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ANSELM ON THE ATONEMENT IN *CUR DEUS HOMO*:
SALVATION AS A GRATUITOUS GRACE

by

Thu Nguyen

A thesis presented to the

Faculty of the Department of
Theological Studies
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Narrative

I usually think that soteriology is the most fundamental and significant concept in the entire system of Christian faith. It connects to questions, such as: why did Christ die? Who needs his death? Who is God in Christ's death? Why does humanity need salvation? What does humanity do to be saved? Answers to these questions certainly shape the Christian faith. Because of the important role of soteriology, I choose a topic pertaining to it.

Statements such as, "God wanted Christ to die to save humanity;" "Christ's death is a price paid to God so that God would eliminate humanity's debt;" and "Christ's death appeased God's wrath so that humanity could be reconciled to God," are a reality in Vietnam, preached by priests and catechists. These preachers are not aware that this kind of talk presents a portrait of God who kills his Son for the sake of his other children's lives.

I believe that the above statements are what Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, in his *Introduction to Christianity*, calls "a much-coarsened version of St. Anselm's theology of atonement."¹ This "much-coarsened version" depicts God as "One (who) gives first secretly with the left hand what one takes back again ceremonially with the right." In this coarsened version of atonement theory, the cross is reduced to being "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. It thus appears to people as the expression of an attitude that insists on a precise balance between debit and credit; at the same time one gets the feeling that this balance is based, nevertheless, on a fiction."²

¹ Joseph Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, trans. J. R. Foster (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), Kindle Edition, 3418.

² *Ibid.*, 3422.

Therefore, for my own faith and my future teaching I would like to examine comprehensively what Anselm's theory of atonement really is. I intently argue that Anselm considers SALVATION TO BE A GRATUITOUS GIFT of God. In addition to my first purpose, which is to clarify Anselm's theory of atonement, I will also answer critiques that, for me, result from the misunderstanding of Anselm's theory. My concern is also for my fellow priests. I suggest that they should not naively teach or preach statements like those quoted above.

I present Anselm's theory of atonement mainly by examining his work *Cur Deus Homo* (*Why God Became Man*), since this is his unique work about atonement. I also occasionally refer to his other works, in order to either strengthen or clarify his thoughts expressed in *Cur Deus Homo*.

A brief summary of the theory of Anselm

Anselm wrote *Cur Deus Homo* in the period of 1094–1098. It was composed in the form of a dialogue between the author and “Bose,” the interlocutor. In this work Anselm presented his view of atonement, which could be summarized as follows:

God created humanity in a righteous state and directed it toward eternal blessedness. God's plan would have been carried out if humanity had obeyed God. There is a relation, or an order established between God and humanity. Preserving the order is the security of the eternal blessedness.³ However, humanity broke down the order by disobeying God. This disobedience is an offense to the honor of God since it frustrates God's plan, which is sin. Sin, Anselm points out, “robs God of his own and dishonors him.”⁴ Sin imprisons humanity in death and takes away from

³ R. W. Southern, *Saint Anselm: A Portrait in a Landscape* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 206.

⁴ Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo: Why God Became Man*, trans. Sidney Norton Deane, B. A. (Beloved Pushing, 2004), I. 11.

humanity eternal blessedness, unless humanity pays God the debt of honor. But humanity is unable to make a satisfaction payment because it has fallen into sin,⁵ whereas, a satisfactory payment must be tantamount to God's honor that is taken away. As a result, there are only two supposed choices for God. God either forgives humanity unconditionally or punishes humanity due to its sin. However, God cannot eliminate the debt because "such compassion on the part of God is wholly contrary to the divine justice."⁶ God cannot also punish humanity since the eternal punishment means the frustration of God's plan.

There is only one solution which is a satisfactory payment. Anselm holds that only the God-man can pay the debt. As God, he has the ability to do it. As man, he makes a payment. Anselm points out, "for God will not do it, because he has no debt to pay; and man will not do it, because he cannot. Therefore, in order that the God-man may perform this, it is necessary that the same being should be perfect God and perfect man, in order to make this atonement."⁷ The one who makes a satisfactory payment must be the God-man. As God, he can make a payment that is beyond humanity's ability. As man, he pays in the place of humanity.

Based on this argument, Anselm states that it is necessary for God to be incarnate. The necessity of divine incarnation answers the question *Why God Became Man*. God incarnated as Jesus Christ, fully human and fully divine. By Jesus Christ's death, humanity made a satisfaction payment. God's honor that was violated by sin is therefore restored. Humanity is saved.

⁵ Anselm, CDH, I. 23.

⁶ Ibid., I. 24.

⁷ Ibid., II. 7.

Chapter 1- THE CONTEXT OF *CUR DEUS HOMO*

1.1. The Social Context

According to Robin Ryan, Anselm was born in 1033 in Italy. He joined the Benedictine monastery of Bec in central Normandy in 1059 as a young man. In 1093, he was named archbishop of Canterbury.⁸ Ryan argued that Anselm's age witnessed the cathedral and monastery schools, the rise of scholasticism, universities, and the translation of the thought of Aristotle.⁹ These events influenced the development of Christian theology in the Middle Ages. Theology began to be done not only in monasteries or the church's institutions but also in secular schools and universities. The introduction of Aristotle's thought came in three waves: "first, his grammar; then his logic (rules of argumentation); and finally his substantive concepts (metaphysics)."¹⁰ Contact with Aristotle's method of arguing and metaphysical concepts profoundly affected the ways in which many Christian theologians expressed the content of the faith. A new methodology was introduced. By this methodology, the truth was achieved on the basis of argument, dialectic, debate or dialogue.¹¹ According to R. W. Southern, the masters of schools applied all the refinement of logical analysis to discover agreement in statements which at first sight seemed irreconcilable.¹² Anselm was one of these Christian theologians who was affected by Aristotle's thought. The evidence of this influence was manifest in Anselm's references to Aristotle's thought to elucidate his own thought.¹³ R. W. Southern states that "Aristotle had never yet been quoted in any medieval

⁸ Robin Ryan, *Jesus and Salvation: Soundings in the Christian Tradition and Contemporary Theology* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2015), Kindle Edition, 71.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 71.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 72.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Southern, *Saint Anselm: A Portrait in a Landscape*, 124.

¹³ Anselm, *DCH* II. 18.

theological discussion. Indeed, so far as is known, the first explicit reference to Aristotle in a theological work is in Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo*.¹⁴

Cur Deus Homo was composed in this context. However, in order to understand Anselm's argument, it is important to be cognizant of additional contextual elements that helped to shape it. According to Ryan, two such elements need to be taken into account.¹⁵ The first is the organization of feudal society in northern Europe. Feudal society attached much importance to hierarchy and order. In feudal society, the order included the lord and the vassal. The distinction between the lord and the vassal guaranteed the order of society. The vassal was protected by the lord, and in return, the lord received the promise of the vassal's allegiance and service. In feudal society, honor was at the heart of life. Whether the social order was maintained or not depended on respect for and maintenance of this honor. If the honor of a superior was broken in some way, society was threatened by chaos. To maintain the social order, the broken honor had to be restored. The restoration of honor was effected either through "the punishment of the guilty or by the guilty making satisfaction to the one who had been offended."¹⁶ The second contextual element was the penitential practice of the church. In the church, there was a period of public penance for serious sins such as murder, apostasy, and adultery. When private confession became popular, penitential practices were established. Penitence relates to sins committed after baptism. It was seen as the price to be paid for the re-purchase of forgiveness and freedom from the punishment of God's anger. The penitence is the satisfaction by which God is appeased.

¹⁴ Southern, *Saint Anselm: A Portrait in a Landscape*, 30.

¹⁵ Ryan, *Jesus and Salvation: Soundings in the Christian Tradition and Contemporary Theology*, 74.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

1.2. Methodology and Goal of Anselm

Until the twelfth century, theology continued to be based on Augustine's epistemology.¹⁷ According to this epistemology, in the search for truth, the will has a certain primacy over the understanding. Therefore, to know the truth one must love the truth, which is identified with God's revelation.¹⁸ Knowing the truth is contingent on loving it, which for Augustine gives a certain epistemic priority to will over intellect.¹⁹ This is very different from the intellectualism of Aristotle's new epistemology. The truth is argued on the basis of debate, examination, dialogue.²⁰ This method constitutes a more critical theology. Marie-Dominique Chenu remarks: "The criteria of truth were no longer based solely on the rule of faith as operative in the revealed texts but also upon the rational coherence of propositions taken from a philosophy of man and here used as the minor premises of syllogisms."²¹

Having been affected by a new method, Anselm was convinced that there is a fundamental harmony between faith and reason. He thought that once one accepted, the mysteries of revelation in faith, could move one to a deeper understanding of truths through the employment of rational thinking. In *Cur Deus Homo*, Anselm confirms:

As the right order requires us to believe the deep things of Christian faith before we undertake to discuss them by reason; so to my mind it appears a neglect if, after we are established in the faith, we do not seek to understand what we believe. Therefore, since I thus consider myself to hold the faith of our redemption, by the prevenient grace of God, so that, even were I unable in any way to understand what I believe.²²

¹⁷ Thomas P. Rausch, SJ., *Systematic Theology: A Roman Catholic Approach* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2016), 25.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 22.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 9.

²¹ Cited from Thomas P. Rausch, SJ., *Systematic Theology: A Roman Catholic Approach*, 25.

²² Anselm, *DCH* I. 2.

Faith is important. However, it is insufficient if faith does not know about reason. Reason itself does not take primacy over faith, but the reasonableness of faith should not be ignored. Reason will strengthen faith. It helps understand what and why we believe. Faith based on reason is Anselm's theological method. He expresses this method with the phrase, *fides quaerens intellectum*, which translates into, "faith seeking understanding." Anselm asserts that the process of *fides quaerens intellectum* is one in which faith endeavors to see for itself as to why the propositions which it affirms are true.²³ By this method, reason does not go beyond the truth of faith; but the believer will come to understand more fully what faith means. Reason then may be seen as the appropriate activity for clarifying the contents of faith.²⁴ In *Cur Deus Homo*, Anselm explains God's reasonableness and the necessity of God's work to save the human race. He also investigates the reasons and logic for the incarnation. Human salvation requires both the necessity of the appearance of the God-man, and the necessity of his death.

Besides confirming his method, in the preface of *Cur Deus Homo*, Anselm explicitly expresses his goals for composing the work. He aims his work at two particular audiences: Christians, and Jews and pagans. Jews and pagans criticize Christian belief:

Infidels ridiculing our simplicity charge upon us that we do injustice and dishonor to God when we affirm that he descended into the womb of a virgin, that he was born of woman, that he grew on the nourishment of milk and the food of men; and, passing over many other things which seem incompatible with Deity, that he endured fatigue, hunger, thirst, stripes and crucifixion among thieves.²⁵

Jews and pagans wonder how the incarnation can be reconciled with God's supreme dignity, purity, and unchangeable stability. God is unchangeable; therefore, it is impossible for God to become anyone else but God's self. For them, it is unworthy for God to assume humanity.

²³ John McIntyre, *St. Anselm and His Critics: A Re-Interpretation of the Cur Deus Homo* (Edinburgh,: Oliver and Boyd, 1954), 42.

²⁴ Southern, *Saint Anselm: A Portrait in a Landscape*, 126.

²⁵ Anselm, *DCH* I. 3.

God who is entirely spiritual cannot be mixed with corporeal things. In addition, Christ's death is the dishonoring of God; therefore, Christians dishonor God in the crucifixion. On the contrary, Anselm tries to prove through his work that God's incarnation and death to save humanity is quite fitting and necessary. By his argument, Anselm presumes that even if they know nothing of Christ, and such a One had never existed, reason would have to confess the reasonableness of the Christian belief. Adolf von Harnack summarizes Anselm's aims as follow:

Jews and pagans must be constrained to acknowledge this necessity. They, and unbelieving Christians, must see that it is unreason to assert that God could also have redeemed us by another person (whether man or angel), or that He could have redeemed us by a mere determination of His will; they must perceive that the mercy of God does not suffer wrong through the death on the cross, and that it is not unworthy of God that Christ should have stooped to abasement and taken upon Himself the uttermost suffering.²⁶

Harnack's statement summarizes the reasonableness of the Christian belief that Anselm intended to express. It is only God who can save humanity, and there is no other way by which humanity is saved, except the way God chose. It is also not unworthy for God to be incarnate and suffer death. Death cannot corrupt God's nature.

In regard to the theological debates of Christians, Roscelin argued that if God's only Son becomes incarnate, the three persons must be three things-three Gods-and not one.²⁷ Conversely, Anselm affirmed that since only one person in the Trinity could be incarnate, that person must necessarily be the Son. Otherwise, there would be two Sons in the Trinity,²⁸ and this would be unbecoming. Besides Roscelin's argument, there is another work which plays a central role in the argument of the *Cur Deus Homo*.²⁹ This work, written by Ralph, a master of the Laon school, has

²⁶ Adolf von Harnack, *History of Dogma*, ed. T.K. Cheyne and A.B. Bruce, trans. William McGilchrist, vol. 6, Theological Translation Library (London: Williams & Norgate, 1899), 58.

²⁷ Southern, *Saint Anselm: A Portrait in a Landscape*, 197.

²⁸ Anselm, *CDH* II. 9.

²⁹ Southern, *Saint Anselm: A Portrait in a Landscape*, 204.

the same title as Anselm's work—*Cur Deus Homo*. Ralph argued that by sinning, humankind came under the dominion of the devil. Humans were only saved by a sinless man, Christ. Anselm objected to Ralph's "devil's right" idea.

1.3. Deletion of the Devil

Anselm objected to the devil's right idea that was supported by not only Ralph and but also a theory of atonement that was generally accepted and supported prior to Anselm. Briefly, this theory argued that by sinning, humanity created a contract with the devil, which rendered to the devil the "right" to have jurisdiction over humanity. God respected this contract; meanwhile, humanity was not able to break it. According to this theory, Jesus Christ's death destroyed the contract. Humanity was free from the devil's dominion.

There are two main explanations for Christ's death, under the banner of "devil's right" theory. One is that his death was a ransom paid to the devil so that the devil would release humanity. Gustaf Aulén notes: "The ransom is always regarded as paid to the powers of evil, to death, or to the devil."³⁰ The other explanation was that Christ's death and resurrection mean the victory of life over death. Death, the devil's power, was destroyed, and humanity was delivered. Church fathers such as Gregory of Nyssa and Augustine supported this argument. Gregory believed that the devil does not recognize Jesus as God in human form, so the devil kills Jesus. The devil thought that he saw a uniquely desirable prey, therefore, he accepted it; "as a fish swallows the bait on the fish-hook, so the devil swallows his prey, and is thereby taken captive by the Godhead."³¹ Augustine used "the simile of a mouse-trap; as the mice are enticed into the trap by the bait, so Christ is the bait by which the devil is caught."³² It turns out that the devil is

³⁰ Gustaf Aulén, *Christus Victor*, trans. A. G. Hebert, M.A. (Eugene, Oregon: Cross Reach Publications, 2016), Kindle Edition, 632.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 916.

³² *Ibid.*, 930.

deceived. When the devil swallows the desirable bait of Jesus Christ, it thought to kill an enemy. However, when Jesus Christ rises from death, he destroys the devil's power that is death.

Anselm rejects both of these explanations. He argues that the devil never has power over humanity. Anselm's refutation of the devil's right is based on his assessment of the devil's autonomy and his understanding of justice. First, God has possession of both the devil and humanity.³³ It *seems* that the devil has a power over humanity since the devil convinces humanity to join his ranks. However, the devil in no way has either jurisdiction over humanity or autonomy apart from God. Concerning justice, Anselm argues that human sin causes a debt owed to God, not to the devil, because humanity sins against God by not honoring God, and has not sinned against the devil.

In the three-cornered drama of God, humanity and the devil, the devil is eliminated, and we are left with God and humanity. There is only a debtor who cannot pay and a creditor who cannot be paid. Southern states that "Anselm had destroyed a satisfying triangle of divine, demonic and human rights, and had left man and God facing each other with no go-between to bridge the gap."³⁴ It is obvious that elimination of the devil's rights magnifies the responsibility of humanity, since it has to directly face God. It also increases God's glory when he brings salvation to humanity.

However, Anselm's deletion of the devil was not easily accepted. On the contrary, it was rejected even by monks of Anselm's order.³⁵ They were unwilling to abandon the rights of the devil. In addition, when the devil's rights are diminished, salvation can be effected only with humanity making a satisfaction payment to restore God's honor, which is equal to Christ's death.

³³ Anselm, *CDH* I. 7.

³⁴ Southern, *Saint Anselm: A Portrait in a Landscape*, 210.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 210.

Therefore, it is necessary that Christ pays the debt in the place of humanity. J. Denny Weaver believes that the deletion of the devil turned God into the author of Christ's death.³⁶

Chapter 2 - THE THEORY OF ANSELM

God's salvation is a gratuitous grace to humanity. To prove this statement convincingly, it is necessary to examine from two sides: God's and humanity's. From God's side, it is necessary to prove that salvation results from God's unconditional love to humanity. That is, God requires nothing from humanity to give salvation to it. On humanity's side, humans are not worthy of attaining salvation due to our sins. In other words, humanity has no merits sufficient to induce God to bestow salvation to it, or at least its merits are not equal to salvation. On the contrary, humanity receives salvation as a result of God's love pouring upon it.

My thesis is that salvation as God's gratuitous grace is actually Anselm's theory of atonement in his *Cur Deus Homo*. I argue my thesis on three bases. First, it is not God, but humanity's eternal blessedness that requires a satisfaction payment. That is, although Anselm writes that God's honor requires a satisfaction payment, Anselm also argues that nothing is added to God. This, a satisfaction payment is made on the behalf of humanity's eternal blessedness; it is not made to God himself. Second, salvation stems from God's mercy. It is not a consequence of God's justice. God's justice demands nothing from humanity. God's justice only demands that God himself saves humanity in a way that is not contradictory to his nature. Third, Anselm does not separate Jesus Christ from the Trinity. He understands Jesus Christ as God and a person of the Trinity. Therefore, Christ's saving work is God and the Trinity's. Combining these three arguments affirms that salvation is a gratuitous grace of God to humanity.

³⁶ J. Denny Weaver, *The Nonviolent Atonement* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001) Kindle edition, 3358-3360.

2.1. Human Blessedness Requires a Satisfaction Payment

2.1.1. The Literal Argument³⁷

To understand Anselm's theory, we first examine what sin is. According to Anselm, God created humanity with rational nature in order that humans might be happy in enjoying God.³⁸ Humanity's happiness is based on humanity's subordination to God's will.³⁹ Such subordination is presented as being an obligation.⁴⁰ Anselm calls it a debt which humanity owes to God and which God requires humanity to pay. One who pays this debt is righteous; one who does not pay it sins. Therefore, sin is nothing other than a non-payment of debt due to God. Anselm writes: "This is the debt which man and angels owe to God, and no one who pays this debt commits sin; but everyone who does not pay it sins. This is justice, or uprightness of will, which makes a being just or upright in heart, that is, in will; and this is the sole and complete debt of honor which we owe to God, and which God requires of us."⁴¹ Because sin is the non-payment of debt due to God, it is an offense to God's honor: "He who does not render this honor which is due to God, robs God of his own and dishonors him; and this is sin."⁴² Therefore, sin is the dishonoring of God by withholding from God what is God's.

Humanity commits sin by not paying what is due to God. Therefore, to be saved, humanity must make a payment to God so that God's honor is restored. However, Anselm also writes that to make a satisfactory payment to God, humanity must pay an additional debt. This statement of Anselm stems from an argument that every creature owns to God the original debt since all are

³⁷ By the literal argument, I mean the argument is inferred when Anselm's work is literally read, or the work is not comprehensively read, or this point is not linked to other points, or Anselm's point is not read between the lines.

³⁸ Anselm, *CDH* II. 1.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Anselm, *CDH* I. 11.

⁴¹ Anselm, *CDH* II. 11.

⁴² *Ibid.*

created by God, who requires complete obedience of will to God's will. The additional debt occurs by the act of disobedience. Therefore, humanity owns to God a twofold debt. Anselm points out: "We must also observe that when any one pays what he has unjustly taken away, he ought to give something which could not have been demanded of him, had he not stolen what belonged to another. So then, everyone who sins ought to pay back the honor of which he has robbed God; and this is the satisfaction which every sinner owes to God."⁴³

In a word, sin is the non-payment of debt due to God, which is an offense to God's honor. To be saved, humanity has to pay a debt to God so that God's honor is restored. Therefore, it is God's honor that requires humanity's satisfactory payment.

2.1.2. Critiques

Sin is conceived as an offense to God's honor, or as a deprivation of God's honor. This understanding easily leads to an assumption that human sin causes God to be hurt or deprived of something. If God is hurt, humanity must act to heal God's injury so that God diminishes humanity's sin and grants salvation to it. If God is deprived of his honor, humanity becomes a debtor of God and, hence, it must make a payment to God. God also becomes wrathful since being hurt; therefore, humanity must do something to appease God's wrath. If a payment, or restoration of God's honor, or appeasement of God's wrath is beyond humanity's ability, someone else will have to do it in the place of humanity.

Out of these theological assumptions, questions arise: who is God? What is his atonement? These assumptions reveal a God who is not a merciful father. He is surely described as a demanding, selfish, wrathful and wicked. This god is not worthy of humanity's worship. Salvation can be considered as a trade deal between God and humanity, which is replaced by Christ.

⁴³ Anselm, *CDH* II. 11.

Salvation is seen as a trade deal since God only diminishes humanity's sin when God receives a reparation that is equivalent to God's honor that is injured by humanity's sin. If it is the case, we wonder if humanity or God needs salvation. Is humanity saved, or is God saved? It can be said that God saves humanity to save God himself, or that saving humanity is only a camouflage; in fact, God needs salvation. Another question is, who is God in relationship to Christ's death? If salvation of humanity is only carried out by a payment to restore God's honor, or to appease God's wrath, it is certain that God needs Christ's death, or at least God arranges for Christ's death. But it is unbelievable to think that God is the author of Christ's death.

These assumptions show risks that may arise out of Anselm's theory of atonement. They result from a concept of a payment to restore God's honor. As a result, Anselm has been the recipient of many critiques. They mainly include three issues: false logic; God in relationship to Christ's death; and the nature of Anselm's theory.

Harnack accuses Anselm of employing false logic. According to him, Anselm's concept of honor conveys three different meanings.⁴⁴ First of all, since God is impassible, his honor cannot suffer any injury. It is incorruptible and immutable.⁴⁵ But, he contends, Anselm asserts that God's honor *can* be injured. And God's injured honor can be restored by penalty or by satisfaction. Lastly, God's honor requires that God's plan, which culminates in the salvation of the reasonable creature, cannot be destroyed.⁴⁶ Therefore, God must avoid punishment of humanity and must carry out salvation. As a result, God chooses satisfaction. Harnack contends that Anselm is not merely epistemically wrong. He contends that the worst thing is that, by the concept of God's injured honor, Anselm's theory depicts an image of a humanlike and wrathful God. Harnack points

⁴⁴ Harnack, *History of Dogma*, 73.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

out: “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 honor and does not forego His wrath till He has received an at least adequately great equivalent.”⁴⁷

George Cadwalader Foley criticizes Anselm for misunderstanding the nature of sin. According to Foley, “Sin is to be measured not by its effects upon God, but by its motive and intention, and its relation to righteousness; there all its ethical quality lies.”⁴⁸ Meanwhile, Anselm views sin as an offense to God, which creates a human debt to God. Anselm’s view “makes a single sin equivalent to an infinite debt.”⁴⁹ This understanding is neither Scriptural nor patristic. The early Christian theologians, particularly Athanasius, see a debt as the fulfillment of a law that requires death as the penalty of sin.⁵⁰ The early Christian authors’ understanding of debt is ethical, whereas, Anselm’s is commercial. Secondly, Foley criticizes Anselm’s concept of honor. He describes Anselm’s understanding of honor as derived from the institution of feudalism and as a personal and humanlike understanding of honor.⁵¹ This kind of understanding reduces God’s glory and honor to a personal prestige that is protected from any insults. By this understanding, Anselm “externalizes and conventionalizes the divine relation to us, and deprives God’s personal claim of all moral significance.”⁵² However, God is the father, rather than a tyrant who demands humanity’s submission to protect his prestige. In addition, although Anselm rejects punishment as a means God uses to restore his honor, it must be thought of as a possible satisfaction of God’s requirements.⁵³ That is, Anselm supports punishment as a satisfactory payment to God’s honor.

⁴⁷ Harnack, *History of Dogma*, 77.

⁴⁸ George Cadwalader Foley, *Anselm’s Theory of the Atonement* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1909), 155.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Foley, *Anselm’s Theory of the Atonement*, 155.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 148.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 155.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 158.

Finally, Foley accuses Anselm of inconsistency with regard to the loss and restoration of *honor*. Foley contends that the loss of God's honor is the basis of Anselm's whole reasoning; but Anselm admits that God can suffer no objective loss of this kind.⁵⁴ This argument is utterly vitiated by this contradiction. By this honor, "the theory, however, is destroyed by Anselm himself."⁵⁵ Anselm understands sin as an offense to God's honor. And humanity's salvation is only granted when it pays God a debt of honor. Therefore, the nature of Anselm's theory is commercial and mercantile. It appears to be a trade deal between God and humanity, whom Christ replaces. Foley concludes that "Anselm has no understanding of a real salvation because he has no real understanding of sin."⁵⁶

J. Denny Weaver critiques Anselm's theory on the basis of concepts such as human sin and divine honor. Accordingly, the honor of God is offended by humanity, which results in humanity's debt to God's honor. The offended honor requires humanity to make a satisfactory payment to God.⁵⁷ This satisfactory payment can only be carried out by Christ, and is equivalent to Christ's death.⁵⁸ Christ dies to restore God's honor, or pay the debt to God. It turns out that God needs or "arranges"⁵⁹ Christ's death. Weaver states: "Although the traditional language has focused on Jesus' death for sinners, asking about the agent behind the death points to God as both the author of the process or the agent behind the transaction that requires the death of Jesus as innocent victim, as well as the recipient of the death as payment to God's honor."⁶⁰ Although not explicitly stated, Christ's death conveys the meaning of "propitiation"⁶¹ since it indicates the sacrifice offered as

⁵⁴ Foley, *Anselm's Theory of the Atonement*, 152.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 155.

⁵⁷ Weaver, *The Nonviolent Atonement*, 325.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ J. Denny Weaver, "Narrative Christus Victor: The Answer to Anselmian Atonement Violence," in *Atonement and Violence: A Theological Conversation*, ed. John Sanders (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006), 5.

⁶⁰ Weaver, *The Nonviolent Atonement*, 1306-1308.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 328.

compensation to the offended honor of God. It also signifies the meaning of “expiation”⁶² since it concerns the sinners’ guilt and penalty which are covered. Although Weaver does not accuse Anselm’s theory of being solely commercial, he states “there is no denying that there is a tendency here toward an economic exchange model of the atonement: my sins are transferred or imputed to Christ while his righteousness is directly transferred or imputed to me.”⁶³

2.1.3. The Real Argument⁶⁴

As explained above, Anselm contends that sin is an offense to God’s honor. This argument inevitably leads to an assumption that God’s honor must be restored so that God brings about salvation. This thought is severely criticized since it depicts God and a theory of atonement that are not acceptable to modern readers. However, if Anselm thought is linked to other thoughts, its meaning is quite different. In fact, Anselm argues that: “Nothing can be added to or taken from the honor of God. For this honor which belongs to him is in no way subject to injury or change.”⁶⁵ That is, God’s honor cannot be disturbed by human sin. The question is, what is really God’s honor? Also, how can sin be an offense against God’s honor if God’s honor cannot be offended? In Book II, Anselm makes a distinction between God’s honor as it is in God-self and God’s honor that is expressed in the order and beauty of the universe. God’s honor as it is in God-self is not able to be offended by human sin. However, God’s honor that is expressed in the order and beauty of the universe can be offended by human sin. When humanity subjects to God’s will, that is, it preserves the order and beauty of the universe, God’s honor is illumined and maintained. Anselm points out:

⁶² Weaver, *The Nonviolent Atonement*, 328.

⁶³ Weaver, “Narrative Christus Victor: The Answer to Anselmian Atonement Violence,” 49.

⁶⁴ By the real argument, I mean the argument is inferred when Anselm’s work is wholly read, or this point is not linked to other points, or Anselm’s point is not read between the lines.

⁶⁵ Anselm, *CDH* II. 15.

When the being chooses what he ought, he honors God; not by bestowing anything upon him, but because he brings himself freely under God's will and disposal, and maintains his own condition in the universe, and the beauty of the universe itself, as far as in him lies. But when he does not choose what he ought, he dishonors God, as far as the being himself is concerned, because he does not submit himself freely to God's disposal. And he disturbs the order and beauty of the universe, as relates to himself, although he cannot injure nor tarnish the power and majesty of God.⁶⁶

Anselm claims that surely no one can honor or dishonor God, as he is in himself; but the creature, particularly humanity “appears to do this”⁶⁷ when it submits or opposes its will to the will of God. Although humanity cannot honor or dishonor God, as God is in God’s self, humanity actually prevents God’s honor from reflecting on the creature. Therefore, a right expression about sin must be that sin is a disturbance of the order and beauty of the universe, and this disturbance offends God’s honor since it prevents illumination of God’s honor.

What is the origin of the concept of honor? Comprehending this concept leads us to recognizing what Anselm means, and what indeed requires a satisfactory payment. To understand the concept we must put it in its historical context. It is noteworthy to emphasize that *Cur Deus Homo* was composed in the twelfth century. R. W. Southern observes that “Anselm's thoughts about God and the universe were colored by the social arrangements with which he was familiar The *Cur Deus Homo* was the product of a feudal and monastic world on the eve of a great transformation. With all its originality, and personal intensity of vision, it bears the marks of this rigorous and—if the word can be used without blame—repressive regime.”⁶⁸ The emphasis is on subjects’ submission to the lord’s will, meanwhile, the lord’s power is always protected. Since *Cur Deus Homo* is the product of the society at the time it was written, there is certainly the influence of the particular culture of Anselm's day on his imagery. According to Southern, honor is built and

⁶⁶ Anselm, *CDH* II, 15.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Southern, *Saint Anselm: A Portrait in a Landscape*, 222.

preserved on one's estate and social status. He explains that "in the language of feudal tenure a man's honor was his estate. The central feature of this estate was his landed property. But it also embraced his due place in the hierarchy of authority, his family background, and his personal honor."⁶⁹ Preserving honor is to preserve the social order and peace. Southern explains: "It was the maintenance of the king's honor which preserved his kingdom, of the baron's honor which preserved his barony, and so on down the scale."⁷⁰ Southern presents this feudal conception of honor as the backdrop for Anselm's understanding of God's honor. He explains that:

God's honor is the complex of service and worship which the whole Creation, animate and inanimate, in Heaven and earth, owes to the Creator, and which preserves everything in its due place. Regarded in this way, God's honor is simply another word for the ordering of the universe in its due relationship to God. In withholding his service a man is guilty of attempting to put himself in the place of the Creator. He fails; but in making this attempt, he excludes himself from, and to the extent of his power destroys, the order and beauty of the universe.⁷¹

Humanity rebels against God. In so doing, it destroys the ordering of the universe which keeps it blessed. To regain the blessedness that is destroyed by humanity's sin, humanity must restore the order of the universe by reclaiming the rights of God who creates the order. When humanity is subjected to God's rights, it is not the case that *God's* injury is healed, but the injury of the universal order is. Southern explains, "his (man's) rebellion requires a counter-assertion of God's real possession of his honor, not to erase an injury to God, but to erase a blot on the universal order."⁷²

Walter Kasper, a German Roman Catholic Cardinal and theologian, similarly explains the concept in terms of the medieval feudal system. Accordingly, in the relationship between the lord and the vassal, the vassal receives the lord's protection and access to his fief. In exchange, the lord

⁶⁹ Southern, *Saint Anselm: A Portrait in a Landscape*, 226.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Ibid.*

receives the vassal's loyalty and service.⁷³ When this relationship remains, there is order, peace and freedom. The thing that maintains the relationship is the lord's position rather than the lord himself. If the vassal refuses the lord's position, the relationship is severed. There is no longer order, peace, or freedom. Kasper explains that "honor is not the lord's personal honor, but the social status by which he is the guarantor of the public peace."⁷⁴ The lord's social status is his lordship or power. When his lordship is accepted, the order of society is sustained. If the vassal refuses the lord's lordship, the society is disordered. However, a thing that is hurt by the vassal's refusal is not the lord himself but the lord's lordship which guarantees the society in which the vassal's happiness is protected. It turns out that the vassal hurts himself when he refuses the lordship, and a thing that needs to be restored is the lord's lordship or the vassal's submission to the lordship. Kasper relates the lord's lordship with God's honor and concludes that "the infringement of God's honor is not a question of God, but of man, of the order and beauty of the world. It is not God's personal honor which has to be restored, but the disfigured and out-of-joint world, which is in order only as long as it upholds the honor of God."⁷⁵

Briefly stated, in a society the king's honor or kingship is the guarantor of the public peace. When kingship is refused, the society is in tumult. Therefore, it is kingship which needs to be restored. It is only restored by subjects' reaccepting the kingship. The thing which needs to be changed is the subjects' spirit. The subjects must be changed so that a peaceful society is re-established, which renders happiness. Ultimately, it is the subjects' happiness which requires the restoration of the kingship. Analogically, sin is an offense to God's honor. However, this honor is not God's personal honor. The dishonoring of God is not a personal feeling of being offended. It

⁷³ Walter Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, trans. V. Green (Burn& Oates: Paulist Press, 1977), 219.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 220.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

is that which secures the order and beauty of the universe. ‘That which secures the order and beauty of the universe’ needs to be restored. It is only in the condition of this restoration that humanity is blessed. According to Anselm’s language, a process of restoring the order and beauty of the universe is the process of making a satisfactory payment. Therefore, we certainly affirm that for Anselm, God does not require a debt payment, but it is human blessedness that requires a satisfactory payment.

The above argument is more clarified by Anselm’s another work, *On the Virginal Conception and On Original Sin* which Anselm considers as “another explanation”⁷⁶ besides *Cur Deus Homo*. Anselm once again deals with the problems of original sin, a debt payment, etc. He claims that humanity is created in a state of “original justice.”⁷⁷ It receives this justice from God. This justice only exists on a condition that humanity is in “the rectitude of will.” The rectitude of will is only preserved when humanity wills what God wills it to will: “No will is just unless it wills what God wills it to will.”⁷⁸ However, in fact, humanity willed what is not in conformity with God’s will. In other words, humanity objected to God’s will. By doing so, humanity abandoned its justice. As a result, humanity fell into a state of injustice. Anselm calls the abandonment of justice original sin.⁷⁹ Original sin is nothing other than injustice. The following passage expresses Anselm’s entire thought:

For when a will was initially given to the rational nature, it was, simultaneous with that giving, turned by the Giver himself to what it ought it to will—or rather, it was not turned but created upright. Now as long as that will remained steadfast in the rectitude in which it was created, which we call truth and justice, it was just. But when it turned itself away from what it ought to will and toward what it ought not, it did not remain steadfast in the original rectitude (if we may so call it) in which it was created. When it abandoned that

⁷⁶ Anselm, “On the Virginal Conception and On Original Sin,” in *Anselm: Basic Writing*, ed. and trans. Thomas Williams (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2007), 329.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 330.

⁷⁸ Anselm, “On the Fall of the Devil,” in *Anselm: Basic Writing*, ed. and trans. Thomas Williams (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2007), 159.

⁷⁹ Anselm, “On the Virginal Conception and On Original Sin,” 332.

rectitude, it lost something great and receive in its place nothing but its privation, which has no essence, and which we call injustice.⁸⁰

Humanity commits sin by objecting to God's will; as a result, humanity loses its justice. Sin corrupts human nature. It is obvious that Anselm stated that the consequence of sin effect human nature, rather than God. We can question what there is to be restored or be made right. The answer is that human nature rather than God needs to be restored. Humanity corrupts the original justice. If humanity has to make recompense, it makes recompense for its justice. Anselm argues that when humanity sins, "What was left in human nature, therefore, was the debt of the justice, whole and sound and without any injustice, that human nature had received, and the debt of making recompense for having abandoned justice, along with the corruption that it had incurred on account of sin."⁸¹

We can conclude that God does not require a debt payment since sin cannot hurt God. The concept of making a reparation is totally strange to Anselm. The idea that salvation is only brought to humanity when God is satisfactorily paid is not Anselm's. Therefore, condemning him for depicting God as a demanding God and of upholding salvation as a commercial exchange is not accurate. In fact, Anselm did present that sin disturbed God's honor. However, this honor is not predicated of God's nature. It is God's honor that illuminates creature. In other words, it is God's honor that preserves the order and beauty of the universe in which humanity is in the state of blessedness. It follows that it is humanity's blessedness that requires reparation. This argument is explicitly presented in Anselm's other works such as *On the Virginal Conception and On Original Sin*. Accordingly, humanity abandons justice bestowed by God. It falls into the state of injustice

⁸⁰ Anselm, "On the Fall of the Devil," 183.

⁸¹ Anselm, "On the Virginal Conception and on Original Sin," 330.

and becomes a debtor to justice. Humanity itself freely abandons justice, it must regain the lost justice. Salvation is the restoration of the lost justice

On the one hand, Anselm understands humanity's debt as its debt of existence. Humanity is created by God, and therefore, is totally dependent on God. Its existence is secured by its obedience to God's will. On the other hand, Anselm understands humanity's debt as its debt of justice. Humanity is created in a state of justice. However, by sinning, humanity falls into a state of injustice. It becomes a debtor of justice. Anselm does not view humanity's debt as something that must be paid to God. What needs to be done is to restore the lost justice. However, critics of Anselm have certainly quantified the debt, turning it into something quantifiable. By the quantified debt, God has had something taken away from him. He must manage to regain what has been lost, or humanity must pay what it has taken from God so that it is given salvation. Critics have turned Anselm's theory into a forensic one. That is, God gives humanity salvation after humanity made reparation or payment to him. From this mistaken point, they have forensically interpreted Anselm's theory of atonement.

2.2. Justice and Mercy of God

2.2.1. The Literal Argument

As presented above, Anselm argues that sin destroys God's honor, which illuminates creation. The destruction of God's honor results in the destruction of the order and beauty of the universe. Therefore, salvation lies on the restoration of God's honor that preserves the order and beauty of the universe in which humanity is in the state of blessedness. In what way is God's honor restored? Anselm suggests two ways: either humanity makes restitution to God's honor, or humanity must suffer punishment as compensation to God.

Anselm does not argue for God's forgiving sin. He gives three reasons why God cannot simply absolve the debt of humanity. First, God is the controller of everything. However, God ceases to be the controller of sin if sin is not punished: "sin would remain in a manner exempt from control (*inordinatum*), which cannot be, for God leaves nothing uncontrolled in his kingdom."⁸² Second, if sin is not punished, God would let something disorderly pass in his kingdom, which is contrary to God's nature: "It is not fitting for God to pass over anything in his kingdom undischarged."⁸³ Third, if the sin is not punished, the sinful and the sinless should receive the same treatment from God. The sinful even have the advantage because they are not subject to law, whereas only God is not subject to law. The sinful cannot be equivalent to God: "Injustice, therefore, if it is cancelled by compassion alone, is freer than justice, which seems very inconsistent. And to these is also added a further incongruity, viz., that it makes injustice like God. For as God is subject to no law, so neither is injustice."⁸⁴ If the sinful obeyed no law, they would be equivalent to God. This assumption is impossible.

God does not simply remit sin. Therefore, humanity encounters two possibilities: either restitution or penalty. Humanity must make compensation which is in accordance with the extent of the injury. Humanity commits sin. It, rather than any other being, must eliminate its sin by making a satisfactory payment to God. Humanity must be responsible for its activity: "Therefore the honor taken away must be repaid, or punishment must follow; otherwise, either God will not be just to himself, or he will be weak in respect to both parties; and this it is impious even to think of."⁸⁵ It is God's supreme justice that requires either compensation or punishment.

⁸² Anselm, *CDH* I. 20.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 13.

Humanity has to make compensation to God; however, it in no way can make a satisfactory payment to be saved. Anselm presents three reasons for this. First, everything humanity is able to do is caused by God's grace.⁸⁶ Even our existence results from God: "you are both the servants of one Lord, made by him out of nothing."⁸⁷ Whatever humanity can do such as repentance, a broken and contrite heart, self-denial, various bodily sufferings, pity in giving and forgiving, obedience, and even existence are owed to God,⁸⁸ humans do these things on the account of this duty. They are not reckoned as a payment to God: "When you render anything to God which you owe him, irrespective of your past sin, you should not reckon this as the debt which you owe for sin."⁸⁹ Second, humanity cannot make a satisfaction payment because of the gravity of its sin. As God's rational creature, humanity is required to give total obedience to God's will. Any slight sin is disobedience to God's will; therefore, it is grave: "So heinous is our sin whenever we knowingly oppose the will of God even in the slightest thing; since we are always in his sight, and he always enjoins it upon us not to sin."⁹⁰ Anselm argues that the gravity of sin lies on not only sin itself but also on whom sin offends. Sin offends God so it is grievous. Anselm's argument leads to Boso's agreement that: "When I consider the action itself, it appears very slight; but when I view it as contrary to the will of God, I know of nothing so grievous, and of no loss that will compare with it."⁹¹ Sin is so grave that "the price paid to God for the sin of man be something greater than all the universe besides God."⁹² Something greater than all the universe besides God is nothing but God himself. Humanity in no way is able to pay this price to God. Finally, by sinning humanity

⁸⁶ Anselm, *CDH* I. 20.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² Anselm, *CDH* II. 6.

“yields to the devil.”⁹³ Therefore, it can make satisfaction to God only if he conquers the devil and so honors God: “(Humanity) conquers the devil by not yielding to his temptation, and so to vindicate the honor of God and put the devil to shame.”⁹⁴ Humanity does this by experiencing “the pain of death, while wholly avoiding sin.”⁹⁵ That is, humanity passes through death with a sinless spirit. But humanity, who committed sin, cannot die sinlessly.

On the one hand, humanity is obliged to pay a debt to God, but it is incapable to pay that debt which is “something greater all the universe besides God”. On the other hand, it is unbecoming for God to diminish the debt without recompense. At this point, Anselm looks to God as the solution. As a result, he states that, it is necessary for God to become incarnate since it is only a God-man who is both a human being and One who pays something greater all the universe besides God.

2.2.2. Critiques

It is certain that Anselm’s concept of divine justice seems to have consequences that are unacceptable today. This concept may depict a god whose attributes are justice and righteousness, without love and mercy. This kind of god is a wicked god, and not God of Christianity. This kind of god seeks revenge or reparation since he is hurt or robbed of something. Especially, a god who demands the death of his son to satisfy his own justice would be a cruel tyrant. However, it is undeniable that many texts and interpretations assert that Anselm depicts this kind of god, just as Ratzinger’s notes: “Many devotional texts actually force one to think 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

⁹³ Anselm, *CDH* I. 22.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

message of love incredible.”⁹⁶ Ratzinger also warns that “a much-coarsened version of St. Anselm’s theology of atonement”⁹⁷ surely results in a naïve understanding of Anselm’s theory. Such understanding is the form “in which the infinitely offended righteousness of God was propitiated again by means of an infinite expiation.”⁹⁸ Therefore, Anselm’s theory appears to people “as the expression of an attitude that insists on a precise balance between debit and credit; at the same time one gets the feeling that this balance is based, nevertheless, on a fiction.”⁹⁹ Furthermore, in its concept of justice, Anselm’s theory may cause an understanding that it is just for God to regain the loss caused by human sin, and that humanity must suffer punishment to expiate its sin. That is, doing justice is based on retribution or punishment. It is retributive and punitive justice.

While there aren’t these exact critiques in theological arguments against Anselm, there are some similar ones. Foley argues that Anselm over-emphasizes justice at the expense of the mercy and love of God.¹⁰⁰ He states that God’s justice, not mercy is the core of Anselm’s theory. Accordingly, salvation is carried out after all demands of God’s justice were satisfied: “Compensation is due to the honor of God, but it is required by His justice; the justice is involved in the acceptance of Christ's death as a reparation.”¹⁰¹ A theory of atonement that centers on divine justice rather than on divine love is not Christian: “There must be a necessity for our redemption in the eternal nature of His love; to center theology in His justice is paganism, not Christianity.”¹⁰²

⁹⁶ Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 3417-3418.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 3419-3420.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 3420-3422.

¹⁰⁰ Foley, *Anselm's Theory of the Atonement*, 166.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 149.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 166.

However, Foley does not claim that the divine love is absent in Anselm's theory, but rather, that divine love is imprisoned until the demands of the divine justice has been satisfied. He points out:

He made such a complete distinction between *justice* and mercy as to render antagonism possible, and then arrayed the one against the other by portraying the one as demanding what the other does not. This is a practical revival of the Gnosticism of Marcion. Mercy was represented as helpless until *justice* was satisfied; their reconciliation was the proof of their previous opposition.¹⁰³

Similarly, Aulén argues that Anselm ignores the church fathers' thought that it is God's love that makes salvation. The cause of Anselm's ignorance is that he over-emphasizes the seriousness of sin. If he mentions God's love, the seriousness of sin will decrease. Aulén states that "it is certain that Anselm is anxious to avoid any such idea of the Divine Love as may minimize the gravity of sin; he claims that God's demand for satisfaction proves the seriousness with which He regards sin."¹⁰⁴ Aulén does not affirm the lack of divine love in Anselm's theory. However, he sees the relationship between the divine justice and mercy as an antinomy. The result of this relationship is a compromise. Aulén says: "The solution of the antinomy can fairly be called a rational compromise; for the Justice of God receives a compensation for man's default, so that His mercy may now be free to act."¹⁰⁵ The love of God is not absent from Anselm's theory, but it is controlled by the divine justice and acts on the boundary of the divine justice: "The Love of God is regulated by His Justice, and is only free to act within the limits which Justice marks out."¹⁰⁶ Such an understanding of the relationship between the divine love and justice leads to Aulén's reading of Anselm, according to which salvation is the result of God's justice: "Atonement is worked out according to the strict requirements of justice; God receives compensation for man's

¹⁰³ Foley, *Anselm's Theory of the Atonement*, 173.

¹⁰⁴ Aulén, *Christus Victor*, 1459-1461.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 2323-2324.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 2355-2356.

default.”¹⁰⁷ Salvation is carried out whenever humanity makes a payment to satisfy God’s justice. Therefore, Aulén concludes that Anselm’s theory of atonement is “juridical in its inmost essence.”¹⁰⁸

J. Denny Weaver examines Anselm’s theory of atonement in the *CDH* and points to justice as the fundamental basis of Anselm’s thought. God demands that his justice must be restored so that salvation is given out. Humanity must pay what is equal to its sin. The equivalence of its sin is a death penalty. He says: “The divine economy has a need for a death penalty to balance the sin of humankind as the basis for restoring justice.”¹⁰⁹ The death that can restore God’s justice is not the human death, but the death of the God-man. Therefore, it is God’s justice that needs Christ’s death: “Divine justice — God’s justice — is what Jesus’ death is aimed at. It is divine justice — God’s justice — that needs the death of Jesus. Without the death, divine justice would not be restored.”¹¹⁰ The death of the God-man is a balance of human sin and a satisfaction humanity pays to God. Weaver criticizes Anselm’s theory as a violent atonement. He writes: “Satisfaction atonement, in any of its variants, is atonement that assumes divinely authored and divinely sanctioned violence of the death penalty as the means to restore justice, as the basis of salvation. Satisfaction atonement is based on an intrinsically violent assumption — restoring justice means punishment.”¹¹¹ In addition, this theory upholds that justice depends on penalty. Doing justice means punishment. Justice is done by balancing sin with punishment. Weaver states: “The assumption in any of the versions of satisfaction atonement that doing justice or making right means to punish and is based on the assumption that an offense is balanced by punishment equal

¹⁰⁷ Weaver, *The Nonviolent Atonement*, 1435-1436.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 1439.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 1322-1323.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 3368-3370.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 3424-3425.

to the offense.”¹¹² Weaver views Anselm’s theory as a social rather than biblical product. It is composed to serve the church’s benefit. He explains:

When the church comes to accept the social order and to see the structures of the social order (such as political authority) as a means of furthering the church and expressing church concerns, then ethics are derived more from the social order than the specific narrative of Jesus. Returning to the sword as the primary example, rather than opposing the sword, the church came to rationalize the sword as a means to defend or extend Christ’s church or the now Christianized social order in which the church was at home.¹¹³

Due to the benefit it receives, the church wants to sustain the social order. Penalty is emphasized as a means of protecting justice. However, the real purpose is to defend and broaden the church in terms of people’s fear.

2.2.3. The Real Argument

Anselm argues that, due to sin, humanity has to face either restitution or penalty. He also affirms that humanity is unable to make restitution. This presumption inevitably leads to humanity’s punishment. However, Anselm upholds that, although God cannot free humanity without requiring satisfaction payment, God cannot punish humanity. God cannot eternally punish humanity for two reasons. First, for humanity to endure eternal punishment would mean the destruction of God’s plan, which is unfitting to God. God’s plan must be carried out: “If it be understood that God has made nothing more valuable than rational existence capable of enjoying him; it is altogether foreign from his character to suppose that he will suffer that rational existence utterly to perish...Therefore it is necessary for him to perfect in human nature what he has begun.”¹¹⁴ Second, God resolves to substitute persons for the fallen angels: “Therefore there ought to be in the heavenly empire as many men taken as substitutes for the angels as would correspond

¹¹² Weaver, *The Nonviolent Atonement*, 1282.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 1575-1577.

¹¹⁴ Anselm, *CDH* II. 4.

with the number whose place they shall take, that is, as many as there are good angels now.”¹¹⁵

The impossibility for God of punishing humanity suggests that sin must be forgiven. Even though humanity does nothing to remit its sin, salvation still must take place to accomplish God’s plan. Punishment of humanity does not exist in Anselm’s thought. Punishment is just an assumption or a basis to explain the necessity of God’s incarnation. In Anselm’s thought, salvation *must* be granted to humanity, regardless of its merit. Therefore the conclusion that salvation is a gratuitous gift is inevitable. If there is an obligation, it is on the side of God, rather than on the side of humanity.

From now on, we can consider salvation as God’s gratuitous gift, which is Anselm’s argument. However, I should address whether there is an absence of God’s mercy and the requirement of God’s justice in accomplishment of salvation.

The Mercy of God

Anselm does not support a solution that God simply forgives sin. However, is it right that, for Anselm, God’s mercy does not relate to humanity’s salvation? In answering this question, it is necessary to examine what the divine mercy is, and the relationship between God and mercy, according to Anselm.

In *Proslogion*, chapter 5, Anselm deals with who God is. Accordingly, God is “more than which nothing greater can be thought.”¹¹⁶ God is greater than that human intelligence can imagine. God recapitulates in himself all the goodness. No goodness is not present in God who is “just, truthful, happy and whatever it is better to be than not to be.”¹¹⁷ God is “whatever it is better to be

¹¹⁵ Anselm, *CDHI*. 19.

¹¹⁶ Anselm, “Proslogion,” in *Anselm: Basic Writing*, ed. and trans. Thomas Williams (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2007), 83.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

than not to be”¹¹⁸. In the line of Anselm’s thought, God must be merciful since mercy is something that is better to be than not to be. In addition, in chapter 9 Anselm states that “one who is good both to the good and the wicked is better than one who is good only to the good.”¹¹⁹ God must be the best since if God were not the best, God is less than one who is the best, which is a contradiction to a proposition that God is “more than which nothing greater can be thought.” Based on this argument, Anselm affirms that God is “supremely good.”¹²⁰ He explicitly presents this truth in *Letter on the Incarnation of the Word*: “No one denies that God is the supreme Good, since whatever is less than something else is in no way God, and whatever is not the supreme Good is less than something else, since it is less than the supreme Good.”¹²¹ It follows that God is merciful. Furthermore, God must be supremely merciful since any privations or defects of goodness cannot be ascribed to God.

God’s mercy embraces both the just and wicked. Anselm explains how God saves both: “You save the just whom justice commends, and set free those whom justice condemns... The just are saved because you look upon the good things you have given them, sinners because you overlook the evil thing you hate. O immeasurable goodness that thus “surpasses all understanding.””¹²² Therefore, any argument that excludes God’s mercy is not in conformity with Anselm’s thought. If God is merciful, his mercy is expressed in all and each of his acts.

If God is merciful, why doesn’t Anselm uphold God’s forgiveness as an expression of God’s mercy in Anselm’s theory of atonement in *Cur Deus Homo*? In this work, he talks about God’s mercy in relation with God’s fitness.¹²³ For Anselm, although God is omnipotent, God

¹¹⁸ Anselm, “Proslogion,” 83.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, 86.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Anselm, “Letter on the Incarnation of the Word,” in *Anselm: Basic Writing*, ed. and trans. Thomas Williams (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2007), 226.

¹²² Anselm, “Proslogion,” 86.

¹²³ Anselm, *CDHI*. 12.

cannot do anything that is contrary to his nature. Wrong cannot become right just because of God's will: "When it is said that what God wishes is just, and that what he does not wish is unjust, we must not understand that if God wished anything improper it would be just, simply because he wished it."¹²⁴ God cannot turn a lie into a truth. God cannot do anything that is contradictory to God's nature. In addition, Anselm identifies God's act with God himself: "'If God wishes to lie,' the meaning is simply this: 'If the nature of God is such as that he wishes to lie.'"¹²⁵ Therefore, at the moment when God does anything that is not accordance with God's nature, God ceases to be God: "For if God wishes to lie, we must not conclude that it is right to lie, but rather that he is not God."¹²⁶ Therefore, Anselm argues that God's mercy is not expressed in any acts that are unfitting to God. More exactly speaking, what is contrary to God's nature is not called mercy: "What acts in a way that is unfitting for God should not be called kindness."¹²⁷

God's fitness relates to God's being. It expresses that the destruction of God's fitness causes the destruction of God himself. From this conclusion, we return to the discussion of God's forgiveness of humanity's sin. For Anselm, forgiving sin, without restitution or penalty, is unfitting for God and would be contrary to God's nature since God cannot be mixed with undischarged sin or injustice in his kingdom. If God accepted undischarged sin or injustice, God would cease to be God. And for Anselm, God is the cause of humanity's existence. If God did not exist, humanity would also disappear. Forgiveness and salvation became nonsense if there were no existence of humanity. Therefore, both God's nature and humanity's salvation require that God not forgive sin without restitution or penalty.

¹²⁴ Anselm, *CDHI*. 12.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

In a word, Anselm argues that God is merciful, and he identifies God's act with God himself. This means each and every act of God must include God's mercy. However, that God is merciful does not mean that he can do anything that is contrary to his nature and the truth. Anselm stresses that God's mercy must be based on God's nature which is supreme truth. Any act of God that is contrary to God's nature is not merciful: "For there is no liberty except as regards what is best or fitting; nor should that be called mercy which does anything improper for the divine character."¹²⁸ Therefore, Anselm argues for God's non-forgiveness. Forgiveness is to refuse the truth, and is contrary to God's nature. However, God's non-forgiveness can't prevent God from expressing his mercy through his accomplishment of salvation that demands no requirement from humanity. This means that the saving act of God is the result of God's mercy. But we can only affirm this argument in the light of examining what divine justice is, and the relationship between divine justice and salvation.

The justice of God

Although Anselm affirms that God is supremely good, he does not deny that God is supremely just. For Anselm, God's goodness is based on justice: "There is no goodness apart from justice."¹²⁹ According to an ordinary sense, the supreme goodness implies no requirement; contrarily, the supreme justice implies a requirement. Anselm himself confesses the difficulty of reconciling these two realities but affirms the co-existence of both: "For even if it is difficult to understand how your mercy coexists with your justice, one must nonetheless believe that it is in no way opposed to justice, because it flows out of your goodness and there is no goodness apart from justice—Indeed, goodness is actually in harmony with justice."¹³⁰ After confessing that it is

¹²⁸ Anselm, *CDHI*. 12.

¹²⁹ Anselm, "Proslogion," 86.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

hard to reconcile justice and goodness, Anselm makes an explanation by giving out a supposition: “Is it because it is just for you to be so good that you cannot be understood to be better, and to act so powerfully that you cannot be thought to be more powerful? For what could be more just than this?”¹³¹ Anselm affirmatively answers this question. God is just because he is so good that he cannot be thought better. For Anselm, God could not be supremely good if he were not just. However, his justice does not obscure his mercy. On the contrary, since he is supremely just, he is merciful: “In fact, if you are merciful because you are supremely good, and supremely good only because you are supremely just, then you are indeed merciful precisely because you are supremely just.”¹³²

God who is supremely just spares not only the just but also the wicked. This observance makes Anselm cry out: “What sort of justice is it to give everlasting life to someone who deserves eternal death?”¹³³ In Anselm’s eye, rewarding only the just is less just; whereas, for Anselm God is supremely just. Although Anselm upholds that God’s justice does not obscure him from rewarding the wicked, he does not reject that God justly punishes them. How are both saving the wicked and punishing the wicked just? Anselm tries to solve this problem by distinguishing justice that relates to God himself and that relates to humanity: “For when you punish the wicked, this is because it accords with their merits; but when you spare the wicked, this is just, not because it is in keeping with their merits, but because it is in keeping with your goodness.”¹³⁴ This distinction seems unsatisfying to Anselm. Therefore, he goes further by upholding that punishing the wicked is not only just with respect to humanity, but also with respect to God himself.¹³⁵ God can spare

¹³¹ Anselm, “Proslogion,” 87.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 86.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 85.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 87.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 88.

and punish the sinner. That God spares one sinner and punishes the other depends on his will. What God wills is always just, and what God does not will is not just.¹³⁶ Both punishing and saving are just, provided that they are God's will.

Anselm seems to contradict himself by claiming that, on the one hand, it is just for God to save both the just and the wicked; and on the other hand, it is also just for God to save or punish the wicked. However, the contradiction conveys a message that Anselm intentionally interprets God's justice rather than judging the destiny of the wicked. For him, God is always just in his acts that are willed by God. He explains and defends God's justice rather than discussing who will be saved. But we can know for sure one thing that God's justice is not a criterion to judge whether one is saved or not since even a sinner may be saved: "you (God) save the just whom justice commends and set free those whom justice condemns."¹³⁷ According to God's justice, without a payment for his sin, one sinner may still be saved. Therefore, any ideas or arguments that understand God's justice as the requirement of a legal equality or a recompense or punishment paid to God himself are not in conformity with Anselm's thought.

If God's justice is not a criterion to judge humanity, then, what is God's justice according to Anselm? God's justice can be understood in Anselm's discussion of humanity's truth, justice, and rectitude. According to him, God is the supreme truth. All other existences only exist in the supreme truth: "So whatever is, truly is, insofar as it is what it is in the supreme truth."¹³⁸ Each being has a truth in itself: "So there is a truth in the being of all things that are, since they are what they are in the supreme truth."¹³⁹ This truth is that each being exists, and its existence is wanted

¹³⁶ Anselm, "Proslogion," 88.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 86.

¹³⁸ Anselm, "On Truth," in *Anselm: Basic Writing*, ed. and trans. Thomas Williams (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2007), 128.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

by God, and its existence only exists in God. Anselm identifies this truth with rectitude: “so its truth is nothing other than its rectitude.”¹⁴⁰ Rectitude is a truth of one’s being, in respect to God. Truth in the will is “nothing other than rectitude.”¹⁴¹ Pertaining to rational creatures, particularly angels and humanity, Anselm especially emphasizes the important role of the will. The will decides whether one is in the state of rectitude and truth or not. One should will what one ought to will. In other words, one’s will must be in conformity with God’s will. On the contrary, if one wills what one ought *not* to will, or one’s will is opposite to God’s will, then rectitude and truth are not present in him or her. Anselm points out: “For if he was in rectitude and in the truth so long as he willed what he ought—that is, that for the sake of which he had received a will—and if he abandoned rectitude and truth when he willed what he ought not, then we cannot understand truth in this case as anything other than rectitude, since both truth and rectitude in his will were nothing other than his willing what he ought.”¹⁴² One is in truth and rectitude when one’s will is in conformity with God’s will. When one is in the state of rectitude and truth in relationship with God, one simultaneously is in the state of justice. Anselm defines justice as “rectitude of will preserved for its own sake.”¹⁴³ “Rectitude of will preserved for its own sake” is the condition of one’s justice. One’s justice is maintained when rectitude of will is preserved. Rectitude of will is only preserved when one wills what God wants one to will. When rectitude of will is destroyed, consequently, truth and justice are destroyed.

The above definition of rectitude of will applies to humanity. For humanity, rectitude of will means being subjected to the will of God. Does God need a rectitude of will? Anselm affirms that God does not need a rectitude which includes subjection, since God is under no obligation:

¹⁴⁰ Anselm, “On Truth,” 121.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 124.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 193.

“While all the rectitudes discussed earlier are rectitudes because the things in which they exist either are or do what they ought, the supreme truth (God) is not a rectitude because it ought to be or do anything. For all things are under obligations to it, but it is under no obligation to anything. Nor is there any reason why it is what it is, except that it is.”¹⁴⁴ However, God still needs the state of rectitude of will. Anselm points out:

Although in him will and rectitude are not distinct, still, just as we speak of the power of divinity or the divine power of powerful divinity even though in the divinity power is nothing other than divinity, so also it is appropriate for us to speak of God’s rectitude of will or voluntary rectitude or upright will. And we cannot so fittingly say of any other rectitude as we can of his that it is preserved for its own sake. For just as nothing else preserves that rectitude but itself, and it preserves itself through nothing else but itself, so also it preserves itself for the sake of nothing but itself.¹⁴⁵

God is in conformity with himself, therefore, there is no distinction between God’s will and God’s rectitude. God is always in rectitude since he never wills that which is opposite to his will. However, rectitude is understood as “be preserved for its own sake”, therefore, it is proper to say of God’s rectitude of will. According to Anselm’s way of reasoning, discussed above, rectitude of will relates to a truth, justice, and existence of one being. Preserving rectitude of will is to preserve a truth, justice, and existence of one being. This rule applies to humanity, but it also applies to God. God needs to preserve his rectitude of will. Therefore, when God preserves his rectitude of will, he preserves his truth, justice, and existence. Such an understanding of God’s justice does not imply any restitution from humanity since sin can never destroys God’s justice that is identified with God himself. If there is a requirement, it is on the side of God. God preserves God’s justice to protect his existence.

In *Cur Deus Homo*, Anselm states that God’s justice demands humanity’s restitution or penalty. Humanity’s penalty is excluded since penalty destroys God’s plan; as a result, there is

¹⁴⁴ Anselm, “On Truth,” 133.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 140.

only one possibility: humanity's restitution. Why does humanity have to make restitution? Is it true that God requires restitution to protect his existence since God's existence is identified with his justice? If not, what does Anselm mean by stating that God's justice demands humanity's restitution?

First of all, we must affirm that God and God's justice, understood as God himself, demand nothing in terms of the argument that God lost nothing. If God requires nothing, why does Anselm state that God's justice demands humanity's restitution? To answer this question, we should look at the purpose of human restitution.

On the one side, Anselm affirms that sin disturbs God's honor, which illuminates the creature rather than God himself. Therefore, what is to be restored is God's honor, reflecting on the creature. God's honor must be restored since it maintains the order and beauty of the universe, just as Anselm points out: "If there is nothing greater or better than God, there is nothing more just than supreme justice, which maintains God's honor in the arrangement of things."¹⁴⁶ It turns out that the order and beauty of the universe need to be restored. On the other side, Anselm argues that sin destroys humanity's justice. Justice only exists when humanity chooses God's will. Choosing in accordance with God's will, humanity's state of rectitude of will is maintained. By choosing other than God's will, rectitude of will is destroyed. Therefore, what needs to be restored is humanity's rectitude of will. However, humanity's rectitude of will exists only in a condition that the order and beauty of the universe is preserved.

When the being chooses what he ought, he honors God; not by bestowing anything upon him, but because he brings himself freely under God's will and disposal, and maintains his own condition in the universe, and the beauty of the universe itself, as far as in him lies. But when he does not choose what he ought, he dishonors God, as far as the being himself is concerned, because he does not submit himself freely to God's disposal. And

¹⁴⁶ Anselm, *CDHI*. 13.

he disturbs the order and beauty of the universe, as relates to himself, although he cannot injure nor tarnish the power and majesty of God.¹⁴⁷

It turns out that the ultimate goal is the restoration of the order and beauty of the universe. The order and beauty of the universe must be restored so that God's honor re-illuminates and humanity is saved. Therefore, we say that God's honor illuminating on the universe and humanity's justice require restitution.

Briefly stated, on the one hand Anselm does not reject that God's nature is mercy. That is, every act of God must include his mercy. Although Anselm argues that God's honor demands humanity's restitution, this restitution is not demanded for God himself, but for the order and beauty of the universe. On the other hand, it is humanity who destroys the order and beauty of the universe; as a result, it is fallen into a state of injustice. Therefore, humanity must regain the lost justice. However, restoring the lost justice is beyond human ability. It is God who does this in the place of humanity; meanwhile, God requires nothing for himself. Consequently, God's saving act is an act of his mercy. Anselm summarizes his argument as follows:

Now we have found the compassion of God which appeared lost to you when we were considering God's holiness and man's sin; we have found it, I say, so great and so consistent with his holiness, as to be incomparably above anything that can be conceived. For what compassion can excel these words of the Father, addressed to the sinner doomed to eternal torments and having no way of escape: "Take my only begotten Son and make him an offering for yourself;" or these words of the Son: "Take me, and ransom your souls." For these are the voices they utter, when inviting and leading us to faith in the Gospel. Or can anything be more just than for him to remit all debt since he has earned a reward greater than all debt, if given with the love which he deserves.¹⁴⁸

Any ideas or arguments that present God's justice as God's legal requirement, which God forces humanity to satisfy, or that contend that God's salvation is an exchange, are not in conformity with Anselm's thought. Aulén criticizes Anselm's over-emphasis of the gravity of sin

¹⁴⁷ Anselm, *CDHI*. 15.

¹⁴⁸ Anselm, *CDHI*. 20.

at the expense of God's love. However, it is possible that Aulén understands sin as a moral fault; whereas, Anselm sees sin as an ontological fault that relates to humanity's existence. It is humanity's yes or no response to God's will. Katherin A. Rogers points out: "On Anselm's view, the enormity of the debt of sin is just a logical entailment of his metaphysics. To deliberately choose against the will of God is to deny His role. But since, in fact, all other goods are reflections of the *summum bonum*, if you reject God's will, you are denying value to everything."¹⁴⁹ Aulén, Foley, and Weaver argue that, for Anselm, God's saving act is a compromise between the divine justice and love, and that salvation is depicted as a trade exchange. They do not understand that Anselm considers God's mercy as God's existence; therefore, there is no a conflict or compromise in God. They also do not recognize that per Anselm, God demands nothing from humanity, therefore, it is impossible to see salvation in a commercial or juridical sense.

Explanation of Anselm's thought

Since Anselm's thought is deceptively complex, I will restate the main points of Anselm's thought, presented above, by referring to A. E. McGrath's article, *Rectitude: The Moral Foundation of Anselm of Canterbury's Soteriology*. According to McGrath, Anselm appealed to Augustine's thought to develop his theory.¹⁵⁰ In fact, in *the City of God*, Augustine views God as the justice ordinator who governs the universe by his will. In the universe, each existence hierarchically has its place, which creates an order. God wants this order; it is a manifestation of God's will: "Justice is essentially the ordering of the world according to the order of being, which is itself a reflection of the divine will."¹⁵¹ Preserving the order is to preserve humanity's justice.

¹⁴⁹ Katherin A Rogers, "A Defense of Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo* Argument," in *Philosophical Theology: Reason and Theological Doctrine*, ed. Michael Baur, *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* (Bronx: American Catholic Philosophical Association, 2001), 29.

¹⁵⁰ A.E. McGrath, "Rectitude: The Moral Foundation of Anselm of Canterbury's Soteriology," *Downside Review* 99, no. 336 (July 1981), 205.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

By sinning, humanity disturbs the order. Consequently, humanity breaks the relationship between it and God, as well as other beings, and the state of justice is destroyed. If humanity wants to be saved, the disturbed order must be restored so that justice is reestablished. Therefore, justification is an act of “making right.”¹⁵² Anselm applies Augustine’s thought to his theory of atonement. However, “he reserves the term *rectitude* to describe this basic God-given order of creation ... The basic meaning of rectitude is the divine ordering of the universe, which has its origin in the divine will and which is itself a reflection of the divine will.”¹⁵³

This order of the universe significantly relates to humanity. When humanity respects the order, it respects the truth about itself and remains in the state of justice.¹⁵⁴ The order also relates to God’s justice that reflects on creation.¹⁵⁵ When the order is destroyed by humanity, the truth and justice of humanity and God’s justice are collapsed. By sinning, humanity falls into a state of injustice and untruth. It is humanity who regains the justice and truth for itself by restoring the order of universe and re-establishes the relationship with God. However, in a sinful state humanity is unable to do anything to save itself. Humanity’s redemption requires God’s act.

The disorder of the universe will bring an end to humanity. This disorder is impossible for God since God wills to fulfill what he has started with humanity. In addition, in this unjust state, God’s justice, expressed in the order of creation, is violated.¹⁵⁶ Therefore, God’s justice requires that the created order be restored.¹⁵⁷ Although God’s ability is over impossibilities, God cannot do anything that is contrary to God’s nature. McGrath states: “God is not free to do anything that violates his own nature, since that involves a contradiction.”¹⁵⁸ The free forgiveness of sins through

¹⁵² McGrath, “Rectitude: The Moral Foundation of Anselm of Canterbury’s Soteriology,” 206.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid. 208.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 209.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

mercy is impossible since it implies contradictions to God's nature.¹⁵⁹ Although it is inevitable that God redeems humanity, God cannot violate his nature. This dilemma requires God to save humanity in a way that is appropriate to his nature.¹⁶⁰

The above presentation is at the core of Anselm's thought. However, he uses concepts or thoughts from the period in which he lives. First, he uses the concept of honor. The usage of honor leads to a notion that sin hurts God, and that making a recompense to God's honor is the requirement of humanity's redemption. In fact, Anselm is certain that sin destroys humanity itself, violating the order of universe. And what needs to be done is the restoration of the order of the universe that was disordered. Second, as I argued earlier, Anselm rejects the justice ("rights") of the devil and ascribes this to God. This statement leads us to a possible misunderstanding that humanity's salvation is the result of God's justice. In fact, the concept helps Anselm prove God's reasonableness in act and will, and the necessity and fittingness of God's incarnation and atonement, since if God simply forgives sin, there will be no incarnation and atonement. God might be in the heaven and save humanity by his order. Additionally, the concept of justice makes God seek a wise way of saving humanity which does not violate God's nature. Third, it is certain that Anselm uses concepts of the ecclesiastical doctrine of penance and the actual penitential systems to express his thought. Accordingly, God determines that penitence is the price to be paid for forgiveness and freedom from sin. One must do penance that is equivalent to the amount of sin so that one's sin is remitted. However, in Anselm's theory, it is God who makes a payment; meanwhile, humanity does nothing. God replaces the position of humanity in the ecclesiastical doctrine of penance and the actual penitential systems. God both makes a requirement and accomplishes this requirement. So, there is no mercantilism in Anselm's theory.

¹⁵⁹ McGrath, "Rectitude: The Moral Foundation of Anselm of Canterbury's Soteriology," 209.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

2.3. The Solution of God

2.3.1. The Literal Argument

According to Anselm, sin offends God's honor, which creates a debt on the part of humanity. Humanity must make a satisfactory payment to God. A satisfactory payment must meet three conditions. First, the amount of payment to God must be "greater than all the universe besides God."¹⁶¹ Second, the one who pays the debt "gives God anything of his own."¹⁶² Third, "he must be greater than all else but God himself."¹⁶³ Therefore, none but God himself can accomplish these three conditions.

Only God can make due satisfaction, but he cannot do it since the one who does it must be born of the line of Adam and Eve. Anselm presents four reasons for this. First, since humanity commits sin, it must be humanity who makes due satisfaction: "As through Adam and Eve sin was propagated among all men, so none but themselves, or one born of them, ought to make atonement for the sin of men. And, since they cannot, one born of them must fulfill this work."¹⁶⁴ Second, humanity should save itself since humanity should not be a beneficiary of someone else: "As Adam and his whole race, had he not sinned, would have stood firm without the support of any other being, so, after the fall, the same race must rise and be exalted by means of itself. For, whoever restores the race to its place, it will certainly stand by that being who has made this restoration."¹⁶⁵ Third, God intends to accomplish his purpose for the human race from Adam. Therefore, if some being, other than one descended from the line of Adam and Eve, makes satisfactory payment for humanity, then not only will God be frustrated in his purpose, but, further, humanity will not come

¹⁶¹ Anselm, *CDH* II. 6.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.* 8.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

to the true dignity of its destiny: “If the race of Adam be reinstated by any being not of the same race, it will not be restored to that dignity which it would have had, had not Adam sinned, and so will not be completely restored; and, besides, God will seem to have failed of his purpose, both which suppositions are incongruous.”¹⁶⁶ Fourth, the one who makes due satisfaction must be born by a virgin: “If it was a virgin which brought all evil upon the race, it is much more appropriate that a virgin should be the occasion of all good.”¹⁶⁷

Due satisfaction is only made by God, and it is only humanity who makes it.¹⁶⁸ It is, thus, necessary that God becomes incarnate in order to accomplish the task. This God-man must have two natures, otherwise he is either God or man: “in order that the God-man may perform this, it is necessary that the same being should be perfect God and perfect man, in order to make this atonement. For he cannot and ought not to do it, unless he be very God and very man.”¹⁶⁹ By this argument, Anselm answers the question: *Cur Deus Homo?* However, to make due satisfaction, this God-man must offer God a gift that “not of debt but freely, ought to be something greater than anything in the possession of God.”¹⁷⁰ Because of the amount of the gift, this God-man “somehow gives up himself, or something of his, to the honor of God, which he did not owe as a debtor.”¹⁷¹ With these conditions, if the God-man surrenders his life voluntarily to God, the satisfaction is obtained. Anselm looks up to Christ’s death as the necessary and sufficient condition to make satisfaction. He explains:

So our Lord Jesus, when he wished, as we have said, to suffer death, ought to have done precisely what he did; because he ought to be what he wished, and was not bound to do anything as a debt. As he is both God and man, in connection with his human nature, which made him a man, he must also have received from the Divine nature that control

¹⁶⁶ Anselm, *CDH* II. 8.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.* 6.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.* 7.

¹⁷⁰ Anselm, *CDH* II. 11.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

over himself which freed him from all obligation, except to do as he chose. In like manner, as one person of the Trinity, he must have had whatever he possessed of his own right, so as to be complete in himself, and could not have been under obligations to another, nor have need of giving anything in order to be repaid himself.¹⁷²

Jesus Christ as God does not die of necessity because he is almighty, nor of debt because he is sinless, and his voluntary death for the divine honor.¹⁷³ Due to these three factors, his death satisfies the restoration of the divine honor. His death outweighs the sins committed by humanity.

Anselm does not understand Christ's death as a vicarious death. He sees Jesus's death to be valuable enough to restore the divine honor. Therefore, on the one hand, it is worthy for him to receive a reward: "It is necessary for the Father to reward the Son; else he is either unjust in not wishing to do it, or weak in not being able to do it."¹⁷⁴ On the other hand, Christ needs nothing since he has all: "He who rewards another either gives him something which he does not have, or else remits some rightful claim upon him. But anterior to the great offering of the Son, all things belonging to the Father were his, nor did he ever owe anything which could be forgiven him. How then can a reward be bestowed on one who needs nothing, and to whom no gift or release can be made?"¹⁷⁵ Christ needs nothing; therefore, the reward may be in vain. Hence it is fitting that the reward or merit Christ created by his death should be given to humanity. The Father cannot object, otherwise, he would be unjust, if the Son wills that. The Son's reward is given to humanity; therefore, anyone who approaches God in the name of the God-man is saved. Humanity receives salvation by sharing Christ's merit:

Upon whom would he more properly bestow the reward accruing from his death, than upon those for whose salvation, as right reason teaches, he became man; and for whose sake, as we have already said, he left an example of suffering death to preserve holiness? For surely in vain will men imitate him, if they be not also partakers of his reward. Or whom could he more justly make heirs of the inheritance, which he does not need, and of

¹⁷² Anselm, *CDH* II. 18.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.* 17.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.* 19.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

the superfluity of his possessions, than his parents and brethren? What more proper than that, when he beholds so many of them weighed down by so heavy a debt, and wasting through poverty, in the depth of their miseries, he should remit the debt incurred by their sins, and give them what their transgressions had forfeited?¹⁷⁶

Anselm considers Christ's death to be satisfaction to restore the divine honor. Therefore, his theory is usually called a satisfaction theory of atonement.

3.3.2. Critiques

“Christ died for our sin” expressed in the Bible is a meaningful confession of Christians. Christians believe that Christ died for us. But if we go further by posing questions such as: who needs Christ's death and what effects does Christ's death bring forth, we receive various answers. We spontaneously answer that Christ's death appeases God's anger so that God remits our sin, or so that God lets humanity be reconciled with him, or Christ's death recompense human sin that offends against God. In such explanations, God obviously needs Christ's death. This understanding of Christ's death dictates who God is and who Christ is. God is really a tyrant, and Christ is a victim of God's wrath and revenge. It is possible that we simply answer that God sent his Son to the world to pay a ransom for us. However, to whom does Christ pay a ransom? Does he pay to God or the devil? If he pays to God, God is believed to be ungenerous. If he pays to the devil, we should wonder why the devil has such right. One example of such understanding is Eucharistic prayer III in the Roman Missal. It says: “Look, we pray, upon the oblation of your church and, recognizing the sacrificial Victim by whose death you willed to reconcile us to yourself.” This translation is less tough than the Vietnamese one, which is “Chúa muốn hiến tế để nguôi lòng Chúa”: God wants Christ as a sacrifice to appease God's wrath. As a priest, I never read this Eucharistic prayer. Therefore, we should be cautious of emphasizing Christ's death.

¹⁷⁶ Anselm, *CDH* II. 19.

Returning to Anselm's theory, with concepts such as sin as an offense to the divine honor, salvation as the result of restoration of the divine honor, and Christ's death as the sufficient condition to restore the divine honor, Anselm's theory leads to the assumption that God wants Christ's death to restore God's honor. Christ's death becomes a price to be paid to God. Christ becomes a victim of both God and the sin of humanity. According to Ratzinger's words, such understanding turns the cross into "a mechanism of injured and restored right", sees God's righteousness as one that "was propitiated again by means of an infinite expiation." It is true that this version of righteousness makes people "turn away in horror from a righteousness whose sinister wrath makes the message of love incredible."¹⁷⁷ Ratzinger states that a right explanation of the cross is that "the cross appears primarily as a movement from above to below. It stands there, not as the work of expiation that mankind offers to the wrathful God, but as the expression of that foolish love of God's that gives itself away to the point of humiliation in order thus to save man; it is his approach to us, not the other way about."¹⁷⁸ Based on these concepts and assumption, several thinkers have condemned Anselm's theory severely.

Most scholars believe that Peter Abelard criticizes Anselm's theory of satisfaction, although he does not mention him by name. Weingart thinks it is probable that Abelard referred to *Cur Deus Homo*.¹⁷⁹ He also notes that there is textual evidence that suggests that Abelard read some of Anselm's other writings.¹⁸⁰ Abelard argues that nobody accepts the death of an innocent person as a ransom. Furthermore, it must be unacceptable for anyone to be pleased by the slaying an innocent person. Neither does God accept the death of his Son. Abelard points out: "How very cruel and unjust it seems that someone should require the blood of an innocent person as a ransom,

¹⁷⁷ Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 3422.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 3443-3445.

¹⁷⁹ Ryan, *Jesus and Salvation: Soundings in the Christian Tradition and Contemporary Theology*, 218.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

or that in any way it might please him that an innocent person be slain, still less that God should have so accepted the death of his Son that through it he was reconciled to the world.”¹⁸¹ Abelard criticizes not only the unacceptable image of God that Anselm’s theory depicts, but also the very idea of satisfaction, for if Adam’s lesser fault requires such a satisfaction, how much greater must be the satisfaction demanded by sins against Christ.

Foley states that compensation is required by God’s justice; therefore, the divine justice is involved in the acceptance of Christ’s death as a reparation.¹⁸² Harnack argues that the theory depicts God as a planner who plans the whole saving act, whereas, Christ is like a means in God’s plan. The theory also describes God as like a mighty man who enjoys the death of his son to heal his own injury.¹⁸³

Aulén argues that Anselm’s theory depicts God as partly a planner and partly the object that the plan points to: “God is no longer regarded as at once the agent and the object of the reconciliation, but as partly the agent, as being the author of the plan, and partly the object, when the plan comes to be carried out.”¹⁸⁴ He criticizes Anselm’s whole theory. According to him, the theory misses this clear conception of the relation between the incarnation and the atonement.¹⁸⁵ He summarizes the content of Anselm’s theory, “God enters into this world of sin and death that He may overcome the enemies that hold mankind in bondage, and Himself accomplish the redemptive work, for which no power but the Divine is adequate.”¹⁸⁶ He categorizes Anselm’s theory as the “Latin type”¹⁸⁷ which stands in contrast with the classical type connected with the

¹⁸¹ Peter Abelard, *Commentary the Epistle to the Romans*, trans. Steven R. Cartwright (Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2011), 167.

¹⁸² Foley, *Anselm’s Theory of the Atonement*, 149.

¹⁸³ Harnack, *History of Dogma*, 77.

¹⁸⁴ Aulén, *Christus Victor*, 1412-1416.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 2297.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 1390-1391.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 311.

majority of the church fathers, and subjective type connected with Peter Abelard. For him, the Latin type presents “the act of atonement has indeed its origin in God’s will, but is, in its carrying-out, an offering made to God by Christ as man and on man’s behalf, and may therefore be called a discontinuous divine work.”¹⁸⁸ Aulén states that the penitential system is the base to explain this type. Accordingly, humanity satisfies God’s requirement of justice. In return, it receives salvation from God. Aulén writes: “The Latin idea of penance provides the sufficient explanation of the Latin doctrine of the atonement. Its root idea is that man must make an offering or payment to satisfy God’s justice; this is the idea that is used to explain the work of Christ.”¹⁸⁹ Therefore, in the atoning work, Christ is not understood as God who accomplishes salvation. On the contrary, “Christ as man makes atonement on man’s behalf.”¹⁹⁰ Last, he maintains that the Latin doctrine is a series of the divine acts that stand in “a relatively loose connection.”¹⁹¹ The actual atonement consists in the offering of satisfaction by Christ and God’s acceptance of it.¹⁹² Humanity has no role in this act, except in so far as Christ stands as its representative. Justification is a second act, in which God transfers the merits of Christ to humanity. Here, again, there is no direct relation between Christ and men. Sanctification is a third act which consist of no organic connection with the preceding two.¹⁹³

Weaver condemns Anselm’s theory of presenting God as the author of Jesus’ death. God is seen as the agent of Jesus’s death because God is the planner of salvation. God’s plan is that, while humanity must pay the debt to God, it is only Jesus by his death who is able to satisfy this debt. Therefore, it is God who plans Jesus’s death. Weaver explains: “Since the divine order needs

¹⁸⁸ Aulén, *Christus Victor*, 301- 303.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 1323-1325.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 2297-2298.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 2270.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 2271.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 2270-2274.

the death to satisfy the debt owed to God, and since humankind obviously cannot arrange any plan to rescue itself or to pay its debt, only God remains as the one for whom God arranged the plan by which the Son could pay the debt. And since only God can arrange the plan, the logic of the satisfaction motif itself makes God the author of the death of Jesus in Anselm's model."¹⁹⁴ In addition, even though Anselm's theory does not directly uphold punishment of an innocent man in place of punishing sinful humanity, it does not alter the fact that God is the agent behind the death since Jesus' death is to satisfy the requirement of God's justice: "God is the agent who arranged the scenario whereby Jesus could be killed so that his death would satisfy divine justice."¹⁹⁵ And, although the payment is explained as not paying God himself, it cannot deny the fact that Jesus's death is directed Godward. That is, God is still responsible for Jesus's death. Weaver affirms: "As long as the death of Jesus is aimed Godward, one cannot avoid either the implication that the powers that killed Jesus perform a service for God or that death is the means through which God enables reconciliation. Whether Jesus' death is a matter of restoring the order of creation or God's honor or holiness, or offering obedience and worship to God, the death is still directed Godward."¹⁹⁶ Some scholars argue that Anselm does not separate Jesus from the Trinity and Jesus' humanity from his divinity. "The unity of the persons of the Trinity means that the Father suffers with the Son."¹⁹⁷ Weaver condemns that such explanation changes the Father as the one who abuses the Son into the one who commits suicide: "This appeal does change the image, however, from the Father abusing the Son to the Father engaging in self-abuse—which might be called divine suicide."¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁴ Weaver, *The Nonviolent Atonement*, 3359-3360.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 3370-3371.

¹⁹⁶ Weaver, "Narrative Christus Victor: The Answer to Anselmian Atonement Violence," 14.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 16.

There are also movements within black theology, feminist theology, and womanist theology that criticize the traditional theology of atonement, in general, and Anselm's theory, in particular. Within black theology, James H. Cone argues that traditional Christian theology is done from "the perspective of the dominant class."¹⁹⁹ It is an oppression-accommodating theology or ruling-class theology or theology of the status quo. Atonement theories from this theology usually depict God as a patriarch and Jesus as a passive surrogate. This might promote the ruling-class's exploitation and sufferings of the oppressed.²⁰⁰ Therefore, he states: "I agree with feminists and womanists who reject the theories of the atonement—ransom, satisfaction, moral influence, substitution, penal, etc.—as reflecting the God of patriarchy, the values of the dominant group."²⁰¹ He agrees with Anselm that atonement means God take humanity's place and does what humanity can't do. However, he critiques Anselm's understanding of sin that is "a legalistic issue connected with God's honor in abstract theory."²⁰² Pointing out harmful images in Anselm's theory, Rita Nakashima Brock, in her *Journeys by Heart*, contends that satisfaction atonement upholds the idea that God wills the death of an innocent Son, which pictures father and son in an abusive relationship: "The father allows, or even inflicts, the death of his only perfect son, the emphasis is on the goodness and power of the father and the unworthiness and powerlessness of his children, so that the father's punishment is just and children are to blame."²⁰³ Feminist theology focuses on the analysis of Jesus's death as passive obedience to the Father, and unjust or innocent suffering. Joan Carlson Brown and Rebecca Parker in their essay "*For God So Loved the World?*" refer to Anselm's statement that "the Father desired the death of the Son, because he was not willing that

¹⁹⁹ James H. Cone, *God of the Oppressed* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1997), Kindle Edition, 93.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 151.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 150.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 217.

²⁰³ Rita Nakashima Brock, *Journeys by Heart: A Christology of Erotic Power* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1988), 56.

the world should be saved in any other way” and claim this statement conveys the image of Jesus’ suffering in obedience to his Father’s will which is “a divine child abuse.”²⁰⁴ This divine child abuse “is paraded as salvific and the child who suffers ‘without even raising a voice’ is lauded as the hope of the world.”²⁰⁵ They suggest that passivity of Jesus’ death is a harmful image. It is much more harmful when his suffering is considered to be redemptive. The image of Jesus’ death due to obedience to the Father’s will is harmful to children and women since it may legitimize fathers’ child abuse, and encourage women to sacrifice themselves or endure sufferings in the place of others for the sake of their salvation and others’ salvation. Brown and Parker write: “This glorification of suffering as salvific, held before us daily in the image of Jesus hanging from the cross, encourages women who are being abused to be more concerned about their victimizer than about themselves. Children who are abused are forced most keenly to face the conflict between the claims of a parent who professes love and the inner self which protests violation.”²⁰⁶ For them, imitating Jesus depicted in this image can sustain children’s and women’s victimization and their sense that Christianity asks them to endure the abuse and oppression. Similarly, Julie N. Hopkins asserts that the image of abuse in satisfaction atonement is also offensive to her. Satisfaction atonement, holding up an image of passive submission and obedience, forces a child to accept whatever a father orders since a child identifies a father with an almighty God the Father. Hopkins explains: “In the eyes of the child the identity of the father is confused with images of an Almighty God Father demanding obedience and threatening judgement whilst Jesus becomes the role-model for her (loving?) self-sacrifice.”²⁰⁷ In addition, this image may expose a young woman to a risk of

²⁰⁴ Joanne Carlson Brown and Rebecca Parker, “For God So Loved the World?” in *Christianity, Patriarchy and Abuse: A Feminist Critique*, ed. Joanne Carlson Brown and Carole R. Bohn (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1989), 2.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

²⁰⁷ Julie M. Hopkins, *Towards a Feminist Christology: Jesus of Nazareth, European Women, and the Christological Crisis* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 52.

“sexual abuse from her father or male relatives,”²⁰⁸ since passive obedience kills her reaction. Within womanist theology, Delores Williams criticizes Anselm’s theory as a substitutionary atonement. For her, “Jesus represents the ultimate surrogate figure standing in the place of someone else: sinful humankind.”²⁰⁹ Jesus becomes a surrogate or scapegoat on behalf of another. This understanding of the death of Jesus may lead to the exploitation against woman. Williams asks: “If black women accept this idea of redemption, can they not also passively accept the exploitation that surrogacy brings?”²¹⁰ Black women can be encouraged to accept passive suffering.

2.3.2. The Real Argument and Defenders of Anselm

In this part, I will present Anselm’s argument that (1) Jesus’ death is voluntary; (2) Jesus dies as a God-man, not merely a person; and (3) the saving work belongs to the Trinity. Based on this argument, I will rephrase Anselm’s theory. Finally, I will use this argument to answer objections to Anselm.

Anselm certainly anticipates objections to his theory when Jesus is pictured as an innocent victim of the Father and humanity; therefore, he tries to prove that God neither wills nor permits Christ to die against his will. Jesus dies of his own free will, not out of his obedience to the will of the Father. In book I, 9 and 10, Anselm gives a full explanation of the relation of Christ’s death and the will of the Father, and his own free will. Anselm maintains that Christ’s death is properly understood in terms of his own free will. He dies not due to his obedience to the will of the Father, but as a direct consequence of his own righteousness, and that of his allegiance to truth which is

²⁰⁸ Hopkins, *Towards a Feminist Christology: Jesus of Nazareth, European Women, and the Christological Crisis*, 52.

²⁰⁹ Delores S. Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1993), 161.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*

demanded by God: “God did not, therefore, compel Christ to die; but he suffered death of his own will, not yielding up his life as an act of obedience, but on account of his obedience in maintaining holiness; for he held out so firmly in this obedience that he met death on account of it.”²¹¹ The will of the Father is not that the Son should die, but that humanity should not be restored unless it does something equal to the death of the Son: “not because the Father preferred the death of the Son to his life; but because the Father was not willing to rescue the human race, unless man were to do even as great a thing as was signified in the death of Christ.”²¹² In fact, for Anselm, humanity has two choices: either humanity offers something equal in value to the death of Christ, or it shall not be saved. In effect, Christ himself wills the first choice: “For he preferred to suffer, rather than that the human race should be lost.”²¹³ Christ dies of his own free will. The Father does not compel him to die.

To demonstrate Christ’s voluntary death, Anselm gives three reasons. He first appeals to the sinlessness of Christ. Accordingly, death does not belong to the human nature, but it is the consequence of sin: “It is plain that, if man had not sinned, God ought not to compel him to die.”²¹⁴ Even as a person, Jesus does not commit sin. He is sinless, he therefore does not have to suffer death.²¹⁵ Second, as God, the omnipotence of Christ prevents him from death: “He is able to avoid death if he chooses, and also to die and rise again.”²¹⁶ He can lay down and regain his life. Therefore, his death originates from his power and will, without any external compulsion: “For he was omnipotent, and it is said of him, when he was offered up, that he desired it.”²¹⁷ Thirdly, with regard to his divinity, his will and God’s will are one: “For as with regard to that will which led

²¹¹ Anselm, CDH I. 9.

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Anselm, CDH II. 10.

²¹⁷ Anselm, CDH I. 10.

him to a holy life, he did not have it as a human being of himself, but of the Father; so also that will by which he desired to die for the accomplishment of so great good, he could not have had but from the Father of lights, from whom is every good and perfect gift.”²¹⁸ Anselm concludes this argument with this passage:

As he is both God and man, in connection with his human nature, which made him a man, he must also have received from the Divine nature that control over himself which freed him from all obligation, except to do as he chose. In like manner, as one person of the Trinity, he must have had whatever he possessed of his own right, so as to be complete in himself, and could not have been under obligations to another, nor have need of giving anything in order to be repaid himself.²¹⁹

With this passage, Anselm explicitly understands Jesus’s death as the death of God incarnate. In addition, in terms of the amount of debt, it is only the death of God incarnate that satisfies this debt. Last, the phrase “as one person of the Trinity” indicates that Anselm considers Jesus’ death as the death of one person of the Trinity. However, Anselm not only considers Jesus’ death as the death of one person of the Trinity, but also views salvation as the saving work of the Trinity, as proven below.

Anselm’s view on the Trinity is not different from Augustine’s view. In fact, in the very prologue of his *Monogion*, to answer critiques that Anselm’s view is not consistent with the Catholic tradition on the Trinity, he asserts that “after frequently reconsidering it, I could not find that I had said anything in it that is inconsistent with the writings of the Catholic fathers, and especially with those of blessed Augustine.”²²⁰ This supposes that Anselm’s view of the Trinity is similar to the Catholic fathers’ and Augustine’s. Let’s examine Augustine’s view.

²¹⁸ Anselm, CDH I. 10.

²¹⁹ Anselm, CDH II. 18.

²²⁰ Anselm, “Monologion,” in *Anselm: Basic Writings*, ed. & trans. Thomas Williams (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2007), 1.

Augustine confesses that his view on the Trinity is simply to follow a confession of the Councils of Nicaea (AD 325) and Constantinople (AD 381), and Catholic fathers before him who wrote on the Trinity. Accordingly, “the Father and Son and Holy in the inseparable equality of one substance present a divine unity; and therefore, there are not three gods but one God; although indeed the Father has begotten the Son, and therefore he who is the Father is not the Son; and the Son is begotten by the Father, and therefore he who is the Son is not the Father; and the Holy Spirit is neither the Father nor the Son, but only the Spirit of the Father and of the Son, himself coequal to the Father and the son, and belonging to the threefold unity.”²²¹ This confession is philosophically formulated into ‘God is three persons, one being or substance’. Three persons are completely equal, eternally co-existential, and consubstantial. Three persons are only distinguished from one another by relation, not by substance. The Father is the begetter who timelessly begets the Son. The Son is the begotten who timelessly generates from the Father. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of both the Father and the Son who proceeds from both. The Father is called the Father relationship-wise. He is called the Father with reference to the Son. The Son is called the Son relationship-wise. He is called the Son with reference to the Father. The Holy Spirit is also called the Holy Spirit with reference to the Father and the Son.²²² Although God is three persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, the three persons are inseparable since God is one substance: “Father and Son and Holy Spirit are inseparable.”²²³ “Father and Son and Holy Spirit are inseparable, so do they work inseparably.”²²⁴ Augustine states that the confession of Catholic fathers before him accords with his: “This is also my faith inasmuch as it is the Catholic faith.”²²⁵

²²¹ Augustine, *The Trinity*, trans. Edmund Hill, O.P, edit. John E. Rotelle, O.S.A (Hyde Park: New City Press, 1991), 70.

²²² *Ibid.*, 200- 202.

²²³ *Ibid.*, 71.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*

²²⁵ *Ibid.*

In his footnote he explains why three persons work inseparably.²²⁶ Accordingly, the divine substance is identical with the divine attributes such as goodness, wisdom, and mercy.²²⁷ That is, we can say that God is wisdom; God is goodness; and God is mercy. Furthermore, what is true of divine attributes is also true of divine activities, such as creation, redemption, revelation, and mission. Because of the absolute identity of God's substance with his attributes and activities, "God as three persons works inseparably."²²⁸ In a word, it is Augustine who confesses his view on the Trinity: "I will say however with absolute confidence that Father and Son and Holy Spirit, God the creator, of one and the same substance, the almighty three, act inseparably."²²⁹

In Augustine's view of the Trinity, three persons are present in each and every act. We can infer that the Trinity is present in Jesus' saving death although Augustine does not explicitly express such understanding of Jesus' death. He is not explicit about the Trinity's presence in Jesus' death, but it is certain that he is implicit about it. In fact, talking about Jesus' death, Augustine argues that Jesus dies for us, and through his death the Father is reconciled with humanity.²³⁰ However, a question arises: does the Father not love humanity? Augustine, in reference to Ephesian 1: 4, *As he chose us in him before the foundation of the world*, states that the Father also loves humanity. He even loves humanity before the world is formed: "Father loved us not merely before the Son died for us, but before he founded the world."²³¹ Referring to this biblical verse, Augustine intends to prove that God consistently loves humanity. The cross is not merely Jesus's love but God's for humanity. For him, "thus the Father and the Son and the Spirit of them both work all things together and equally and in concord."²³²

²²⁶ Augustine, *The Trinity*, 71.

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Ibid., 183.

²³⁰ Ibid., 356.

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Ibid.

Anselm's understanding of the Trinity is not inconsistent with Augustine's.²³³ That is, God is three persons and one substance. In his discussion of the Word's existence, Anselm argues that the Word eternally exists by God's understanding himself. He explains that God's understanding himself is God's uttering this understanding which is God's utterance or Word, just as, to think of a thing we remember is to utter it in our mind, the word of that thing, then, is that very thought, formed out of our memory after the likeness of the thing.²³⁴ That is, the Word is God's eternal understanding himself. Anselm writes: "Now if he understands himself eternally, he utters himself eternally. And if he utters himself eternally, his Word exists with him eternally. Therefore, whether he is thought to exist without any other essence existing, or along with other things that exist, his Word, coeternal with him, must exist with him."²³⁵ The Spirit is the equal love of the Father for the Son, and the Son for the Father: "This love is regarded as the Spirit of both since he wondrously proceeds from both in his own inexpressible way by being breathed out."²³⁶ The Son is begotten by the Father's understanding himself, and the Spirit proceeds from love of the Father and the Son: "Nothing makes or creates or begets the Father; the Father alone does not make but rather begets the Son; and the Father and the Son equally neither make nor beget, but somehow breathe out their love."²³⁷ Therefore, God is the Father, the Son and the Spirit. God is three persons in one substance. Anselm makes this statement in terms of an argument that the Father's love for the Son is nothing other than the Father himself, and that the love of the Son for the Father is nothing other than the Son himself. He writes: "The Father and Son would nonetheless love both themselves and each other. And so it follows that this love is nothing other than that the Father and the Son are, namely,

²³³ Anselm, "Monologion," 2.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, 42.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, 58.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, 57.

the supreme essence. Now since there cannot be more than one supreme essence, what is more necessary than that the Father and the Son and the love of each is one supreme essence?”²³⁸

Based on the similarities between Anselm’s view and Augustine’s, we can infer Anselm also believes that the Father and the Son, and the Spirit of them both, work all things together and equally and in concord, although he does not explicitly state this argument. Furthermore, Anselm also understands that the Trinity is present in Jesus’ death. He expresses this inference in *Cur Deus Homo* in which he presents his theory of atonement. It is evident in his talking about Jesus’ death. This is the death of “one person of the Trinity.”²³⁹ He dies for the honor of God.²⁴⁰ For Anselm, the honor does not merely belong to God as the Father, but belongs to the Trinity: “That honor certainly belongs to the whole Trinity; and, since he is very God, the Son of God, he offered himself for his own honor, as well as for that of the Father and the Holy Spirit.”²⁴¹ That is, Jesus dies for the honor of the Father, that of the Spirit and for his own honor. This argument of Anselm indicates his view of the non-separateness of the Trinity. It is evident in his statement that “for thus we plainly affirm that in speaking of one person we understand the whole Deity, to whom as man he offered himself.”²⁴² The non-separateness of the Trinity conveys a statement that, I argue, in Anselm’s perspective, Jesus’s death is that of God incarnate, and his death relates to the Trinity.

There is still a difficult point to be clarified. That is, Anselm argues that Jesus Christ dies for the honor which belongs to the Trinity. As previously presented, Anselm makes a distinction between God’s honor as it is in God-self and God’s honor that is expressed in the order and beauty of the universe.²⁴³ If Jesus died for God’s honor as it is in God-self, he as God would die for God.

²³⁸ Anselm, “Monologion,” 55.

²³⁹ Anselm, CDH II. 18.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Ibid. 15.

However, there is certainly no place in *Cur Deus Homo* where Anselm states that Jesus Christ dies for God. It follows that he dies for the divine honor that is expressed in the order and beauty of the universe.

Because of the death of Jesus as the death of God incarnate and the saving work as the work of the Trinity, there is no concept of payment. Jesus' death is not considered as a price paid to God or God's honor since God cannot make a payment to himself. God requires nothing. The divine requirement is not understood as a condition so that God bestows salvation on humanity. It should be understood that God wills to accomplish the plan he has begun. He intends to save humanity in a way that is not contradictory to his nature. Salvation is not generated when a payment is made. Jesus does not encounter God with a huge amount of debt. He encounters the order and beauty of the universe that are damaged by human sin. His mission is to restore the universe so that God's honor is illuminated and humanity is saved. It is the restoration of the universe that costs his life. God incarnate is seen as the Repairer. In addition, the concept of satisfaction is not understood in a sense that a satisfactory payment is made to God. It is possibly understood in a sense that God's plan is accomplished and humanity is saved in a way that God's justice and mightiness are not offended. It is certain that Anselm recognizes the perfection and harmony of God's plan, and the blessed end of humanity. Therefore, every side is satisfied. This establishes his satisfaction theory of atonement.

In answering critiques, let us begin with Aulén. Basically, he states that the idea of penance and the Western penitential system emerging in the Middle Ages provides the sufficient explanation of the Latin doctrine of the atonement. That is, humanity must make an offering or payment to satisfy God's justice so that humanity receives salvation from God. Christ on humanity's behalf does this. By this statement he turns Anselm's theory into a trade between God

and humanity. However, Aulén misunderstands Anselm's theory. In fact, Anselm does not consider Jesus's death as his penance on humanity's behalf, but he states that Jesus' death creates a merit. Therefore, there is no concept of penance and penal substitution in Anselm's thought. In addition, in Anselm's thought the satisfaction is not fulfilled by penance. Anselm looks up to Jesus as a satisfaction condition to generate salvation for humanity. However, this does not mean he sees Jesus's death as penance. This argument is also in McIntyre's thought. He comments that Anselm "does not regard the death of Christ as a penal substitution. It is also noted that the link between satisfaction and penance is entirely absent from Anselm's conception. In his discussion of the death of Christ there is no suggestion that the satisfaction offered by the God-man is vicarious penitence."²⁴⁴

Meanwhile, Abelard, Foley, Harnack, Weaver, and scholars of black, feminist, and womanist theology such as Cone, Brock, Brown and Parker criticize Anselm's theory in terms of the argument that Anselm's theory depicts God as the author of Jesus' death. Either God himself requires Jesus' death or God's justice does it. Anselm's theory also describes Jesus as an innocent victim. Therefore, the satisfaction atonement poses a harmful model for abused children or oppressed people. However, their mistake is that they do not see Jesus' death as the death of God incarnate and separate Jesus from the Trinity. On the contrary, Anselm considers Jesus' death as the death of God incarnate. This means in Jesus Christ, God suffers. The suffering of Christ is never simply the suffering of a human being, but God-man's. Anselm also understands the saving work as the Trinity's. This means the Trinity is present in Jesus's death. In a sense, the Father suffers with the Son. Since the presence of the Trinity in Jesus' death, David Hart sees Jesus' death

²⁴⁴ John McIntyre, *St. Anselm and His Critics: A Re-Interpretation of the Cur Deus Homo* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1954), 87.

as “the trinitarian motion of love,”²⁴⁵ which is given entirely as a gift. It is a gift since it is not needed to be given by God, and given as a price that humanity imposes upon him. In returning to God, Jesus experiences all conditions of humanity which consists of death. He turns his death into a grace of salvation to humanity: “Jesus recapitulates humanity by passing through all the violences of sin and death, rendering to God the obedience that is his due, and so transforms the event of his death into an occasion of infinite blessings for those to whom death is condign.”²⁴⁶ Burnell F. Eckardt argues that God is not only the one who receives satisfaction but the one who makes satisfaction.²⁴⁷ Therefore, he suggests that “it is clear, if one can read Anselm on his own terms and without any preconceived bias concerning what Anselm is supposed to have held, that for him the mercy of God stems precisely from the fact that it is God himself who pays the debt.”²⁴⁸

If Jesus’ death is the death of God incarnate, and if the saving work belongs to the Trinity, there is not an image of God as an abusive father, or Jesus as an abused son, and no model that is harmful to the oppressed. The Father does not force the Son to die. Contrarily, the Father, along with the Son, suffers to save humanity. In addition, the cross can be explained as a condemnation of violence, oppression, and injustice. When Jesus is nailed on the cross, he simultaneously nails sin, violence, oppression and injustice. The cross becomes a call to end all kinds of evil. Such an understanding Jesus’ death portrays him not as a helpless victim but as an active participant in opposition to evil. Finally, any explanation of soteriology which avoids the death of Jesus as the cause of salvation inevitably leads to a consequence that God’s saving mission is refused, or human sin is not realized, and God’s saving grace is seen as, to use L. Gregory Jones’ words, a “cheap

²⁴⁵ David Bentley Hart, “A Gift Exceeding Every Debt: An Eastern Orthodox Appreciation of Anselm’s *Cur Deus Homo*,” *Pro Ecclesia* VII, no. 3 (1998), 348.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁷ Burnell F. Eckardt, *Anselm and Luther on the Atonement: Was It “Necessary”?* (San Francisco: Edwin Mellen Pr, 1992), 24.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 39.

grace.”²⁴⁹ Jones explains that cheap grace “denies any real need for deliverance from sin since it justifies the sin instead of the sinner. As such, cheap grace offers consolation without any change of life, without any sense of either dying or rising in Christ. Indeed, cheap grace does not require any embodiment.”²⁵⁰

Such explanation of God’s honor reverses usual concepts. All purposes are to restore order and beauty of the universe in which humanity lives in a blessed situation. What Jesus Christ aims at doing is also to restore this order. God does not need Christ’s death to restore his honor, or to appease his wrath. Jesus Christ’s death is not a price paid to God. It is simply a consequence of Jesus Christ’s effort to restore the order and beauty of the universe. Anselm calls this death as a satisfaction payment since through it the order is restored. The restoration of the order and beauty of the universe needs Jesus Christ’s death.

CONCLUSION

Sin hurts the order and beauty of the universe. The disordered universe destroys both God’s honor that illuminates the universe and humanity’s justice. Therefore, the restoration of the universe is the condition in which God’s honor re-illuminates and humanity regains blessedness. Anselm argues that, to restore the disordered universe, humanity must make a satisfactory payment. However, God is never hurt. That is, God needs no payment. God gets no benefit from restoration of the universe. On the contrary, humanity only lives in the state of the blessedness when the universe is restored. So, the blessedness of humanity is what requires a satisfactory payment. Moreover, God should save humanity, even though it cannot make a satisfactory payment, since God’s plan that makes humanity blessed otherwise cannot be accomplished.

²⁴⁹ L. Gregory Jones, *Embodying Forgiveness: A Theological Analysis* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 13.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

Therefore, salvation stems from God's mercy. Finally, saving work belongs to the Trinity. Thus, for Anselm, salvation is a gratuitous grace of God.

This conclusion can be expressed in a different way. In fact, humanity must be responsible for its debt of sin. Paying the debt is beyond its capacity. Only God can make that payment. Therefore, God incarnates to do it in the way that is not contrary to God's nature. This way is adjusted by God's justice. God's justice does not imply any need of God from humanity. Since salvation is carried out by God alone, it must be a gratuitous grace of God.

This argument is tied to concepts drawn from Anselm's time: honor, debt, justice, etc. He uses these concepts to prove the necessity of the incarnation, the reasonableness and logic of each and every act of God, and the importance of salvation to humanity. This is consistent with his scholastic theological methodology: faith seeking understanding.

Critics cling to the usage of medieval terms to criticize Anselm's theory, turning it into a theory that depicts God as a tyrant, or as the one who "gives first secretly with the left hand what one takes back again ceremonially with the right,"²⁵¹ and a theory that makes the cross to be "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."²⁵² In fact, Anselm's theory is the opposite of these critiques. Anselm understands salvation as a gratuitous grace of God. God is depicted as a merciful Father. And the cross is an expression of God's love. It is the place where humanity can get eternal life.

²⁵¹ Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 3422.

²⁵² *Ibid.*

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