

# Meditation According to Anselm of Canterbury



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## Abstract

The *meditatio* theme sends us directly to the spiritual framework of the monasteries where St. Anselm of Canterbury is one of the most relevant representatives in the High Middle Ages. As a Benedictine monk, Anselm acknowledges and lives fully the return to the self as introspection: recollecting oneself, in silence, in search of God. Distancing oneself from the world (a type of *contemptus mundi*) and love for God's kingdom constitute the most indicative signs of happiness that may be enjoyed by a monk in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. One of the first aspects of meditation is the insertion within the conquest of the inner self as a self-acknowledgement of the soul to seek God assumed by faith. Current essay will discuss meditation within the context of monastic spirituality in Anselm's time and the model of meditative prayer as elaborated in (1) the *Proslogion*, a treatise known to be a meditation on the reason of faith and (2) the *Third Meditation*, dealing with the redemption of the human stance. It will be demonstrated that meditation and contemplation, according to Anselm, have their full meaning within the salvation mysteries.

**KEYWORDS:** MEDITATION, CONTEMPLATION, MONASTIC THEOLOGY, PRAYER.

## La meditación según Anselmo de Canterbury

### Resumen

Con el tema de la meditación somos introducidos directamente en el ámbito de la espiritualidad monástica, de la cual San Anselmo de Canterbury es uno de los representantes más significativos de la Alta Edad Media. Como monje benedictino, él reconoce y vive plenamente la reflexión sobre sí mismo entendida como introspección: se trata del ejercicio del retiro para, en silencio, buscar a Dios. El distanciarse del mundo (un tipo de *contemptus mundi*) y el amor del reino de Dios constituyen los signos más indicativos de la felicidad que puede ser experimentada por un monje del siglo XI. Uno de los primeros aspectos de la meditación es la conquista del yo

interior como auto reconocimiento de la alma para la búsqueda de Dios a través de la fe. Este trabajo se centrará en la discusión sobre la meditación en el contexto de la espiritualidad monástica de la época de Anselmo de Canterbury y en el modelo de oración meditativa elaborado sobre (1) el *Proslogion*, un tratado conocido por ser una meditación de la razón de la fe y (2) *Tercera Meditación* que considera la redención de la condición humana. El objetivo del trabajo es mostrar que la meditación y la contemplación, según San Anselmo, alcanzan su completo significado por medio del misterio de la salvación.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** MEDITACIÓN, CONTEMPLACIÓN, TEOLOGÍA MONÁSTICA, ORACIÓN.

## Introduction

The theme of meditation brings us directly to monastic spirituality of which Anselm is actually one of the most relevant representatives of European medieval philosophy. As a Benedictine monk, Anselm acknowledges and fully lives a turn on oneself as retrospection: one's silent recollection in the search for God. Meditation is crucial for the exercise of contemplation. Throughout Anselm's writings, there is a direct reference to meditation or to contemplation as, for instance, in his *Prayers and Meditation* which was written to exhort the human soul towards the love of God; the *Monologion*, which is a reflection (*sola ratione*) on the divine essence, with its first title *Meditation on the reasons of faith*; and the well-known *Proslogion*, written "sub persona conantis erigere mentem suam ad contemplandum deum" (*P proem.*: 93.21-94.1) [by one who tries to raise his soul unto the contemplation of God]. Current paper will comprise two sections: 1) a concise exposition on the concept of meditation in monastic spirituality in St. Anselm's time; 2) the elucidation of the so-called meditative prayer as the model of Anselm's meditation occurring in the seminal *Proslogion* (2.1) and in the *Third Meditation* (2.2), one of Anselm's last writings. I will try to show that divine truth, desired by the creature and the ultimate end of contemplation, has its full and complete meaning in the work of salvation.

## 1. Meditation within the monastic context

Between his arrival at Bec-Hellouin, Normandy, France, in 1059, till the publication of the prayer series in 1070, it may be said that Anselm lived intensely monastic spirituality.<sup>1</sup> Southern called these ten years as Anselm's "years of silence" (1990: 67), in which he dedicated himself to the reading of the Bible and Augustine's works, coupled to his apprenticeship by his master Lanfranc who introduced him in the studies of dialectics.<sup>2</sup> As a monk, he exercised fully the religious life, or rather, the desire and seeking of God.

Monastic spirituality was constantly cultivated throughout the High Middle Ages, particularly between the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries. People with authority in the political and spiritual fields hailed from the monasteries, especially the abbey at Cluny, which established itself as a symbol of respect and power. On the strictly theological stance, Leclercq suggests

<sup>1</sup> After research by Wilmar (1932), 19 prayers and three meditations are acknowledged to have been written by Anselm. In his critical edition, Schmitt presents these texts (v. III, pp. 2-91). Most prayers and meditations were written c. 1070. The Third Meditation, analyzed below, was written c. 1099, near Lyon, during his exile. Schmitt's edition (1946) will be employed in current paper, with page and lines. Abbreviations used: *Ep.* (*Epistolarum liber primus*); *OM* (*Orationes sive meditationes*); *P* (*Proslogion*); *CDH* (*Cur Deus Homo*). Translations of texts from medieval authors are mine.

<sup>2</sup> Since its founding, the Abbey at Bec was characterized by its simplicity and excellence in studies. In fact, several monks were acknowledged as *philosophi*, according to Odorico Vital (Bestul, 1983: 185). This is due to Lanfranc and Anselm; the former was reputed to be a dialectician, originating from the schools in northern Italy; the later became famous for his manner in dealing with divine themes, without the resource to authority, but by procedure known as *sola ratione*.

the term “monastic theology” to express the set of truths that, based on Revelation, have been elaborated and ordered within a doctrinal body: “il y a véritablement une réflexion sur les données de la foi, et la recherche d’une vue d’ensemble organique de ces données. La doctrine monastique mérite donc vraiment le nom de théologie” (1990: 181).

St. Benedict was the model of spirituality during Anselm’s times in which the monk’s life was compared to the apostolic way, or rather, an imitation of the life lived by the apostles (Chenu, 1986: 54). The main marks of the monk’s life comprised shunning the things of the world and accepting the ideals of a common life. The ideal of the “City of God” was anticipated in the life of the monastery (Gilson, 1930: 108). As Chenu underscores, a conversion occurs “qui ouvre l’accès du royaume de Dieu et qui se fixe dans un code austère de vie pénitente; béatitudes qui en sont des lois, à ce point intériorisées, qu’elles relèvent de la liberté de l’amour plus que des préceptes” (1986: 65). Under the sign of obedience, conversion becomes a *conversio morum*.

Coupled to the monastic aspect described, one may perceive, from the historical point of view, the gradual development of the priestly model (Congar, 1974: 154), which will herald relevant changes in the history of Christian spirituality in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The vast social and religious landscape of the period is created by cathedral clerics and town schools and, shortly, by universities. Man’s insertion in the world and the new preaching method, contrastingly to monastic stability, were beginning to have a solid basis. Chartres would be the symbol of such an updating and the monastery would not be anymore the idealization of the City of God (Chenu, 1986: 239).<sup>3</sup>

The monk’s main task –the *lectio divina*– includes meditation, or rather, a progressive conquest of innerness with the perspective of the soul’s self-knowledge to seek God by faith, or rather, an *itinerarium mentis ad Deum*. The general meaning of the verb *meditari* is to think or reflect; therefore, the term is correlated to *cogitare* and *considerare*, both of which are frequently used by Anselm. In its practical sense, thinking aims at doing, with the idea of preparing oneself and anticipating. Within the context of the Christian milieu, *meditari* is first and directly related to *lectio*.

pour les anciens, méditer c’est lire un texte et l’apprendre par cœur au sens plus fort de cette expression, c’est-à-dire avec tout son être, avec son corps, puisque la bouche le prononce, avec la mémoire qui le fixe, avec l’intelligence qui en comprend le sens, avec la volonté qui désire le mettre en pratique (Leclercq, 1990: 23).<sup>4</sup>

Anselm contributed in a consistent way to the definition of a new literary genre of prayers and meditations, seen in the prologue of his homonymous book, where he says that they were written to exhort the reader’s spirit to the love and fear of God (*ad excitanda [...] ad Dei amorem vel timorem*) and to examine oneself (*ad suimet discussionem*) (Anselm, *OM*, Prol., 3: 1-3). These two factors converge on the same point: the Christian’s self-examination towards God so that the reader may reach the feeling of love (joy and delight). Besides this end, the preface to these prayers and meditations provides the manner in which these prayers should be read. Addressing the readers, he instructs them that they should not be read from the beginning to the end, in a quick way, but the most convenient one should be chosen so that meditation would be full of care and exigent. The order of reading them should be chosen by the reader

<sup>3</sup> In the case of the meaning of *monastic theology*, above, one should underscore that the significant moment occurred in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, especially with St. Bernard. The spiritual heritage of monastic life was confirmed by this doctor of the divine (Leclercq, 1990: 181).

<sup>4</sup> *Lectio* is present throughout the whole Middle Ages and is an integral part of teaching procedures in the medieval university. However, one should make the following distinction: “La *lectio* scolastique tend vers la *quaestio* et la *disputatio*. On lui pose et on se pose, à son sujet, des problèmes: *quaeri solet*. La *lectio* monastique tend vers la *meditatio* et vers l’*oratio*. La première est orientée vers la science, le savoir; la seconde, vers la sagesse, le goût. Au monastère, la *lectio divina*, cette activité qui commence par la grammaire, aboutit à la componction, au désir eschatologique” (Leclercq, 1990: 72).

and not by any internal exigency of the text. Readers are invited to participate in the activity by co-participating in the process. This is a highly important factor due to its innovatory aspect within medieval tradition (Southern, 1966: 46-47; Ward, 1973A: 14).

There is a brief comment on the difference between prayer and meditation in Letter 10 sent to William the Conqueror's daughter Adelaide. In meditations, the sinful soul makes a self-examination that frequently ends up in despising herself. On the other hand, prayer is a deep conviction of the heart directed towards an increase in love (Anselm, *Ep.*10, 113: 11-19). Without any doubt, we may conserve such aspects in each, even though we know that a true limit is not extant: "we find that distinction is not clear-cut: all his prayers have some sort of meditation, and vice versa" (Southern, 1966: 103). The same mental effort is present in both procedures.

Since Charlemagne, the prayer model comprised Florilegia coupled to Psalms to be read and meditated upon. The content of these prayer books was the Holy Word. Changes in contents and forms were done by Anselm. In the former case, Anselm added an intellectual aspect to the spiritual factor of prayer, which is manifest in the mental effort for the examination and the understanding of one self. The Christian acknowledges and understands his sinful state and his distancing from God. Invocations and laments reinforce the distance between man and God, and, at the same time, manifest the desire to achieve the source of happiness. Biblical references are myriads and are basic to prayer. On the other hand, strictly speaking, meditation is initially a *lectio divina*, or rather, the reading and the study of the Psalms or any other text from the Bible. As we shall see later on, Anselm's prayer-meditations endeavor to delve within the inner soul, an introspective movement, from which the acknowledgement of man's smallness and humiliation are derived. The emotional state pushes forward man's intelligence. In fact, the prayer at the start of the *Proslogion* must be thus understood. Prayers and meditations are Anselm's great heritage with regard to spiritual activities. The literary model is the product of the monk's recollection and interiority, with enormous repercussion on devotion in the Middle Ages.

The new prayer contents are provided in a language that explores all the linguistic richness of Latin. Southern insists that Anselm is an excellent and elegant Latinist.<sup>5</sup> The tension experienced by sinful man (pain and exile) is expressed through carefully chosen stylistic resources. Word refinement triggers the reader and calls attention to what is said. Thus, the higher aim is achieved. Since meditative prayer is a mental activity –each and every *meditatio* is a *cogitatio*– it is a conversion of the heart in the wake of a life option for monasticism made by the monk. This is far from prayer as a verbal expression of a request, a supplication or a static reception of something. Prayer is rather an ardent and vigorous search. We may even attribute to the Anselmian prayer what Antoni said on Augustine: "prier ce n'est plus 'parler', c'est être devant pour vouloir et désirer, c'est un acte" (Antoni, 1997: 97). The literary style proposed by Anselm had a great impact on Cistercian spirituality that Saint Bernard knew extremely well how to exploit its full range (Ward, 1973B: 73).

Dedicating himself to the exercise of *meditationes*, the work of Anselm as a monk may be perceived by witnesses who lived with the master at Bec and by those who had access to his early works and the first steps within the spiritual world, such as Gilbert de Nogent and Eadmer, his biographer. The former's autobiography has

<sup>5</sup> Anselm achieves a clear, musical and epigrammatic style when he emphasizes rhyme and assonance: "they (rhymes) are pointers to the meaning first, and adornments only by accident. The similarities of sound follow the construction of the sentence; the construction of the sentence follows the shape of the argument, and the shape of the argument reflects the balance of a universal order, which itself reflects the perfect symmetry of the whole creation. The rhymes and assonances in Anselm's earliest writings recreate in miniature the tensions of the universe: the tensions between Sin and Righteousness, creation and re-creation, debt and payment, justice and mercy, eternal misery and blessedness" (Southern, 1990: 74).

several interesting pages on first contacts with the master and with the process of his formation. A highly important clue by Gilbert reveals Anselm's strife –an *incentor*<sup>6</sup> to teach the manner inner man should be led:

Qui cum in prioratu praelibati coenobii adhuc ageret, suae me cognitioni ascivit, et omnino puerulum, et in summa et aetatis et sensus teneritudine positum, qualiter interiorem meum hominem agerem, qualiter super regimine corpusculi, rationis jura consulerem, multa me docere intentione proposuit (Guibertus, *De vita sua* I.17: 874C)

I first knew him when he was the prior of the monastery at Bec. If we had been yet children –in age or in intelligence– he thought it was his duty to teach us carefully the manner inner man would be conducted, how it would be consonant to reason with regard to the governance of the body. (Guibertus, *De vita sua* I.17)

Further on, he narrates:

Is itaque tripartito aut quadripartito mentem modo distinguere docens, sub affectu, sub voluntate, sub ratione, sub intellectu commercia totius interni mysterii tractare (Guibertus, *De vita sua* I.17: 874D).

He taught me to exercise the spirit within the tripartite model and develop the workings of the mystery of the inner man, from the point of view of desire, will, reason and intelligence (Guibertus, *De vita sua* I.17).<sup>7</sup>

To the new arrival at the monastery, Anselm underscores that the Christian's constant search is care with the inner man, the soul, so that he would not return to base and inferior objects of the exterior world and he would acknowledge what is new within him. This lesson has already been given by Augustine. In his conversations, Anselm's interest was the investigation of virtues and vices so that the former would increase and the latter decrease. Anselm scrutinizes the soul and it is a safe clue as a starting point for his meditations.

In his *Vita Anselmi*, Eadmer gives us an extremely interesting and precious biographic profile of Anselm. Eadmer enhances Anselm's role as teacher during his early years at Bec underscored by "sanctis meditationibus insistebat; ex contemplatione summæ beatitudinis" (*Vita Anselmi* I.8: 15) [his dedication to meditation" to "contemplate the supreme beatitude]. The main clue to his monastic spirituality may be observed in his considerations on the monk's role is his recommendations to the young Lanzon on his admittance to Cluny. Since the monk is admitted to Christ's army, he should be confirmed at the roots of love, as a tree deepens its roots in the soil, to achieve peace of spirit, constancy and meekness. Eadmer underscores that, in Anselm's view, the monk should spend all effort to despise the world and to give all his attention to everything related to God (ibid., I.21).<sup>8</sup> The monk should live according to the abbot's rule and obedience, and not according to his own desires (Anselm, *Ep.* 38, 148: 12-13). The image that best characterizes the monk is that of the pilgrim who aspires to find one day the heavenly fatherland (Anselm, *Ep.* 37, 145: 9-12). An analysis of the role of meditation explained in the *Proslogion* and in the *Third Meditation* follows.

<sup>6</sup> On several occasions Anselm is identified as *incentor*, in the sense that he inspires and instigates the knowledge of the soul to attain to the truth of inner man.

<sup>7</sup> The tripartite method distinguishes will, memory and intelligence in the soul. Anselm mentions four aspects: will, desire, reason and intelligence.

<sup>8</sup> Alessandro Ghisalberti comments on Anselm's letters and does not consider such a flight as absolute and indefectible: "si deve tuttavia far attenzione ai tratti peculiari con cui il nostro autore caratterizza impositivo la rinuncia monastica, ossia l'amore del regno e il desiderio di Dio [...] Anselmo vede nell'amore appassionato del monaco la sola condizione per poter prendere parte a questa scalata del regno" (1988: 348).

## 2. Anselm's Meditations

### 2.1. *Illic solus Deus intentio mea*

Anselm's most known writing is the *Proslogion*. God and everything we believe about him is the core of this meditation where all effort of rational activity converges. The *Proslogion* is closely related to the *Monologion*, not only from the chronological point of view –merely two years go between–, but also with regard to the issue that is basic to this writing, or rather, a reflection on the divine essence. The meditation in the *Proslogion*, which may be called a meditative prayer, has two main aspects: 1) acknowledgement of the state of the human being marked by sin; 2) an exhortation to contemplate God. The latter aspect is dealt with by Anselm in the preface: “I have written this small work so that one may raise one's soul to the contemplation of God and understand what one believes” (*P proem*, 93.21-94.1) [de hoc ipso et de quibusdam aliis sub persona conantis erigere mentem suam ad contemplandum deum et quaerentis intelligere quod credit, subditum scripsi opusculum]. The structure of the meditative prayer is extant in three different moments in the *Prologion*, namely, in the opening chapter (c.1), in his critical reconsideration (c.14-15) and in the final chapters (c.24-26).

The meditative prayer's two clues occur in the first chapter of the *Proslogion*, generally left uncommented by many critics since they do not consider it associated to the unique argument.<sup>9</sup> The chapter's content is characterized by words that enhance Anselm's explicit desire: exhort man to seek God: “Quaero vultum tuum; vultum tuum, domine, requiro” (*P I*: 97.9-10) [I seek your face; my Lord, I seek your face]. This initial request marks the infinite chasm between God and poor man,<sup>10</sup> paradoxically enhanced by the presence/absence idea: “Si autem ubique es, cur non video praesentem? Sed certe habitas ‘lucem inaccessibilem’ [...] quomodo accedam ad lucem inaccessibilem?” (*P I*: 98.3-5) [you are everywhere and I do not behold you, “you inhabit inaccessible light; how can I approach it?]. Further, the dire condition of fallen man is perceived, marked by “cruel disgrace”: from the happiness to which man was made, to unhappiness. They are the marks of human pain and misery, separating him from God. Anselm exploits literary topics with great ability to reinforce the supplicant's miserable and vile condition and, at the same time, trying to push the soul towards the contemplation of the Creator. After describing man's situation and desire, Anselm closes the chapter with a strong Augustinian stance:

Non tento, domine, penetrare altitudinem tuam, quia nullatenus comparo illi intellectum meum; sed desidero aliquatenus intelligere veritatem tuam, quam credit et amat cor meum. [...] Nam et hoc credo: quia ‘nisi credidero, non intelligam’ (*P I*: 100.15-19)

O Lord, I shall not try to fathom your depth, since in no way I may compare it to my intelligence; I would rather understand somewhat your truth and my heart will believe and love [...] I truly believe, because, if I didn't believe, I would not understand (*P I*).

The second meditation prayer lies within the work's central chapters (14-15). The argument is as follows: Anselm details what was attained until that moment. He pointed out how reason refers to God in a convenient manner as “someone beyond whom there is nothing greater” (c.2), underscores that thinking with rectitude implies in the need of this thought (c.3); the denial of the foolish person may be explained through a certain

<sup>9</sup> The argument, developed to show that God is how we believe he is, lies in Chapters 2-4, more known than other chapters of the same writing. The argument is called ontological and has been acknowledged as such by post-Kantian tradition. I believe that neither the discarding of the initial prayer that antecedes the argument nor its reduction to a mere psychological consideration favor the full understanding of his writings (Corbin, 1992: 135).

<sup>10</sup> Anselm employs the terms *homuncio/homunculus* several times, followed by adjective denoting base and vile. He does so to admit weakness and pray for mercy.



way of thinking (c.4). The question comes back to the soul, which, since the start, is motivated by searching and desiring an encounter with God: “An invenisti, anima mea, quod quaerebas?” (P XIV: 111.8) [My soul, did you find what you were looking for?]. The request requires understanding through the vision: “Domine deus meus, formator et reformator meus, dic desideranti animae meae, quid aliud es, quam quod vidit, ut pure videat, quod desiderat” (P XIV: 111.22-24) [Lord, my God, creator and re-creator of my being, tell my soul, who yearns for you, that you are not that whom she saw, so that she may see that who she ardently desires]. For the supplicant soul, the hidden God is transcendent and the source of all truth: “Quanta namque est lux illa, de qua micat omne verum [...] Quam ampla est illa veritas, in qua est omne quod verum est” (P XIV: 112.5-7) [how great is the light from which all truth is derived [...] immense is the truth where all that is true may be found]. The *aliquid quo nihil maius cogitare* becomes *quidam maius* (something greater than may be conceived).

The happiness that man expects consists of the presence of full joy. It is the theme, proposed in chapters 24-26, that closes the *Proslogion*. The thought of such happiness will be the crowning of the effort of the ardent desire for union with God mentioned at the beginning of the meditation. It is the moment in which Anselm takes into account the body's and soul's goods, extant in life, and their respective reference with the future promise. In a treatise such as the *Proslogion – De Deo Uno*– it is the first reference on a content addressed directly to man

The meditative style of this group of chapters will be underscored by the human intellect's effort in its search for understanding. The argumentative movement developed by Anselm is structured on a set of conjectures (*coniectationes*) on the good conceived as supreme and unique: “Excita nunc, anima mea, et erige totum intellectum tuum, et cogita quantum potes, quale et quantum sit illud bonum” (P XXIV: 117.25-26) [now, my soul, direct all your intellect, think what you may, on who is this good and on its greatness]. The conjectures endeavor to raise perception on that who is beyond, on that who is not merely the greatest, in the sense of *maius* provided in the unique argument, but it is *quiddam maius*. For instance, if a specific singular good is pleasing, how will that who encompasses all good things be? If created life is good, how is creating life be? This is the structure of Anselm's reasoning: *quale* and *quantum*, probably derived from Aristotle via Boetius, plus the category relationship, constitute the shape of the reasoning. One should note that all verbs are in the future tense and indicate the scatological dimension of the meditation.

However, when the body's and soul's qualities (the aim of c. 25) are taken into account, the discussion on man and his future appears more clearly and takes an ethical turn. Let not miserable man, a man without any importance (*homuncio*), following the terms of chap. 1, seek here the body's and the soul's good, but only in God: “qui hoc bono fruatur [...] Certe quidquid volet erit” (P XXV: 118.12-13) [Who enjoys this good [...] will certainly have everything that God wishes]. What one expects is beyond man: “never have the eyes seen, nor the ears heard, never has it entered man's heart” (I Cor 2:9). This verse by Paul is textually quoted by Anselm and it is crucial for the chapter's interpretation. The body's qualities (made of matter) are seven: beauty, strength, longevity, satiety, intoxication, melody and voluptuousness. Each of the above-mentioned qualities has the same structure already given according to the category relationship: those who love beauty (of the body) should know that there is something more beautiful than the sun (Mt 13:43). Similarly, in the case of melody as conceived by Anselm: there is nothing like the choir of angels singing to the Lord.

The qualities of the soul have their fulfillment in God. They are also seven, the first of which are based on the intellect: wisdom, friendship, harmony, power, honors, safety and happiness. Intelligence and will are important for our analysis. Wisdom is not

that quality that man may achieve through his own efforts. It is the wisdom of God revealed to man. Harmony and power are basic for the will. True harmony means that all should have one single will, which is none other than God's will. It is the formula that reviews the terms of dialogues on free will where the true will is identified as God's will.<sup>11</sup> Such closeness, such identity among wills is also manifested in the term *potestas*, another quality of the soul where we perceive the synonym *voluntas-velle*. Anselm says: "Si potestas: omnipotentes erunt suae voluntatis ut deus suae. Nam sicut poterit deus quod volet per seipsum, ita poterunt illi quod volent per illum" (P XXV: 119.8-10) [if they desire power, they will have an almighty will, like God's; since God can do all that he wants in itself, they can also do what they desire, through him].

The movement indicates full happiness that leads man towards the plenitude of heart, spirit and soul. The meditation prayer that ends the *Proslogion* manifests a voice that addresses God in terms of hope and happiness: "Deus meus et dominus meus, spes mea et gaudium cordis mei, dic animae meae, si hoc est gaudium de quo nobis dicis per filium tuum: 'petite et accipietis, ut gaudium vestrum sit plenum'" (P XXVI: 120.23-25) [My God and my Lord, my hope and my heart's happiness, tell my soul that this is the joy transmitted to us by your son: "ask and you will receive so that your happiness will be full"]. It is the joy of the blessed. Man should always know and love God –they are the petitions at the end of the prayer– since they cannot be received fully in this life, man should progress daily till he reaches total plenitude.

### 2.2. *The Third Meditation: Deus... creator et recreator meus*

The third meditation called "On the Redemption of Mankind" is a late text within the context of prayers and meditations. The theme is correlated to that of *Cur Deus Homo*, although the form of its approach is very different since Anselm does not reply to the *infideles* who oppose the notion of a saving God. Anselm directs himself to the Christian to motivate him in his inwardness as if by a sort of *compunctio cordis*, and demonstrates the reasons of Christ's saving mission. The totally new vocabulary solicits the *affectus*, *cor*, *desiderium* and *gaudium* of the Christian.<sup>12</sup>

The meditation is structured on two distinct premises: 1) a consideration on the Christian soul as she asks herself on her true condition or when she directs herself to God; 2) the "reasons" for Christ's Incarnation. However, an Introduction and a Conclusion, which recall the themes indicated in the two sections, may be detected.

The first part provides the classic form of Anselm's prayer-meditation: it exhorts the *anima christiana* so that she remembers and reconsiders (*retractaret*) that she had been saved by Christ. Its main theme is that the Christian would return to the meditation and delights in its contemplation. The vocabulary reminds one of spiritual nutrition: to taste the goodness of the Redeemer... to appreciate a taste sweeter than honey. In other words, *mande cogitando, suge intelligendo, gluti amando et gaudendo* (OM, Med. 3: 84.10-11).

The verb *retractare* is the pivot of analysis. In fact, it may indicate either the idea of a resuming or a remembrance of something, or correcting it or revising it. Perhaps Anselm does not aim in correcting or revising *Cur Deus Homo*, which directly foregrounds the meditation, but in demonstrating to the Christian the greatness of the redeeming act. It is actually a meditation which, as previously shown, aims at the joy of contemplation.<sup>13</sup>

11 In this dialogue by Anselm, man's true will is identified with God's will in so far as one wants what God desires. One may rightly say that it is the submission to God's will which does not imply servile submission.

12 An interesting comparison between the two writings is given by Roques, 1970: 132-157. Following the same line of thought, there is Schmitt, 1955: 125-138. A Christological interpretation has been provided by Briancesco, 1981-1982; and 1984. For a historical and theological approach of Redemption, see Carpin, 2000: 75-156.

13 *Contemplare/contemplatio* is not found in the *Proslogion* alone, as we have seen above. It appears in the *commendatio* of



Christ's redeeming work is qualified by Anselm as the expression of goodness and love, the product of a pious will (*pia voluntas*) manifested explicitly since no need forced Christ to humble himself so much: "sed omnis necessitas et impassibilitas eius subiacet voluntati" (*OM*, Med. 3: 86.60-61). What he wills must of necessity be and what he does not will cannot possible be.

For Anselm, the issue, underscored in this meditation, largely developed in *Cur Deus Homo*, is the fact that human nature had to be reconciled but, at the same time, it was incapable of appeasing God. This is how God's goodness (*bonitas Dei*) comes to Mankind's rescue: the Son assumes human nature in his very person and this Man, underlines Anselm, offered his life freely for his Father's honor (*Anselm, CDH II.14*).

Anselm's terms to describe the divine work are basic for the building of a moral vocabulary: Christ did not suffer because of a need but of his own free will –spontaneous goodness– and, because of God's honor, bore the bad will. Divine will is good, spontaneous and obedient, without coercion or prohibition. The two terms abide together, without any contradiction. Anselm thus makes the above example a model of Mankind's free will: "est enim perfecta et liberrima humanae naturae oboedientia, cum voluntatem suam liberam sponte voluntati dei subdit, et cum acceptam bonam voluntatem sine omni exactione spontanea libertate opere perficit" (*OM*, Med. 3: 88.118-121) [when it voluntarily surrenders its own free will to the will of God, and when, with a freedom all its own, it perfects the good will which was therefore accepted because not imposed].

These are actually the great motives of which the Christian soul should be aware. Anselm's terms, thrifly distributed, indicate the great tension in the opposed items: "captivas eras, sed hoc modo es redempta. Ancilla eras, et sic es liberata. Sic es exul reducta, perdita restituta, et mortua resuscitata" (*OM*, Med. 3: 88.129-131). The figure of the small man arises in the impacting description of his stance as a sinner: he lay in darkness, a great load burdened him and his cries were transformed into a heavy burden. This is the reason for the admonitions: "Expavesce memorando, contremisce cogitando" (*OM*, Med. 3: 89.157-158). That is why poor Mankind should examine its debt to the Redeemer, consider what He did, think in all things divine and look fixedly to its Savior.

As the soul turns onto herself, she directs herself in prayer to the Creator: "O bone, O Domine Christe". They are words that acknowledge the greatness of the work of the Redemption and are expected to reach God's "ears". Christ did not merely take away the sin of the world in which Mankind was born but changed Man. Man was ill and Christ raised him up and put him on his feet. *Oratio* 14 expresses very well such a change: "Vult, domine, vult ad deum et ad te anima mea erigere faciem suam, et plumbeo pondere curvata gravatur" (57.78-80) [O Lord, my soul desires to raise her eyes to Thee since a leaden burden left her curved]. Finally, let the Christian soul realize all these 'reasons' and let the interior Man think these words of salvation.

We have seen in the *Proslogion* and in the *Orationes sive meditationes* that the prayer-meditation is a pathway that leads Man towards the divine truth even though at the moment it still remains partial. The divine word will be assimilated (close to *ruminatio*), weighed and measured in the monk's retirement to reach its full meaning expressed in the *ratio Dei*. In fact, *excitatio mentis* and *compunctio cordis* are two instances within the same process. It is the acknowledgement of the dignity of the human creature that the condition of smallness and humiliation, caused by sin, is intolerable to the Benedictine monk from Bec.

Urban II when the entire work of the Father and Doctors of the Church is taken into consideration: "in veritatis contemplatione" (*CDH* 39:6; 40:1); also in the terms of *Prayer 2 (Oratio Christi)*: "spero tui adventus solam consolationem, ardeo tui vultus gloriosam contemplationem" (*OM*, 7: 37-38). Contemplating the truth, even partially, is a sign of joy, as also indicated at the end of the *Proslogion*.



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