simply be a truly human being but one specifically from the stock of Adam.

After deducing how the one to offer the required satisfaction must be constituted, Schwager points out Anselm's argument that the postulated God-Man would have everything he has from himself and would also be free. Since that human being will also be God, he would also possess goodness from himself, not out of necessity but out of freedom and be just (*gerecht*) from himself, and therefore, worthy of praise.⁷⁷⁸ Having determined freedom as the capacity to do something from oneself, Anselm expanded his definition of freedom soteriologically as the capacity to preserve rectitude for its own sake. A rational creature can only preserve its rectitude if his actions stem from himself. As regards the freedom of choice, especially those angels firmly rooted in goodness, Anselm says it is because they possess justice for its own sake from themselves. They could have given it up earlier, but they did not. Schwager thus notes that Anselm, in his analysis here, still considered freedom of choice as choosing between good and evil but drops it in his later arguments.⁷⁷⁹

Schwager focuses on the satisfaction act of the postulated God-man, which must be freely offered and include the sacrifice of life because it is only death that the God-man never owes God from all he has. Since the God-man will be free from sin, God cannot demand his death as a result of being guilty of sin. Consequently, he has the freedom to offer his life to God. This act is of the highest value ever because the God-man has offered himself, that nothing more

⁷⁷⁷ Cf. Raymund SCHWAGER, *Der wunderbare Tausch*, 293.

⁷⁷⁸ Cf. Raymund SCHWAGER, *Der wunderbare Tausch*, 295.

⁷⁷⁹ Cf. Raymund SCHWAGER, *Der wunderbare Tausch*, 295.

can be offered.⁷⁸⁰ The satisfaction of the God-man through his death, which possesses infinite value, outweighs all the sins. The sin of those who willingly killed the God-man is reduced to venial sin instead of an infinite one due to their ignorance. Anselm, with contentment, affirms that we have found Christ, about whom we confess that he is God and man and that he died for our sake.

However, a question arises about how Jesus assumed sinlessness from a sinful nature. Anselm asserted that the mother of Jesus was cleansed in advance from sin through her faith in the upcoming death of the God-man.⁷⁸¹ If the mother of Christ is free from sin due to the upcoming redemptive death of her son, then Jesus was born so that he should necessarily die. His death was a precondition for her sinlessness so that he could be born sinless from a sinful human nature, so argued Boso. Schwager sums up Anselm's response to Boso, saying God cannot be compelled by anything (*no necessity out of coercion*); if he wants something to be liberated, then His will is immutable (*necessity out of self-obligation*). For the virgin's faith in the anticipated redemptive act to have solid ground, this death *must* or needed to happen. Schwager argues that this "*must*" corresponds to the second type of necessity, which does not exclude freedom but is its very foundation.⁷⁸² Anselm tried to show that the God-man's saving act, from God's perspective, was free. It was also free from the human perspective, for man had sinned, and it is man who must freely carry out the work of restoration.

Turning specifically to the problem of the human will in the God-man, in response to the objection of Boso, who wanted to know if the sacrifice was rational (*rationabiliter*), Anselm answered that: "He gave an example to men ... which example he would not have given at all had He by His power avoided the death for which such a reason was inflicted upon Him?"⁷⁸³ Having seen the example given by Christ, man is left with the freedom to either emulate the example of Jesus or not. Thus, Anselm said God desired that His creature does something on its own in certain respects, whether to act or not. He gives an example of a choice one makes between virginity and marriage. Despite virginity being a better choice, if one prefers, one may choose marriage. Schwager observes that Anselm understands freedom of choice from this example as choosing between good and better from this Christian praxis.⁷⁸⁴ With that, he can

⁷⁸⁰ Cf. Raymund SCHWAGER, *Der wunderbare Tausch*, 296.

⁷⁸¹ Cf. CDH II, XVI.

⁷⁸² Cf. Raymund SCHWAGER, *Der wunderbare Tausch*, 297-298.

⁷⁸³ CDH II, XVIII (b).

⁷⁸⁴ Cf. Raymund SCHWAGER, *Der wunderbare Tausch*, 299.

demonstrate that the freedom of Christ to offer His life was a better choice; however, he was nevertheless not indebted.

Schwager distinguishes two perspectives from Anselm's argument. From the moment God chose to create, He foresaw humanity's sin and, through this act of creation, irrevocably committed Himself to saving humankind. From God's perspective, God needed Christ to fulfil the salvific act absolutely; otherwise, God would be unfaithful to His own freely chosen self-obligation. According to Schwager, the same absoluteness applies not to Christ's inner obligations as a man. According to the demands of his created nature, freedom of choice for him remained between the preservation of his life and the sacrifice.⁷⁸⁵ Christ, however, freely chose the latter.

Schwager believes reconciling divine and human perspectives is achievable since they are united in one person. He again connects this one person in two natures to the theme of freedom. He says freedom is not simply the capacity to preserve rectitude for its own sake and act from oneself but includes the possibility of choosing, namely in its original form (*Urform*), as a choice between good and better.⁷⁸⁶ Schwager passionately shows that Jesus Christ fully exercised His free choice, which did not conflict with the Father's will.

Finally, coming to the high point and question of how the free offer of the satisfaction of Christ can benefit the people, Anselm surprisingly responds with thoughts of restitution, as Schwager notes. The satisfaction act of the Son is so great that the Father should necessarily reward Him. However, since Jesus does not need anything, for anything the Father has also belongs to the Son, the Father cannot directly recompense His Son and indirectly does so by offering this recompense to the brothers of His Son.⁷⁸⁷ Schwager observes that this latest turn of events in the theory of satisfaction teaching appears, at first, strange. It seems that God is neither chained nor imprisoned by the chains of the superior legal system.

In discussing the benefits of the satisfaction provided by Christ for humanity, a pertinent question emerges: When the Father extends His compassion and forgiveness to the brethren of Christ, even in the absence of any effort on their part to offer satisfaction or atonement, ought He not to have acted so initially out of pure mercy to grant them forgiveness?⁷⁸⁸ Schwager says that only one satisfactory response in the scope of Anselm's thought can be given when one

⁷⁸⁵ Cf. Raymund SCHWAGER, *Der wunderbare Tausch*, 311.

⁷⁸⁶ Cf. Raymund SCHWAGER, *Der wunderbare Tausch*, 300.

⁷⁸⁷ Cf. Raymund SCHWAGER, *Der wunderbare Tausch*, 301.

⁷⁸⁸ Cf. Raymund SCHWAGER, *Der wunderbare Tausch*, 302.

assumes that in the God-man, others have also offered the required satisfaction in a real way.⁷⁸⁹ This assumption, according to Schwager, again highlights the distinction between the personal will and the natural will. Christ would thus have determined his natural will through his personal will, thus enabling others of the same race to share in this natural will. According to Schwager, Anselm's consideration of the problem of the natural will of Jesus cannot be proved further. At the end of this thought, Boso expressed his joy at the thought of the merits of Christ, which God credited to the Adamic nature, saying, "Nothing more reasonable, delightful, desirable could the world hear."⁷⁹⁰

Schwager now arrives at what he believes is the crowning of Anselm's argument, where he integrates God's mercy for humanity with the human freedom of choice. Presenting the mercy of God, he says: "The mercy of God, which whilst we were considering God's justice... seemed to you to vanish, we now find to be so great ...as that neither greater could be conceived of."⁷⁹¹ Having discovered a mercy greater than can be thought of, Schwager turns to Anselm's presentation of the subsequent step, namely, inviting man to exercise his free choice to accept or reject God's great mercy. In other words, man, as an agent or co-actor in the dramatic salvation history, is invited to respond to the offer of mercy from the free-acting, merciful Father when He stated: "For what can be understood to be more merciful than that God the Father should say to the sinner...: take my only begotten Son and offer Him for yourself; and the Son Himself: Take me and redeem yourself."⁷⁹² In this offer of salvation, God is engaging man in a dialogue. This dialogue presupposes freedom and so underlines how God respects freedom.

Schwager comments on Anselm's closing reflection, stating that, surprisingly, God's infinite mercy flows together with the phrase '*self-redemption*'. Though salvation is a pure gift from God, it does not exempt man from his actions.⁷⁹³ Thus, Schwager stresses that the gift's greatness reveals itself in that it makes man capable of carrying on his own actions: "take me and redeem thyself."⁷⁹⁴ Schwager underlines that *God's gifts should be viewed as exchanges between free beings, each possessing their own dignity*.⁷⁹⁵ He highlights that a gift should not

⁷⁸⁹ Cf. Raymund SCHWAGER, *Der wunderbare Tausch*, 302.

⁷⁹⁰ CDH II, XIX.

⁷⁹¹ CDH II, XX.

⁷⁹² CDH II, XX.

⁷⁹³ Cf. Raymund SCHWAGER, *Der wunderbare Tausch*, 303.

⁷⁹⁴ CDH II, XX.

⁷⁹⁵ Cf. Raymund SCHWAGER, *Der wunderbare Tausch*, 303.

be imposed externally but should be fully embraced interiorly through one's own freedom. Schwager observes that for Anselm, a gift is only considered to reach in the innermost being when the receiver appropriates it in such a way that it becomes his own act.⁷⁹⁶ Having reached the end of Anselm's argument in *Cur Deus Homo*, Schwager remarks that the demands which seem to stem from impersonal legal thought ultimately turn out to be the demands of a *radical logic of freedom*.⁷⁹⁷ He suggests that, in contrast to the prevailing impression of Anselm's theory as an impersonal legal doctrine of redemption, Schwager perceives it as a radical doctrine of freedom.

Schwager summarises his analysis of Anselm's theory by explicitly describing it as a dramatic event. "The saving act of Christ was a dramatic event between him (Christ), the people who rejected and crucified him, and the heavenly father."⁷⁹⁸ Schwager explicitly names three persons and beings involved in this drama as actors and co-actors: Jesus, the human person and God the Father.

Viewing Anselm's soteriology through the lens of the logic of free choice for God the Father, Jesus, and humanity alters the interpretation of Anselm's theory, particularly concerning the radical or strong criticisms. A good example is Ratzinger's critique and interpretation of Anselm, which has become a stereotype critique of Anselm's soteriology. Ratzinger's critique dismantles Anselm's theory, stating that it "imagines a God whose unrelenting righteousness demanded a human sacrifice of his own son, and one turns away in horror from a righteousness whose sinister wrath makes the message of love incredible."⁷⁹⁹ We agree with him on the point that the credibility of love could be diminished if the focus is placed on the magnified perceived wrath of God. According to Ratzinger, Anselm's theory presents the image of a wrathful God. However, when Anselm's work is read in its entirety, it becomes evident that God is not a being filled with wrath but rather a merciful God. Ratzinger's image of God, one of love rather than wrath, does not contradict Anselm's depiction of God. Anselm illustrated through his arguments, particularly in his conclusion, that his ultimate aim was to show that God is so merciful that no greater mercy can be conceived, and He is not obsessed with His honour or demanding a human sacrifice of His Son. His theory, however, is that despite the seriousness of man's sin and the difficulties man has in overcoming it (sin), greater mercy has been offered with a not prohibiting offer of simply voluntarily appropriating the offered mercy by the Father

⁷⁹⁶ Cf. Raymund SCHWAGER, *Der wunderbare Tausch*, 303.

⁷⁹⁷ Cf. Raymund SCHWAGER, *Der wunderbare Tausch*, 303.

⁷⁹⁸ Raymund SCHWAGER, *Der wunderbare Tausch*, 311. My translation.

⁷⁹⁹ Joseph RATZINGER, *Introduction to Christianity*, 281.

and the Son. As noted by Tück, God offers forgiveness free of charge (*umsonst*) in His Son.⁸⁰⁰ Anselm's teaching is, therefore, rightly termed the radical doctrine of God's mercy, as asserted by Schwager.

Ratzinger's critique remained focused and stuck on the first part of Anselm's work, focused on justice, but overlooked or neglected Anselm's second part presentation on the mercy of God that is greater than can be conceived. Kienzler was right in his observation that Ratzinger's critique was deficient, for it focused only on one part while leaving aside the other part.⁸⁰¹ Leaving out the second part or the conclusion, which focused on the mercy of God, was a serious omission by Ratzinger and made his critique incomplete and unbalanced. Because of this serious omission, his criticism that Anselm's theory is obsolete does not stand. His concern, however, that God is not wrathful, which is a genuine concern, does not contradict Anselm.

Ratzinger later changed his position on criticising Anselm's theory in his *Jesus von Nazareth* Book.⁸⁰² While discussing the crucifixion and burial of Jesus, without mentioning Anselm and without mentioning that Ratzinger himself made that critique forty years ago, Ratzinger says: "It is always said: Is it not a cruel God who demands infinite atonement? Is this not an idea unworthy of God? Must we not renounce the idea of atonement for the sake of the righteousness of the image of God?"⁸⁰³ The complete change in position is seen in Ratzinger's response to this objection, which disassociates God from violence and sinister wrath, as well as from being one who demands a sacrifice of his son, a view he previously held while teaching at Regensburg University. He now states:

But it is not a cruel God who demands infinite atonement. It is the other way round: God himself sets himself up as the place of atonement and takes suffering upon himself in his son. God himself gives his infinite purity into the world. God himself drinks the cup of all that is terrible and thus restores justice through the greatness of his love, which transforms the darkness through suffering.⁸⁰⁴

⁸⁰⁰ Cf. Jan -Heiner TÜCK, *Auf Seiten der Leidenden. Gethsemani, Golgotha und die Hoffnung auf Gerechtigkeit*, in: DERS., *Passion aus Liebe. Das Jesus-Buch des Papstes in der Diskussion*, Ostfildern 2011, 234-261, here: 245.

⁸⁰¹ Cf. Klaus KIENZLER, *Gott ist größer. Studien zu Anselm von Canterbury*, Würzburg 1997, 144

⁸⁰² Joseph RATZINGER, *Jesus von Nazareth. Zweiter Teil vom Einzug in Jerusalem bis zur Auferstehung*, Freiburg 2010, 256. „Nun wird aber nicht etwa durch einen grausamen Gott Unendliches verlangt. Es ist genau umgekehrt: Gott selbst richtet sich als Ort der Versöhnung auf und nimmt das Leid in seinem Sohn auf sich. Gott selbst schenkt seine unendliche Reinheit in die Welt hinein. Gott selbst ‚trinkt den Kelch‘ allen schrecklichen aus und stellt so das Recht wieder her durch die Größe seiner Liebe, die im Leid das Dunkel verwandelt.“

⁸⁰³ Joseph RATZINGER, *Jesus von Nazareth. Zweiter Teil*, 256.

⁸⁰⁴ Joseph RATZINGER, *Jesus von Nazareth. Zweiter Teil*, 256. *My translation*.

This new position of Ratzinger reversed almost word for word all his earlier harsh critiques of Anselm's staurocentric theory as expressed in his *Introduction to Christianity*. As observed by Tück, Ratzinger's new position now asserts that (1) there is no difference between the will of the Father and the Son, as Jesus willingly accepted the cup of suffering. (2) It is not humanity that offers anything; rather, God provides His gift of reconciliation through His Son.⁸⁰⁵ Thus, rather than viewing Anselm's staurocentric theology as portraying a cruel God, he now describes it as presenting God as "not a cruel God." Instead of demanding infinite satisfaction, "God takes the suffering upon Himself in His Son." Instead of merely placating his wrath, God Himself drinks the cup of all that is terrible. Ratzinger demonstrates a revolutionary shift in the logic of sacrifice.⁸⁰⁶ It is not humanity that presents something to God for the forgiveness of sins, nor does God require anything. Instead, God offers the gift of forgiveness in the crucified one.⁸⁰⁷ This corresponds with Anselm's depiction of God, who calls out: "*Take my only Begotten Son and offer Him for thyself.*"⁸⁰⁸ Ratzinger's new position thus cancels his earlier condemnation of Anselm, and although he does not mention his name, he affirms and endorses it as a correct theology of the cross.

His new stance is compatible with Schwager's position on the non-violent image of God. In Act III of dramatic theology, the bringer of salvation is brought to judgment and suffers death. Schwager reinforces this point in the dramatic theology, which clearly emphasises and shows the image of God as a non-violent God. He is a God who responds to violence with the offer of peace. This offer of peace aligns with the conclusion of Anselm's argument regarding God's offer of mercy. God is not filled with sinister wrath or violence but proves himself to be an immutably loving and merciful God. It is indisputable that mercy and peace are inseparable from one another; one cannot have one without the other.

Having already reviewed Ratzinger's criticism of Anselm's soteriology from Schwager's perspective, we now turn to the other critics of Anselm.

⁸⁰⁵ Cf. Jan-Heiner Tück, *Auf Seiten der Leidenden*, 245.

⁸⁰⁶ Cf. Jan -Heiner Tück, *Auf Seiten der Leidenden*, 245.

⁸⁰⁷ Cf. Jan -Heiner Tück, *Auf Seiten der Leidenden*, 245.

⁸⁰⁸ CDH II, XX.

5.5. Revisiting the criticisms of Anselm from Schwager's perspective

Having begun this work by examining the criticisms directed at Anselm's soteriology, some of which have already been addressed during the reconstruction of his doctrine, and after considering Schwager's perspective on Anselm's soteriology, which draws upon Balthasar's Theo-drama and Girard's mimesis theory, we now wish to revisit the most significant criticisms from the viewpoint of Raymund Schwager's dramatic theology. Our aim is to strengthen Anselm's arguments, particularly in light of the negative critique and representation he has encountered. The main themes to revisit include satisfaction, ransom, sin, mercy, and justice. We will begin with Anselm's fundamental concept of satisfaction.

5.5.1. Satisfaction

The soteriological theory of Anselm has been identified or described as a satisfaction theory due to the central role that satisfaction plays in it. However, critics have almost always associated it with the wrath of God, even making it seem synonymous with the wrath of God. The first criticism came from Hammer, who labelled it as solely concerned with external payments.⁸⁰⁹ His point of departure was Anselm's definition of sin as not giving God His due and the assertion that sin does not affect God. His interpretation, thus, is that what is touched or affected is the external glory of God - *gloria dei externa*, i.e., the right order (*ordo*) of the world.⁸¹⁰ According to Hammer, the inner disposition of the sinner is not taken into consideration. Since what is affected is only the external, Hammer argued that Anselm's satisfaction theory is also reduced to or limited only to the externals. He observed that Anselm placed greater emphasis on the satisfaction that must be offered, focusing on something external rather than addressing the inner disposition, which is mentioned only minimally. Under his staurocentric critique, Hans Kessler also critiqued the concept of external satisfaction but went even further than Hammer, stating that aside from sin being something external, the demand for external satisfaction bears no relationship to the inner being. The relation remains external and formal.⁸¹¹ Kessler further qualifies his observation by saying that *God is not personally affected* (except only his external honour) or *the human person*.⁸¹² We can summarise the critique on satisfaction provided by the two as follows: sin is external, thus

⁸⁰⁹ Cf. Felix HAMMER, *Genugtuung und Heil*, 139.

⁸¹⁰ Cf. Felix HAMMER, *Genugtuung und Heil*, 139.

⁸¹¹ Hans KESSLER, *Die theologische Bedeutung des Todes Jesu*, 159.

⁸¹² Hans KESSLER, *Die theologische Bedeutung des Todes Jesu*, 161.

affecting only the external glory of God and necessitating external satisfaction; according to Kessler, neither God nor man are truly affected by sin.

Our response to this claim is that Hammer and Kessler misunderstand Anselm's soteriology. We begin by examining the accusation that sin is external. According to the logic of free will, as Schwager argued, it would be a misinterpretation to confine sin solely to the external realm, for, irrespective of its magnitude, it can only occur because the will permits it. Otherwise, it cannot be imputed to man at all. However, the human will, which wills the act of sinning, is something intrinsic and central to being human and is affected by sin. Schwager argued that the will is the seat of man's sin.⁸¹³ Man is, therefore, affected by sin just as God is, as Wiese rightly challenged Hammer in defence of Anselm when he said: "The sin of man deeply affects man and does not remain external to him...if redemption is a necessity, then God must also be affected by sin... as much as man is."⁸¹⁴ Schwager agrees with Wiese, supports his defence, and compliments it with his view that creation is a voluntary self-obligation of God. God promised (through the covenant) to lead the rational creature to its end. Thus, the whole creation and the work of salvation arise from a free decision of God.⁸¹⁵ Given this fact, satisfaction, much like sin, cannot remain external to God, as it touches on the self-obligation of God to preserve His creation. Hammer's criticism could only be correct if he meant that God's greatness or honour is never increased nor reduced due to man's sin.

Kessler's claim that God is not personally affected by sin (aside from his external honour) or the human person is rather extreme and a misrepresentation of what Anselm meant by saying God's honour is not affected by sin. He attempted to read more into Anselm than is actually there. The implications of his claims suggest that if neither God nor man is affected by man's sin, then there would be no need for satisfaction and, ultimately, man's redemption. There would be no need for God to plan man's redemption at all. Man would not require redemption at all. In fact, any theory of redemption would be superfluous. This understanding can potentially dilute the notion of sin and soteriology. However, when considering his work as a whole, Anselm's intention demonstrates that sin affects man by losing blessedness⁸¹⁶ due to an intrinsic sin named disobedience. Disobedience, according to Girard, is a sin man committed

⁸¹³ Cf. Raymund SCHWAGER, *Der wunderbare Tausch*, 290.

⁸¹⁴ Hans-Ulrich WIESE, *Die Lehre Anselm von Canterbury über den Tod Jesu in der Schrift "Cur Deus Homo"*, 152.

⁸¹⁵ Cf. Raymund SCHWAGER, *Der wunderbare Tausch*, 293.

⁸¹⁶ Cf. CDH I, X. "man was created for blessedness."

by imitating the greedy imitation of Satan. Sin is thus to be understood as mimetic disobedience and rivalry.

5.5.2. Ransom Theory and emancipation of man

While still on the theme of satisfaction, a concept Anselm presented as a reaction to the flawed ransom theory, it is also necessary to reconsider and analyse what this concept represents from Schwager and Girard's new perspective. The concept of satisfaction is indisputably connected to the forgiveness of man's sin and the instigator of man's sin, namely Satan. Anselm put forward the satisfaction theory to refute the ransom theory, which taught that Satan had rights over human beings because of their fall into sin. According to Hoping, Origen, the third-century Church Father, was the first to teach about the ransom theory.⁸¹⁷ It stated that "the Devil acquired juridical rights over sinful men, but that God, by the Incarnation, satisfied those rights, thus making Atonement. In His death, the entrance to Paradise was unlocked; the flaming sword that turned every way was removed."⁸¹⁸

The ransom theory, which comes in various forms, posits that the blood of Jesus served as a price paid to Satan to redeem fallen humanity from his dominion and slavery.⁸¹⁹ According to Lukken, "fallen humanity could only be freed on condition that Christ paid the required price to Satan, the legal owner."⁸²⁰ Anselm, however, strongly rejected this supposition, contending that Satan had no ownership rights over fallen humanity whatsoever. Instead, he asserted that the death of Jesus was satisfaction offered not to Satan but to the Father, as it was the Father whom the sins of humanity had wronged. It is only fitting that the offended party should receive the apology in the form of satisfaction rather than the instigator. Here, Anselm rectified the long-standing theological fallacy of the ransom theory. However, in doing so, Anselm introduced a new problem that continues to spark debate today. The question he raises is this: If satisfaction was given to the Father, what implications does this hold for the image of the Father? Does it not depict Him as one who requires a sacrifice of His Son to appease His wrath in order to forgive humanity? Or, as objected by Kessler in his staurocentric critique, does "God delight in or require the blood of the innocent, that only on condition of his death will

⁸¹⁷ Cf. Helmut HOPING, *Jesus aus Galiläa - Messias und Gottes Sohn*, Freiburg 2019, 283.

⁸¹⁸ Lukyn A. WILLIAMS, *Gilbert Crispin, Abbot of Westminster. A Discussion of a Jew with a Christian concerning the Christian Faith. Probably before A.D. 1098*, in: *Adversus Judaeos. A Bird's-Eye View of Christian Apologiae until the Renaissance*, Cambridge 2012, 375-380, here: 378.

⁸¹⁹ Cf. Helmut HOPING, *Jesus aus Galiläa. Messias und Gottes Sohn*, 283.

⁸²⁰ Gerard M. LUKKEN, *Original sin in the Roman liturgy. Research into the theology of original sin in the Roman sacramentaria and the early baptismal liturgy*, Leiden 1973, 167.

He, or can He spare the guilty?”⁸²¹ This connection with wrath and satisfaction brings us back to the criticisms made by Hammer, Ratzinger, and Kessler against satisfaction stated above.

This problem would not arise if we considered it from the perspective of freedom. The outcomes would be different if one examined it from the viewpoint of Jesus' freedom, the main protagonist in this salvation event narrative, who willingly submitted to death. In his staurocentric critique, Kessler suggests, or rather insinuates, that Anselm taught that Jesus lacked power over his sacrifice on the cross. However, this is no longer the case; as Schwager has argued, Jesus was not a passive participant in this drama of salvation, nor was he a puppet, to use Rahner's term, but an active co-actor with the Father and humanity in the event of salvation. Anselm anticipated the issue of interpreting soteriology solely in terms of justice. He already addressed it earlier in his first book by clarifying that the death of the God-man is neither a ransom to the devil nor an appeasement of the Father's wrath, but a free choice made by Jesus himself driven by his profound love and compassion for humanity.⁸²² This free choice of Jesus in the salvation drama is central to Anselm's theory of redemption, which should not be overlooked, as some commentators have done. Anselm's theory positions Jesus as the protagonist in the redemptive event, where He willingly undertook all His actions without compromising the image of the Father, as Anselm emphasised. “God did not compel Christ to die, but Christ, of His own will, bore death... on account of the obligation He was under to fulfil righteousness.”⁸²³ Anselm defended the image of the Father by entirely removing compulsion from the Father's actions and highlighting the free will of Jesus. The exclusion of compulsion indicates that Jesus acted freely. The obligation to fulfil justice was also a free choice made by Jesus.

While emphasising in dramatic theology that man is a co-actor in his salvation, it should not be overlooked that Jesus was also a co-actor, indeed the chief protagonist of the drama. To further magnify this point, we articulate it via negativa, as expressed by Rahner regarding man not being a puppet but a co-performer.⁸²⁴ The same can be said about Jesus *via negativa* that He was not a mere puppet of a cruel Father in the events of His suffering and death. He is not a mere puppet or robot controlled by His Father; rather, He makes His own choices and does not just passively follow what He is commanded to do. Choosing to sacrifice his life was his

⁸²¹ Cf. Hans KESSLER, *Die Theologische Bedeutung des Todes Jesu*, 158.

⁸²² Cf. CDH I, III.

⁸²³ CDH I, IX.

⁸²⁴ Karl RAHNER, *Theos in the New Testament*, in: *Theological investigations* Vol. 1, 111.

own act. As co-actor with the Father and the Holy Spirit (Trinity) in the first dramatic act in heaven, according to Balthasar,⁸²⁵ he voluntarily chose to be the son of Mary and was incarnated. He fully possessed the divine and human will and executed all his actions freely.

By insisting on Jesus's dramatic freedom to go all the way up to the cross, Anselm achieves three things: Firstly, he redeems the image of the Father from being seen as a wrathful and violent God due to the fact that it was not a demand of the Father to have the son crucified on the cross. Anselm sought here to underline that the Father is non-violent, a point that Schwager and Girard have made the key defining characteristic of the Christocentric mimesis, i.e., mimesis centred on the imitation of the desires of Christ. Secondly, he also reduces Satan to his place as a creature and not a sovereign, as claimed by the ransom theory, thereby eliminating the gnostic notion of having two opposing sovereign Gods, the good God and the evil one.⁸²⁶ Thirdly, but closely connected to the second point, denying Satan's sovereignty and rights over humanity liberates man from his false self-image as Satan's slave living under Satan's rule, which the ransom theory had brought about. In other words, it proclaims a double liberation for man; namely, liberation from the real slavery to sin and liberation from the erroneous perception of a negative self-image as a slave of Satan. The image of man as a precious creature of God is once more rediscovered.⁸²⁷ This second kind of liberation can have a great influence on the attainment of the first and most important kind of liberation; it restores man's self-confidence, spurs him on to self-emancipation and enables him to achieve self-redemption by consciously making use of his full faculties of freedom to appropriate the offer of mercy and thus redeem himself, thereby attaining his original goal of blessedness. Fourthly, having restored humanity's capacity to choose God, Jesus now challenges man to emulate his desires, as Girard and Schwager's mimetic and dramatic theory advocates.

Anselm's theory sought to awaken this consciousness in man precisely to spur him to become a confident co-actor with God in his own drama of salvation and to take the bold step of accepting Jesus and offering Him to the Father. This theory restores man to his status and dignity as God's precious and sublime creature.⁸²⁸ This position is made possible because Christ opened man's world from within by entering the closed world of man. Schwager

⁸²⁵ Cf. Hans Urs von BALTHASAR, *Theo-Drama III*, 529.

⁸²⁶ Cf. Raymund SCHWAGER, *Eindrücke von einer Begegnung*, in: Norbert Lohfink(Hg), *Gewalt und Gewaltlosigkeit im Alten Testament*, Freiburg 1983, 214-224, here: 214.

⁸²⁷ Cf. CDH II, IV.

⁸²⁸ Cf. John MCINTYRE, *Cur Deus Homo. The axis of the argument*, in: Sola Ratione, Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, 1970, 118.

reinforced this view by stating that God's greatest gift to man is that He has enabled man to do things for himself.⁸²⁹

Anselm's bold stance in degrading Satan, who was placed on a high pedestal by the ransom theory, finds support and reinforcement in the mimesis theory of Girard. Girard sees Satan, whom Anselm stripped of his authority over human beings, as a parasite who feeds on what God has created.⁸³⁰ Satan, having never created anyone, is incomparable to God the Creator; therefore, it is not inappropriate to regard him, as Girard did, as a parasite. Although a parasite is a living being or creature, it does not own the other being that hosts it, and thus has no claim to rights over its host. Both Anselm's theory of satisfaction, which called Satan, among other things, a thief, a slave, and a traitor,⁸³¹ and the mimesis theory of Girard, which called Satan a parasite, have one thing in common, namely, they strip Satan of his presumed power and ownership rights over the human person and thereby removing him from the salvation equation. Satan is removed from the equation of salvation by the fact that man does not need to pay him a ransom, nor does God need to do so on behalf of man or at Satan's demand. The influence of Satan on the human person that Anselm ascribed to him was that of tempting man to disobey God, hence committing a sin of disobedience.

5.5.3. The Sin of Disobedience

Disobedience was the sin committed by man when he allowed himself to be deceived by Satan, as asserted by Anselm. Girard similarly noted the exact influence of Satan over man, leading him to disobey God by imitating the greedy desires and disobedience of Satan. Anselm's understanding of sin can thus be strengthened and be defined, from the perspective of mimesis and dramatic theology, as disobedience in imitation of the greedy desires of Satan. To be saved, man requires reverse mimesis; that is, to cease imitating the greedy mimesis of Satan and return to the original mimesis as demonstrated by Jesus. Anselm said one has to disobey Satan and defeat him (Satan). In other words, man has to stop imitating Satan. This is supported and strengthened by Girard's mimesis theory, which endeavours to illustrate that obeying and voluntarily imitating Jesus, who perfectly obeyed and imitated his Father, is the goal. "The Son does what he sees the Father doing" (John 5:19). By taking on the Adamic nature, Jesus Christ

⁸²⁹ Cf. Raymund SCHWAGER, *Der wunderbare Tausch*, 303.

⁸³⁰ Cf. René GIRARD, *I see Satan fall like lightning*, 44.

⁸³¹ Cf. CDH I, VII. "Neither devil nor man exists but by God...what claim should God urge with His own, concerning His own, upon His own, except to punish him as His *slave* who had persuaded his fellow slave to desert their common Lord and to join him, and had, a *traitor*, received the fugitive: a *thief* welcomed another thief with the theft from their Lord?"

elevated the once incapable human nature, enabling man to obey God and submit or yield his will to the divine will.⁸³² Schwager reinforces this assumption of human nature by affirming that Christ has assumed the human will. Humanity is empowered to redeem itself (*self-redemption*) with the restoration of human nature and will through Christ's assumption of them.

5.5.4. Self-redemption

Anselm's frequently repeated statement is that man must save himself but cannot. A way out is provided at the end of *Cur Deus Homo* by the Father and the Son. The Father offered Jesus to man so that man could present Him for himself, and the Son's invitation for man to accept Him and redeem himself is a gesture that invites man to be a co-actor with the Father and the Son in his own salvation event.⁸³³ Man is invited to redeem himself by accepting the invitation and offering Jesus for himself. Anselm achieved his goal of making man participate in his own salvation, but he did not sufficiently detail how man should later handle the influences of Satan or evil. When a person takes Jesus and offers Him for oneself or takes Him and redeems oneself, what happens when one falls again or remains susceptible to evil? The problem of violence and evil is evident in the world, and a solution must be continuously sought to address it. This limitation of Anselm finds a practical solution in Girard's mimetic theory, which is incorporated within the dramatic theology of Schwager. It supports and thus reinforces Anselm's argument by suggesting a way for man to self-redeem himself through the continual imitation of Jesus, who not only unveiled but also overcame the mimetic cycle, thereby paving the way for man to redeem himself from the cycle of greedy mimetic violence. Palaver refers to this as positive mimesis or *nachfolge* (discipleship).⁸³⁴ This imitation of Jesus or *nachfolge* must be an ongoing activity of man.

Man's inability to break free from the chains of sin, as stated by Anselm, finds its parallel in the mimetic cycle, from which man cannot escape. Just as Anselm argued that man could not save himself, Girard maintains that man cannot, on his own, break away from the mimetic cycle of violence and desire. This cycle, however, was broken by Jesus, who became man and, as a man, perfectly imitated the desire of his non-violent and loving father, never succumbing to the deception of Satan. In doing so, Jesus established himself as a model and devised a means for man to break free from the mechanism of mimetic violence by emulating his imitation of

⁸³² Cf. ANSELM OF CANTERBURY, *Meditatio Redemptoris Humanae*, 422.

⁸³³ Cf. CDH II, XX.

⁸³⁴ Cf. Wolfgang PALAVER, *René Girard's Mimetic Theory*, 219.

the non-violent father, which can be traced through the Old and New Testaments. Kirwan sums up Girard's non-violent God's image in scripture as follows:

Girard's biblical 'canon' consists of texts which narrate the avoidance of sacrificial immolation, whether by divine protective decree (the mark of Cain); or by the substitution (the *Akedah*, the binding of Isaac); or by an act of mercy (Joseph's foregoing retribution against his brothers). The insistent undertow of the scriptures, as Girard reads them, is God's pulling away from the mimetic entanglements and violent reciprocity. The undertow swells towards the drama of Holy Week, which God intends as a divine comedy, not misfortune.⁸³⁵

The non-violent image of the Father is central to the five acts of Schwager's dramatic theology. This depiction is even more evident in Jesus himself, who imitates the Father's desires and demonstrates non-violence, even towards the enemies who arrested him in Gethsemane, mocked him, and crucified him. Instead of passing judgment on them, Jesus interceded for their forgiveness on the cross, "Father, forgive them, they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34). After his resurrection, he greeted his disciples with the words, "Peace be with you" (Luke 24:36). By being non-violent, it becomes clear that Jesus shows us the image of the Father as non-violent whom he imitated. The image of God as non-violent remains constant from the beginning up to the end.

5.5.5. The non-violent Father – merciful than can be conceived

In Jesus' non-violent way of conduct and teaching during his public life, his way of acting towards human sinners, and in His greeting of peace at the end after the resurrection, we see manifested the mercy of God that is greater than one can think of. There is a clear connection between the mercy of God and the non-violent image of God in the dramatic theology. Instead of violent retribution, peace is offered to them (Disciples). However, this peace, which is not just a greeting but at the same time a gift, must be accepted and appropriated like God's mercy, which is not imposed.⁸³⁶ Since Schwager and Girard treat man as a co-actor in this drama of salvation, the appropriation of the peace offered by the non-violent Jesus, who imitates His non-violent Father, lies in the free, dramatic response of man. In this drama of salvation, peace and mercy are never imposed on anyone, rather, they also depend on the dramatic free acceptance by man. We see a kind of parallel here between Jesus' invitation in CDH II, XX of "*take me and redeem yourself*" and the father's "*take my son and offer him for yourself*" with

⁸³⁵ Michael Joseph KIRWAN, *The Drama of the World, the Drama of Theology*, in: Religions 13 (2022) 1093 [doi:10.3390/rel13111093].

⁸³⁶ This is reminiscent of Jesus' words of Jesus to his disciples when he sent them out: "Let your first words be 'Peace to this house'. And if a man of peace lives there, your peace will go and rest on him, if not it will come back to you." (Luke 10:5-6).

the post easter greeting and offer of “*peace be with you.*” In these two parallels between the two theories, we see two different ways of expressing the same thing, that is, the mercy of God, greater than which none can be conceived. One who accepts the mercy offered by God is simultaneously receiving the “peace that this world cannot give” (John 14:27), but God alone, a peace greater than can be conceived, ultimately leading one to the realisation of the goal of blessedness. At play here is what Schwager underscores: God's gifts should be viewed as exchanges between free beings, each possessing their own dignity.⁸³⁷

However, the offer of peace and mercy is one thing, and being capable of receiving that peace and mercy is another. God’s salvation plan would be incomplete without first building the capacity in man to receive and appropriate the salvation package. Thus, His restoration plan involved making man capable of accepting the offer of salvation by the elevation that the nature of man received by being assumed by Jesus Christ. We find a reinforcement of this elevation in the dramatic theology of Schwager. Just as Jesus, in Anselm's theory, elevated the weak nature of man by assuming human nature, so Jesus, by fully possessing the human will and restoring human freedom, elevates the weakened human will and freedom to a level where it can will to break free from the mechanism of mimetic desire and violence. According to Schwager’s dramatic theology, Jesus let himself enter into the mechanism of sin, the closed world of human freedom, in order to open this freedom up from within.⁸³⁸ In so doing, Jesus gave man an example to be imitated. It would be an exercise in futility by Jesus to give man an example to imitate if man’s will remained incapacitated. Just as Anselm argued that man was able to defeat Satan again because Jesus, by assuming human nature, made man capable again, so Schwager asserts that the greatest gift that God has given man is that he has enabled man to do things for himself.⁸³⁹ On this point, both Anselm and Schwager reaffirm the fact that man has been enabled to act as a co-agent in his own salvation. Having been thus capacitated, it is now hoped that man, as a co-actor, can overcome Satan, according to Anselm’s theory or break the cycle of violence, according to Girard, by imitating Jesus. Man must dramatically act and break the cycle of violence himself and freely accept the offer of salvation as an active co-actor in this drama of redemption.

⁸³⁷ Cf. Raymund SCHWAGER, *Der wunderbare Tausch*, 303.

⁸³⁸ Raymund SCHWAGER, *Der wunderbare Tausch*, 309.

⁸³⁹ Cf. Raymund SCHWAGER, *Der wunderbare Tausch*, 303.

5.5.6. The Justice of God vis-à-vis the mercy of God

Anselm's theory was strongly criticised for seemingly being one-sided, that is, for seemingly putting too much emphasis on God's justice and less on divine mercy, thereby leading to the overshadowing of God's mercy. Critics of his justice argument always linked punishment to justice based on the maxim of *aut poena aut satisfactio*. The stereotype criticism that got so pronounced is that of imputing violence to God. The idea of punishment made God appear as a cruel, punishing, judging, violent, and wrathful God. But this was a widespread caricature of Anselm's theory⁸⁴⁰, a misrepresentation of what Anselm stood for. Despite Anselm arguing passionately about not leaving sin inordinate if it is not punished, it became clear in his arguments that punishment for him meant eternal condemnation in hell.⁸⁴¹ However, he ultimately criticised the notion of punishment within the theory of satisfaction. He declared it absurd when he argued and showed that "no man passes this life without sin"⁸⁴² and that no one can save himself by his own efforts. Following this logic, everyone would be punished, i.e., eternally banished. But then God's purpose for His creation would be defeated if He let His entire creation go to ruin because it could not redeem itself. "It is very unlike Him to suffer that nature to perish utterly."⁸⁴³ In following this thought, Anselm unveiled God's mercy, which is greater than can be conceived, when he argued that God could not stand by and watch His creation go to ruin, hence providing the option of satisfaction. Only those who refuse the offer of satisfaction offered freely by the Father and the Son would face the option of punishment, but then, it would be more like self-condemnation than condemnation by God.

This goal of Anselm to show that God is merciful and determined to save man at all costs finds resonance and reinforcement in the dramatic theology of Schwager, who revealed God as a non-violent God. A non-violent God is another way of saying a merciful God, for God is non-violent because He is merciful. Girard and Schwager defend the image of God as not being a cruel, vengeful and wrathful God but as a merciful father. In Girard's narrative of the founding murder, God took the side of the victim (Abel) but also protected Cain from violent revenge, proving His nature as a merciful God for preserving Cain's life (Cf. Gen 4:15). In the Decalogue, God forbade killing and the root cause of the same, i.e., mimetic desire. In the prophets and psalms, "Schwager notices a development in which God is seen more and more

⁸⁴⁰ Cf. Jan-Heiner TüCK, *Auf Seiten der Leidenden*, 245.

⁸⁴¹ Cf. CDH II, IV.

⁸⁴² CDH I, X.

⁸⁴³ CDH II, IV.

on the side of the victims of violence and less on the side of violence in the Old Testament.”⁸⁴⁴ Following the lead of Girard’s line of thought concerning the non-violent image of the Father, Schwager extensively explored the question of violence in the bible to prove that God is non-violent theologically.

Schwager, who had long been unsatisfied with the historical-critical exegesis because of its limitations, especially on the subject of violence and the violent images of God (*gewaltverhaftete Gottesbilder*), earnestly pursued Girard’s line of thought. As noted by Niewiadomski, Schwager strongly felt the need for a renewed interpretation of the Bible that went beyond the limits of the historical-critical method.⁸⁴⁵ Unlike Marcion, who in the second century, when confronted with conflicting images of God, proposed a radical solution to the problem and thereby fell into the error of dualism, distinguishing between the creator God of the Old Testament and the liberating God of Jesus in the New Testament as two separate and unrelated Gods.⁸⁴⁶ This ultimately led him to deny the Old Testament and, further, that there was any connection between Judaism and Christianity.⁸⁴⁷ Marcion’s general classification and condemnation of the Old Testament as a book of the violent God, the Demiurge, overlooked the other Old Testament texts that show God as non-violent. Schwager was careful not to make this distinction and error. Instead, he recognised the God of the Old Testament not as a violent and wrathful God or as a demiurge but as the same Father of Jesus Christ, the one and only God.⁸⁴⁸ Girard’s mimesis thesis proved to be precisely the key Schwager sought to understand the paradox of violence. In his analysis of texts on violence in the Old Testament, Girard detailed how the God of the Old Testament proved to be non-violent in the story of Cain and Abel. God prevented the murder from escalating by forbidding anyone from killing Cain.

In the Decalogue, apart from forbidding desire, i.e., envy and covetousness in the tenth commandment (Cf. Exodus 20:17), which, if not carefully watched, could lead to violence and death, God also directly forbade killing, saying: “You shall not kill” (Exodus 20:13). Now, the question that arises is: if God prohibits killing, which is violence in itself, would He not be contradicting Himself if He ordered or sent others to kill? Schwager, just like Girard, is convinced that the non-violent God cannot, on the other hand, sanction violence in any form,

⁸⁴⁴ Nikolaus WANDINGER, Raymund Schwager, *Dramatic Theology*, 329.

⁸⁴⁵ Cf. Jozef NIEWIADOMSKI, *Figurationen mimetischer Rivalität in der Literaturen als Anstoß für die Theologie*, 298-209.

⁸⁴⁶ Cf. Karl-Heinz MENKE, *Das unterscheidend Christliche. Beiträge zur Bestimmung seiner Einzigkeit*, Regensburg 2015, 351.

⁸⁴⁷ Cf. Karl-Heinz MENKE, *Das unterscheidend Christliche*, 354.

⁸⁴⁸ Cf. Nikolaus WANDINGER, *Salvation through Forgiveness or through the Cross?* 103.

including killing in the name of sacrifice. The action of God stopping Abraham from offering Isaac as a sacrifice is one such example. In the prophetic literature, we also find a sharp criticism of sacrifice, indicating that God is not interested in sacrifices offered to Him. In the book of the prophet Amos, God says: “I hate, I scorn your festivals, I take no pleasure in your solemn assemblies. When you bring me *burnt offerings, your oblations*, I do not accept them, and I do not look at your communion of a fat cattle... let justice flow.” (Amos 5:21-24). Amos asserts that God prefers justice to sacrifices. In his conversations with Berry, Girard made a striking observation about sacrifices: “Sacrifices are not in the Ten Commandments, even though we know the Ten Commandments are very old. So that’s why Christ says it’s not sacrifice that God wants. It’s compassion instead of sacrifice.”⁸⁴⁹ As Niewiadomski observed, Girard noted that in the Book of Psalms, unlike in the mythological texts where the victims of violence have no voice because the lynching mob silences them, here they are given a voice. The victims do not remain silent but curse their oppressors, thus exposing the collective violence.⁸⁵⁰ They also serve to show that God does not sanction violence but is on the side of the victim. In other words, God suffers with the victims. God is also seen as persecuted in the persecution of the lynch mob through the mechanism of the single victim.

These Old Testament passages, among others, show that the God of the Old Testament is non-violent. However, the conflict arises when one reads other Old Testament passages that portray and link God to the violent acts presented in the Texts of the Old Testament. In his book *Must There Be Scapegoats?* Schwager establishes that “approximately one thousand passages speak of Yahweh’s blazing anger, of his punishments by death and destruction, and how like a consuming fire he passes judgement, takes revenge and threatens annihilation.”⁸⁵¹ This creates a problem concerning the real image of God. Is He a violent God? Or is He a non-violent God? How can this problem and confusion be resolved? Reconciling these two conflicting images posed a new challenge for theologians. In the second century, Marcion tried to resolve this challenge by proposing a radical and heretical solution to this problem, in which he assumed “the existence of two gods, one of the Old Testament and another of the New.”⁸⁵² He generally regarded the God of the Old Testament as violent, ignoring many OT texts that show God as non-violent. He went further even to demean the God of the Old Testament, saying He is

⁸⁴⁹ Michael HARDIN (ed.), *Reading the Bible with Rene Girard, Conversations with Steven E. Berry*, 109.

⁸⁵⁰ Cf. Jozef NIEWIADOMSKI, *Figurationen mimetischer Rivalität in der Literaturen als Anstoß für die Theologie*, 208.

⁸⁵¹ Raymund SCHWAGER, *Must there be scapegoats? Violence and Redemption in the Bible*, 55.

⁸⁵² Aloys GRILLMEIER, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, volume one, Atlanta 1975, 99.

inferior to the God and Father of Jesus, subsequently rejecting the Old Testament and only remaining with a cleaned-up New Testament. He proposed a new canon of the New Testament comprising only a cleaned-up proto gospel of Luke (*restituierter proto Lukas*) and ten Pauline letters.⁸⁵³

On the other hand, Schwager proposed a moderate position affirming the inspiration of the Old Testament as God's word in human language. He considered the written text of the Old Testament to be "mixed texts that mix up genuine insights into divine nature with human projections on top of these insights."⁸⁵⁴ This carefully chosen position consequently called for a long-lasting interpretation and "*Entmischung*,"⁸⁵⁵ as noted by Niewiadomski. As an example of the unmixing (*Entmischung*) of the texts, Wandering illustrates it as follows:

Israel experienced its God as a liberator from oppression – a genuine insight into the divine nature – yet it connected this divine way of acting with violent retribution against its enemies, an idea that one must classify as a human projection when looking back from the revelation in Jesus, who prayed even for his persecutors.⁸⁵⁶

This aligns with the church's long-standing hermeneutical principle that *the Old Testament must be interpreted through the lens of the New Testament*.⁸⁵⁷ Schwager's perspective on mixed texts corresponds with Vatican II's *Dei Verbum*, which asserts that "God speaks in Sacred Scripture through men in human fashion."⁸⁵⁸ According to Schwager, human authors are responsible for human projections. Schwager's dramatic theology aimed to protect and defend God from such projections by demonstrating and persuasively arguing that God is non-violent, which resonates with the portrayal offered by Girard and one that Anselm sought to convey when he spoke of the mercy greater than which none can be conceived. As noted by Niewiadomski, Schwager's dramatic theology sought to deconstruct the image of a God who demands blood sacrifice to placate His anger by presenting the image of a radically non-violent

⁸⁵³ Cf. Karl-Heinz MENKE, *Das unterscheidende Christliche. Beiträge zur Bestimmung seiner Einzigkeit*, Regensburg 2015, 353. See also: Raymund SCHWAGER, *Der wunderbare Tausch*, 48.

⁸⁵⁴ Nikolaus WANDINGER, *Salvation through forgiveness or through the cross? Raymund Schwager's Dramatic solution to a false alternative*, in: Michael KIRWAN and Sheelah Trefle HIDDEN (eds.), *Mimesis and Atonement*, London 2017, 95-114, here: 104.

⁸⁵⁵ Jozef NIEWIADOMSKI, *Figurationen mimetischer Rivalität in der Literaturen als Anstoß für die Theologie*, 210.

⁸⁵⁶ Nikolaus WANDINGER, *Salvation through forgiveness or through the cross?* 104.

⁸⁵⁷ Nikolaus WANDINGER, *Raymund Schwager. Dramatic Theology*, 329.

⁸⁵⁸ SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation Dei Verbum* (18 November 1965), in: Vatican II. The Basic Sixteen Document of Vatican II, ed. by Austin FLANNERY, Northport/NY-Dublin 1996, (art. 12).

God, one who does not victimise but who stands with the victims.⁸⁵⁹ Schwager's view of a radically non-violent God complements and strengthens Anselm's depiction of a radically merciful God. He is radically non-violent because He is radically merciful.

⁸⁵⁹ Cf. Josef NIEWIADOMSKI, *Nur ein Sünderbock? Dramatischer Zugang zum Erlösungstod Christi*, in: Magnus STREIT – Jan-Heiner TÜCK (eds.), *Erlösung auf Golgota. Der Opfertod Jesu im Streit der Interpretationen*, Freiburg 2012, 83-100, here 88-89.

6.0. GENERAL CONCLUSION

In his most famous but controversial theory of satisfaction, Anselm presented to us the image of God who is infinitely merciful, for His mercy is greater than can be conceived.⁸⁶⁰ He is the God who is not full of sinister wrath⁸⁶¹ nor cruel⁸⁶² but compassionate and non-violent. This conclusion is the exact opposite of the common impression painted of Anselm's theory by several critics and commentators like Werbick, who says "God is a merciless creditor,"⁸⁶³ or Harnack, who labelled it as the worst theory ever given out as ecclesiastical.⁸⁶⁴ Some commentators like Kessler saw Anselm as radically bent on advocating for the severe punishment of even the slightest sin, likening God to an offended private man.⁸⁶⁵ They hastily wrote him off, judged him harshly and overlooked the richness of his entire theory. On the contrary, it has been shown in this work that he is not a proponent of God's wrath but of God's infinite mercy, greater than can be conceived. He is also a proponent of man's freedom, and his radical theory of freedom⁸⁶⁶ is central to man's redemption. Using the mimesis theory and Schwager's dramatic theology, Anselm's arguments have been strengthened and supported using modern language and concepts of mimetic theory and freedom as contained in Schwager's Theo drama. It has been shown that Anselm stood for the fact that God created man out of free choice and remains committed to preserving man and saving him through His infinite mercy even after he fell into sin.

This is, however, not to say that Anselm's theory had no limitations. If his theory were to also cover the life and teaching of Jesus and also the resurrection and Pentecost, Anselm's theory would have been more comprehensive soteriologically. As it is, the critique of Kessler was correct that Anselm focused mainly on the cross (staurocentric soteriology) and ended with Christ's death. It appears as though the death of Christ is entirely severed from His life and

⁸⁶⁰ Cf. CDH. II, XX

⁸⁶¹ Cf. Joseph Cardinal RATZINGER, *Introduction to Christianity*, 233.

⁸⁶² Cf. Glenn W. OLSEN, *Hans Urs von Balthasar and the rehabilitation of St. Anselm's doctrine of the Atonement*, in: *Scottish Journal of Theology* 34 (2009) 49-61, here: 53. In Balthasar's words: "Nowadays it has become fashionable, at least in Europe to revolt against the soteriology as outlined by St Augustine and put into a system by St Anselm of Canterbury... that the father in order to restore peace between God and the world, wished or was obliged to sacrifice his son. Doesn't this manifest a *cruel God*, who in order to restore honor, as Anselm puts it, resorts to such horrible means as the total abandonment of his son on the cross?"

⁸⁶³ Jürgen WERBICK, *Soteriologie*, 244.

⁸⁶⁴ Cf. Adolph HARNACK, *History of Dogma* vol. 6, 77-78.

⁸⁶⁵ Cf. Hans KESSLER, *Die theologische Bedeutung des Todes Jesu. Eine traditions-geschichtliche Untersuchung*, Düsseldorf, 1970, 132.

⁸⁶⁶ Cf. Peter HÜNERMANN, *Jesus Christus Gottes Wort in der Zeit*, 203.

works on earth and isolated.⁸⁶⁷ It appears to limit the saving act to the cross (although he spoke very briefly about the public life of Jesus) and does not account for the resurrection and Pentecost, through which his life and saving act were vindicated by the Father and through which the opposing powers of sin and death were overcome. The language he used from the medieval period, such as *honour Dei*, *rectitudo voluntatis*, and *aut poena aut satisfaction*, is also a limiting factor, as it has become incomprehensible today.⁸⁶⁸ This necessitates a need for an inculturation using modern concepts. We have attempted this in this paper by using the mimesis theory concept to inculturate and strengthen Anselm's position. Considering everything, we wish to end by responding to criticisms against him.

To the criticism on commutative justice by Kessler, suggesting that God acted like an offended private man,⁸⁶⁹ a critique raised by Harnack earlier and repeated by Kessler, among others, the critic also sees punishment as honouring God and criticises freedom, which makes man and God appear as equal partners obliging man to pay the debt to God, the offended partner, due to a breach of the business contract. The criticism that Anselm saw the punishment of sin as a way of honouring God does not hold water, for if Kessler understood what Anselm meant by punishment, he would hesitate to condemn him. Anselm understood punishment as eternal condemnation in hell. Since all have sinned, this would mean that all humanity is damned in hell, reduced to nothingness, for in being eternally separated from God, creation is reduced to nothingness. But this would not bring God honour, for as Irenaeus said, "the glory of God is man fully alive."⁸⁷⁰ Preserving His creation would be a more honourable thing to do, and God, out of self-obligation, cannot watch the world go to ruin without intervening. For Anselm, God's honour or glory is not dependent on man, for His glory is immutable, with or without creation, as Anselm repeatedly emphasised. We agree with Kessler's conclusion that the idea of punishment is absurd inside the concept of satisfaction.⁸⁷¹ It is absurd, as Anselm also argued, that God's purpose of creating man would be defeated should He watch man going to ruin, i.e., to eternal damnation in hell, without redeeming him or providing the means.

As for the criticism of freedom, Kessler accused Anselm of making man and God appear to be equal partners. The allegation does not hold water either. It is not a business transaction or contract but a personal relationship. This does not diminish the status of God; rather, from a

⁸⁶⁷ Hans KESSLER, *Die theologische Bedeutung des Todes Jesu*, 158.

⁸⁶⁸ Cf. Jan-Heiner TÜCK, *Crux. Über die Anstößigkeit des Kreuzes*, 179.

⁸⁶⁹ Cf. Hans KESSLER, *Die theologische Bedeutung des Todes Jesu*, 132.

⁸⁷⁰ Cf. CCC §294. See also: IRENAEUS, *Adversus Haereses*, 4,20,7.

⁸⁷¹ Cf. Hans KESSLER, *Die theologische Bedeutung des Todes Jesu*. 162.

dramatic theology perspective, as Schwager noted, God's gifts ought to be viewed as exchanges between free beings, each possessing their own dignity.⁸⁷² Only free beings can form genuine bonds and relationships. This echoes Jesus' words to His disciples near the end of His earthly ministry: "I call you friends" (John 15:15). He said this after revealing all He learnt from His Father. Anselm never claims that man and God are equal but emphasises that they are co-actors. He clearly affirms that God has no equal, as only God is omnipotent and sovereign, and this does not negate man's subordinate status before God. God remains superior, and man will always remain subordinate. According to Anselm, God respects human freedom, for it would be meaningless for God to grant man freedom and not respect that same freedom. This freedom makes salvation a matter of free choice rather than something imposed upon man. This perspective is reinforced in dramatic theology, which emphasises man's role not as a puppet of God but as a co-actor in the drama of salvation.⁸⁷³ Being a co-actor with God does not necessarily mean equality of status between God and man. Kessler was right to say that man cannot be equal to God, but he misunderstood Anselm's intention to underline man's role as a co-actor in his own drama of salvation by actively accepting the offer of the Father and the Son to complete the redemption process. Man is neither passive nor a puppet in this salvation drama. Dramatic theology clarifies this view of Anselm by emphasising man's role as an actor in the drama, thanks to the freedom he received from God.

The criticism that Anselm's theory presents man as a passive agent in his own salvation drama does not hold water. This is because it states the opposite of what the previous critic of Kessler held about freedom: that it makes man and God appear equal. The critic of Kessler cancels this criticism about man's passivity in his own salvation. Anselm emphasised that man ought to collaborate with God in his own salvation.

Harnack's criticism that it appears that "the son offers himself to himself,"⁸⁷⁴ or that God offered Himself to Himself or reconciled Himself to Himself is an extreme way of emphasising the supposed passivity of man. God's invitation and offer of mercy to man at the end renders this critique invalid. Schwager's dramatic theology strengthens Anselm's perspective by asserting that man is a co-actor in the drama of salvation and is, therefore, active rather than passive. Man actively participated but negatively in the crucifixion of Jesus Christ after rejecting the proclamation of the Basilea in Act III of the dramatic theology. Still, the offer of

⁸⁷² Cf. Raymund SCHWAGER, *Der wunderbare Tausch*, 303.

⁸⁷³ Cf. Karl RAHNER, *Theos in the New Testament*, 111.

⁸⁷⁴ Adolph Harnack, *History of Dogma*, Vol.6, 77.

peace after Easter invited man to participate actively and positively in his own salvation by accepting the peace and the message that man had initially rejected. This dramatic turn of events and view of man's participation by Schwager reinforces what Anselm was trying to convey in his theory of God offering mercy greater than man can conceive.

Regarding Pröpper's critique of conditionalising divine mercy by insisting on compensation which is based on Anselm's words: "He who has not paid says in vain, forgive."⁸⁷⁵ We agree with Pröpper that conditions were established for accessing the mercy of God, but this should not be viewed as prohibitive, as the critique seemingly suggests. Anselm asserted that God had provided the satisfaction already. What is required of man is to freely accept this offer and appropriate it for oneself. This was in order not to leave man out of his own redemption. Schwager asserted that God's infinite mercy flows with the phrase '*self-redemption*'. Though salvation is a pure gift from God, it does not exempt man from his actions.⁸⁷⁶ Salvation is a dramatic act. As observed by Krenski, drama is an act that presupposes freedom.⁸⁷⁷ Therefore, the precondition is that man uses this freedom actively in his own redemption. We find further reinforcement of this thought in dramatic theology when Schwager argued that there are no preconditions for entering into the Basilea, which Christ came to establish on earth by gathering all around Him. Everyone is loved and provided for by God, good or bad; all receive rain and sunshine without segregation. Still, there are post conditions for remaining in the Basilea: to love one's neighbour, love one's enemies, and forgive one's enemies. The precondition in Anselm's theory is that after God has done the most challenging part, man needs to play a role, not only accepting the mercy of God by appropriating it but also, according to Schwager, imitating God the Father and Jesus Christ continuously in forgiving as he has been forgiven.

As for the undeniable social context of feudalism raised by Greshake, which influenced Anselm's teaching on honour and punishment, Anselm sought to inculturate his theory with images from that social context. He is praised for his efforts to dissociate violence from God, and Greshake commends him for this.⁸⁷⁸ Using the analogy of a medieval peasant insulting a king to talk about God and man, Anselm played with this analogy in order to convert his audience from an image of a punishing sovereign (for satisfaction in his theological argument

⁸⁷⁵ Thomas PRÖPPER, *Theologische Anthropologie II*, Freiburg, 2015, 673. See also CDH I, XIX.

⁸⁷⁶ Cf. Raymund SCHWAGER, *Der wunderbare Tausch*, 303.

⁸⁷⁷ Thomas Rudolf KRENSKI, *Passio Caritastis. Trinitarische Passiologie im Werk Hans Urs von Balthasar*, Einsiedeln 1990, 238.

⁸⁷⁸ Cf. Gisbert GRESHAKE, *Gottes Heil- Glück des Menschen*, 92.

is not punishment but something positive)⁸⁷⁹ to his image of a non-violent but merciful sovereign God whose radical mercy is greater than can be imagined. Just as Jesus transformed the portrayal of God that people had in the parable of the wicked servants into a non-violent God, Anselm endeavoured to reform the common image of God in the Middle Ages to reflect the notion of a merciful God.

Ultimately, employing the language and ideas of dramatic theology, we wish to reinforce Anselm's theory of redemption by firmly asserting that Jesus is not a puppet of the cruel Father in the drama of salvation history. This is because the Son voluntarily offered His life to the Father for man's salvation, not passively or as a puppet, but as a co-actor in the drama of salvation. Blaming the Father or calling God the Father cruel due to the death of Jesus misses the point. Jesus possesses free choice and, therefore, was fully responsible for His self-initiated choices in the salvific event of the world. Both His divine and human wills "are at once efficient causes and effects."⁸⁸⁰ He laid down his life of his own accord, according to John's Gospel: "I lay down my life that I may take it again... I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again"(John 10:18). It has not to be forgotten that Jesus is a co-actor with the Father and the Holy Spirit in the Holy Trinity communion where the salvation of man was decided upon. "Jesus Christ sees Himself as coming forth from that decision in perfect freedom."⁸⁸¹ He is also a co-actor on the earthly stage as man and God with mankind. Jesus is not a puppet of the Father in this drama of salvation! He is a co-actor and protagonist. This way of perceiving Jesus not as a puppet in the drama of salvation history but as a co-actor is a game changer in Anselm's interpretation of satisfaction for today. Understood this way, all the stereotypical criticisms and interpretations that label Anselm's theory as portraying the Father as bloodthirsty, cruel and hostile as one who demands a sacrifice from his son, or as an offended private man, no longer stand.

The central criticism aimed at Anselm, the staurocentric critique suggesting that God demanded Christ's death on the cross to save humanity, implicitly assumes that Jesus is a mere puppet of God the Father rather than one who makes his own independent decisions. Nonetheless, his choices are never at odds with the Father's will.

⁸⁷⁹ Cf. Gisbert GRESHAKE, *Gottes Heil- Glück des Menschen*, 92.

⁸⁸⁰ Glenn W. OLSEN, *Hans Urs von Balthasar and the rehabilitation of St. Anselm's doctrine of the Atonement*, in: *Scottish Journal of Theology* 34 (2009) 49-61, here: 58.

⁸⁸¹ Cf. Hans Urs von BALTHASAR, *Theo-Drama. Theological Dramatic Theory III.*, San Francisco 1992, 242.

On the contrary, Jesus is not a puppet in the drama of salvation. He is a protagonist or co-actor with the Father and the Holy Spirit in the drama of salvation. He was responsible for the self-initiated choices of His life in the drama of salvation history, responding to man's free actions, including facing the consequences of man's rejection, which ultimately led to His death. However, the offer of mercy and peace after the resurrection overrides man's initial rejection. It allows man to be a co-actor and participate in his own salvation with his fully restored finite freedom. As Schwager firmly stated, the human will was restored once and for all on the cross in his act of extreme love.⁸⁸² Anselm's theory of salvation thus recognises man's free dramatic choice in his own salvation, offered by the Father and the Son as co-actors in this drama. As observed by Kirschner, there can be no salvation of man bypassing man's freedom.⁸⁸³ The radical mercy could not be greater than conceivable if the radical, non-violent, free-acting Jesus and the radical, non-violent God the Father's offer were imposed on man. Man needs to make a free and radical choice of accepting the mercy offered to him in order to complete the redemption process. According to Schwager, Anselm's theory and its demands, which seem to stem from impersonal legal thought, ultimately turn out to be the demands of a radical logic of freedom.⁸⁸⁴ The radical mercy of God is greater than any other because the actors in the drama are free-acting agents.

⁸⁸² Cf. Raymund SCHWAGER, *Der wunderbare Tausch*, 317.

⁸⁸³ Cf. Martin KIRSCHNER, *Gott-größer als gedacht. Die Transformation der Vernunft aus der Begegnung mit Gott bei Anselm von Canterbury*, Freiburg 2013, 269.

⁸⁸⁴ Cf. Raymund SCHWAGER, *Der wunderbare Tausch*, 303.

List of abbreviations

CCC	Catechism of the Catholic Church
CDH	<i>Cur Deus Homo</i>
DERS	<i>Derselbe</i>
DV	<i>Die Verbum</i>
IKaZ	<i>Internationale Katholische Zeitschrift</i>
JJS	Journal of Jewish studies
LThK	<i>Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche</i>
NA	<i>Nostra Aetate</i>
NCE	New Catholic Encyclopedia
NZSTh	<i>Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie</i>
StZ	<i>Stimmen der Zeit</i>
THQ	<i>Theologische Quartalschrift</i>
WiWei	<i>Wissenschaft und Weisheit</i>
ZKTh	<i>Zeitschrift für Katholische Theologie</i>

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Abstrakt

Die Frage, wie Jesus Christus durch sein Leiden und Sterben die Welt von der Sünde erlöst hat, ist ein zentrales Thema der Theologie, das bis heute kontrovers diskutiert wird. Anselm von Canterbury hat als erster eine systematische Soteriologie vorgelegt. Er deutet die Sünde des Menschen als Ehrverletzung Gottes – und deutet den Tod Jesu als Genugtuung, die dem Menschen das gibt, was er braucht, aber selbst nicht leisten kann. Diese Satisfaktionstheorie markiert eine Abkehr von der Redemptionstheorie, die davon ausging, dass dem Teufel ein Lösegeld gezahlt werden musste, um die sündigen Menschen seinem Zugriff zu entwinden. Die Satisfaktionstheorie Anselms hatte allerdings Auswirkungen auf das Gottesbild und ließ den Verdacht aufkommen, dass Gott ein grausamer Vater sei, der das Opfer seines eigenen Sohnes verlangte, um von seinem Zorn gegen die Sünde des Menschen abzulassen – wie Nietzsche, Harnack und Ernst Bloch behaupteten. Zur Verteidigung von Anselm wurde hingegen angeführt, dass nicht Gott, sondern der Mensch die Genugtuung braucht, um seine Freiheit im Ordo wiederherzustellen, und dass Jesus Christus sein Leiden freiwillig auf sich genommen hat.

In seinem Werk *Cur Deus Homo*, argumentiert Anselm, dass Gott dem Sünder nicht einfach göttliche Amnestie – *sola misericordia* – gewähren kann, denn das käme einer Behandlung des Menschen als unmündigem Kind gleich und würde die Freiheit des Menschen nicht ernst genug nehmen. Die gerechte Barmherzigkeit Gottes, die durch die Genugtuung Christi erlangt wurde, muss vom Menschen frei angenommen werden, damit er aktiv an seiner eigenen Erlösung mitwirken kann. Die von Anselm verwendeten mittelalterlichen Begriffe, die in der heutigen Zeit hermeneutisch fremd geworden sind, erfordern eine Neuinterpretation unter Verwendung zeitgenössischer Begriffe. Hier stellt René Girards Theorie des mimetischen Begehrens ein Deutungsangebot bereit. Er kontrastiert mythologische und biblische Texte und unterscheidet zwischen positiver und negativer Mimesis. Negatives mimetisches Begehren führt zu Rivalität und Gewalt, was im zehnten Gebot des Dekalogs ausdrücklich verboten wird. Im Gegensatz dazu präsentiert die Bibel ein positives Modell der Mimesis, das gewaltfrei ist, indem sie das gewaltfreie Verlangen Gottes nachahmt. Anders als in den Mythen zeigt die Bibel, dass Gott nicht gewalttätig ist. Trotz der Provokation, dass der Sohn als Sündenbock getötet wird, antwortet der Vater nicht mit Gewalt, sondern mit dem Angebot des Friedens. Ähnlich wie Anselms Konzept der Barmherzigkeit, das dem Sünder gerecht zu werden versucht, setzt auch die Aneignung des Friedens einen freien menschlichen Willen voraus. Die Rezeption Girards

durch die dramatische Theologie Raymund Schwagers macht die mimetische Theorie zu einem wichtigen hermeneutischen Schlüssel für die Neuinterpretation der Soteriologie heute. Die mimetische Theorie kommt zu dem Schluss, dass Gott nicht gewalttätig ist, und bekräftigt Anselms Gedanken in *Cur Deus Homo*, dass Gottes Barmherzigkeit größer ist, als man sich vorstellen kann. Letztlich erweist sich Gott aufgrund seiner radikalen Gewaltlosigkeit als barmherzig. Die Erlösung kann daher als ein dramatischer Akt gesehen werden, der die Freiheit aller anderen Akteure der Heilsgeschichte erfordert.

Abstract

The question of how Jesus Christ redeemed the world from sin through his suffering and death is a central theme of theology that is still the subject of controversial debate today. Anselm of Canterbury was the first to present a systematic soteriology. He interpreted man's sin as an injury to God's honour, and interpreted Jesus' death as satisfaction, which provides for man what he ought to but cannot provide. This satisfaction theory marked a departure from the ransom theory, which assumed that a ransom had to be paid to the devil in order to free sinful mankind from his grasp. However, Anselm's theory of satisfaction had implications on the image of God and gave rise to the suspicion that God was a cruel father who demanded the sacrifice of his own son in order to appease His wrath against man's sin - as Nietzsche, Harnack and Ernst Bloch claimed. In Anselm's defence, however, it was argued that it is not God but man who needs satisfaction in order to restore his freedom in the *Ordo*, and that Jesus Christ voluntarily took his suffering upon himself.

In his work *Cur Deus Homo*, Anselm argues that God cannot simply grant the sinner divine amnesty - *sola misericordia* - as this would be tantamount to treating man as a minor child and would not adequately take man's freedom into account. The just mercy of God, attained through the satisfaction of Christ, must be freely accepted by man for him to actively participate in his own redemption. The medieval terms used by Anselm, which have become hermeneutically foreign in modern times, require reinterpretation using contemporary concepts. This is where René Girard's theory of mimetic desire readily serves as a valuable interpretive aid. He contrasts mythological and biblical texts, distinguishing between positive and negative mimesis. Negative mimetic desire leads to rivalry and violence, which is explicitly prohibited in the tenth commandment of the Decalogue. In contrast, the Bible presents a positive model of mimesis that is non-violent by imitating the non-violent desire of God. Unlike the myths, the Bible demonstrates that God is not violent. Despite the provocation of the killing of His son as a scapegoat, the father does not respond with violence but offers peace instead. Similar to Anselm's concept of mercy, which aims to be just to the sinner, the appropriation of peace also presupposes free human will. Girard's reception in Raymund Schwager's dramatic theology makes mimetic theory to be an important hermeneutical key for the reinterpretation of soteriology today. The mimetic theory concludes that God is not violent and affirms Anselm's thought in *Cur Deus Homo* that God's mercy is greater than can be imagined. Ultimately, God proves to be merciful because of his radical non-violence. Redemption can,

therefore, be seen as a dramatic act that requires the freedom of all other actors in salvation history.