

Anselm's Theory of Freedom

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This article is a discussion of Saint Anselm's understanding of man as created in a state of original justice, the loss of that justice in the Fall and its restoration in redemption and grace. Before the Fall, man's original justice was an original freedom, namely, the pure inability to sin. By means of an accidental feature in human beings called freedom of choice between alternatives, man lost his original inability to sin. In fact, after the Fall man is unable not to sin. He has lost the gift of justice, no longer has an upright will, and is rendered powerless with respect to freedom. Against one's will, man now experiences all kinds of inordinate desires and temptation. Yet Anselm argues that temptation is ultimately impotent with regard to man's inner freedom which has been restored by the redemption and an all pervading grace. Man once again has uprightness of will. The miracle of it all is that God restores to man what man willingly chose to desert in the first place, namely, an original freedom, i.e., the will to choose the right thing. The discussion ends with the problem of grace and freedom: if God's grace is so pervading, how in fact is an act of free choice really an intrinsically human act.

In his book *Will in Western Thought*, Vernon Bourke submits this definition of freedom as the very essence of the will:

. . . that power or condition of an agent which enables him to act, or refuse to act, and to do so in ways which he determines, without compelling restraints from forces external to, or internal to, his personality.¹

It seems, however, that this notion of free will is not to be found in the tradition of the early Greeks, at least not explicitly. Plato speaks of freedom in terms of political and social freedom and Aristotle never once suggests that the genus of willing is freedom.² As a matter of fact, for Aristotle, it is doubtful whether there is a theory of will at all, let alone a notion of freedom. There is a notion of choice but it seems to be reduced to an intellectual preference, i.e., a kind of reasonable desire that issues forth necessarily in action as the last step in a process of deliberation by the practical intellect. "Choice is either desiderative reason or ratiocinative desire."³ Etienne Gilson seems to agree with this position when he says that, "It remains a fact that Aristotle spoke neither of liberty nor free will."⁴ Albrecht Dihle in his paradoxically named book *The Theory of Will in Classical Antiquity* argues that the authors of classical antiquity prior to Augustine lacked any vocabulary and for the most part any conception of the will. For both

¹ Vernon Burke, *Will in Western Thought* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1964), 79.

² Ibid., 80.

³ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, VI, 1139 b 3, trans. Martin Ostwald (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Educational Publishing Co., 1962).

⁴ Etienne Gilson, *The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy*, trans. A.H.C. Downes (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936) 307.

Plato and Aristotle, reason is what motivates, and it motivates independently of any other faculty.⁵

Mary T. Clark in her book *Augustine, Philosopher of Freedom* says that "after Aristotle there is a confusion of free choice with spontaneity by Epicurus and then the establishment of a rigorous doctrine of universal determinism by the Stoics."⁶ If freedom and free will are not explicitly treated in Plato and Aristotle and are confused with spontaneity and determinism in Epicurean and Stoic doctrines, it is somewhat ambiguous as to what their explicit origin in thought is. Nevertheless, freedom and free will are vividly presented in the writings of the early Eastern Fathers of the Church, in Clement of Alexandria,⁷ Origen,⁸ and Gregory of Nyssa.⁹ Here, however, freedom of will is found together with the notion of God's grace in a constant dialectic "like two poles of one and the same reality."¹⁰

With Augustine, the themes of freedom, free will and grace which are seen in the Fathers of the Eastern Church enter the West and with them more philosophical insight and distinction. For Augustine, freedom is fundamentally a quality of the will which enables one to do what one ought to do according to God's will.¹¹ It is a freedom to do the good, an original freedom given to man with creation. However, Augustine's own psychological struggle made him realize that something had gone wrong and the will "does not will in its entirety."¹² Rather, it is in a tug-of-war between what it wants and what in fact it wills. What had gone wrong was the Fall after which man was rendered powerless to choose the good. His original freedom was taken away, and from then on the will was systematically turned from doing what was right. Freedom from then on was experienced as the ability to sin or not to sin, and the will being radically misdirected from its original thrust was in need of grace. God's grace was necessary to restore what was lost and thereby render man once again able to choose the good. According to Augustine, the grace needed does not destroy free will but "changes the will from a bad will to a good will"¹³ without which change "we are powerless to perform good works of a salutary nature."¹⁴ Hence, God's grace brings about our power to will the good as well as cooperates in our free acts of willing.

⁵ Albrecht Dihle, *The Theory of Will in Classical Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982). See pages 20–67 for a detailed study in Ancient Greece of the lack of any notion of will as separate from an intellectual or non-intellectual context.

⁶ Mary T. Clark, *Augustine, Philosopher of Freedom: A Study in Comparative Philosophy* (New York: Desclee Co., 1958) 17.

⁷ Clement of Alexandria, *The Stromata*, VI, 12 in *The Writings of the Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1956).

⁸ Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 5, 12 trans. Henry Chadwick (Cambridge: University Press, 1965).

⁹ Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses*, trans. Abraham J. Malherbe and Everett Ferguson in *The Classics of Western Spirituality* (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), 66, 114.

¹⁰ Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (London: James Clarke & Co., Ltd., 1957), 197.

¹¹ Augustine, *De libero arbitrio*, III, 18, 52 trans. Robert P. Russell in *The Fathers of the Church*, Vol. 59 (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1968).

¹² Augustine, *Confessions*, VIII, 9 trans. John K. Ryan (New York: Doubleday Image Books, 1960).

¹³ Augustine, *De gratia et libero arbitrio* trans. Robert P. Russell in *The Fathers of the Church*, Vol. 59 (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1968) 15, 31.

¹⁴ Augustine, *De gratia*, 17, 33.

Augustine's contribution to an understanding of the nature of freedom, will, and grace in the context of man's original state, sin, and redemption is monumental. He focused directly on the will and its freedom as the source of free choice. It is the direction of the human will guided by grace rather than the cognitive process of practical reason that issues forth in free acts. In this way, the emphasis on freedom and the will entered the mainstream of Christian philosophy in the West—an emphasis which Anselm of Canterbury inherited and continued together with a penetrating philosophical analysis. This paper will discuss the notions of freedom, free choice, will, and grace as developed by Anselm, especially in the *De Libertate Arbitrii* and the *De Concordia III*. However, reference will be made to other works in the Anselmian corpus in order to flesh out the picture.

In order to understand Anselm's treatment of freedom and grace in the order of creation, sin and redemption, it is necessary as a preliminary to focus in on the concepts of rectitude and justice which thread through the treatment. According to A.E. McGrath, Anselm's understanding of justice is derived from Augustine for whom God is the *justissimus ordinator* who orders the universe according to his will.¹⁵ In the *De Trinitate*, Augustine calls God the highest justice who orders all things according to weight, measure, and number which in turn mirror God's justice as the supreme exemplar. But, not only is God's justice mirrored in the physical order of creation, it also prescribes the moral order, i.e., how men are to act according to free choice. God's justice, then, is reflected in the human will as the right order men ought to choose. This is man's rectitude of will.¹⁶ In this sense, justice and rectitude are synonymous terms which refer to God's will for both the physical and moral orders of his creation. They are primarily attributes of God and only secondarily of creation and human affairs as they participate in God's will.

This Augustinian vision of God's justice and rectitude mirrored in creation is reflected in Anselm when he defines truth as rectitude perceptible only to the mind and justice as right ordering of things according to the will.¹⁷ What Anselm seems to be saying is that there is a right order in creation, i.e., a state of affairs that ought to be. When this right order is perceived by the mind, it is called truth, as for example, when one perceives that it is as it ought to be that a stone seeks to move downward and lie on the ground.¹⁸ There is also a right order in the will i.e., a way that the will ought to will in an autonomous and free choice. This right ordering in the will is called justice. In reference to the will, Anselm says that one must "stand in the truth,"¹⁹ and to stand in the truth is to will what one ought, namely, to will what God wills. Anselm, therefore, concludes that ". . . justice is not rightness of knowledge, or rightness of action, but is rightness of will."²⁰ Truth and justice, then, are species of rectitude. When perceived, it is called truth; when willed, it is called justice.

¹⁵ Alister McGrath, "Rectitude: The Moral Foundation of Anselm of Canterbury's Soteriology," in *Downside Review*, 99 (July, 1981) 205. Referring to Augustine's *Civitate Dei*, XI, 17.

¹⁶ McGrath, Referring to Augustine's *Civitate Dei*, III, 9, 16.

¹⁷ Anselm, *De Veritate*, XII trans Jasper Hopkins and Herbert Richardson in *Anselm of Canterbury*, Vol. 2 (New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1976).

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ *De Veritate*, IV.

²⁰ *De Veritate*, XII.

The concept of justice as the right ordering of the human will according to God's justice is important for a clear understanding of Anselm because for contemporary society the notion of justice takes on a legal connotation of fair and equitable conduct toward one's neighbor or the strict rendering of one's due to another. Anselm's use of the word "justice" is not limited to the juridical order. It does not stand for an essentially legal relationship. Rather, it stands for that rectitude of order which is mirrored in all creation, but specifically in the human will in its right relation to God's. As such, the concept is properly metaphysical and theological. Its meaning has all the breadth of the Augustinian tradition of God as *the justissimus ordinator* and all creation participating in God. Anselm prays to God in the *Proslogion*: "You are completely and supremely just."²¹

God's justice, then, is an umbrella category under which Anselm views everything from creation, to sin, to redemption. He sees creation as the mirroring of God's justice, especially the creation of man in original justice. He sees sin as the desertion of God's justice as mirrored in the human will (as well as the angelic will), and he sees redemption as the restoration of God's justice in the human will. Freedom, therefore, as a quality of the will, is the gift that is given to man in original justice; it is the gift that is lost when he chooses to desert it, but the gift that is restored through grace in the redemption. Given this general overview, how does Anselm treat the gift of freedom in relationship to that justice which is a right will, to free choice, and to grace?

In the *De Libertate Arbitrii*, Anselm in dialogue with a student searches for a definition of freedom that would be general enough to apply to God, angels and man.²² Human freedom was only one form of freedom among others in Anselm's time. In beginning his search for an all encompassing definition, therefore, Anselm rejects the commonly held Augustinian definition of freedom as the ability to sin or not to sin. It is impossible for this definition to be correct because it would imply that both God and the angels are able to sin and that would be "blasphemous."²³ God and the angels have freedom but they are not able to sin or not sin. For Anselm, then, "the ability to sin does not constitute either freedom or a part of freedom."²⁴ Freedom is more fundamental than autonomous choice or the ability to choose between alternatives. It is the pure inability to sin and all rational beings possess this freedom. It is important to grasp from the start what Anselm means by freedom because to the modern mind the person who has the ability to choose between sinning and not sinning seems freer than the one who is simply unable to sin. Anselm addresses this confusion and concludes to the contrary that the person who is unable to sin is freer. The one who has the actual ability not to turn away from justice and rectitude is the one in possession of fundamental freedom.

²¹ Anselm, *Proslogion*, IX, trans. S.N. Deane in *Saint Anselm: Basic Writings*. (La Salle: Open Court Publishing Co., 1962).

²² Anselm, *De Libertate Arbitrii* 1, in *Anselm of Canterbury*, Vol. 2.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ *De Libertate Arbitrii*, 2.

In order to understand what Anselm is getting at, it should be kept in mind that the *De Libertate Arbitrii* is the second work of a trilogy of which the first is *the De Veritate* and the third the *De Concordia*. Hence, Anselm's analysis of freedom is carried on in the context of his ontology of truth and justice as mentioned above. Consequently, the kind of freedom that Anselm defines must be seen in the light of the nature and the purpose of the being who possesses it. In men and angels, freedom is that quality of the will by which they were able to preserve and conform to the gift of original justice. What Anselm is saying is that rational beings were created according to God's justice and the right ordering of things. They were created to mirror God as Supreme Justice by choosing according to God's will for them and thus fulfill their ultimate end of doing what is good, right, and just. In other words, they were created in a state of original justice—a state given to them by God as a task to both preserve and perfect. Freedom was given as a means by which they were to keep and preserve that gift inviolable. Hence, Anselm rightly defines freedom as the ability to keep rectitude for its own sake.²⁵

In summation, fundamental freedom is not a freedom to choose between alternatives of sinning or not sinning. Rather, it is a freedom that is oriented toward one goal only, namely, to preserve justice as the right order of things by freely choosing to act according to what is good, right, and just. In short, freedom is that property of the will by which men and angels were actually able to do what they ought to do according to God's will for them.

Freedom, thus defined, is the kind of freedom which men and angels possessed before the Fall. But it is precisely the fact of the Fall that leads to a seeming contradiction. If men and angels sinned and turned away from the gift of original justice, then they must have had the ability to sin, which ability is not included in Anselm's definition of freedom. Yet, Anselm insists that Adam and Satan "sinned by their own choice which was so free that it could not be compelled by any other thing to sin."²⁶ The question now becomes how can sin both occur and not occur by means of freedom.

The solution to this dilemma is offered in an argument that will take some unpacking as to what Anselm means. He holds that "each sinned by his own choice, which was free; but neither sinned by means of that in virtue of which his choice was free."²⁷ It seems that Anselm is saying that sin was committed by an autonomous will, i.e., by a will that was free in the sense that it was not coerced from within or from without. Hence, sin was not the result of some kind of determinism or necessity but the result of free will. It was committed through that by which the will is free, namely, through that freedom which is the quality of the will enabling it not to sin. Men and angels had two powers. As long as they used their fundamental freedom nothing could force them to sin. Nothing could force them to desert justice and a rectitude of will ordered to choosing what they ought according to God's will. Fundamental freedom is absolute. However, besides fundamental freedom as a power, they possessed the power of autonomous choice, namely, the ability of choose between the alternatives of sinning or not sinning.

²⁵ *De Libertate Arbitrii*, 3.

²⁶ *De Libertate Arbitrii*, 2.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

Consequently, sin was a direct result of a conscious and deliberate act of will. It was an act belonging totally to the one acting. Sin was the sole responsibility of the sinner.

It would seem that for Anselm the ability to sin willfully was an accidental feature of fundamental freedom. Although men and angels were created with fundamental freedom as the inability to sin, nevertheless, under the conditions of created freedom, fundamental freedom took on the accidental feature of the freedom to choose between alternatives. Put another way, the form that freedom took under the conditions of created freedom had the added property of being able to sin or not to sin. This is to say that, in creatures, freedom is the ground or condition of possibility for an autonomous will, namely, one that can will between alternatives free from any coercive factors.

From the Augustinian tradition, Anselm inherited two distinct notions of freedom.²⁸ In one, freedom (*libertas*) is thought of as a state of perfection in which one is exempt from the possibility of sin. Here freedom is both a state of sinless perfection and the actual ability to maintain that state. The second notion of freedom is a property of the will by which one is able to make self-determining choices by choosing autonomously between alternatives (*liberum arbitrium*). In order to preserve his single definition of freedom encompassing God and created rational beings, it would seem that Anselm rejected the Augustinian distinction in favor of one basic and fundamental definition of freedom as a state of sinless perfection. However, in men and angels, it took on an accidental feature as well, which feature enabled men and angels to autonomously choose to sin or not to sin, to preserve or desert the gift of original justice.²⁹ Given this understanding and resolution to the dilemma of how sin can both occur and not occur by means of freedom, it would seem an improper use of language to say that one sins freely. Anselm has insisted that one does not sin in virtue of freedom as the inability to sin. Hence, one does not sin freely. Nevertheless, one does sin through an accidental feature of freedom, namely, through an autonomous choice which is free from any determining coercion. Hence, one sins by "free choice." What Anselm has done is make it logically impossible that a choice of evil should ever occur by means of God's gift of fundamental freedom by which one was to glorify God constantly by choosing what is good, right, and just. However, a choice of evil could occur and did occur through an accidental feature of that freedom, namely, "free choice."

In the *De Concordia*, Anselm in speaking about original justice and the freedom to preserve it says that, "Rectitude is never separated from the will except when the will wills something else which is incompatible with this rectitude."³⁰ This is the situation painted in the

²⁸ Mortimer J. Adler, *The Idea of Freedom*, Vol. 1. (New York: Doubleday, 1961), 136.

²⁹ Stanley G. Kane, *Anselm's Doctrine of Freedom and the Will* (New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1981) 153. My theory is a variation on Kane's understanding of Anselm. Kane holds that Anselm did not hold the Augustinian distinction between *libertas* and *liberum arbitri*. Rather, freedom is a generic term that takes on two determinate forms or shapes depending on the circumstances. Hence, freedom distinguishes itself as the ability to do what is just where it is impossible to do anything unjust and freedom to do what is just but under circumstances where it is possible to do something unjust.

³⁰ Anselm, *De Concordia Praescientiae et Praedestinationis et Gratia Dei cum Libero Arbitrio* 111, 4 in *Anselm of Canterbury* Vol. 2.

De Casu Diaboli as well where the sin of Satan involved his willing "something which he did not already have and was not supposed to will at the time."³¹ According to Anselm, then, the sin of Satan was a willing departure from what he was supposed to will. The analysis of Satan's misuse of the will is a paradigm for all misuse of the will including man's. Consequently, the picture holds true for Adam as well. As already seen, the will was created upright and just with an affection and desire for willing good and just deeds. It also possessed the freedom to preserve this perfection.³² It ought to have willed what was "advantageous to will,"³³ but it willed otherwise and consequently Satan and Adam "lost the good which they already had."³⁴

What precisely is the good that was lost in the Fall? Put another way, what according to Anselm were the consequences of the misuse of freedom? Anselm claims that what was lost was rectitude of will itself.³⁵ Adam lost the state of perfection, i.e., the state of justice in which he was created. He no longer would be actually able not to sin. If so, it would seem to follow that he lost his fundamental freedom as well since freedom is that quality of the will which renders one actually able to choose what is right and just. However, Anselm contends that although Adam lost rectitude of will, he did not lose what belongs to a rational nature essentially, namely, freedom.³⁶ How can one lose the ability to keep rectitude of will and still retain freedom which is the quality of keeping rectitude? In answer to this paradox, Anselm presents what can be called the ability-use distinction.

The argument for this consists in the claim that the successful or effective use of any given power or ability does not depend solely upon the mere possession of the ability which is a natural subjective capacity. Obviously, a subjective capacity is not the only necessary condition for doing something. To illustrate this, Anselm does an analysis of the visual perception of a mountain.³⁷ The necessary conditions for seeing the mountain are four-fold. First, a person must have sound eyes capable of seeing. Second, there must be a mountain. Third, there must be a medium of light. Fourth, there must be nothing between the perceiver and the mountain to obstruct vision, e.g., a dense fog or heavy rain. If the second, third, or fourth conditions are absent, one will not in fact be actually able to see the mountain. Hence, he will have the ability to see but not actually be able. In other words, he will have the ability but not the use. Analogously speaking, Anselm thinks that when angels and men deserted rectitude of will they lost the condition whereby they were actually able to choose what is good, right, and just. They lost the use of freedom. Nevertheless, they still retained as part of rational nature the ability to choose uprightness. They retained freedom as a subjective capacity. Anselm considers this fairly obvious when he asks his student

³¹ Anselm, *De Casu Diaboli* IV, in *Anselm of Canterbury*, Vol. 2.

³² *De Libertate Arbitrii*, 3.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *De Casu Diaboli*, 6.

³⁵ *De Libertate Arbitrii*, 3.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

What, then, prevents our having the ability to keep uprightness-of-will for the sake of this uprightness itself—even in the absence of up-rightness—as long as within us we have reason, by which to recognize it, and will, by which to hold fast?³⁸

To sum up, once the sinner misuses his freedom by choosing to desert rectitude, he loses the gift of justice and is no longer able not to sin. He imprisons himself in a state of desertion and is powerless by his own autonomous choice to exercise his freedom which, nevertheless, he retains as an ability in principle. In other words, the sinner is able to act for the sake of righteousness alone, but not actually able because he has lost the gift of justice.

Nevertheless, although justice itself is lost as well as the concomitant use of freedom, there does remain a vestige of justice.³⁹ This vestige is obligation. Anselm claims that it is essential to man's dignity that he possess justice, and although he abandons it, he is by nature still obliged to choose according to God's justice.⁴⁰ It is the fact that obligation remains as a vestige of justice that grounds blame and praise in men's choices. As a matter of fact, when someone is blamed for some choice he makes, what is blamed in the will is "nothing at all other than the absence of justice."⁴¹ He was blamed for falling short of what he ought to have chosen, namely, justice, right, and good. If the obligation to keep rectitude of will for the sake of rectitude were to cease with the Fall, then responsibility for one's choices would likewise cease. This is not the case.

The situation that man now finds himself in after the Fall is one of great stress and tension. It is the tension between being obliged to will justice, right, and good and not being actually able to choose it. In order to understand this tension, in the *De Concordia* Anselm speaks about two distinct inclinations or affections of the will, namely, the affection for justice and the affection for happiness.⁴² The affection for justice is the inclination that follows upon the gift of justice. By means of it one desires to choose what God wills for human nature. The affection for happiness, on the other hand, is a desire for what is useful and beneficial for one's well being, e.g., health, sleep, food etc. Before the Fall, these two affections were ordered to each other in perfect harmony, even in the angels. Accordingly, "The addition of justice would so temper the will for happiness that its excess would be checked while its power to transgress would remain unabridged."⁴³ What Anselm seems to be saying is that in the state of original justice, the desire for happiness and well being—or, the desire to fulfill one's needs—was subordinated to the desire for willing justice and right. Men and angels both possessed a just will for happiness.⁴⁴ In other words, before the Fall one's desire for happiness was under the

³⁸ *De Libertate Arbitrii*, 4.

³⁹ *De Casu Diaboli*, 16.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *De Concordia*, III, 12.

⁴³ *De Casu Diaboli*, 14.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

harmonious control of one's desire for justice. One desired justice and was able to peacefully choose it without any conflict or stress. After the Fall, things were radically different. Man lost the gift of justice and with it the affection for justice. Consequently, the desire for happiness goes unchecked, and man now finds himself subjected to inordinate desires. Anselm says that the will "turns itself to benefits that are false and which pertain to brute animals. . . ." ⁴⁵ Against one's will, man experiences all kinds of inordinate carnal desires (e.g. anger). The inordinate desire for happiness coupled with the inability to keep justice together with the sense of obligation to keep justice creates the stress and tension called temptation.

In the *De Libertate Arbitrii*, Anselm spends a good amount of time discussing temptation, but his point is to demonstrate that a man who possesses rectitude (either originally or by grace) can in no way desert "uprightness except by willing to." ⁴⁶ The point is that the will is absolutely autonomous and is thereby unable to be coerced from within or without to choose one way or another. Temptation, no matter how strong it may be experienced and under whatever difficult circumstances it may arise, is impotent vis a vis man's inner freedom and the power of autonomous choice. A man simply "cannot will against his will." ⁴⁷ In order to demonstrate the freedom and autonomy of the will, Anselm refutes three experiences of temptation where it seems that the will is unfree and coerced against its will. In each case there is also an improper use of language which misleads the student into thinking that the will is not free.

In the first case, says the student, it seems that "a man lies against his will in order to save his life." ⁴⁸ Hence, it seems that he unwillingly wills to lie. Here is a man who does not want to lie because he knows that he ought not to lie, but is psychologically coerced against his will by the fear of death. He seems both to will to do what is right and to will to preserve his life. In the end, when he wills to lie, it would seem that he in fact willed against his own will. Anselm's rebuttal is that is what appears to be the case, but in reality in choosing to lie what the man does is willingly desert uprightness and justice. Anselm's analysis of the case is as follows. The man has before him a choice of two options, either to lie and not be killed or not to lie and be killed. There is no necessity, no coercion to move either way. Both alternatives are in his power of free choice. As long as his will remains steadfast in doing what is right, it cannot be turned away from right willing unless it willingly consents to what it ought not to choose. So in choosing to lie, the man in fact willingly chooses to desert uprightness. He does this out of a deliberate free choice. For Anselm, no temptation can turn one away from choosing what is right against one's will. ⁴⁹ In short, one cannot will against one's will. One is free.

If so, then what does one really mean when one says that a man wills against his will? According to G. Stanley Kane, a distinction must be made between to lie willingly and to lie unwillingly. To lie willingly means to choose in order to save one's life. To lie unwillingly

⁴⁵ *De Concordia*, III, 13.

⁴⁶ *De Libertate Arbitrii*, 5.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

means that it is against one's will that "he is faced with the necessity of having to make a painful choice. But this kind of unwillingness is not contrary to free choice."⁵⁰ It is more difficult to choose what is right when the consequence is death. The temptation to choose sin is greater due to the psychological pressure. Nevertheless, the temptation can never coerce. Temptation's only function is to serve as an occasion for the will to exercise its free choice. It is not in anyway an efficient cause of human choices. And so, the will remains radically free in the face of the two alternatives. In the end, if one chooses to lie, he does not choose against his will. Rather, he chooses willfully to abandon doing what is right. In the *De Concordia*, Anselm says that the will is a self-moving instrument.⁵¹ It is its own power and it and it alone can will itself to will. In conclusion, then, Anselm solves an apparent case of willing against one's will by claiming that to say that one wills against one's will is an improper use of language. Its proper meaning is that one's options are exceedingly difficult and painful, but options there are and there is free choice.

In the second case that the student presents, it seems that when one is actually overcome by a temptation there is experienced a "powerlessness."⁵² In modern psychological terms it seems that when one has given in to a powerful temptation, one was under an irresistible compulsion that forced the will to will what it should not have willed. Anselm has already shown that the will is radically free and cannot be forced. Hence, what does it mean properly speaking when one expresses this sense of powerlessness? Anselm says that we are accustomed to say that we cannot do a thing, not because the thing is impossible for us to do, but because we cannot do it without difficulty.⁵³ What Anselm means is that a temptation may be experienced as psychologically so strong that one feels powerless in the face of it, but one should know that what is experienced is a difficulty, and a difficulty cannot destroy the will's freedom to choose. Again, only the will can move itself to turn away from righteousness even in the face of a psychological compulsion. It is, therefore, logically impossible for a temptation to overpower the will. If it did, it would have to force a consent from a man and this is impossible to do since a consent is by nature an act of will. Only the will can move itself to will. The conclusion drawn is, the proper meaning of "I felt powerless in the face of this temptation" is "I felt it difficult to control the circumstances of this temptation and willed what I ought not to have chosen."

In the third case, the student claims that it seems that the temptation was stronger than the will to keep rectitude and choose what is right.⁵⁴ This implies that the will is more or less strong, that it can be weak. To answer this objection, Anselm distinguishes between the will as instrument and the will as use.⁵⁵ The will as instrument is the ability to actually will to choose between alternatives. The will as use is the will in so far as it is actually willing and making choices. Following upon his previously established position, Anselm repeats that the will as

⁵⁰ Kane, 135.

⁵¹ *De Concordia*, III, 11.

⁵² *De Libertate Arbitrii*, 6.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ *De Libertate Arbitrii*, 7.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

instrument "has an inalienable strength which cannot be overcome by any other force."⁵⁶ However, the will as use and activity can be more or less strong depending on how much effort one exerts in the exercise of the will as instrument. It is like a man holding a bull at one time and a ram at another. His strength is the same, but in the case of the ram he does not exert the same amount of strength.⁵⁷ In other words, on some occasion one may not use his power of free choice to its full capacity. The failure, therefore, is not due to the will's freedom and capacity. Rather, it is due to one's feeble use of the capacity. One concludes that the proper meaning of "the temptation was stronger than the will" is that in the face of temptation "I did not exercise the power of my freedom up to its potential and hence I chose against a right will."

After arguing that no temptation can coerce an upright will and remove rectitude, Anselm argues that even God himself cannot remove rectitude from a rational creature on the grounds that he would involve himself in a contradiction. He would will that the creature not possess what he in fact wills for him.⁵⁸ Again, there is an improper use of language because it is often said that God removes rectitude when he does not intervene and prevent it from being deserted by one's free choice.⁵⁹ But, properly speaking, God cannot remove what in fact He wills for his rational creatures. And so it is that Anselm proclaims the central thesis that he has been arguing, namely, that "nothing is more free than an upright will, whose uprightness no alien force can remove."⁶⁰

The Anselmian analysis of temptation as presented in the *De Libertate Arbitrii* presupposes that man has the gift of justice and rectitude of will either as Adam had before the Fall or men have after the Fall through the gift of grace. It presupposes the gift of fundamental freedom. In the present state of affairs, without grace man would simply be unable to do any good that would lead to salvation. But, what is it that grace does, and how does it interact with human freedom and free choice?

In the Fall, man lost the gift of justice, no longer has an upright will, and is rendered powerless with respect to freedom. Because he is impotent with respect to a freedom which he possesses as a dormant potency, he is tossed about by inordinate desires for happiness. Man finds himself in a sad state of affairs as one who "serves sin, i.e., is unable to avoid sinning."⁶¹ Moreover, he "serves sin because of the impossibility of recovering uprightness through [his] own efforts."⁶² It is in this context that Anselm argues for the necessity of grace in order for man to be restored to a state of justice. He states that "only by the grace of God does a creature have uprightness which I have called uprightness-of-will."⁶³ Grace alone restores the gift of justice and rectitude and renders a man once again actually able to choose what is according to God's

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ *De Libertate Arbitrii*, 8.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ *De Libertate Arbitrii*, 9.

⁶¹ *De Libertate Arbitrii*, 12.

⁶² *De Libertate Arbitrii*, 10.

⁶³ *De Concordia*, III, 3.

will. Grace alone restores man to a situation of sinless perfection. Grace alone restores to man the actual use of his freedom.⁶⁴ But grace is also necessary for the exercise of freedom in free choice. "Everything should be attributed to grace."⁶⁵ That fact explains why the man who is tempted in Anselm's examples of temptation is a man who is radically free under grace.

The position of an all-encompassing grace in both the restoration of freedom and justice as well as the exercise of free choice presents the problem of "whose action is it"? If God's grace is so pervading, how in fact is an act of free choice really man's intrinsic human act? It is the problem of the relationship of grace and freedom. To solve the problem, Anselm has recourse to a metaphor of a naked man who is given a garment he is unable to obtain by himself. If he uses the garment, he does so in virtue of the gift; if he does not use it, it is in virtue of his own free choice to refuse the gift.⁶⁶ Applying the metaphor to the problem at hand, Anselm states:

Similarly, when God gives willingly. . . to someone conceived and born in sin to whom he owes nothing except punishment, 'it is not of him who wills. . . but is of God, who shows mercy.' And as for one who does not receive grace, or one who rejects it after having received it: the fact that he remains in his obduracy and iniquity is due to him rather than to God.⁶⁷

Anselm wants to say that in any choice made by man under the power of grace there is a role played by God and a role played by man. God's role is to act directly upon the human will in order to restore fundamental freedom, right desire, and right choice. God is the sole efficient cause of human freedom, desires, and choices for what is good, right, and just. His role is positive in that he alone is the only one who actually and directly does anything just. He alone is All Good and All Just. G. Stanley Kane claims that man's role, on the other hand, is negative in five ways: First, it is a necessary cause in making a choice. Second, it involves doing something one could not otherwise do. Third, it is a free choice between moral alternatives because there is no force or coercion. Fourth, if the sinner fails to respond to God's grace, there is further culpability. Fifth, this kind of free choice between moral alternatives is compatible with one's being in a sinful state "marked by the inability positively to do what is right."⁶⁸ In short, left alone, man is stripped of the use of freedom and is a servant of sin. In a positive sense, he can only choose evil. And so, when a man is faced with a choice between good and evil, what he in fact is doing by means of free choice sustained by grace is either allowing or preventing God from restoring justice and freedom in his will. He does this by refraining from willing anything evil. In other words, man's role is to have some kind of veto power over God's working in the human will. His choice is to cooperate or not. Hence, should a man fail and choose to do evil, he does so not because the ability to keep justice under God's grace fails him, but "because the will

⁶⁴ *De Concordia*, III, 4.

⁶⁵ *De Concordia*, III, 3,4,5.

⁶⁶ *De Concordia*, III, 5.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Kane, 165–166.

to keep it fails him."⁶⁹ He chooses something incompatible with it and thereby deserts the gift of justice.⁷⁰ For Anselm, then, man is always radically free under grace. He has the freedom to determine himself and thus to choose to be free over and over again or he has the free choice to jump ship and drown in the whirlpool of sin. In short, man's freedom under grace consists in his free choice of encouraging or frustrating God's gracious act of restoration.

The salvation of man is viewed by Anselm as the restoration of justice and rectitude of will. It is not achieved by grace alone nor by free choice alone but by both together.⁷¹ But the miracle of the restoration is primarily God's own work in the human being—a miracle Anselm considers greater than the raising of the dead. He believes this because even should someone commit suicide, he only takes away what was going to be taken away eventually. The person who abandons justice and an upright will, on the other hand, "throws away that which was supposed to be kept always."⁷² Hence, the greatness of the miracle lies in restoring what man willingly chose to desert.

In conclusion, Anselm's great insight is that the human person in and through his will is created to participate in God's own justice. As such, his final goal is to enjoy perfect freedom in an eternal happiness. In that state of perfect freedom, man at last will be free as he was meant to be, fixing his will on giving glory to God by doing freely what is God's ordained will for him. To be and to do that for which one was created is pure freedom and delight. And, since man has chosen to desert this freedom and happiness, then, if God's plan for justice and right order was not to be frustrated, God became man in the person of Jesus the Christ in order to accomplish what "human nature alone could not do."⁷³ In a meditation on the redemption,⁷⁴ after explaining why God became man and freely subjected himself to the suffering of the cross, Anselm fervently reminds us:

See, Christian soul, here is the strength of your salvation, here is the cause of your freedom, here is the price of your redemption. You were a bond-slave and by this man you are free.⁷⁵

And he concludes his meditation with the prayer of every human heart that yearns for freedom:

Lord, my heart is before you. I try, but by myself I can do nothing; do what I cannot.⁷⁶

⁶⁹ *De Concordia*, III, 10.

⁷⁰ *De Concordia*, III, 4.

⁷¹ *De Concordia*, III, 5.

⁷² *De Libertate Arbitrii*, 10.

⁷³ Anselm, "The Meditations on the Redemption" in *The Prayers and Meditations of St. Anselm*, trans. Sister Benedicta Ward S. L. G. (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1973), 234.

⁷⁴ *Meditations*, 234.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Meditations*, 237.