

Saint Anselm's *Fides Quaerens Intellectum* as a Model for Christian Philosophy

Gregory B. Sadler
Ball State University

The paper discusses Anselm's thought as Christian philosophy in light of positions developed during the 1930s French debates about Christian philosophy, specifically the complementary positions of Etienne Gilson and Jacques Maritain. I argue that, understood by reference to the frameworks of Gilson's early (1931-33) position and Maritain's position, Anselm's thought would not only be a Christian philosophy but also a model of Christian philosophy. Gilson's later (1934-37) position, however, held that Anselm's thought should not be considered to be Christian philosophy. I argue that his later position has several weaknesses, and that his first position provides the more adequate assessment of Anselm.

Saint Anselm is incontestably a Christian thinker of the first rank, both as a *Christian* thinker and as a Christian *thinker*. On the one hand, his thought, life, and work are permeated by the *Christian* religion. With the exception of the *De Grammatico*, all of his dialogues and treatises are motivated primarily by the goal of bringing some greater and further understanding to issues and problems arising out of the Christian faith.¹ On the other hand, Anselm was a powerful *thinker*, and thinking was an integral part of Anselm's Benedictine life, incorporated within his prayer, exercises, duties, and counseling. Anselm's entire being came to be oriented towards thinking about the divine, approaching and mediating upon the divine through thought.² Emblematic of centrality of thinking for Anselm is *Cur Deus Homo*'s oft-cited passage: ". . . it seems to me negligence if, after we have been established in the faith, we do not strive to understand what we believe."³

The question can be raised, however, whether the emphasis Anselm placed on the intellectual life (or even his accomplishments and contributions to thought) merits calling Anselm a *philosopher*, specifically a *Christian* philosopher, or calling his work *Christian philosophy*.⁴ Doubts or misgivings about using such terminology have some genuinely

¹ Much of Anselm's corpus consists of what might be called occasioned writings, texts motivated 1) by an active controversy within the Church (e.g. the *Epistola de Incarnatione*), 2) by fellow religious asking him to set down for them some of the fruits of their conversations and his own meditations and insights about matters of the Christian faith (e.g. the *Monologion*, the *Cur Deus Homo*), or 3) by his own desire to return to and rework matters treated in previous texts (e.g. the *Proslogion* and the *De Virginali Conceptu*).

² As his biographer Eadmer puts it, Anselm was able "to unravel many most obscure and previously insoluble questions about the divinity of God and about our faith." *The Life of St. Anselm*, ed. and trans. R.W. Southern (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1962), p.13. Eadmer also narrates a practice that indicates how deeply entwined thinking, specifically about God, and living became for Anselm. As a bishop, Anselm was wearied, even fell ill, when dealing with secular matters. The remedy, learned by "long experience," was simple: "we drew him out of the crowd . . . and put to him some question of Holy Scripture" (*loc. cit.*, p. 80).

³ *Cur Deus Homo* 1.1, in *S. Anselmi Cantuariensis Archiepiscopi opera omnia*, ed. Dom F. S. Schmitt, O.S.B. (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson and Sons. 1940-1961), vol. 2, p. 48. All further citations of Anselm's work are from the *O.O.*, and will be designated by the work's title, chapter, *O.O.* volume (when needed) and page numbers. All translations of Anselm and of the other authors cited, unless otherwise noted, are those of the author.

⁴ Setting the French context, there were, prior to the debates, scholars willing to call Anselm's thought philosophy, as the very title of Charles Fillaitre's *La philosophie de saint Anselme* (Paris: Alcan. 1920)

philosophical bases and raise some deep philosophical issues and problems. Not the least of these are questions about the nature of the discipline, commitments, research project, or even way of life one is engaged in by studying and doing philosophy. The question whether Anselm can be considered a philosopher, whether his work can be considered philosophy, will clearly depend on the conception of philosophy one has and employs, as well as on related conceptions, e.g., of reason, theology, faith, even mysticism.⁵ If Anselm's work and thought are to be considered philosophical (unless this expression is ruled out in some way), clearly they must be considered *Christian philosophy*.

That expression, however, is one whose very *validity* or *propriety* is and has long been a matter of controversy. Even sharper controversy about the *nature* of Christian philosophy exists among those who admit it into the philosophical lexicon. Given all this, it might be asked: what there is to gain by raising these long-vexed and tangled issues, let alone embroiling Anselm in them? Any response must presuppose that the questioner recognizes some value in raising and exploring philosophical questions, even if they are not resolved (as very few questions are) to the entire satisfaction and agreement of all.⁶ In this case, the philosophical questions include a reflexive one about the very *nature* of philosophy as well as the related question of *Christian philosophy*, including what Christian philosophy is, or would be, and whether and how Anselm's thought fits into Christian philosophy.

From the Patristic era down to the present, the notion of Christian philosophy has been an object of both study and contention, and these have been conditioned by recurring issues: the relations between Christianity and philosophy; the relations between faith, religious practice, religious community, and reason; the relations between the natural order or faculties and the supernatural; the concrete and historical conditions of philosophizing; and lastly philosophy's possibility of and claim to being entirely self-sufficient and autonomous, determining its own nature and scope and those of reason. A central claim underlying this paper, but simply made and not argued for here, is that the issues Christian philosophy involves were never before and have never since been examined, discussed, and debated to the same depth, in as much detail, with as much originality and scope of thought, with as much deliberate focus, and by so many luminary minds, as they were in the 1930s

indicates. Alexandre Koyré's concludes that Anselm "can claim one of the first places in the history of thought, and, in any case, boast of the glory of being the first, at least in the West, to have presented a system of Christian theology and philosophy." *L'idée de Dieu dans la philosophie de St. Anselme* (Paris: Editions Ernest Leroux, 1923), p. 226.

⁵ Miguel Cruz Fernandez points out the importance of this choice: Anselm's work "... is simply Thought, intellectual vocation; if we want to call this movement 'Philosophy', that depends on what the word 'philosophy' means to us. For, Saint Anselm's thought cannot be identified with philosophy in the Greek sense of the word, but it is much closer to other conceptions of philosophy." "Les caractères fondamentaux de la philosophie de saint Anselme," *Spicilegium Beccense*, v. 1, p. 16. As Etienne Borne, one of the Christian philosophy debate's keenest but rather laconic observers, noted, this choice conditions the problem of Christian philosophy more generally: "The response that the philosopher will bring to this problem, the very way in which he defines and opposes the terms will depend from the start on the idea of his philosophy that he makes for himself, on what I will call by convention, and to cut things short, of his *reflexive* philosophy." "D'une 'Philosophie Chrétienne' qui serait philosophique", *Esprit*, Nov. 1932, p. 335.

⁶ Particularly philosophical questions whose perennity stems from: 1) the reflexivity inherent to philosophy; 2) the existential importance of the questions; 3) the very fact that great thinkers have addressed themselves to these questions, without reaching entire agreement; 4) the depths and complexity of the objects one attempts to grasp and articulate, e.g. the nature of God.

Francophone debates. While there have been some advances beyond the positions developed by the main participants either during or later out of the 1930s debates, these advances are in large part either indebted to those positions or independently develop similar themes and insights.⁷ Accordingly, in my view, there is no better philosophical lens available for examining the questions whether Saint Anselm is a Christian philosopher, and his work Christian philosophy, than the main positions of the 1930s debates.

This study is organized into three main sections. The first section presents several general features of the position on Christian philosophy Gilson articulated during the earlier years of the debate (1931-33), and indicates how Anselm's thought fits as an example and even a model of Christian philosophy. The second section presents Maritain's complementary position and discusses Anselm in that framework. The third and final section addresses the problem raised by Gilson's later (1934-37) revision of his views on Anselm and Christian philosophy. During this period, Gilson explicitly declares that Anselm is *not* a Christian philosopher, but I argue that this reinterpretation is misguided in certain respects so that Gilson's earlier position on Christian philosophy and on Anselm is the more adequate one. A twofold goal informs all three sections. First, given the ambiguity of the term and notion, it is important to get some coherent conception of what "Christian philosophy" is. Second, my aim is to use that framework to indicate that Anselm's thought is not merely a historical Christian philosophy, but also that Anselm's thought and life provide a model, though not the exclusive model, for Christian philosophy. Before entering into the study proper, however, a few brief points of context bearing on the 1930s Christian philosophy debates still need to be made here.

With the one exception of Gilson, there was little explicit reference to Anselm during the debates,⁸ and this seeming lack of interest is explicable by several factors. First, one of the main lines of conflict was that between philosophers who held there could be *no* Christian philosophy in *any* sort of philosophically rigorous sense (a group which included both rationalists such as Emile Bréhier and Léon Brunschvicg and neo-Scholastics such as Fernand van Steenberghen and Léon Noël) and philosophers who held there could be Christian philosophy (including both Thomists such as Etienne Gilson and Jacques Maritain and non-Thomists such as Maurice Blondel and Gabriel Marcel). Anselm might be included

⁷ I do not mean to disparage or downplay the brilliance of some contemporary scholars discussing the problem of Christian philosophy. Among these should be numbered the late Joseph Owens, C.S.S.R., Ralph McInerny, Yves Floucat, Alvin Plantinga, Leo Sweeney, S.J., Jean-Luc Marion, and Adriaan Peperzak.

⁸ The authors who do mention Anselm are: J. Huby in "Sagesse chrétienne et philosophie" (*Études*, 5 June 1932), who briefly discusses Anselm and Bonaventure as continuing the Augustinian tradition (p. 521) and M. Souriau in "Qu'est-ce qu'une philosophie chrétienne?" (*Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, v. 39, no. 3), who suggests that the critics of Christian philosophy have failed to "aim at its center, rather than elsewhere: to study Augustinianism itself, which is prolonged through Saint Anselm, Saint Bonaventure. . . . up to Descartes, Pascal, Malebranche, and finally Kant" (p. 366).

Since the 1930s debates, there have been occasional references to Anselm in works discussing Christian philosophy. Among them are: Roger Mehl, *The Condition of the Christian philosopher*, trans. Eva Kushner (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1963), in particular p. 104-117; Maurice Nédoncelle, *Is there a Christian Philosophy?* trans. Iltyd Trethowan (New York: Hawthorne Books, 1960); André Hayen, S.J., "Saint Anselme et saint Thomas: la vraie nature de la théologie et sa portée apostolique", *Spicilegium Beccense*, v. 1. (Paris: Vrin, 1959); Miguel Cruz Hernandez, *loc. cit.*; J. Rassam, "Existence et vérité chez Saint Anselme", *Archives de Philosophie*, v. 24, n. 2 (1961); Simon Decloux, "Philosophie chrétienne, hier et aujourd'hui" in *Pour une philosophie chrétienne: philosophie et théologie*, (Paris: Letheilleux, 1983).

in listings of Christian philosophers by proponents of Christian philosophy, but the historical figures on whom the debates turned were primarily Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Malebranche, and Pascal. Second, Thomist proponents of Christian philosophy not surprisingly approached the issues largely through their interpretations of Thomas's thought.⁹ The one explicitly Augustinian philosopher to get involved in the debates, Michel Sourriau, predictably focused largely on Augustine. Blondel and Marcel had already developed their own quite clearly non-Thomist positions in response to what they took to be new demands imposed by the developments of modern thought, employing in Blondel's case first a "method of immanence" then later a "method of implication" and in Marcel's the development of a Christian existentialist phenomenology. Other than a happy formula, Anselm's thought seemed to have nothing particular to offer these participants.¹⁰

Given the participants' intellectual caliber, erudition and profundity of scholarship, it is unfortunate little sustained attention was given to Anselm's thought for critical opportunities were lost for examining and engaging it in light of the issues being raised, articulated and debated. These debates about Christian philosophy were never resolved in any full sense, and given the inherent complexity and difficulty of some of the issues, they continue to remain open to further study, interpretation and discussion. Anselm's thought could be productively interpreted as Christian philosophy in light of several of the main participants' positions, in particular those of Gilson, Maritain, Blondel, and Marcel.¹¹ In this article, simply for reasons of unity and brevity, I devote exclusive attention to the implications of Gilson's and Maritain's views on Christian philosophy, leaving Blondel and Marcel's views for a further study.

I. Gilson: *Fides Quaerens Intellectum* as Christian Philosophy

If Gilson's and Maritain's positions on Christian philosophy had to be briefly summarized together, it would be that while in its essence or its concept philosophy is neither Christian nor non-Christian, and is purely rational, this is an abstraction. In their concrete and real existence, which cannot be estranged from the human subject who philosophizes, philosophies can be Christian, and in fact Christian philosophy does exist, since there are historical cases of this. There are, to be sure, differences between Gilson's and Maritain's presentations of this same basic position. As Maritain puts it, he discusses from a doctrinal perspective what Gilson does from a historical perspective. And, more importantly, Gilson

⁹ As late as 1930, the 1,500 year anniversary of St. Augustine's death, even Gilson, in an article commemorating that Christian philosopher, could on the very same page claim that "[o]ne of Thomism's great superiorities was to have enough creative power to assimilate Augustinianism's results" and that through his *Proslogion* argument, "in our opinion, Saint Anselm left the correct path." "L'avenir de la métaphysique augustinienne," *Revue de Philosophie*, v.30 (1930), p. 713.

¹⁰ For discussion of Blondel's misinterpretation and underestimation of the significance of Anselm's thought, specifically the *Proslogion* argument for God's existence, see my "The Ontological Proof, the Option, and the *Unique Necessaire*: Maurice Blondel's Examination of the Proof in Anselm, Descartes, and Malebranche," *The Saint Anselm Journal*, v. 2, n. 2 (<http://www.anselm.edu/library/SAJ/pdf/22Sadler.pdf>).

¹¹ Several French Anselm interpreters have been influenced considerably by Blondel's philosophy, among them Jacques Paliard and Aimé Forest. Among Anglophone interpreters, Peter O'Toole exhibits a clear Blondelian influence. Gilson's influence has been less marked, but his 1934 "Sens et nature de l'argument de Saint Anselme" has had some influence in French- and German-language Anselm scholarship.

explicitly discusses Anselm, while Maritain does not. Both, however, are relevant to understanding whether Anselm's thought can be seen as Christian philosophy. Gilson's early definition of Christian philosophy by reference to Anselm's own *fides quaerens intellectum* is a fitting place to start.

In his 1931 presentation to the Société française de Philosophie, Gilson argued that the Augustinian tradition's view on Christian philosophy contained "a deep truth. . . which it is perhaps its proper function to preserve. This truth is the real unity of the elements of the concrete in the subject where they are realized,"¹² the elements in this case being the faith and the reason of the philosophizing human subject. According to this view, it is a mistake to think that the faith or the reason of the human subject have a reality or being "radically distinct from that of a thinking substance to which they belong."¹³ Faith and reason, or for that matter Christianity and philosophy, can be distinguished from each other in the thought of particular human beings, and this allows them to be grasped as concepts, corresponding to essences, treated in abstraction, but they nevertheless remain "rooted in the unity of the concrete subject."¹⁴ This bears significant implications:

[E]very Christian philosophy will be traversed, impregnated, nourished by Christianity as by a blood that circulates in it, or rather, like a life that animates it. One will never be able to say that here the philosophical ends and the Christian begins; it will be integrally Christian and integrally philosophical or it will not be. These are not secondary concessions made to the Augustinian position on the problem, but the open recognition of the fact that this position is the true position on the problem and that the reality that it defines is really the reality to be explained.¹⁵

Gilson actually expresses himself somewhat ambiguously by speaking of "*the* reality," for there are several connected realities at issue. First, there is the human subject, in this case the Christian philosopher, in whom there is both faith and reason. Second, there is *a* Christian philosophy, i.e. *this* Christian philosophy of *that* Christian philosopher. Third, there is the complex reality of Christian philosophy, which includes and envelops both Christian philosophies and Christian philosophers.

Like the non-Christian philosopher, the Christian philosopher uses reason, "not a reason of a different type than that of non-Christian philosophers, but a reason that labors under different conditions."¹⁶ These different conditions will be complex and concrete, most likely not describable in their totality, but one common feature is that the Christian philosopher's reason will be "that of a subject in which there is something non-rational, his religious faith."¹⁷ This seems to place the Christian philosopher at a disadvantage, at least in

¹² *Bulletin de la Société française de la philosophie*, Session of March, 1931, (afterward cited as *BsfP*), p. 45.

¹³ *BsfP*, p. 45.

¹⁴ *BsfP*, p. 45-6.

¹⁵ *BsfP*, p. 46.

¹⁶ *BsfP*, p. 47.

¹⁷ *BsfP*, p. 47.

the eyes of critics and negators of Christian philosophy, but as Gilson rightly points out, in reality there is no such creature as a pure philosopher, “the concrete realization of an unique concept, in whom reason would not cohabit with any irrational of this sort.” Within every philosopher, and thereby within every philosophy, reason is bound up with the non- or irrational. As Gilson notes later in 1932, the view that “everything which either directly or indirectly undergoes the influence of a religious faith ceases, *ipso facto*, to retain any philosophical value” is an unjustified assumption, albeit one widespread in modern philosophy and culture, “a mere ‘rationalist’ postulate, directly opposed to reason.”¹⁸

More can be drawn from these important points. It may be, as Gilson suggests, that the “philosophical life,” or even philosophy considered as a discipline or set of practices, involves making an effort “to bring what is irrational in us to the state of rationality,”¹⁹ an effort using, and perhaps in the process uncovering or further developing, resources afforded by an already present but always imperfect human reason. The two more pressing and definite problems reason’s joint tenancy raises for the philosopher are “distinguishing between the irrational and the not-yet-rational,”²⁰ and “knowing the time when the possibilities of the rationality of the non-rational one has chosen are exhausted.”²¹ According to Gilson, the way Christian philosophers address these problems is particularly revealing. “What is peculiar to the Christian is being convinced of the rational fertility of his faith and being sure that this fertility is inexhaustible. If one pays attention, that is the true meaning of Saint Augustine’s *credo ut intelligam* and Saint Anselm’s *fides quaerens intellectum*: a Christian’s effort to draw some of reason’s knowledge from faith in revelation.”²²

The characteristics of Christian philosophy Gilson emphasizes here are features of Anselm’s work. His treatises and dialogues employ rational argumentation and rational techniques of philosophical investigation. In the course of the argumentation, they do not simply start from or continually rely on the Christian revelation, nor do they resolve matters by final appeals to authority or citations of Scripture. To be sure, Anselm is a believing, practicing, devout, and orthodox Christian, and the reason that he employs in his philosophizing clearly cohabits with Christian faith. Just as clearly, the determinate conditions Anselm’s reason labors under are vastly different than those of philosophers in other times and places, quite arguably very different even from the conditions under which labor the reasons of many contemporary Christian philosophers, even interpreters of Anselm. The real question, however, as Gilson rightly notes, is whether Anselm’s Christian faith is irrational, and thereby simply vitiates the rationality of his philosophizing, transmuting it into something non-philosophical, or whether Anselm’s Christian faith is “not-yet-rational,” “non-rational,” a source of possibilities for reason, of perhaps inexhaustible rational fertility, so

¹⁸ Etienne Gilson, *The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy, (Gifford Lectures 1931-1932)* trans. A.H.C. Downes (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1936), p.40.

¹⁹ *BsfP*, p. 47.

²⁰ *BsfP*, p. 47.

²¹ *BsfP*, p. 48.

²² *BsfP*, p. 48. Marcel de Corte would later provide a slightly different, but complementary formulation: “A Christian philosophy is born from Revelation’s power of rational expansion.” “Sur l’histoire de la philosophie chrétienne,” *Revue de Philosophie*, v. 5 (1935), p. 160.

that in those concrete conditions, his philosophizing could be done all the better, more adequately, more in harmony with philosophy's own demands and drives.

Anselm does "draw some of reason's knowledge from faith in revelation," and he does so in a philosophical manner. Consider in this light the famous *Proslogion* passage.

Considering [the previous work, the *Monologion*] to be constructed [*esse. . . contextum*] by an interlinking [*concatenatione*] of many arguments, I began to wonder if perhaps a single argument could be found, that required nothing other than itself alone for proving itself, and that by itself would suffice for showing [*ad adstruendum*] that God truly is, and that he is the supreme good requiring no other, and that he is what all things need so that they are and so that they are well, and whatever else we believe about the divine substance.²³

The goals of the argument are all truths of the revealed Christian faith. Anselm knows what the *Proslogion* is supposed to prove; he knows the desired end-points, and it is a matter of arriving at them philosophically. This is precisely one of the ways that Christianity is a "revelation generative of reason,"²⁴ to use Gilson's startling formulation; the Christian philosopher sets about to *prove* or demonstrate things which he or she believes to be true because revelation teaches them. This takes place in all of Anselm's treatises and dialogues (excepting the *De Grammatico*). The Trinity, the Incarnation, the Atonement, various divine attributes, relations between the Creator and creatures, God's very existence, all of these are truths of faith for which Anselm provides philosophical argument, arguing *to* them, rather than *from* them. André Audet expresses this succinctly, making a distinction for the *Proslogion* which applies to Anselm's works more generally: "Saint Anselm's *thought* therefore starts from faith.... But his *argument* does not start from faith"²⁵ (my emphasis).

Yet, this is only one way in which Christianity is generative of reason in Anselm's work. In the formula *fides quaerens intellectum*, the first term cannot be restricted simply to a set of propositions, nor even the habit of assenting to those propositions,²⁶ and the second term cannot be restricted to merely generating philosophical proofs; the goal, what Anselm explicitly asks for, is to arrive at understanding, if even just to some extent (*aliquatenus*), God's truth.²⁷ One might even make the case that, precisely because Anselm believes in

²³ *Proslogion*, proem, v.1 p. 93.

²⁴ *BsfP*, p. 39.

²⁵ "Une source augustinienne de l'argument de saint Anselme," in *Etienne Gilson: Philosophe de la chrétienté* (Paris: Cerf. 1949), p. 118.

²⁶ Eileen C. Sweeney provides discussion of this, with which I am in complete agreement. "The *Proslogion* begins from faith in several senses. First, I think it is clear from Anselm's practice that he does not mean by faith the presupposition of or even some of the basic principles of Christian faith articulated in the creed. He presupposes faith in the sense that *faith poses the questions for which he seeks understanding*. . . Further, he presupposes faith in the sense that faith entails an intense desire to know about the subjects he explores by reason. . . . Lastly, he presupposes faith in the concepts and rational processes of the human mind" (emphasis mine). "Anselm's *Proslogion*: The Desire for the Word," *The Saint Anselm Journal*, v. 1, n. 1 (<http://www.anselm.edu/library/SAJ/pdf/11Sweeney.pdf>), p. 22.

²⁷ *Proslogion*, c.1, p. 100.

order to understand, rather than seeking to understand so that he might believe,²⁸ he liberates himself and his philosophical effort from the temptation of restricting the scope of his reason to discovering argumentation that will prove truths of faith. Viewed in that light, the very priority of faith seeking understanding allows Anselm's philosophizing to be more than merely apologetics. Gilson notes a reflexivity concretely involved in Anselm's *fides quaerens intellectum*: "this very primacy of faith over reason is itself something which he believes before he understands, and believes in order to understand."²⁹ Eileen Sweeney provides a complementary expression of this reflexivity, speaking of "[f]aith as the desire to traverse the gap between what faith believes and what reason understands."³⁰

The philosophical itinerary towards understanding is exploration through dialectic and argumentation, through the use of reason, or better put, the "rational mind," which Anselm calls in the *Monologion* both the "mirror in which [God's] image is glimpsed [*speculetur*]" and the "image" of God.³¹ The Christian revelation is accordingly generative of reason in a second way distinguishable from the first, by provoking or enticing the rational human being to setting reason to work and keeping it at work, exploring the matters it comes into contact with, exploring reason's very contours and capacities in the process. Put in very blunt terms, the rational human mind only comes to understand itself and what reason is in the process of employing reason. And, the degree and the development of understanding will depend on *what* objects the rational mind involves itself with, and *how* it addresses itself to those objects and its relation to them.

In Anselm's case, reason comes to better understand and to be better understood in the course of dialectical reflection, and in relation to its ultimate object, the divine substance. In Anselm's works, far from compromising the integrity of his rational investigations, Christianity allows and requires a higher, more nuanced, discerning and reflective, a *more rational* use of human reason. As Gilson noted in his 1931-2 Gifford Lectures:

[I]t was certainly Anselm who supplied the definitive formula for the primacy of faith over reason, *for if reason would be fully reasonable*, if it would satisfy itself as reason, there is only one sure procedure open to it, and that is to examine the reasonableness of faith. Faith, as faith, is self-sufficing, but it aspires to become an understanding of its own content; it does not depend on rational evidence, but, on the other hand, it engenders it."³²

A considerable proportion of Anselm's texts consists in making and following out the implications of distinctions needed at the proper points, where a line of seemingly correct reasoning, whether placed in the mouth of a student or simply and starkly raised as a stumbling-block by the meditating reasoner, threatens to lead into an intellectual impasse.

²⁸ *Proslogion*, c.1, p. 100.

²⁹ Etienne Gilson, *The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy*. trans. A.H.C. Downes (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991) , p. 34.

³⁰ Sweeney, *loc. cit.* p. 23.

³¹ *Monologion*, c. 67, v.1, p. 77-8.

³² Gilson, *The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy*, p. 33. Emphasis mine.

Although it is because of his Christian faith that he knows to stop at such points to examine matters more closely, Anselm's response is never to simply resolve matters by citing the authority of Scripture or tradition, but to concentrate at that point, examining the matter, not allowing reason to degenerate into mere technique nor to halt itself short of its objects. Every time Anselm does this, he demonstrates his confidence "in the rational fertility of his faith" and "that this fertility is inexhaustible." He displays a confidence in reason greater than those whose "rationalism, very dogmatic, becomes irrational, and seems to mutilate. . . philosophical speculation itself" at these points, to adopt Blondel's expression.³³

Both Gillian Evans and Marilyn McCord Adams have discussed this important, even essential structural aspect of Anselm's thought. What they have to say is particularly relevant, not only to Anselm himself but to this aspect of Christian philosophy.³⁴ Evans focuses on Anselm's paradoxes and makes three points relevant here. First, Anselm's paradoxes have determinate purposes. "A logical or epistemological paradox requires explanation which often demands the abandoning of previous habits of thought; a rhetorical paradox is designed to startle, to jolt the reader out of the complacency of his habits of thinking."³⁵ Second, "Anselm's thinking was always governed by the knowledge beforehand that there was a fixed conclusion to be reached, a conclusion laid down by orthodox doctrine. This forced him to look for solutions outside the range of standard logical manipulation of accepted ideas."³⁶ Third, connecting these two points together, "Anselm is confident that God demonstrates the resolutions of holy paradoxes to man in such a way that they can be understood by reason and at the same time give pleasure and satisfaction because of the beauty of their reasonableness."³⁷

Adams makes several points complementary to Evans'. First, she stresses the pedagogical or disciplining functions of Anselm's written works, aimed at cultivating the entire human person towards their *telos*, that for which they were made. Anselmian training cultivates not only the intellect, but also the emotions and the will, and integrates these.³⁸ Second:

³³ Blondel, "Y-a-t'il une philosophie chrétienne?" *Revue de Métaphysique et de la Morale*, Vol. 30, n. 4 (1931) p. 600. Blondel was criticizing Bréhier, but his criticism is an apt one for similar rationalist rejections of Christian philosophy.

³⁴ Articulating, exploring, and resolving seeming paradoxes, aporiai, and contradictions has been an integral part of both Christian (and Jewish) philosophy and theology since their inceptions. In this respect, one ought think not only of those who have stressed these, for instance Tertullian, Pascal, Kierkegaard, Marcel, but also of those whose work features on resolution of these difficulties by generating a larger and fuller understanding of the matters involved, for instance Thomas Aquinas and Blondel, as well as of course Anselm.

³⁵ Gillian Evans, "The 'Secure Technician': Varieties of Paradox in the Writings of St. Anselm," *Vivarium*, v. 13, n. 1 (1975), p. 1.

³⁶ *loc cit.*, p. 11.

³⁷ *loc cit.*, p. 20.

³⁸ Marilyn McCord Adams, "Fides Quaerens Intellectum: St. Anselm's Method in Philosophical Theology," *Faith and Philosophy*, v. 4, n. 9, (1992), p. 410-12. Later, she observes: "where such advanced topics are concerned, intellectual expertise does not suffice for progress. Rather the focus of the whole self is important, the coordination of intellectual effort with the disciplined exercise of the soul's other powers, is necessary" (p. 418).

Anselmian education does not aim merely at handing down packages of correct doctrine, but rather at developing the student's skills for enquiry. Anselm's works, mostly written at the request of his students and reflective of his pedagogical practices, consistently thrust the reader into an *active* role.³⁹

Among these skills are "argumentation, tricky modal notions, the drawing of distinctions, the development of analogies, and the detection of improper linguistic usage."⁴⁰ Third, "in the intellectual sphere," as she puts it, "God takes the initiative,: first by creating rational beings with intimate knowledge of him; then by disclosing Himself to select human beings, and by providing Holy Scripture and ecumenical Church councils."⁴¹ The effort of the reasoning human being, including the philosopher, is a response, marked by a "collaborative nature."⁴²

Paradoxes or impasses and their resolutions in Anselm's work, understood through these points of Evans and Adams, are emblematic of Gilson's broader conception of Christian philosophy. Anselm is confident that there is a rational solution to every paradox precisely because of his Christian faith. The very fact of having fixed conclusions to strive for in orthodox belief does not render the Christian philosopher dogmatic but rather intellectually fruitful, willing to take and follow reason further than the putatively undogmatic unbelieving philosopher. In this way, the very scope and resources of reason are expanded, or to use Maritain's formulation, "[t]he very experience of philosophy was renewed by Christianity."⁴³ The Christian philosopher, believing that reason in its fullest sense resides in or even is the triune God, is willing, is enabled, is given the confidence to follow out reason even into the paradoxical or aporetic. At times, the treatment of impasses leads to a definitive resolution of the problems raised, for instance in the *De Veritate* when the teacher leads the student to understanding how a thing could be right and wrong at the same time, seemingly violating the principle of non-contradiction. At other times, it leads through a complex sequence of problems, where the central difficulty keeps getting pushed deeper, for instance in chap. 3 of the *De Casu Diaboli*. At other times, it leads into the various mysteries of Christianity, where the rational human mind must acknowledge it cannot penetrate further. Even in such cases, however, it is possible to arrive at something, to understand it, though not to entirely understand it. Anselm, in effect, is able to provide a rational account of why reason can only take the rational human mind so far.

Gilson provided several other characterizations of Christian philosophy that apply to Anselm's work. One immediately follows the passage we took as our starting point:

³⁹ *loc. cit.* p. 415. Emphasis Adam's.

⁴⁰ *loc. cit.* p. 415.

⁴¹ *loc. cit.* p. 413.

⁴² *loc. cit.* p. 413.

⁴³ *BsfP*, p. 65 He continues: "The *datum* that is offered to it is a world that is the work of the Word, where everything speaks of the infinite Mind [Esprit] to the finite minds that know themselves to be minds. What an ante! [entrée de jeu] There is a sort of fraternal attitude towards things, I say even in so far as they are *to be known*, speculation about which is thanks to the Christian Middle Ages, and which seem to have prepared, on the one hand, the flowering of the experimental natural sciences, and on the other, the flowering of the reflective knowledge with which modern times are honored."

If there have been philosophies, that is, systems of rational truths, whose existence cannot be explained historically without taking account of Christianity's existence, these philosophies should bear the name of Christian philosophies. They are philosophies, since they are rational, and they are Christian, since the rationality they have contributed would not have been conceived without Christianity.⁴⁴

Each of these points patently applies to Anselm's work, the more so when Gilson specifies further: "it is not enough that a philosophy be compatible with Christianity; it is necessary that Christianity have played an active role in the very establishment [*constitution*] of that philosophy." Another similar characterization raises two additional points

If philosophical systems exist, purely rational in their principles and in their methods, whose existence is not explained without the existence of the Christian religion, the philosophies that they define merit the name of Christian philosophies. This notion does not correspond to a concept of a pure essence, that of the philosopher or that of the Christian, but to the possibility of a complex historical reality: that of a revelation generative of reason. The two orders remain distinct, even if the relation that unites them be intrinsic.⁴⁵

Both characterizations tell us that *a Christian* philosophy must be rational in order to be *a philosophy*. And, the rationality, relied upon and expressed in the course of philosophizing and in the product of the philosophizing, without ceasing to be rational, must have derived from Christianity some determinate guidance, aid, direction, even its occasion for use or existence, its "establishment."

But the characterization just cited goes further. First, the notion of Christian philosophy does not have a definable essence one could pin down and then apply equally and univocally to all Christian philosophers, but rather corresponds to something concrete and complex, a "revelation generative of reason," namely Christianity, or as Maritain puts it: "the expression 'Christian philosophy' does not designate simply an essence, but a complex: an essence grasped in a certain state."⁴⁶ Second, more clearly expressing this generativity, Gilson maintains that in Christian philosophy the distinction between the supernatural order of revelation and the natural order of reason is maintained at the same time that there is an intrinsic relation between them. Later, in his Gifford Lectures, he clarifies: "I call Christian, every philosophy which, although keeping the two orders formally distinct, nevertheless considers the Christian revelation as an indispensable auxiliary to reason."⁴⁷

Gilson provides yet another characterization of particular importance here. He notes that Christian philosophers will gravitate to certain areas of philosophy. At the start of the debate, he states: "Insofar as Christian, they will limit themselves to philosophical problems

⁴⁴ *BsfP*, p. 48.

⁴⁵ *BsfP*, p. 39.

⁴⁶ *BsfP*, p. 68.

⁴⁷ *The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy*, p. 37.

about which revelation can serve them as a guide: God, man with his relations with God, nature in its relations with God. . . . They are therefore, insofar as Christian, philosophies with a clearly quite vast but limited program.”⁴⁸ He suggests, “if there are Christian philosophies, one can predict that their fertility will be manifested in the fields of metaphysics, anthropology, and morals more than in any others.”⁴⁹ He goes further than this, however, in stating that “the Christian philosopher is one who effects a choice between philosophic problems.”⁵⁰ The Christian philosopher could extend his or her interest to anything within the entire range of philosophy’s possible problems, themes, and objects, but “is interested uniquely or above all in those which affect the conduct of his religious life.”⁵¹ Gilson concedes that

[e]ven Christian philosophers like St. Thomas, whose interest extended to the whole of philosophy, did their creative work only in a relatively restricted sphere. And *nothing could be more natural*. Since the Christian revelation teaches us only truths which are necessary to salvation, its influence could extend only to those parts of philosophy that concern the existence and nature of God, and the origin, nature, and destiny of the soul.⁵²

This choice goes beyond simply characterizing Christian philosophy and the Christian philosopher, in two ways. First, along with the very focus on some matters goes the proper lack of engagement with other matters, those of vain curiosity, which would lead astray. This is precisely one of the ways in which revelation functions as an “auxiliary” or “helper” to the philosopher’s reason. Second, “[c]hoosing man in relation to God as his central theme, the Christian philosopher acquires a fixed center of reference which helps him to bring order and unity into his thought.”⁵³ This centering and ordering of the philosophizing subject’s thought is not merely a subjective aid, but rather an objective one, allowing the philosopher to better apprehend and approach reality in relation to, and even in the light of the divine.

II. Maritain’s “Christian State of Philosophy”

These characterizations bring us finally to Maritain’s formulations, which are complementary to and provide additional useful distinctions and clarification of Gilson’s. Maritain introduces the distinction “between the *nature* of philosophy, of what philosophy is in itself, and the *state* in which it is found factually, historically, in the human subject, and which relates itself to its conditions of existence and exercise in the concrete.”⁵⁴ Considered in terms of its essence, philosophy is determined solely by its object, derives from “strictly

⁴⁸ *BsfP*, p. 48.

⁴⁹ *BsfP*, p. 48.

⁵⁰ *The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy*, p. 37.

⁵¹ *loc. cit.*, p. 37.

⁵² *loc. cit.*, p. 38. Emphasis mine.

⁵³ *loc. cit.*, p. 39.

⁵⁴ *BsfP*, p. 59. For very similar translations of nearly the same material cited here, cf. Edward H. Flannery’s translation of Maritain’s *An Essay on Christian Philosophy* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1955), a reworking of a paper delivered at the University of Louvain in December 1931, that paper itself a reworking of Maritain’s contribution to the March 1931 S.f.P meeting.

rational or natural intrinsic criteria,”⁵⁵ so that “it is not dependent on Christian faith, in its object, its principles, or its methods.”⁵⁶ Although this essence, if properly grasped, may provide some guidance for the development and practice of philosophy, it must not be confused with it, for the essence of philosophy is an abstraction, existing nowhere in reality on its own. So, for Maritain, the question of Christian philosophy cannot be resolved by merely looking to the essence of philosophy,⁵⁷ any more than for Gilson it could be by looking to the concept of philosophy alone. “Once it is a question no longer of philosophy taken in-itself, but of the manner in which the human subject philosophizes, and of the different philosophies brought to the light of day by history’s concrete movement, consideration of philosophy’s *essence* no longer suffices, and consideration of the *state* imposes itself.”⁵⁸

The state in which a philosophy, or more properly speaking (since philosophy is itself as *habitus* of the human subject) a philosopher, can be found may be Christian or non-Christian. In fact, Maritain not only acknowledges a plurality of Christian philosophies (holding out, of course, for St. Thomas’s as the best), but even seems to recognize a plurality of Christian states of philosophy, these being distinguishable, but also connected by continuities of history, practice, institution, doctrines, intellectual movements and systems.⁵⁹ Maritain also uses another term for the concrete conditions of philosophizing: “regime.” This term is particularly important, because in French, the term has a wider range of denotation than in English, ranging all the way from the familiar political meaning to the meaning of “diet,” and its connotations within this range include that of determinate ordering, discipline and structure continued over time. A “state” of philosophy reflects both the condition of the philosophizing person, and the wider and more complex intersubjective and institutional context in which the philosophizing person finds him or herself.

Classifying Anselm as a Christian philosopher by Maritain’s criterion of Christian regime seems unproblematic. Again, if anyone is a Christian philosopher by this standard, Anselm is one. Maritain’s perspective illuminates Anselm’s thought as Christian philosophy in a different manner, however, having to do with what it is that a Christian state or regime does for philosophy. To summarize it very briefly, Maritain holds that philosophy, which still remains purely natural and purely rational, develops differently and farther in a Christian regime than it otherwise would because it “finds itself in the best conditions of exercise, in a properly privileged state.”⁶⁰ It does so because Christianity assists reason in two

⁵⁵ *BSfP*, p. 62.

⁵⁶ *BSfP*, p. 62.

⁵⁷ Maritain criticized the rationalists and neo-Scholastics for having forgotten “that here we are considering a pure abstract essence. It is all too easy to materialize an abstraction, i.e., to clothe what is actually an ideal monster as if it were a concrete existence.” *BSfP*, p. 62.

⁵⁸ *BSfP* p. 63.

⁵⁹ Two points need to be made here: 1) I acknowledge that this second plurality is not thematically discussed by Maritain in his writings on Christian philosophy. I would argue that this is implicit in and required by his explicit statements. As such, it would be a fruitful object for further study, which cannot be attempted here. 2) The continuity between these different Christian states of philosophy is one which is rooted in the supernatural order and, as such, will be only partly thematizable by philosophy, even Christian philosophy, and require transition to an explicitly theological perspective.

⁶⁰ *BSfP* p. 71.

distinguishable but interrelated orders, the objective order, where the Christian revelation provides “objective contributions” [*apports objectives*] which can be appropriated and developed by philosophizing subjects, and the subjective order where Christianity provides what Maritain calls “subjective reinforcements” or “strengthenings” [*confortations subjectives*] to the philosophizing subject. A Christian state or regime, in both the personal and the intersubjective and institutional aspects, is integral to both orders, as their fuller explanations show.

Objective contributions take place in three main ways. First, Christianity leads philosophy towards what natural human reason could have, but did not actually discover on its own: objects that “ought to be in some way implicit, whether it be in the most virtual way, in humanity’s philosophical treasury.”⁶¹ In some of these cases, Christianity illuminates objects philosophy did not develop, e.g. creation *ex nihilo*, the consubstantial *Logos*, while in other cases, Christianity allows doubts and hesitations to be overcome, in which case “one ought to speak not of revelation, but of confirmation.”⁶² Second, even when dealing with supernatural mysteries, philosophy, by being the handmaid of Christian theology, learns much by “being led along paths that are not its own,” by being “in proximity to theology.”⁶³ Finally, there can be “conceptual preparation” for some object (e.g. the *Logos*), which then revelation illuminates in a new and fuller way.⁶⁴

The order of subjective reinforcements is more complex and heterogeneous, since it bears more directly on the concrete individual human subject, for whom, in Maritain’s Aristotelean-Thomistic view, philosophy is an intellectual *habitus*, requiring teaching and guidance, disciplined and systematic practice, and development. “[I]n order to acquire in us its full normal development, philosophy demands many rectifications and purifications from the individual, an ascesis not only of reason, but of the heart, and that one philosophize with one’s entire soul just as one runs with one’s heart and one’s lungs.”⁶⁵ Living and thinking in a Christian milieu affects the ways and directions in which one’s thought takes determinate form. Grace also plays a role here, healing our wounded nature, allowing the reason of the individual human being to be more fully used and developed. For the individual subject, philosophy, as a discipline and way of knowing, as a *habitus*, and even as a determinate set or system of doctrines, requires relations and contact with other wisdoms and activities, like theology, allowing it a “synergy and vital solidarity, this dynamic continuity of *habitus*” that “confers on philosophic activity a subjective reinforcement and refining of capital importance.”⁶⁶

This notion of a Christian state of philosophy provides a fuller understanding of precisely how reason and faith work together in the human subject, how, to use Gilson’s terms, Christianity can be a “revelation generative of reason.” It also allows further

⁶¹ *BSfP*, p. 64.

⁶² *BSfP*, p. 65.

⁶³ *BSfP*, p. 65.

⁶⁴ *BSfP*, p. 65.

⁶⁵ *BSfP*, p. 64.

⁶⁶ *BSfP*, p. 66.

illumination of Anselm's thought as Christian philosophy. Again, Anselm's use of reason is clearly motivated and oriented by an unquestioned Christian faith, but also a faith that does not nullify human reason as a philosophical use of reason. Using the resources afforded by human reason, Anselm approaches questions and issues capable of being framed, explored, and, in some cases and to some extent, resolved by human reason. These are matters that the Judeo-Christian revelation, and the human efforts (for instance those of the Church Fathers) to come to terms with and understand that revelation (and the God who reveals it), proffers to the rational and reasoning human being, the objective contributions of which Maritain speaks. The *Proslogion*'s "faith seeking understanding" or the *Cur Deus Homo*'s "after be[ing] established in the faith. . . striv[ing] to understand what we believe" are then perfect formulations of how Christian philosophy philosophizes.

The relationship between the subjective reinforcements and the objective contributions is particularly striking in Anselm. Given certain remarks Anselm himself occasionally interjects (which seem to imply that some of his arguments, distinctions, and inferences are easily arrived at by any rational being) and given the orderly, systematic unfolding and presentation of his ideas and doctrines, it is very easy to overlook the depth of the roots of Anselm's thought in Christian life, practice, and community, in short, in a Christian regime. First, as noted earlier, many of Anselm's texts (and their main topics, images, prayers, meditations, arguments, distinctions, and explanations) emerge from the backdrop of his religious and intellectual monastic life. They are of course intelligible, provided one has the requisite will and intellect, apart from that context as philosophical treatises, but they originate in that deeply Christian way of life and thought, the Christian regime of Benedictine community.⁶⁷ Southern notes that even Anselm's *fides quaerens intellectum* emerges from a communal backdrop and even in its individuation remains structured by his relationships within the community:

At one level of experience, therefore, the statements of the faith are the corporate possession of the whole church, and they are corporately expressed in the daily routine of the monastic community. But, to understand these phrases, it is necessary to turn them into individual experiences, and the path to this understanding is found in the cooperation of small groups of friends within the community.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Martha Clare Kilzer, O.S.B., noting (as have others, e.g. De Lubac) that Christian monasticism and asceticism often received the name "Christian philosophy," specifically discusses the Benedictine contribution: "St. Benedict clearly indicated in his *Rule* that he intended the life he was legislating for to be the fully human life, the rational life – to engage the whole person in the entirety of his physical, intellectual, and spiritual powers. . . .In this sense at least, St. Benedict was a true philosopher." "The Place of St. Benedict in the Western Philosophical Tradition," *The American Benedictine Review*, v. 25, n. 2 (1974) p. 186.

Dom Paschal Baumstein O.S.B. discusses this Benedictine contribution specifically with respect to Anselm: ". . . Anselm drew from Benedict the principal means for realizing the life of excellence that he believed constituted the human enterprise. For that work he developed a perspective and approach that he labeled contemplative reason (*rationis contemplatio*). It served in penetrating the diverse dimensions of divinity as well as in weighing their application." "St. Anselm and the Prospect of Perfection," *Faith and Reason*, v. 29, (2004), p. 166.

⁶⁸ Richard Southern, "The Relationship between Anselm's Thought and His Life," in *Saint Anselm – A Thinker for Yesterday and Today*. eds. Colomon Viola and Frederick van Fleteren (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press. 1990), p. 19-20. Southern notes: "[Anselm] was never a solitary thinker following his own trains of thought in

It is also worth reflecting on the fact that all of Anselm's texts develop from and through untold and innumerable hours of his own private reflection and meditation on the matters they raise and discuss. Such study and dedication both stems from and is supported by a desire to understand what one believes, and in return is the condition for being able to make some progress in understanding, to penetrate somewhat into the intelligibility of the Christian faith. Simply to render oneself able to understand what other Christian thinkers have themselves come to understand and to more or less felicitously communicate requires that one's mind not be a blank slate but already properly formed, disciplined, and exercised. The sorts and magnitude of achievements Anselm made, contributing thereby to Christian philosophy, require that and more. Two passages from Eadmer's biography are worth examining in this light:

And so it came about that, being continually given up to God and to spiritual exercises, he attained such a height of divine speculation, that he was able by God's help to see into and to unravel many most obscure and previously insoluble questions about the divinity of God and about our faith, and to prove by plain arguments that what he said was firm and catholic truth. . . . Hence he applied his whole mind to this end, that according to his faith he might be found worthy to see with the eye of reason those things in the Holy Scriptures which, as he felt, lay in a deep obscurity.⁶⁹

Being thus inwardly more clearly illuminated with the light of wisdom and guided by the power of discrimination,⁷⁰ he so understood the characters of people of whatever sex or age that you might have seen him opening to each one the secrets of his heart and bringing them into the light of day. Besides this he uncovered the origins and, so to speak, the very seeds and roots of all virtues and vices, and made it clearer than light how the former could be attained and the latter avoided or subdued.⁷¹

Through his work Anselm makes and charts a marvelous doubly twofold progress, a progress in both *understanding* matters of the faith and *articulating* them, and a progress in both

isolation. All his thoughts required for their stimulation and formation the cooperation of those who shared the Benedictine rule," p. 11, and he specifies this cooperation: "In general, the usefulness of his listeners did not lie in their ability to contribute to the argument: it lay in their creating an atmosphere of common religious effort which stimulated the flow of Anselm's thoughts," p. 18.

⁶⁹ Eadmer, *loc. cit.*, p.12.

⁷⁰ This "power of discrimination" already introduces considerations of reason, since according to Anselm in *Monologion*, c. 63 (among other places), one of the main aspects integral to rational being is the capacity to discriminate between different values such as just and unjust, good and bad, true and false, and between degrees of these. Although this is too large a topic to adequately address here, it should be noted that 1) Anselm's moral theory, understood as Christian philosophy, *both* is dependent on concepts and doctrines developed in and derived from the Christian faith, *and* provides rational explanations for this dependency. 2) During the course of the Christian philosophy debates, Maritain started another sub-controversy of his own by arguing in *An Essay on Christian Philosophy* that, while philosophy in general need not be actually subordinated to Christian theology, moral philosophy, in order to be adequate to its objects, would have to be subordinate to theology, since only Christianity afforded the true knowledge of humanity's actual moral condition.

⁷¹ Eadmer, *loc. cit.*, p. 13.

understanding moral philosophy and *applying* it. The first delves into the inexhaustible and ultimately unsoundable depths of the economy of the triune God, God's relations with created being, and even the very capacities for knowing and understanding these employed in the progressive knowing and understanding itself. The second grapples with the obscure complexities of individual human hearts and lives, and with the natures and relations of the universal moral principles resident in and illuminating the particulars. What is particularly important, however, are the two factors that make this philosophical progress possible.

First, Anselm devoted himself to and through a spiritual discipline that is at the same time intellectual and not merely intellectual, but also practical, communicative, and affective. Anselm's thought develops in the matrix of prayer, of an intimate involvement with, a seeking of, an attentiveness to God. Dom Paschal Baumstein calls attention to the Anselmian focus on calling human beings to be what-they-ought-to-be, to the perfection appropriate to them, carried out and conceptualized in an "unending effort",⁷² a *conversatio* with God, which is "a matter of continuously turning to the Lord."⁷³ This is in fact a central aspect of the "subjective reinforcements" involved in Christian philosophy, that for a philosopher in a genuinely Christian regime, doing philosophy will be inextricable and uncompartamentalizable from prayer, from communication with and communion with God. Their philosophy will be, as Aimé Forest called it (writing about and taking the expression from Maurice Blondel) "a praying philosophy."⁷⁴ Anselm's philosophy is clearly such, evident not only in the *Proslogion*, where, to use Jacques Paliard's happy expression, prayer and dialectic alternate,⁷⁵ but also in the *Monologion*, where the reasoner, in the course of attempting to understand God, discovers that the human being is made to love God, the ultimate good, truth, and justice, but can only do this if it "strives to be mindful of and to understand it."⁷⁶ Even further, the human being is to desire,⁷⁷ to exert itself in striving for [*studium annitendi*], and hope to attain God,⁷⁸ to reach for God through believing.⁷⁹

Second, Anselm displays consciousness of divine grace's central importance for intellectual development and progress. In Eadmer's passage cited just earlier, Anselm applies himself so that God may graciously permit him to attain some understanding of difficult scriptural matters through his use of reason. Eadmer is not wrongly characterizing Anselm

⁷² Baumstein, *loc. cit.*, p. 169. It should be pointed out that Adams has also emphasized this feature of human being: "Anselm held that human nature, like every created nature is an imperfect imitation of the Supreme Nature, as has a telos – a 'that-for-which-it-was-made' and for which all its powers were given." *loc.cit.*, p. 410.

⁷³ Baumstein, *loc.cit.* p. 171.

⁷⁴ Aimé Forest, "Une philosophie orante," *Les Etudes Philosophiques*, p. 320. Two points are important to note in this matter 1) as far as my research of the debates has indicated, *all* of the Christian participants in the Christian philosophy debates, in their practice if not necessarily in their theory, were "praying philosophers"; 2) this vital aspect of Christian philosophy *was overlooked* during the debates, so much so that Yves Simon felt compelled in 1934 to note that the relationship between the life of prayer and Christian philosophy was one of "the least explored aspects of the problem" and to sketch his own treatment of it. "Philosophie chrétienne: Notes complémentaires" *Etudes Carmélitaines*, (1934), p. 107.

⁷⁵ Jacques Paliard, "Prière et dialectique," *Dieu Vivant*, v. 6. (1946), p. 55.

⁷⁶ *Monologion*, c. 68, p. 78.

⁷⁷ *Monologion*, c. 70, p. 80.

⁷⁸ *Monologion*, c.75, p. 83.

⁷⁹ *Monologion*, c. 76, p. 83.

here, who consistently speaks of divine aid in the very course of his reasoning. Proslogion 2-4 is a prime example. Immediately after the course of reasoning he thanks God: “for, what before, you giving it to me, I believed, now, you illuminating it, I understand.”⁸⁰ His gratitude is entirely appropriate, since at the beginning he asks in prayer: “Lord, who gives understanding to faith, give to me that. . . I might understand that you are as we believe, and that you are what we believe.” In the *Cur Deus Homo*, Anselm speaks of the “proofs” or “reasonings” (*rationes*) he provides being “what God has deemed worthy to lay open to me”⁸¹ (*mihi dignabitur aperire*). He uses exactly the same expression at the beginning of the *De Concordia*, a text in which are found two passages important in their implications here but relatively little discussed in literature on Anselm.

In the first passage, Anselm is discussing the relationship between rectitude, believing, understanding, and willing, and he states that “rightly believing and understanding are given to the rational creature” for the purpose of allowing it to will rightly. In this passage, there is an integral connection between faith, understanding, and willing, and a parallel between the last two. “For a person should not be said to have a right understanding who does not rightly will according to it; nor should a person be said to have any but a dead faith, who does not rightly will to act in accordance with faith, for which reason faith is given.”⁸² The main point relevant to our discussion here is that understanding, *intellectus* and *intelligere*, can be “given” just as much as faith can be. God, and the relationship between the creature and God, can be productive of, even the condition for right understanding. And this is particularly important given that Anselmian Christian philosophy is precisely faith seeking understanding, i.e. the effort to rationally, philosophically, understand the truths of Christian faith.

The second passage illuminates this further. In the course of resolving the problem of the harmony between grace and free choice, Anselm explains how the human creature can cooperate with the grace that is determinately offered to him or her. Anselm uses metaphors of cultivation and seeds, one of which is the “word of God, or more accurately, not the word, but the meaning grasped through the word”⁸³ and another is “the entire meaning [*omnis sensus*] or understanding of rectitude which the human mind grasps [*concipit*], whether through hearing, or through reading, or through reason, or through some other way.”⁸⁴ These seeds are sown and cultivated in various ways, which include human intermediaries who themselves are rational human beings who use their will and reason rightly, in cooperation with the grace they have themselves received. In this passage, Anselm is explicitly concerned with right and wrong willing, but there is no reason why this insight could not be applied to the understanding involved in Anselmian Christian philosophy. In that light, philosophy, as a systematic activity developing understanding through the use of human reason, need not be (self)-understood as a work of human reason alone. There is an intelligibility, or as Gilson calls it a “rational fertility,” to the Christian faith which philosophy can explore and exploit,

⁸⁰ *Proslogion*, c. 4, p. 103.

⁸¹ *Cur Deus Homo*, c. 1, v.2, p.48.

⁸² *De Concordia*, 3.2, v. 2, p. 265.

⁸³ *De Concordia*, 3.6, p. 270.

⁸⁴ *De Concordia*, 3.6, p. 270.

and that intelligibility is already marked and structured by grace. Products of the efforts, discipline, and thinking of previous philosophers, and the long traditions of Christian philosophy available to form, nourish, and inspire new Christian philosophers can be understood analogously as a complex and reiterated dialectic of divine grace and human willing, which then the present-day philosopher is invited to join through his or her determinate use of reason and will in philosophizing.

All of this illustrates a few manners and matters in which Anselm's thought can be viewed as Christian philosophy in the senses that Gilson and Maritain give to that expression, particularly in terms of what Maritain called the subjective order of reinforcements or strengthening, where Christianity can play a determinate and complex role in the development and direction of a philosopher's thought. Anselm makes considerable contributions to Christian philosophy himself, in both the objective order and the subjective order, providing later Christian philosophers both with a model of the life of thought to look to and (at least in parts) emulate and with important philosophical insights, arguments, distinctions, and explanations. It would not be to go too far to conclude with M.C. Hernandez: "Saint Anselm's intellectual attitude seems to be the model for better understanding the roots that render the existence of an authentic Christian philosophy possible."⁸⁵ But, this brings us finally to an crucial issue that has to be dealt with. Gilson later revises his assessment of Anselm, and given our reliance on his earlier positive view in discussing Anselm's thought as Christian philosophy, his reinterpretation must be examined and assessed.

III. *Fides Quaerens Intellectum* No Longer Christian Philosophy?

During the 1930s, Gilson changed his views on Anselm and Christian philosophy several times. The larger context for these changes involves changes in the way Gilson regarded other Christian philosophies and philosophers, in particular Augustine, Thomas, and the Augustinian tradition, or to use Gilson's preferred term "family." In the earlier mentioned 1930 anniversary piece, while holding to the view that Thomism provides a more technically rigorous philosophy, he assigns Augustine a more absolutely central role in Christian philosophy than he ever will again in the future: "The *nisi crederitis, non intelligetis*, is and will eternally remain the charter for every Christian philosophy;"⁸⁶ "Augustinianism is something other and more than a Christian philosophy. It is its charter and lasting model.... [I]n order to be Christian insofar as a philosophy, a philosophy will be Augustinian or it will not be at all; its metaphysic of nature will be completed by a metaphysics of grace...."⁸⁷ He also states: "the program of Christian philosophy is one and the same for Saint Thomas and for Saint Augustine: [to see the] *invisibilia Dei per ea quae facta sunt*."⁸⁸

Augustine's exemplary importance to Christian philosophy lies precisely in the fact that "in his works, revelation is the source, the rule, and even the sustenance of rational

⁸⁵ Hernandez, *loc.cit.* p. 18.

⁸⁶ Gilson, L'avenir de la métaphysique augustinienne," p. 691.

⁸⁷ *loc. cit.*, p. 708.

⁸⁸ *loc. cit.*, p. 712.

thought. He believes in faith as generative of reason, and that dogma, taken as such, is generative of philosophy.”⁸⁹ This allows the development of a “system of ideas that, purely rational in their essence, would be impossible without the influence of a supernatural and transcendent light.”⁹⁰ He is also part of a progress in reason, which allows “reason to move freely within the heart of the Christian faith.”⁹¹ These formulae, quite similar to those cited earlier, indicate that Gilson regards Christian philosophy as able to be, even having to be, in intimate relation with faith, revelation, grace, the supernatural order, these affording reason a fuller scope and power.

Gilson’s view of Anselm as an Augustinian is marked by ambivalence. On the one hand, according to Gilson, Anselm has a correct, Augustinian view of the scope of reason and faith.

For the Augustinian Saint Anselm’s *fides quaerens intellectum* does not remove him from communion with the philosophers called ‘rationalists’, but in his view those philosophers remove themselves from the true philosophy, because they refuse to bring reason’s effort to bear on a vast domain of experience, and particularly of inner experience, experience of the effects produced in the soul by grace.⁹²

On the other hand, at that time, Gilson still reads Anselm’s *Proslogion* argument as an illegitimate deduction from a concept to reality, and this is why he criticizes Anselm for having “left the right path.” By the time the debate starts in 1931, Gilson, however, includes Anselm in his lists of Christian philosophers, and considers *fides quaerens intellectum* a “true definition” of Christian philosophy. He also revises his view of the *Proslogion* argument, seeing in it Anselm’s realization of what Gilson would call the “metaphysics of Exodus.” His interpretation of Anselm changes markedly in a set of lectures given in 1934, focused specifically on the *Proslogion* argument, reinterpreting that work in light of the *De Veritate*.⁹³ He examines and rejects the views of Karl Barth and Neo-Scholastics (a view that rationalists would hold as well) that Anselm’s *Proslogion* is simply theology, and Anselm Stolz’s view that it is mystical contemplation. But, Gilson now is unwilling to consider the *Proslogion*,

⁸⁹ *loc. cit.*, p. 691.

⁹⁰ *loc. cit.*, p. 691.

⁹¹ *loc. cit.*, p. 693.

⁹² *loc. cit.*, p. 708.

⁹³ These lectures, later published as an article, important in its own right for interpretation of Anselm’s argument, do not represent a radical departure for Gilson’s Anselm-interpretation. Already in 1930, he writes: “it is in the *de Veritate* that he touches on the secret door behind which is found God,” *loc. cit.*, p. 713. In 1931, “profess[ing] no excessive admiration” for “the technical mechanism of the proof in the *Proslogion*,” p. 59, he regards favorably “prov[ing] the existence of God inductively, as the sole conceivable cause of the idea of God within us; a way opened up by St. Augustine and the St. Anselm of the *De Veritate*,” *The Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy*, p. 62. By 1934, he insists: “Unless the *Proslogion* argument is not empty of meaning, it must necessarily be inserted within a doctrine of truth, one in which the existence of truths always presupposes those of their objects.” “Sens et nature de l’argument de Saint Anselme,” *Archives d’Histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Âge*, v. 9, p. 9. J. Rassam, however, rightly criticizes Gilson: “the way in which Gilson interprets. . . does not appear entirely faithful to Saint Anselm’s texts.” “Existence et vérité chez saint Anselme,” p. 332.

and the *Monologion* as well, to be “Christian philosophy.”⁹⁴ In addition, he revises his view of Anselm’s *fides quaerens intellectum* seeing now “in that formula, an exclusive ambition and limitation, which forbids us from seeing in the definition of the attitude of a Christian philosopher.”⁹⁵

What explains such a drastic shift in perspective? And, is Gilson correct? Ought we follow him in his later views and conclude that Anselm’s thought is not Christian philosophy after all? Answering these questions involves looking at three problematic assumptions of Gilson’s thinking about Christian philosophy. First, Gilson begins to regard the Augustinian tradition, and Anselm’s thought in particular, as no longer being Christian *philosophy*, since it presupposes faith. Second, he emphasizes a previously overlooked distinction between having a rational *method* and having a rational *object*. Third, he more rigidly, but less reflectively and less critically, distinguishes a more narrowly defined philosophy from non-philosophy, ignoring his implicit reliance on theology. Each of these reflects Gilson’s increasing predilection towards viewing Christian philosophy both in light of and as embodied in Thomism. But, each of these also sets him at odds with what seemed most correct and fruitful in his previous views, particularly for interpretation and understanding of Anselm’s thought.

Gilson now sees a problem in the Augustinian view of the relationship between faith and understanding, and therefore between faith and reason or philosophy. As he puts it later in his 1937 lectures, “All the members of the Augustinian family resemble each other by their common acceptance of the fundamental principle: unless you believe, you shall not understand.”⁹⁶ Anselm more than anyone brings the problem to a head, since the most “perfect definitions” of the Augustinian method “are to be looked for in the writings of Anselm rather than in those of Augustine,”⁹⁷ including *credo ut intelligam* as well as *fides quaerens intellectum*, which in 1934 he decides does *not* express “the attitude of a Christian philosopher.”⁹⁸ In 1934 he concludes that, because Anselm’s reflection is applied to faith and derives from faith, it is not philosophical.

⁹⁴ Gilson does not take an explicit position on the other treatises and dialogues, and one might be tempted to think that he would view some of them at least as theology. From his statements about the works he discusses and the methods Anselm uses in those works, however, it is apparent that Gilson would not consider them to be theological. One of the ironies of Gilson’s later, seemingly more philosophically rigorous approach, is that he is forced to conclude that Anselm’s thought be considered neither philosophy, nor theology, nor mystical contemplation, but only “a study of Sacred Scripture on faith’s intelligibility,” loc cit., p. 50, a definition Gilson admits lacking in Anselm’s own work.

The irony is that precisely the feature of Thomas’ approach Gilson so highly praises in *Reason and Revelation in the Middle Ages*, i.e. that Thomas sets everything exactly in its proper place (“in philosophy. . . there is but one conceivable proper place for any given thing. Unless you find it, the thing is lost, not in the usual sense that it is no longer to be found anywhere. Out of its proper place, the thing simply cannot exist at all,” p. 71), gets applied by Gilson in such a way that there is no longer any “proper place” for Anselm’s thought!

⁹⁵ Gilson, “Sens et nature de l’argument de Saint Anselme,” p. 49, note 2.

⁹⁶ Gilson, *Reason and Revelation in the Middle Ages* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1938), p. 21.

⁹⁷ loc. cit., p. 24.

⁹⁸ Gilson, “Sens et nature de l’argument de Saint Anselme,” p. 49, note. 2.

We could say that philosophy includes, among others, a class of thinkers who would choose the content of faith as the object of their reflection; but these are the very thinkers who would doubtless raise objections, for the essence of the type of knowledge that they pursue demands that they choose faith for their object. Let us say more: if it bears only on faith, this is because faith itself, in seeking understanding, gives birth to it. Can we consider a type of knowledge to be a part of philosophy when for it even to come into being it demands an act of faith?⁹⁹

Gilson precludes the *Proslogion* specifically from being philosophy “because this inquiry, as purely rational as it may be, forbids itself any object other than that of faith and agrees with it entirely.”¹⁰⁰ He does concede that Anselm and other Augustinians have a role in Christian philosophy, which they have “greatly enriched,” specifically because “the purely rational nature of their methods of demonstration has allowed a great number of their conclusions to be incorporated in one way or another into philosophy, and this is why they form a part of its history.”¹⁰¹

All of this not only goes against but seems to ignore key points of Gilson’s own earlier explicitly developed position. In particular, in order for Anselm’s thought to be Christian philosophy, it was not required that his thinking and reflection, his use of reason not have its origin in the attitude of faith, adherence to the contents or object of faith, the Christian revelation. To the contrary, the Christian revelation being a “revelation generative of reason” or an “indispensable auxiliary to reason” is what makes a Christian *philosophy* a *Christian* philosophy. Close attention to Gilson’s own definitions of Christian philosophy reveals no reason why Anselm’s thought should not be called, among other things, philosophy. Philosophies are “systems of rational truths” and Christian philosophies are those “whose existence cannot be explained historically without taking account of Christianity’s existence.” Furthermore, “[t]hey are philosophies, since they are rational, and they are Christian, since the rationality they have contributed would not have been conceived without Christianity.”¹⁰² Whether this rationality is born from faith and focuses on or even restricts itself to matters of faith is of no relevance here, except to support its title to Christian philosophy, not to remove it. What does matter is whether reason is made at critical points to rely directly and simply on appeals to faith, rather than argument, explanation, investigation, and evidence. Two passages, one from 1932, the other from 1933, lend additional support here:

⁹⁹ loc. cit., p. 47-8. Just two years earlier, discussing the “corner-stone of all Christian philosophy,” imbued with “an inexhaustible metaphysical fecundity,” the realization that “[t]here is but one God and this God is being,” Gilson does not have a problem with such an act of faith: Applying the principle of St. Augustine and St. Anselm, the *Credo ut intelligam*, Duns Scotus, at the very outset of his metaphysical speculation, makes an act of faith in the truth of the divine word. . . . but, forthwith, after the act of faith, *philosophy begins*” (emphasis mine). *The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy*, p. 512.

¹⁰⁰ loc. cit., p. 49.

¹⁰¹ loc. cit., p. 48, note 2.

¹⁰² *BsfP*, p. 48.

The truth is that in fact, if not in right, the formation of a Christian philosophy was inevitable, that it is still so today, and will so remain so long as there are Christians, and Christians who think. The inevitability does not flow from the essence of Christianity, which is a grace, but arises from the very nature of the recipient of the grace. . . . As soon as a Christian begins to reflect on the subject that carries grace, he becomes at once a philosopher.¹⁰³

There is an essential difference between the attitude of the theologian who sets himself up within the revealed datum and asks reason what Revelation is, and the attitude of the philosopher, who sets himself up in the rational order and asks of faith how it can enrich reason's knowledge.... The fact that reason and faith play roles in theology as in philosophy does not at all imply that they play the same roles there. Whatever appeal he may make to reason, the theologian's conclusion is always something revealed. The philosopher's is always something rationally demonstrated, whatever appeal he makes to faith.¹⁰⁴

In the view expressed by these passages, a philosopher's reflection can be centered on matters germane to faith and theology, without that reflection thereby ceasing to be philosophy. Indeed, that very reflection is faith seeking understanding, or put more explicitly, that very philosophical reflection is what is produced by a human subject who has faith employing reason as his/her mode of seeking understanding of what is first believed by faith. And, this is thereby, as Gilson rightly earlier called it "a Christian's effort to draw some of reason's knowledge from faith in revelation." This reflection can be, as it is in the cases of Anselm's dialogues and treatises, sustained and systematic,¹⁰⁵ allowing Anselm's thought to be placed under the rubric of Christian philosophies, "philosophical systems. . . purely rational in their principles and in their methods, whose existence is not explained without the existence of the Christian religion."¹⁰⁶ For Gilson in 1934 and onward, however, it is not longer sufficient that Anselm's thought be "purely rational" in these respects. "Doubtless, the

¹⁰³ Gilson, *The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy*, p. 419.

¹⁰⁴ *La philosophie chrétienne: Juvisy 11 Septembre 1933* (Juvisy: Cerf. 1933), p. 70-1. In this passage, Gilson is defending his position on Christian philosophy in response to Neo-Scholastics' criticisms of the very notion of Christian philosophy.

¹⁰⁵ The question of whether a "system" can be ascribed to Anselm is a complex one, which cannot be examined in detail here. My view on this is entirely indebted to the following two scholars. Dom J.R. Pouchet maintains: "The work of St. Anselm is not only a collection of juxtaposed monographs, which for the most part touch on major theological subjects; rather, to a certain degree, it reveals a much more spontaneous than systematic character of coordination, in light of which it is allowable to speak of partial syntheses, or synthetic aspects, or of the synthetic value of his teaching." "Existe-t-une 'Synthèse' Anselmienne?" *Analecta Anselmiana*, v. 1 (1969).

Dom Baumstein takes a similar approach: "Anselm never articulated his concept in a unified, architectonic schema. Thus it is necessary to collate the elements of Anselm's teaching, drawing upon each themes's varied appearances throughout the course of the Anselmian corpus. That is not, however, an extraordinary effort, since the diverse fruits of Anselm's original and fecund mind do indeed render a consistent and compendious philosophy. Even when not presented systematically, his thought is not random; it is integrated compellingly within his perception of reality." "St. Anselm and the Prospect of Perfection," *Faith and Reason*, v. 29, p. 166.

¹⁰⁶ *BsfP*, p. 39.

method Saint Anselm follows is purely rational. . . .but the *object* to which it applies, is posited, by Anselm himself, as transcendent to reason.”¹⁰⁷

Precisely what Gilson means by this is that Anselm reasons about what should be out of bounds for and beyond reason. “A Christian philosopher knows,” he informs us, “that he cannot rationally ‘demonstrate’ anything touching on the Trinity or the Incarnation,” and justifies his assertion simply by quoting Saint Thomas Aquinas. He continues: “For Saint Anselm, to the contrary, once the quest for understanding starts from faith, it starts from all of the faith; whence his ‘proofs’ and his ‘necessary reasons’ not only touching on the existence of God, but just as much [*aussi bien*] touching on the Trinity and the Incarnation.”¹⁰⁸ Several points must be made in response. Gilson’s reading Anselm, whom he charges with “recklessness in giving rational demonstrations of all revealed truths. . . . proving by conclusive dialectical arguments, not only the Trinity of the Divine Persons. . . . but even the very Incarnation of Christ, including all its essential modalities,”¹⁰⁹ must be admitted to be rather reckless. Gilson ignores Anselm’s explicit statements at key points indicating that whatever force his rational demonstrations seem to have, they neither exhaust nor penetrate to the center of the mysteries of the faith, in which deeper reasons lie concealed, in which the ineffable economy of the Trinity takes place, and yet into which the rational human mind can penetrate a little, with some sufficiency, some adequacy, some intellectual progress.¹¹⁰

Gilson narrows the scope of what he is willing to call Christian philosophy, doing so both by relying more and more on distinctions and doctrines drawn from Thomism and by correlatively elevating Thomas to the exemplar of Christian philosophy. His decision that Anselm’s thought is purely rational in method, but aims at an object transcendent to reason, and is thereby no longer philosophical is a typical example. To be sure, Anselm does not make that distinction. As one of Gilson’s contemporaries puts it:

Anselm clearly distinguishes between faith and reason *as means of knowledge*; this distinction is at the very basis of his programme . But there is for him but one *object of knowledge*: the present order of things, in which nature and supernature are intimately one, or rather, in which the *natural* actually belongs to the *supernatural*. Within this one field of knowledge, he did not sufficiently

¹⁰⁷ “Sens et nature de l’argument de Saint Anselme,” p. 48. Emphasis Gilson’s.

¹⁰⁸ *loc cit.*, p. 48 note 2.

¹⁰⁹ Gilson, *Reason and Revelation in the Middle Ages*, p. 26.

¹¹⁰ To be fair, in his two decades later *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (New York: Random House, 1954), Gilson does modify his position “however strongly he might trust the power of reason, Saint Anselm never imagined that it would succeed in understanding mystery.... To understand a mystery would be much more than to understand its necessity” (p. 130). Even here, however, Gilson’s treatment has two flaws. 1) He does not take account of Anselm’s explicit cautioning in *Monologion* (which could go for the other works): “I wish matters to be understood in this way, that even though something that seems necessary be concluded from reasonings which appear [cogent] to me, let it not be said on that account to be absolutely necessary, but only that it can be regarded in that way” (p. 13); 2) Anselm does think we can understand (*intelligere*) mysteries through the use of our reason, but only, as he says (or actually entreats) “to a certain degree” (*aliquatenus*), *Proslogion*. c. 1, p. 100.

distinguish the *proper object of reason* from the *proper object of faith*, and thought it possible to conclude from the one to the other.¹¹¹

The charge that Anselm's thought, as rational as it may be, is not philosophy because it turns to the same object, or more precisely, the same order(s) of objects as do the Christian faith and theology, and because it does not make distinctions that Thomas and his followers would later make, becomes somewhat strange the more one reflects on it. There are three other responses to make. First, selecting the *objects* of Christian faith and theology as the *objects* of one's philosophical investigation, reasoning, and even demonstration is, *according to Gilson's own earlier lights*, a hallmark and defining trait of Christian *philosophy*. Second, as Gilson himself points out, there was considerable diversity in the views of Christian thinkers on precisely what matters of the faith could be approached and apprehended by reason. Some justification needs to be given precisely why *these* matters of the faith can be so dealt with and *those* matters cannot, and that leads into the third response. Third, there is the counter-charge Anselm interpreters might make that forcing Anselm's thought into the structures of a set of later Scholastic distinctions and definitions involves anachronistically distorting the Scholastic Doctor's own thought,¹¹² since, after all, there is progress in the development of philosophy and of Christian philosophy, and quite arguably the means by which Thomas distinguished philosophy from *sacra doctrina*, when properly understood, was a pace in that progress rather than a blind alley.

At play here is a much larger, more complex, and deeper reflexive problem, one that lies at the very heart of the problem of Christian philosophy, because it lies at the heart of philosophy itself. I call this *the problem of deeper entanglement of philosophy with its other in the course of distinction*. It arises whenever we, as philosophers, and within philosophy, attempt rigorously and completely to distinguish philosophy from something else that would be strictly non-philosophical, definitively deciding through philosophy what parts of that other philosophy can legitimately address and what parts it cannot. What inevitably occurs is that philosophy ends up making implicit and unnoticed use of that from which it was attempting rigorously to distinguish itself. In philosophical reflection upon itself and its differences from some other discipline, type, or body of inquiry and knowledge, this reflexive activity reveals philosophy entangled with precisely that which from which it attempted to distinguish and separate itself.

In the very piece in which he decides Anselm's thought is no longer Christian philosophy, Gilson claims to be working from a purely philosophical standpoint, arguing: "[i]t is therefore possible, insofar as one is a philosopher to give definitions of philosophy, of

¹¹¹ J. Bayart, S.J., "St. Anselm's Concept of Mystery," *Recherches de Théologie Ancienne et Médiévale*, v. 9 (1937), p. 165.

¹¹² R.A. Herrera, "St. Anselm's *Proslogion*: A Hermeneutical Task," *Analecta Anselmiana*, v. 3 (1972) provides an example of this. In reference to the *Proslogion* argument, he calls Descartes and St. Thomas "the two principal 'obstacles' which, in our opinion, are blocking the way to an adequate comprehension. . . ." (p. 142). His reasoning is that: "St. Anselm makes no clear distinction between prayer, theology, logic, and mysticism, but, by including all, appears to transcend each one individually. The Thomistic framework is incapable of assimilating this amorphous organism." I agree with the first part, but have reservations about the second, which seems to depend on the interpretation of St. Thomas' thought. It would, however, appear to be the case in Gilson's interpretation of both St. Thomas and Anselm.

theology, of mysticism, expressing the essence of each of these disciplines and valuable for every philosophy, every theology, every mysticism whatsoever. This is not easy, but philosophy has the right and the duty to try to do so.”¹¹³ Consider now Gilson’s insistence that Anselm’s thought is no longer Christian philosophy because Anselm reasons and draws rationally derived conclusions about, among other matters, the Trinity. Gilson relies on distinctions between philosophy and its “others” (Christian faith, theology, mysticism), distinctions that are putatively carried out by and within the activity of philosophy, lending them a certain assurance and solidity in the eyes of philosophers. But, are the distinctions Gilson makes and relies on in his reevaluation of Anselm, by his own lights, philosophical? An affirmative answer can only be given by abandoning Gilson’s new and more restrictive view and returning to his earlier, broader, and more fundamentally correct view on Christian philosophy. For how can Gilson *know in a philosophical manner* that Christian philosophy can reason about certain matters of the Christian faith but not others, about *praeambula fidei* but not *artacula fidei*?

Does Gilson, or Saint Thomas for that matter, derive this rather sophisticated insight from pure, unaided human reason alone? Certainly not. Perhaps, then, it derives from philosophical reflection which takes its direction or its starting impulse from a doctrine of the Christian faith? Is the distinction between philosophy and theology, then, a revealed doctrine of the Christian faith, one that, having been informed of by their faith philosophers then attempted to rationally demonstrate on purely philosophical grounds? Again, no. Thomas’ distinctions between philosophy and theology, and between those truths about God attainable by human reason and those beyond the competence of human reason, are made in works which, though they contain portions describable as “philosophy,” are theological. The more rigid and exclusive one makes the border between philosophy and theology, the more that distinction itself has to fall on the side of theology, and the more inaccessible that very distinction becomes to philosophy.¹¹⁴ And the more one does this, the more one’s position on Christian philosophy begins to slide back towards the positions of the very Neo-Scholastics, like Van Steenberghen, Noël, and Mandonnet, who rejected the term and the notion of Christian philosophy, the very thinkers against whom Gilson and Maritain defended Christian philosophy. Put in very blunt terms, the attempt to distinguish “pure philosophy” or “philosophy in the rigorous sense” from its theologically-tainted other transgresses the very requirements and borders it attempts to impose from within philosophy.

This is not to say that no distinctions can or ought to be made between philosophy, even Christian philosophy, and theology, or between reason or understanding, and faith. But, it has to be acknowledged *both* that these distinctions must not be turned into strict separations and that the very distinctions themselves are products of intellectual activity

¹¹³ “Sens et nature de l’argument de Saint Anselme,” p 44.

¹¹⁴ The inaccessibility, and even by rights unintelligibility, which *would* result from this is overlooked, of course, because things do not in fact turn out that way, precisely because Christian philosophy, Christian theology, and Christian faith are not as neatly distinguishable and separable in the real and the concrete order as they are in theory. If they *were*, the result *would* be that these distinctions would enter philosophy from across the border, as it were, and would simply have to be accepted by philosophy. Practically everyone involved in the 1930s Christian philosophy debates would regard philosophy simply accepting something from theology, without being able to investigate and assess it on its own, philosophically, as incompatible with philosophy’s essential autonomy.

correctly characterized as “faith seeking understanding,” i.e., of Christian philosophy, understood here most adequately by reference to Gilson’s earlier 1931-33 views supplemented by Maritain’s contributions. What Gilson seems to have lost sight of was one of the strongest points of his and Maritain’s positions, that Christian philosophy exists precisely because philosophy is at best an abstract concept or essence, that philosophy actually exists only in determinate states in and through determinate concrete human subjects, and that this is no accident but rather the essential condition for philosophy’s existence. Along with this is his realization that any talk of the “purely rational” likewise involves an idealizing or abstraction which overlooks the fact that reason and faith do concretely cohabitate in individual philosophizing subjects. As Rassam later reminds us in his critique of Gilson’s Anselm-interpretation,

Saint Anselm is quite simply a Christian who does philosophy. . . . [D]oes a reflection sustained by faith for that reason cease being rational? To be sure, reason is a universal instrument, but the exercise of reason is always a personal act. And philosophy is never an abstract reason’s impersonal construction, but the act of a person who uses reason as an instrument to illuminate their experience.¹¹⁵

To use and end on Gilson’s own words, in a Christian philosophy, we “will never be able to say that here the philosophical ends and the Christian begins; it will be integrally Christian and integrally philosophical.”¹¹⁶ That is eminently the case in Saint Anselm’s Christian philosophy.

¹¹⁵ “Existence et vérité,” p. 337.

¹¹⁶ *BsfP*, p. 46.