

St. Anselm of Canterbury and Romano Guardini

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Well before World War I, Romano Guardini had felt the deleterious impact of the Kantian critique of religion. As a reaction to Kant and the then prevailing Neo-Scholasticism, Guardini turned to the Augustinian tradition. While theologians at the time were attempting to demonstrate the scientific nature and relevance of theology, Guardini here sought to demonstrate the indispensable relevance of revelation and faith for knowledge. His position was cause for much irritation at the university and he was criticized for “unscientific dogmatism.” But for Guardini true knowledge comes about only if the object of investigation is integrated into one’s interiority. The goal of knowledge is not a mere collection or assemblage of information, “but rather the formation of one’s own being... (for) only the person who is holy recognizes the holy God.”

Guardini’s interest in the person and thought of St. Anselm of Canterbury is formative for his thought on these issues for he detects similarities between the eleventh century and his own age, the early part of the 20th century. In both ages he sees the promise for a rebirth amid chaos. Guardini wrote two seminal pieces dealing with the theology of St. Anselm. His article, “Das argumentum ex pietate beim hl. Bonaventura und Anselms Dezenzbeweis”(St. Bonaventure’s Argument from Piety and Anselm’s Proof), was published in 1922 and, one year later in 1923, he published in a collection of essays an article entitled “Anselm von Canterbury und das Wesen der Theologie” (Anselm of Canterbury and the Nature of Theology). In these one discovers the key to unlock Guardini’s understanding of the nature and purpose of theology.

1. The historical context of Guardini’s encounter with Anselm

In the novel *The Capuchin Crypt*, set at the end of World War I, the Jewish author Josef Roth describes, the irretrievable loss of an entire world—a world of sureties, of a firmly established and seemingly eternal order that found its most obvious expression in “an alliance between throne and altar.”¹ Central Europe is here embarking on a democratic experiment that envisions “ a pluralistic, democratic and highly industrialized modern state.”² But this is depicted by Roth as being created amid “a religious and ideological vacuum.”³ Other contemporary observers were of the opinion that the actual causes for the collapse of the *anciens regimes* were to be sought elsewhere than in merely another war. The underlying causes were to be discovered in the underlying intellectual currents and structures characteristic of modernity.⁴ In this connection, some historians spoke in hindsight of a “Catholic spring.” Many theologians

¹ Josef Roth, *Die Kapuzinergruft* (Stuttgart: Deutscher Taschenbuchverlag, 1966), 11th ed., pp 44f.

² Thomas Ruster, *Die verlorene Nützlichkeit der Religion, Katholizität und Moderne in der Weimarer Republik* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1997), 2nd ed., p. 28.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Joachim Reber, *Romano Guardini begegnen* (Augsburg: St. Ulrich, 2001), p. 75.

struggled for a new beginning—among them, Pius Parsch, Ildefons Herwegen, Karl Adam, and Romano Guardini (1885-1968).

Already well before World War I, Romano Guardini during his studies of economics in 1905 had felt the deleterious impact of the Kantian critique of religion.⁵ He remarks: “at that time the whole of (my) faith melted away; more precisely, I noticed that I had none left.”⁶ As a reaction to Kant and the then prevailing Neo-Scholasticism, Guardini turned to the Augustinian tradition. He wrote both his doctoral dissertation (1915) and his habilitation work (1921) on aspects of Bonaventure’s theology. But the subject of his inaugural lecture (Probevorlesung), which he delivered in January of 1922 at the University of Bonn, was “Anselm of Canterbury and the Nature of Theology.”⁷

While theologians at the time were attempting to demonstrate the scientific nature and relevance of theology, Guardini here sought to demonstrate the indispensable relevance of revelation and faith for knowledge. The lecture was cause for much irritation at the university and he was criticized for “unscientific dogmatism.”⁸

But for Guardini true knowledge comes about only if the object of investigation is integrated into one’s interiority.⁹ The goal of knowledge is not a mere collection or assemblage of information, “but rather the formation of one’s own being...only the person who is holy recognizes the holy God.”¹⁰

One has to read well into the second article I am going to discuss here in order to discover the reasons for Guardini’s interest in the person and thoughts of St. Anselm of Canterbury.¹¹ He detects similarities between the eleventh century and his own age, the early part of the 20th century. In both he sees amid chaos the promise for a rebirth. Relationships, among people and between people and God, were being assessed anew. In contrast to a thinking that defined itself exclusively in abstract terms, Guardini believes that, in the time after World War I, there was a turn to the living and concrete, a rediscovery of a romantically envisioned

⁵ For a first glance at the person and work of Guardini, see <http://www.obing.com/zenz/hzguard.htm>. See also: Albino Babolin, *Romano Guardini, Filosofo dell’Alterità, Realtà e Persona* (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1968). Albino Babolin, *Romano Guardini Filosofo dell’ Alterità, Situazione Umana ed Esperienza Religiosa* (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1969). Hanna-Barbara Gerl, *Romano Guardini, 1885-1968, Leben und Werke* (Mainz: Matthias Grünewald, 1985). Arno Schilson(ed.), *Konservativ mit Blick nach vorn, Versuche zu Romano Guardini* (Würzburg: Echter, 1994). Walter Seidel(ed.), *Christliche Weltanschauung mit Romano Guardini* (Würzburg: Echter, 1985). Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Romano Guardini, Reform aus dem Ursprung* (Einsiedeln: Johannes, 1995).

⁶ Romano Guardini, *Berichte über mein Leben. Autobiographische Aufzeichnungen* (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1996), pp. 68f: “(Damals) ist mir der ganze Glaube zerronnen, richtiger gesagt, ich habe gemerkt, dass ich keinen mehr hatte.”

⁷ The article, “Anselm von Canterbury und das Wesen der Theologie,” was published in the collection of essays: Romano Guardini, *Auf dem Wege, Versuche* (Mainz: Matthias Grünewald, 1923), pp. 33-65.

⁸ Romano Guardini, *Berichte über mein Leben*, pp. 33f.

⁹ Romano Guardini, *Heilige Schrift* (Düsseldorf: Patmos), 1996, p. 30f.

¹⁰ Romano Guardini, “Eine Denkergestalt des hohen Mittelalters: Bonaventura,” in *Unterscheidung des Christlichen*, Bd. 3 (G 27) (Mainz: Matthias Grünewald, 1994), p. 19.

¹¹ “Anselm von Canterbury und das Wesen der Theologie,” pp. 44-49.

organic whole, a fresh appreciation of community. Thinkers seemed to free themselves from any identification of “concept” and “spirit” [*Begriff* and *Geist* in German]. He observes “a powerful, awakening appreciation for reality.”¹² He finds a restless agony in all personal activities, which prevented the individual from finding his position in the whole scheme of life. People yearned to discover anew the meaning of terms such as “God,” “soul,” and “world.” Indeed, he finds a general yearning to orient oneself again towards being and to engage in metaphysical speculation.¹³ Cognition was no longer perceived as “the work of a mechanical apparatus.” Rather, it was seen as the activity of a living subject in relation to a self-defined object. Such indications he sees as having inaugurated a “new age.”

Guardini finds here something like a “phenomenological position.” Knowledge can be gained only if one assumes the proper disposition—namely one appropriate to and commensurate with the sought object. Both the proper disposition and investigation of the epistemological prerequisites are needed to do justice to the respective areas of inquiry. Taking this one step further, Guardini asks whether this disposition does not also include the proper ethical conduct. This leads him to hypothesize the need for “an asceticism of education.” In this regard, he is influenced in a crucial way by Anselm and by Bonaventure’s *Collationes in Hexaemeron*. He also wonders whether any one individual is capable of addressing all the questions related to cognition, or whether, in some cases, “a collective subject” is called for.¹⁴ In contrast to rationalistic speculation, he asks whether one needs to guide one’s thought with reference to something like tradition and whether organized work of a group of thinkers would be better suited to arrive at a coherent body of knowledge than would any isolated individual. A comprehensive understanding of a subject is possible, perhaps, only if a community of persons with different backgrounds engage in a joint search. This community he finds in a school of an order, such as the Benedictine monastery of Bec, or in the whole of the Church, the community of believers. He further asks whether traditions may play an epistemological role. He critically qualifies this question and distinguishes true tradition and a true community of thinkers from mere mass thinking—a phenomenon then increasingly taking center stage in society and politics. It is by recourse to Anselm of Canterbury and the Benedictine charisma that Guardini attempts to overcome individualistic thinking and its attendant consequences. He tries to discover how the object of an intellectual inquiry can grant its presence to cognition.

Guardini wrote two pieces dealing with the theology of St. Anselm. His article, “Das argumentum ex pietate beim hl. Bonaventura und Anselms Dezenzbeweis” (St. Bonaventure’s Argument from Piety and Anselm’s Proof from Fittingness) was published in 1922. One year later, in 1923, a collection of essays was printed under the title, *Auf dem Wege -- Versuch (On the Path – Attempts)*. In that collection one discovers a central essay unlocking Guardini’s understanding of the nature and purpose of theology. It had already been written in 1922 and is

¹² Ibid., p. 45. He speaks of “Sinn für die Wirklichkeit.”

¹³ Ibid., p. 45, footnotes 1 and 3. It seems that Guardini is, in this connection, indebted to two contemporary authors—Paul Landsberg, *Die Welt des Mittelalters und wir* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1991) and Nikolai Hartmann, *Die Metaphysik der Erkenntnis* (Berlin und Leipzig: Vereinigung wissenschaftl. Verleger, 1921).

¹⁴ “Anselm von Canterbury und das Wesen der Theologie,” p. 48.

entitled “Anselm von Canterbury und das Wesen der Theologie” (Anselm of Canterbury and the Nature of Theology).

2. The article, “Bonaventure’s Argument from Piety and Anselm’s Proof from Fittingness”

Guardini examines in this article two competing arguments for the Incarnation: first that God became incarnate in his only-begotten Son to satisfy Himself and second that he did so out of solidarity with humankind. For this purpose, Guardini, then still a young Privatdozent, compares the big quæstio 2 of d. 1 a. 2 in Book Three of Bonaventure’s *Commentary on the Sentences* with Anselm’s *Cur Deus Homo*.¹⁵ What was the decisive reason for God becoming incarnate? Was it in order to redeem fallen humanity or to perfect creation? Augustine had argued that the Son had come exclusively to redeem us.¹⁶ On the other hand, Alexander of Hales, in his *Summa Theologica*, speaks of a “convenientia ad incarnationem” even without the Fall.¹⁷

Guardini shares Bonaventure’s fundamental judgment. Bonaventure acknowledges a “duplex opinio magistrorum.” This is the basis for Guardini’s inquiry into which argument is better. Both positions agree that the Incarnation, i.e., the hypostatic union of human nature with the second person of the blessed Trinity, perfected creation. It was in this connection that Anselm speaks of “fittingness”: he believes that this is the all-determining motivation for our redemption. Bonaventure and Guardini acknowledge both arguments—Alexander’s and Anselm’s—as legitimate and valid. However, Bonaventure ponders which of the two might honor God more and motivate the human soul to greater piety, bringing forth greater awareness. The terms Bonaventure uses are “magis inflammat,” “magis honorificat,” “magis commendat.”¹⁸ Using different words, Bonaventure and Guardini test both arguments in the “proving grounds” of practical piety, maintaining that the result should, in turn, yield greater theoretical accuracy.

By no means is this for Guardini a merely rhetorical question. Also, more is at stake than merely greater pedagogical efficiency. For Guardini the question regards the very nature of theology. Is the task of theology simply “to make people good,” i.e., to edify them? Guardini rejects outright the notion that theology is a “practical science.”¹⁹ Is theology, then, the “theoretical science of practical concerns”?²⁰ This option Guardini also rejects outright. Rather, he asserts, “theology is a theoretical science concerning [both] being and action.”²¹ Guardini concludes that theology is not at all a science seeking practical applications for theoretical results. Rather, it belongs to the very nature of theology to relate being and action to one

¹⁵ Romano Guardini, “Das argumentum ex pietate beim hl. Bonaventura und Anselms Dezenzbeweis,” *Theologie und Glaube*, vol. 14 (1922), pp. 156-165.

¹⁶ Cf. Sermo 174 c. 2n. 2.

¹⁷ Cf. *Summa Theologica*, p. 3 q. 2 m. 13.

¹⁸ Guardini, “Das argumentum ex pietate beim hl. Bonaventura und Anselms Dezenzbeweis,” p. 159.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 159: “Theoretische Wissenschaft vom Praktischen,”

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 160: “Theologie ist eine theoretische Wissenschaft vom Sein und vom Handeln.”

another. Only in this sense does he understand Bonaventure's description of theology as a "scientia practica." Guardini acknowledges that theology possesses, as a theoretical science, practical, religious, and ethical ramifications—"ut boni fiamus." This is why he, like Bonaventure, thinks of "sapientia," as standing above theological discourse. While St. Thomas Aquinas defines "sapientia" as the ability to reflect on practical matters in light of revelation, to Bonaventure's mind wisdom means both knowledge and will.²² Guardini sees the latter approach justified in light of the notion of "emotive insight."²³

The purpose of theological statements is also to communicate theological truth in such a way that they contribute "perfectly to ethical purification and a proper elevation of feelings."²⁴ Guardini insists that this understanding of theology is by no means an expression of pragmatism. This would be the case only if there would be, in matters of religion, no theoretical truth at all that could be rationally verified. Guardini merely intertwines the theoretical and practical aspects of theology in such an intimate way that one cannot contradict the other. While Bonaventure defines philosophy as "veritatis ut scrutabilis notitia certa," --as certain knowledge of the examined truth--he defines theology as "veritatis credibilis notitia pia" --as pious knowledge of the truth of faith.²⁵ The aim of theology is sapiential insight. This entails more than merely the logical stringency of an argument and the clarity of its presentation. The aim is far more than mere cognitional insight. The recognized truth wants to be loved by the human will, tested by the human intellect and savored by the human soul. Theology thus intends to address the full and whole human being. As a consequence, theology, according to Guardini, must be understood as a synthesis of theory and religious praxis.²⁶ Therefore, more must occur than exclusively rational verification on the part of the thinking subject. The will must become good, the heart pure and the whole human person must be transformed into the proper condition. In this vein, he acknowledges a close theory-praxis correlation and reciprocal interdependence, and sees this expressed in a paradigmatic way in Anselm's writings.

Against this background, one better appreciates the medieval alternatives—between an argument acknowledged because it provides greater piety and one that argues from what is more fitting for God. If one recognizes that one of two possible actions or motivations is better, then it must follow that the better one is also the real one. The criterion for deciding theological issues is the potential for greater religious edification.

This permits Guardini to turn to Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo*.²⁷ He first presents the familiar central lines of the argument. It is not fitting for God to leave something in disorder in

²² *S. Th.* 1 q. 6.

²³ "Das argumentum ex pietate beim Bonaventura und Anselms Dezenzbeweis," p. 161

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 161: "Ihr Ziel ist, Wahrheitserkenntnis, zugleich aber auch sittliche Läuterung und rechte Gemütshebung in vollkommener Weise herbeizuführen."

²⁵ Bonaventure, "Collations on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit," 6 and 13.

²⁶ "Das argumentum ex pietate beim hl Bonaventura und Anselms Dezenzbeweis," p. 162: "Sie besteht also darin, dass der Mensch nicht nur mit dem Verstande erkennt, sondern auch mit dem Willen liebt, mit dem Gemüt erprobt und verkostet."

²⁷ Guardini uses PL 158, which is based on the Maurinian edition of 1675.

his kingdom. Sin is a disorder which prevents human beings from doing what is due to God, namely, from honoring God. God must bring order into the human condition. This can be achieved either by punishing humanity or by voluntarily performing satisfaction. While He could have brought order about without satisfaction or punishment, this would not have fully restored the divinely instituted order. Such action would not be fitting for God and therefore lies outside the range of divine freedom. Thus, punishment and satisfaction are the only viable alternatives. This leads finally to Anselm's theory of satisfaction.

Bonaventure discusses this theory.²⁸ He investigates the underlying understanding of God. He asks where a greater degree of freedom is realized for an infinite being. In both cases, fittingness or piety result in a multitude of possibilities or probabilities. Speculation alone cannot arrive at a definitive answer. In the first case, one ponders what is more fitting for God. In the second case, one reflects more on what promotes greater piety on the part of the believers. This requires employing criteria. For Anselm it is sin that can be absolved only by way of punishment or satisfaction. On the other hand, for Bonaventure it is love that is being awakened in the believer if God acts out of mercy and not merely to perfect creation. Guardini asks: would God have agreed to the hypostatic union even if He had not been bound to redeem? In that case, Bonaventure's argument in favor of greater piety is not convincing for Guardini. In this connection, Guardini refers to Francis de Sales, who had also found Bonaventure's argument wanting, although he himself had been quite practically oriented.

Guardini concludes that, in either case, subjective elements come into play. Therefore one cannot favor one argument over the other. In the final analysis, Guardini considers neither to be an actual scientific proof.²⁹

Their true significance, he finds, lies in the psychological and practical fields. Within theology, however, he shares Boso's position: "All this is beautiful, and one must accept it as a painting. If there is nothing firm on which it rests, then it does not appear satisfying for the believer.... First, the intellectual firmness of faith must be presented...; subsequently, fittingnesses may be developed very much like in paintings, through which the "corpus veritatis" may step forth more luminously."³⁰

In this article, Guardini extensively discusses Bonaventure's position, but devotes comparatively little time to that of Anselm. Nonetheless, he does not decide for either one when it comes to choosing which of the approaches is better: whether it is better to argue that God

²⁸ Cf. II Sent. D. 20. Cf. also Guardini, "Das argumentum ex pietate beim hl. Bonaventura und Anselms Dezenzbeweis," p. 164.

²⁹ "Das argumentum ex pietate beim hl. Bonaventura und Anselms Dezenzbeweis," p. 165: "Bedenkt man ferner, wie kompliziert und problematisch die oben dargelegten besonderen Voraussetzungen der beiden Argumente sind, sollen sie überhaupt logisch anerkannt werden, so kommt man zum Ergebnis, dass sie als eigentlich wissenschaftliche Beweise nicht in Frage kommen."

³⁰ Guardini translates directly from the Latin of the then available Migne text: CDH 1,4,PL 158,365. The author translated the German text. Cf. Guardini, "Das argumentum ex pietate beim hl. Bonaventura und Anselms Dezenzbeweis," p. 165.

became man in order to offer satisfaction for sin or that God would have become man even without original sin. However, divesting Bonaventure's argument of its subjective and affective factors, only Anselm's fittingness argument is left, in Guardini's opinion. Here the fittingness of a situation to God's perfection, to His divine love, is the decisive criterion. This, however, Guardini critiques on two grounds: 1) that one gets too close to divine freedom and 2) that one is using a yardstick only God may use.³¹

3. Guardini's inaugural lecture, "Anselm and the Nature of Theology"

The introduction to the article "Anselm of Canterbury and the Nature of Theology" helps one to understand Guardini's interest in Anselm. He sees parallels between the eleventh century and his own early twentieth century. He claims that in both ages the Church is attempting to extricate herself from the surrounding society and culture. She wants to gain independence vis-à-vis worldly powers and secular interests alien to her nature. He states: "all ecclesial power originates in God."³² Only by gaining relative political independence and thereby appreciating better the difference between her nature and that of the body politic is the Church able to come to a pure representation of her nature and to impact the world in a Christifying manner.

In a footnote on the very first page, Guardini warns the reader not to subsume rashly "this first master of Scholasticism" under "Anselmism," Platonism," or "like rubrics," but rather to allow the youthfulness of Anselm's theology to speak directly to us.³³

He investigates the theological milieu Anselm lived in and encountered. He sees therein a conflict between a purely authoritarian method of handing down creedal statements and a method that was individualistic and rationalistic.³⁴ Medieval theology overcame this opposition and developed something new and unique. In Anselm, Guardini sees the foundation for this synthesis laid down. Guardini believes that for Anselm this foundation was not achieved in a merely extrinsic and eclectic manner, but rather through an organic combination and reciprocal penetration of both approaches. This was not something that came about accidentally, merely because of Anselm's acute mind. Rather--and this is significant for Guardini--Anselm's whole personality was rich and creative, precisely because it was embedded in the whole of the Catholic faith. He lived with a strong "original awareness" of the supernatural realities within a believing community.³⁵ This was reflected in his numerous meditations, prayers, and letters.³⁶

³¹ Cf. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Romano Guardini, Reform aus dem Ursprung*, p. 66, fn. 78. Interestingly, Guardini ponders the arguments exclusively as mutually excluding alternatives—not as two different perspectives on the one phenomenon.

³² "Anselm von Canterbury und das Wesen der Theologie," p. 33.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 35. This seems to parallel the conflict between Neo-Scholasticism and Modernism in Guardini's own days.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 35: "(U)rprungliches Bewusstsein."

³⁶ This correlation of prayer and insight is detected again by Raymond Klibansky, *The Continuity of the Platonic Tradition* (London: SCM, 1939).

Anselm was acutely aware of the power of the theoretical question confounding his age. As a believer, he was able to address the vital issues of his day head-on. The formula Anselm used to bring about this synthesis is the Augustinian “Credo ut intelligam.” It is the resonating leitmotiv throughout the *corpus Anselmi*. This Guardini sees confirmed in the *Proslogion*’s prooemium, where Anselm uses the formula, “fides quaerens intellectum,” which Guardini tellingly translates as “Faith striving to become reasonable knowledge.”³⁷ As Guardini does not tire of stressing, reason never enjoys heuristic priority vis-à-vis faith. He appreciates Anselm’s turning against both rationalism and dialectics in *De fide Trinitatis*.³⁸ He cites Anselm to argue that only someone firmly rooted in faith is able to apprehend its rationally interrelated connections and structures. In the *Cur Deus Homo*, he finds a line to buttress this claim.³⁹ Only subsequent to believing the depths of Christian faith are we then able to employ reason when fathoming it.⁴⁰ Ultimately faith does not rest exclusively—so Guardini interprets Anselm—on the inner correctness of revealed truth, but rather on one’s trust in the veracity of the revealing God.⁴¹ At this point one sees how Guardini sharpens and intensifies the Anselmian “fides quaerens intellectum” to a personal act of faith. Returning to the *De fide Trinitatis*, he states categorically, along with Anselm: “Whoever does not believe...does not experience [“non experietur”]; and who does not experience [i.e., have faith] cannot gain knowledge.”⁴² Without faith one has no appreciation for this *ordo*. Guardini considers Anselm’s proof of God’s existence as philosophical, not theological.

Theology, as Guardini interprets Anselm, is never something subjective or individualistic; it is communal, always oriented towards and rooted in tradition, namely that of a “community of thinkers,” the Church.⁴³ This is illustrated when Anselm himself declares the content of his own *Monologion* correct only insofar as it is in agreement with the “Catholici patres.”⁴⁴

Faith and theology are not exclusively reason’s assent, but a living dedication of the whole person to the triune God. Anselm is unable to regard someone as believing if he does not love and hope. By loving and hoping, the believer also strives for the believed. Guardini finds this confirmed in Anselmian expressions such as “credere in illam” and “credere ad illam.” Faith is nothing short of striving towards God.⁴⁵ In Guardini’s opinion, such faith is not merely something for the “Gemut,” for the human soul or feeling, as Schleiermacher preached from the

³⁷ Ibid., p. 36: “Glaube, der vernunftige Erkenntnis zu werden strebt.”

³⁸ *De fide Trinitatis* 2;265ff. Guardini had not been aware that the text was not authentically Anselmian.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 37: “Im Glauben befestigt muss sein, wer sich damit befassen will, dessen vernünftigen Zusammenhang und Aufbau (“eius rationem”) zu begreifen.”

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 37. He translates Anselm: “Die rechte Ordnung verlangt, dass wir daran gehen, sie mit dem Verstande zu erforschen....” Cf. *Cur Deus Homo* I 2:362.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 37.

⁴² Ibid., p. 37. *De fide Trinitatis*, 2;264. Translated from the German rendition of the original Latin.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 49.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 39: “(In der Einführung zum Monologium, ... dessen Inhalt sei nur richtig, soweit er mit den Schriften der ‘Catholici patres’ übereinstimme.”

⁴⁵ “Anselm von Canterbury und das Wesen der Theologie,” p. 39.

pulpit to fashionable early 19th century Berlin, in the wake of the Kantian revolution. Full and living faith is for Guardini “an affirmation of divine truth, culminating in the disposition of the whole human being, his yearning and comprehension, in an incorporation of all of life into a relationship of truth with God and at the same time of a principle of proper life and conduct [apprehended] from God.”⁴⁶

Without proper conduct and life, faith is endangered, and, as a result, theological insight is impaired. The human mind ascends to higher spheres by keeping God’s commandments. Such is his reading of the *De fide Trinitatis*.

This is confirmed when turning to *De Veritate*. Truth is divided here into four components—knowledge, volition, virtue, and being—the sum total of which Guardini considers to make up Anselm’s “rectitude.” He sees Anselm teaching “an asceticism of religious insight.”

Thus Guardini sees Anselm as taking a position against any form of overconfident rationalism. At the same time, Anselm also distances himself from traditionalism---another word for fideism and just one step away from agnosticism. When Anselm sets out in *Cur Deus Homo* to prove on necessary grounds, with no recourse to Scripture, that Christ had to become incarnate, Guardini concludes that this puts too much weight on rational argument. He appreciates Anselm’s argument in the *Proslogion* that one can grasp God merely in a certain way and always imperfectly. He mentions also that, in chapter sixty-four of the *Monologion*, Anselm insists that the finite human mind fails to grasp its infinite object.⁴⁷

Reason’s supreme achievement is precisely to recognize that it cannot understand and then to account for this circumstance. The act of belief becomes a constant habit and remains unchallenged, unlimited, and unimpeded by any mind, however acute. All genuine thought flows into believing, living prayer. Guardini appreciates in Anselm’s thinking the fact that this monastic theologian does not allow the mysteries of faith to degenerate ultimately into rationalistic constructions. Thought and prayer form a unity, as in the achievements of Augustine and Bonaventure. This unity is what makes Anselm so attractive to Guardini. The two are seemingly independent but related to one another: “Faith gives life and consciousness a supernatural reality; thought produces clarity.”⁴⁸ Proper clarity in turn impacts life and perfects it, which creates the basis for new insights.

4. Conclusions Guardini draws from Anselm’s writings

From this engagement with the *opus Anselmi* Guardini draws significant conclusions. First and foremost among them is that the object of theology is not a set of abstract terms, but rather concrete realities. Anselm presents not a “colorless tinkering with terms,” but a grateful

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 40.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 42.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 44: “Der Glaube gibt Leben und Bewusstsein übernatürliche Wirklichkeit; das Denken schafft Klarheit.”

discovery of the personal, dynamic “self-revealing God,” combining “event, content and effect.”⁴⁹ Unless this is consciously beheld and credibly lived, theology is merely one science among others—rational, perhaps rationalistic, but certainly skeptical, individualistic and under the spell of a fickle *Zeitgeist*. By heeding Anselm’s programmatic “credo ut intelligam,” theology comes into its own. All theology must arise from an inner believing certitude. This is the basis for “a real illumination, expanding and ordering reason through grace, a true elevation of insight beyond its natural confines.”⁵⁰ Anselm’s formula “credo ut intelligam” opposes two positions:

a) an anti-intellectual view reducing faith to the emotional. Here Anselm defends theology’s intelligibility as a rational, methodological science (against fideism à la Karl Barth’s insistence on *analogia fidei*).⁵¹

b) a reduction of theology to the natural sciences. Here Anselm defends the specific character of theology as a science concerning supernatural revelation (against liberalism à la Adolf von Harnack).

In an illuminating footnote, Guardini follows Johann Adam Mohler’s reading of Anselm: only the higher level of Christian truth enables one to apprehend the totality of reality and frees one of fragmentation.⁵² He quotes St. Paul: “Among human beings, who knows what pertains to a person except the Spirit of the person that is within? Similarly, no one knows what pertains to God except the Spirit of God.... Now the natural person does not accept what pertains to the Spirit of God. The spiritual person, however, can judge everything but is not subject to judgment by anyone” (1 Cor 2:10-15).⁵³

From this it follows for both Anselm and Guardini that faith is an act of the complete human being. Thus it is also an ethical act, challenging us to magnanimous selflessness, surrender and courage. “One must intend the good in order to ponder truth.”⁵⁴ Only the holy one is able to gain theological insight, because he has acquired full freedom, purity, and fullness of faith. This is the case because faith’s object is not arrived at randomly, but is “the self-revealing God and his work in humanity and the soul.”⁵⁵

Against this background, Guardini pleads for an epistemologically motivated asceticism and contextualizes it in “the organic, heuristic community of humanity.”⁵⁶ Against the

⁴⁹ “Anselm von Canterbury und das Wesen der Theologie,” p. 50f.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 52: “Er bedeutet darüberhinaus eine reale Erleuchtung, Ausweitung und Ordnung des Verstandes durch die Gnade; eine wirkliche Erhebung des Erkennens über sein natürliches Mass....”

⁵¹ Karl Barth, *Fides Quaerens Intellectum. Anselms Beweis der Existenz Gottes im Zusammenhang seines theologischen Programms*, originally published in 1931 but here from the 2nd rev. ed. (Zollikon: Evangelischer Verlag, 1958). Cf. also Emery de Gaál Gyulai, *The Art of Equanimity: A Study on the Theological Hermeneutics of Saint Anselm of Canterbury* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2002), pp. 267-282.

⁵² Ibid., pp. 62-65.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 65

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 55.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 56.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 56: “Erkenntnisgemeinschaft der Menschheit.”

background of this “collective spirit,” such terms as *consensus partum* and *auctoritas partum* receive their significance, and concepts such as “personal holiness,” “spiritual economy,” and *magisterium* their justification. A supernatural principle, namely God Himself, permeates all these terms, calling for an asceticism in the Holy Spirit. This calls for a theology expressing itself in a “sentire cum ecclesia.”⁵⁷

Anselm’s “credo ut intelligam” entails three things: a) being consciously a member of the Church; b) having one’s individual faith embedded in the believing community of the Fathers; and c) allowing theology to trust the Church’s *auctoritas* as final arbiter.

This attitude prevents exegesis from being mere linguistics or a literary study of Scripture, and liberates theology to go beyond personal conjectures and idiosyncratic judgments.

Both Anselm and Guardini insist that such expansion, the widening of faith into the communal, is a process that is not reduced to something emotional or experiential, but is one that is also rational and, therefore, methodological. Guardini sees this multidimensionality of faith well illustrated in dogma. Faith is open to an ecclesial formulation, reflecting “ecclesial credal consciousness.”⁵⁸ Dogmatic formulas are coordinates wherein individual thinking fits into the organic thinking of the Church. Only by understanding itself on the basis of its ecclesial dimensions does theology gain genuine authority. Thus theology becomes the methodological exploration of an object, communicated from within the greater horizon of ecclesial faith.⁵⁹

Stimulated by his Anselm studies, Guardini sees in theology not one science among many, on an equal footing with the other sciences, but the one concerned with the whole of reality and therefore alone constituting a *Weltanschauung*.⁶⁰ This Anselmian perspective allows Guardini, in all his subsequent writings, to engage the world of culture in an original way—to write on Dostoevsky and Dante, contribute to liturgical renewal and author profound spiritual reflections. All of his extensive *oeuvre* is indebted to his early confrontation with Anselm. Anselm permits Guardini to steer clear of both intuitionism and rationalism. Guardini can formulate something of a post-Kantian “critique of concrete reason” and recover a dynamic originality for theology, because he discovers in Anselm’s work the leitmotif of “the living concrete.” He hoped that this would manifest itself in his own time, “in a religious process of unknown consequence—the awakening of the Church in (her) souls.”⁶¹

In conclusion, Guardini believes that his age is ripe to appreciate the wealth of Anselm’s understanding of theology: “there must be the will, to behold life from eternity, to contemplate

⁵⁷ Ibid., pp. 58f.

⁵⁸ “(K)irchliches Glaubensbewusstsein.” Ibid., p. 60

⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 60f.

⁶⁰ Romano Guardini, “Vom Wesen katholischer Weltanschauung” (1923), in: *Unterscheidung des Christlichen. Gesammelte Studien 1923-1963* (Mainz: Matthias Grünewald) 1963, pp. 13-33. Here, p. 24.

⁶¹ Romano Guardini, *Vom Sinn der Kirche* (Mainz: Matthias Grünewald, 1955), 5th ed., p. 19.

God with the aid of God's power."⁶² This requires constant personal cultivation of discipline and repeated renunciation of willfulness. Theology, in this sense, means maintaining a fruitful tension between "a deductive direction from the eternal, dogma and the Church, and the inductive direction originating in the concrete properties of facts and phenomena."⁶³

The reception of the Anselmian understanding of theology Guardini had hoped for in 1922 has still not materialized. Will there perhaps now occur, at the beginning of the 21st century—as postmodernity gradually recedes into history—an Anselmian *kairos*?

Inspired by the ageless wisdom of Benedict and his spiritual sons and stimulated by Anselm's central theological intuition, Guardini is able to close his inaugural lecture at the University of Bonn, in 1922, with the words: "whoever intends to be a theologian in the full Anselmian sense, has to know that his thinking must set out not from his own self or his age, but rather from the Church and her tradition, embracing the whole of eternity; that the theologian is called to be not an autonomous legislator and personal creator, but a selfless instrument."⁶⁴

⁶² Ibid., p. 61: "Der Wille, die Dinge von der Ewigkeit her zu sehen, Gott mit Gottes Kraft zu betrachten."

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 62: "Denn wer im vollen anselmischen Sinne Theologe sein will, muss wissen, das er nicht aus Ich und Gegenwart heraus, sondern aus der Kirche und ihrer, das ganze Aevum umspannenden Tradition her denken muss. Dass er nicht autonomer Gesetzgeber und persönlicher Schöpfer, sondern selbsloses Organ sein soll."