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Journal of the Melanesian Association of Theological Schools

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ANSELM FOR MELANESIA: A TRANSLATION OF GISBERT GRESHAKE, "REDEMPTION AND FREEDOM: TOWARDS A NEW INTERPRETATION OF THE SOTERIOLOGY OF ANSELM OF CANTERBURY"

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Abstract
Many modern theologians find Anselm's soteriology presents God as cruel and vain, concerned with his own honour at the expense of human suffering. In 1973 Gisbert Greshake published an alternative view: the old Germanic concept of honour is taken by Anselm and transformed to be the human perception of God which enables them to live in justice. Sin distorts that perception of God and leaves no road open for a simple return. God, respecting human freedom, sends Jesus, the God-man, to enable humanity to make that offering of satisfaction (compensation) which restores God honour. However, as society moved from being based on personal relations to being based on law, theologians lost the ability to see what Anselm was doing, A translation of Grehake's article is present in the hope that Melanesian theologians will find that Anselm uses and transforms concepts that belong to their world, as a first step to understanding better God's gift to us of salvation, and also the implications that Christ's payment of compensation to God for human attempts to bring peace through compensation.

Key Words
Anselm, Gisbert Greshake, soteriology, *Cur Deus homo*, satisfaction, punishment, compensation, atonement

INTRODUCTION

Our background and education make us confidently certain of some things. As a white Australian missionary to PNG who did his undergraduate theology in the 1980s, two of those things were: (a) the bride price turned women into commodities and was therefore a Bad Thing; and (b) that

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Anselm's theory of atonement turned salvation into a commodity, and was therefore a Bad Thing.

Despite the first certainty, when I came to PNG in 2005 and suddenly found myself teaching the unit on marriage, I thought it prudent to ask my class what they thought of bride price, and was surprised to find that they were all in favour of it. Thus began a time of listening, trying to understand what the exchange that we modern westerners call "bride price" meant in a very different context. Five years later, doing my PhD, I was reading a theologian who was looking at the soteriology of Anselm and Thomas Aquinas, and trying to explain away all the language of "price" and "buying" to say that it was simply all about love.[1] Instead of convincing me of what I wanted to believe, he made me realise the terms could not be explained away. But there was one other thing I had learned in theology: that which most resists our attempts to fit it into our system of thought is actually the key to a better understanding. If "pre-modern" Melanesian society had a way of looking at "price" that did not reduce women to commodities, then perhaps Anselm and Thomas, who were also pre-modern, had a way of looking at "price" that did not reduce salvation to a commodity.

My mind went back to passing remark in Walter Kasper's *Jesus the Christ*, which noted that Gisbert Greshake had shown what Anselm's theory meant in the terms of his age, but that this would not be useful to modern westerners, and then moved on.[2] But as a missionary to Melanesia, I thought, it might be useful to me.

I eventually found the article in the Bodleian Library in Oxford and slowly translated it from the original German. I am publishing the translation in *Melanesian Journal of Theology* because what Greshake says about feudal German society has strong parallels with contemporary Melanesian society: *satisfactio* ("satisfaction") is the counterpart of compensation, and *poena* ("penalty or punishment") is the counterpart of payback.

Greshake notes that in using the concepts of feudal German society for theology, Anselm transforms them. Compensation has a powerful negative side; it is often associated with merely material gain rather than the restoration of relationship. Bishop Bernard Unabali sometimes speaks about

[1] Romanus Cessario, OP, *The Godly Image: Christ and Salvation in Catholic Thought from Anselm to Aquinas*, Studies in Historical Theology (Petersham, MA: St Bede's, 1990).
[2] Walter Kasper, *Jesus the Christ* (trans. V. Green; Eng. ed.; Tunbridge Wells: Burns & Oates and Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1976), 219–21.

the "compensation industry" stage of the peace process in Bougainville, where it was simply a matter of trying to get as much as possible from the offenders.[3] Not surprisingly, some of my students fail to see how Anselm is transforming the concept of *satisfactio*/compensation, and claim that what he is talking about is called in PNG "reconciliation". But I want to stick to the word "compensation" to show the continuity between the two. The desire for compensation is not be denied, but transformed, or if it is denied, it is only so that a new desire can arise that can be recognised as the true fulfilment of the old one. If we follow this logic we can arrive at a conclusion that Greshake does not reach because it is not an issue for him: compensation can only truly establish peace and the order of justice if it is compensation as transformed by Christ, compensation that draws its power from the price Jesus paid for us on the cross. He alone is the prince of peace.

This, I think, is the most immediate practical conclusion for Melanesians from Greshake's article. However, as I started by mentioning bride price, there is scope for further theological reflection in that direction. If Christ can transform the economy in which compensation payments are made so that they bring true reconciliation, can Christ also transform the economy in which bride price payments are made? Can the man see his bride price as somehow imitating the price that Jesus paid for his bride, the church (Eph 5:22–30)? Can the material goods that the husband gives be a symbol of an inner self-giving that, like Christ's death on the cross, has as its goal not to possess woman but to give her freedom? Greshake merely enables us to ask these questions; it would take a completely new and different article even to begin to explore them.

I do not agree with everything in Greshake's article. I think that he is not entirely fair in his criticism of Thomas. More importantly, I think that he has overlooked the significance of Anselm's definition of the contrasting pair satisfaction and punishment, and therefore has not completely exorcised Anselm's text. God's honour cannot be lessened or destroyed, holds Anselm, and so if God is offended through sin, then God's honour will be restored one way or another: either in accord with the offender's will (satisfaction),

[3] Bernard Unabali, "Reconciliation in Bougainville after the Crisis," Singkai Lecture, 30th June 2017, Catholic Theological Institute, Bomana.

or against the offender's will (punishment).[4] Anselm meaningfully defines punishment without any reference to pain or suffering, and so his insistence that God must be given either *satisfactio* or *poena* (in Latin, *poena* or punishment was given by the offender to the offended one) does not of itself imply any desire in God to inflict suffering. The idea that God might punish is not original with Anselm, of course, as it is thoroughly scriptural: reading Anselm closely may be helpful in interpreting many of those biblical texts.

I should not delay any longer. I am not a great German scholar, so I erred on the side of caution and have tended to be literal rather than to write normal English. Where Greshake used a Latin term, I have kept it, but I have provided an English translation too. Greshake could presume that his German readers of the 1970s knew Latin: I cannot presume the same of today's readers of *MJT*. The numbers in square brackets in the text in the indicate the page numbers in the original article, and use of a smaller font in the translation reflects a change of font size in the original. Greshake will often use an author's ideas, and even quote directly, without giving a full reference, and with the limited resources available here in Port Moresby, I have not had time to chase these up.

I would like to thank Marianne Zabukosek of Camberwell, Victoria, who looked over my translation. In a few places I preferred my original wording as it seemed to match better what I understood of Anselm's thought or simply standard theological usage. So, any mistakes in the translation should be attributed to me alone.

Gisbert Greshake, "Redemption and Freedom: Towards a New Interpretation of the Soteriology of Anselm of Canterbury," *Theologische Quartalschrift* 153 (1973): 323–45

[323] There is probably no theological theory which is so passionately disputed and yet which—although it has never been the object of official church teaching—has imprinted itself on the sense of the faith of so many Christians as the teaching on the redemption of Anselm of Canterbury.

[4] Anselm, *Cur Deus homo* 1.15. The critical edition for this is found in F. S. Schmitt (ed.), *S. Anselmi Cantuariensis archepiscopi opera omnia*, vol. 2: *Continens opera quae archipiscopus composuit* (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1946), 37–133.

To put its distinctive nature (as it is usually understood) in *one* sentence, according to Anselm the essence of redemption is that the God-man Jesus died on the cross to achieve expiation to God for our guilt and through his suffering and death to pay infinite satisfaction for our sin, which we could not pay, so that through him the righteousness of God would be satisfied, his anger calmed, and reconciliation would be established between God and humanity. It will soon be shown that this summary, in fact, has *nothing* in common with the core of Anselm's view. Nonetheless this caricature that I have just outlined still is the dominant cause of the widespread rejection of Anselm's soteriology in the current day. The critique of it still stands under the influence of the Liberal Theology of the previous century, supported above all by Ritschl and Harnack. According to Harnack the weaknesses of this theory lie "so much on the surface, and they offend to an equal extent both our sense of reason and our sense of morality (not to mention the attempt to murder the gospel) to such a degree that, if modern theology were operating under normal conditions, it would not bother wasting words over it." Despite Anselm's good intention and despite some valid observations "never before has such a bad theory been put forward as something *belonging to the church*." But there are also opposing opinions. For example, there is Emil Brunner, who describes Anselm's idea as "priceless" and declares it to be "a first rate achievement" in the history of theology.

[324] Precisely as a result of this heatedly-debated evaluation of Anselm the need has arisen to seek a new interpretation of Anselm with the insights and methods of modern hermeneutics. We don't mean by this merely a retrospective of re-appraisal of the past: since at this time a pronounced embarrassment dominates in theology, there urgently emerges the task of making clear under today's conditions how the message of redemption through Jesus Christ is believable and understandable. What do salvation and reconciliation mean in a world where lack of salvation and reconciliation force themselves on us in a new way each day? Perhaps a look at history, perhaps listening to the testimony to the faith of the past can help us to gain perspectives for the understanding of salvation today. Finally, if we can bear the embarrassment that theology should need to listen to a sociologist, in the words of P.L. Berger "the presumption that one can drive theology under the ignorance of history is not only intolerably self-righteous, it is also uneconomical."

The following explanations are divided into three parts of unequal length. In the first and most detailed section a new interpretation of Anselm's soteriology will be sought; in the second the position and significance of Anselm in the history of theology will be briefly outlined, and finally questions will be asked about the relevance of Anselm's ideas for today.

I. An Interpretation of Anselm's Soteriology

Two Preliminary Remarks:

1. Anselm's soteriology is found above all in his work *Cur Deus homo?*. Anselm wrote this work about the year 1100 when he was fleeing and in exile in Italy, when he, caught up in the investiture controversy, refused to give his oath of feudal loyalty to Henry I of England. He also wrote this work in a [325] situation that was for him extremely troubled and lacking in peace; furthermore, he completed it in an overhasty rush, as people from the surrounding neighbourhood had already, without his knowledge or consent, published the first part of his draft before it had been properly checked over. These external circumstances also might be responsible, as Anselm himself admits, for the fact that the work *Cur Deus homo?* has not achieved its final unity and maturity. Often arguments are placed side by side without any connection; the flow of thought is broken off and then taken up again later in another form. Thus, it is not easy to find the heart of the argumentation. For this reason alone this work has given rise to a very varied and inconsistent interpretation.

2. Anselm quite expressly states that salvation through Jesus Christ has many dimensions. Like his theological opponent Abelard, he can say in this regard that salvation consists in the revelation of the infinite love of God for us; he also points to the saving function of the example and teaching of Jesus. Anselm does not deny these and other dimensions of salvation. Furthermore, he expressly admits: "Whatever a person can say about salvation—there still remain hidden deeper grounds for such a significant thing." Therefore, Anselm does not want to produce a complete soteriology. His motivation, rather, is to find the inner core of the various moments of the process of salvation, the very one which is the ground and unifying factor of all the others. "The crucial point of the question," concludes Boso, Anselm's dialogue partner, "is: Why did God become human, so that humans could be saved through his death, when apparently he could have done this in other ways?"—"He could have done this in other ways!"—this formulation does

not in any way indicate some unreal hypothetical theology, but rather it gives expression to the astonishment of the believer, the believer who so far has accepted his faith in a merely postivistic way, but now has been startled from his comfortable rest by the incarnation of God and the kenosis of the Son, the believer who has discovered the incomprehensible and totally new fact of the death of God. But the formulation, "He could have done this in other ways," also takes into account the objections of the Jews and Muslims, with whom the generation of Anselm found itself in [326] living dialogue, and who specifically held the redemptive death on the cross to be unworthy of a God. So, the discovery of "He could have done it in other ways" leads both to probing the depths of the inner dimensions of the faith in the death of Christ as death-for-us, and to defending it against the objections from outside.

So much for the preliminary remarks. The explanation and interpretation of Anselm's theory of salvation should start at the point which is normally considered to be the key element of Anselm's soteriology, that is, with the examination of the *honour of God* which is injured through human sin.

The Meaning of the Expression: Expiation for the Injured Honour of God

The human being—as Anselm emphasises again and again—has through his or her sin deprived God of the honour due to him. He was created for obedience, for devotion, for service of God. He has deprived himself of this goal through his sin. He has through the cancellation of his obedience deprived God of his honour and refused his love. He has thrown away the ground of his being, lost his purpose. In order to be able to exist again as a meaningful creature, he must give back to God his honour; he must achieve satisfaction for the honour of God which has been taken away. If not, he falls victim to his own meaninglessness. This is the force behind the axiom: *aut satisfactio aut poena* ["either satisfaction or penalty/either compensation or payback"]—either humanity makes satisfaction for the injured honour of God, or he falls victim to eternal punishment. God in his own righteousness must demand one of the two: *aut satisfactio aut poena*. But because the human being cannot make an infinite satisfaction, God sends his own Son, who through his vicarious death on the cross pays the satisfaction for us and so the honour of God and the broken relationship between God and humanity is restored.

A strange thing, this "honour of God", which is injured through human sin and for that reason is demanded back by him in the form of punishment or satisfaction (= expiation)! Does it not seem that the liberal critique has got it [327] right here: the worst thing about Anselm is—as Harnack says—"his mythological understanding of God as a powerful private individual, who rages on account of his damaged honour, and will not give up his anger until he has obtained some equivalent of at least the same greatness"? Is it not—Harnack continues—a terrifying thought, "that God has a horrible privilege with respect to humanity, to be unable to forgive out of love, but rather always needing a payment."? Since that time this critique has remained a general *topos* of criticism of Anselm. On the Catholic side even, for example, J. Ratzinger joins in. He remarks that the infinite expiation, the repayment of which God demands, shows God in a "sinister [*unheimlich*] light." "The impression forces itself on one's consciousness that Christian faith in the cross represents a God whose unmerciful righteousness has demanded a human sacrifice, the sacrifice of his own Son. And one turns oneself away from a righteousness whose dark anger makes the message of love unworthy of belief."

Now is the time to ask why, according to Anselm, is God reckoned to demand *satisfactio—Genugtuung* ["satisfaction"] for sin? Why does not his unconditional forgiveness and goodness satisfy? Is not the axiom *aut satisfactio aut poena* totally unsuitable to express the process of salvation, in that there is no room in this alternative for God's love and pity? But Anselm does not deny God's infinite compassion. Just the opposite! Towards the end of the work *Cur Deus homo?* he triumphantly claims, "We have now found the compassion of God to be so great and in agreement with justice, that it cannot be thought to be any greater." But for Anselm this compassion of God is not something totally free-floating, arbitrary; rather, it is tied to justice, or better, to the *ordo iustitiae* ["order of justice"], which God himself has set. Therefore, Anselm can address God with the words "What does not happen justly is not allowed to happen, and what is not allowed to happen happens unjustly. Therefore, if you do not take pity on sin justly, you are not allowed to take pity; and if you are not allowed to take pity, you would take pity unjustly." Therefore, because the pity of God must be *just*, the *justice* axiom *aut satisfactio aut poena* holds true—either satisfaction or punishment for sin. To grant compassion without observing this *ordo iustitiae* means to

forgive sin "*inordinate*"—against this *ordo*. "But it would be a thing of derision," declares Anselm, "to want to attribute such a compassion to God."

[328] What outrageous expressions! Can they be understood at all? Don't we find here even more clearly the mythical picture of a God who is constrained by a magical order of justice, which watches over the absolute maintenance of the divine honour, and would even set this honour against any possible compassion of God?

This very widespread interpretation overlooks, however, some crucial expressions of Anselm, which put it all in a completely different light. For Anselm declares briefly and succinctly, "It is impossible that God could lose his honour!" "God's honour, *so far as it concerns him*, can in no way be added to or taken away from. For in itself the honour is indestructible and totally unchangeable. But if the creature … maintains his order, it, so to speak, obeys God and honours him … If it should want what it should, it honours God, *not because it gives him something*, but because it voluntarily submits itself to his will and his ordering and it maintains its place in the universe of things and the beauty of this universe, *so far as it concerns* [*the creature*] *itself*. But if the creature should not want what it should, in that way it dishonours God, *so far as it concerns the creature itself*, precisely because it does not voluntarily submit itself to his ordering and makes a mess of the order and beauty of the universe, so far as the creature has a share in it (*quantum in se est*), though admittedly the creature does not in the least (!) injure or disfigure the power and the dignity of God." With these and similar expressions it is made clear beyond doubt: God's being-Lord, his honour, suffers no damage through human sin and thereby needs no restoration or satisfaction. Therefore the "injuring of the honour of God" through sin (as Anselm puts it) does not involve God at all, but rather it involves humans, it involves the order and beauty of the world, which is handed over to humanity and is destroyed through its guilt. Therefore, God and his personal honour do [329] not demand restoration, rather the world, disfigured and turned completely upside down, demands restoration. Therefore, at a crucial place God's honour is re-interpreted by Anselm anthropologically (or, if you want, sociologically) and understood as the order and beauty, as *the honour of creation itself*, which, as it were, should reflect the honour of God. But what does this mean, and why does Anselm often speak expressly of the honour *of God*?

We must go back a lot further in order to answer this problem. Only in that way can we open up the core of the thought world of Anselm.

[330] The Sociological Context: "Honour" in the German World

Anselm's soteriology cannot be understood without taking note of the sociological context in which he stood. Since the arrival of the sociological formulation of the question, we see more clearly than before that each theory is based on a sociological plausibility structure, a sociological *eidos*, whose immediate comprehensibility and obviousness is grounded and guaranteed by the experiential horizon of the epoch concerned, and above all by the social situation. It is certainly an important and vast task of future dogmatic and theological history to take into account sufficiently the problematic posed by sociology.

The imagery and social basis from which Anselm saw the honour of God, the position of humanity, sin, and salvation, is the German constitutional law of his time. This needs to be dealt with more closely.

From the early Germanic legal ideas of an oath of allegiance and loyalty there developed in the kingdom of the Franks the feudal system with feudal law, which thence develops into the decisive form of the medieval constitution. For although other constitutional forms still continue to exist alongside feudalism, nonetheless we find even these gradually "infiltrated with feudal concepts and not able to be completely understood without having regard to them." The heart of feudalism lies [331] in the original interpersonal commitment of a feudal lord and vassal, who promised each other loyalty for loyalty and thus entered into mutual dependence. The vassal receives from the lord a fief and protection and with it a share in the public power and official mission; the lord obtains from the vassal the undertaking of allegiance and service. The kingship becomes more and more involved in this feudal connection, so that the king emerges as the apex of a feudal pyramid spreading itself downward into many ranks and little by little including almost the whole social unit. This inclusive feudal order not only gives the individual his established role, his rights and his freedom,—in this order there also lies the peace, unity and cohesion of the social fabric.

The meaning of this historical indication for the understanding of Anselm's theology becomes immediately clear if one considers that the feudal order is essentially totally grounded in the mutual recognition of the social placement and function, or, to put it in other terms, the recognition of the "honour" of the contractual partners. In this Germanic world honour is not some sort of virtue, not some moral value, not personal self-esteem, nor even the esteem achieved through another—*honor* is not *gloria*!—; rather, honour is the recognised "position, which anybody

occupies in the connection with the life of the people." So, honour is the quintessence of social existence, "the ordering factor in the relations of people with each other." Feudalism particularly rested on the honour of lord and vassal, recognised and strengthened through the oath of allegiance. The honouring and enforcement of this honour thereby becomes the root of the social ordering of freedom, law and peace. Law, peace and freedom are a virtual synonym for "honour", so, looking from the other side, dishonour and the injury of honour are equivalent in meaning to lawlessness and the absence of peace, unfreedom and ruin. Therefore, according to the Germanic understanding, the state with its law is not a pre-existing abstract "[your] highness"—a sort of made-up juridical person; rather, the state is identified with its personal bearers and their mutual relations. This holds above all for the [332] king. His position, his *honor* quite simply constitutes the state and the law. Therefore, he is not an individual, a private person; rather in his recognised position he guarantees the overall public ordering of peace. Should his *honor* be injured, the state of peace is broken, the cohesion of the social fabric is endangered. The restoration of the royal honour is therefore not demanded for the personal satisfaction of the office holder, but *for the sake of the restoration of the order of the whole*. What holds for the king holds to a lesser degree for the lower orders of the feudal pyramid: the recognised *honores* (relations of honour) are the decisive constituents of law and order.

For this reason, the restoration of injured honour is no purely private concern; it has social and public consequences. Now, according to Germanic law the restoration of injured honour took place either through the punishment of the guilty party (*poena*) or through satisfaction (*satisfactio*). Now the legal axiom *aut satisfactio aut poena* is not specifically Germanic; the Roman law already knew for legal infringements either the infliction of a direct revenge punishment or a penance/penalty (expiation, satisfaction)—a sort of substitute punishment, therefore, which one carried out on oneself as a voluntary, pre-emptive self-punishment. This *satisfactio* did indeed have the character of a punishment, insofar as it was based in the loss of valuables or in an adoption of burdens, but in Roman law it already had a note of the voluntary, the spontaneous, and the personal. The legal axiom *aut satisfactio aut poena* entered the church's theology and practice of penance through Tertullian,[5] and there—and mediated through the mediaeval practice of penance—[333] it met with the equivalent Germanic legal principle. In the process *satisfactio* achieved concrete form generally as monetary penalty to the person whose honour had been offended. What served as the measure of the amount to be paid was the fixed numerical value of a person in the customary institution of what was called Wergeld, which again was equivalent to the social position, the *honor* of the one

[5] Tertullian, *De pudicitia* 2.13 (CCL 2.1285): "aut uenia … aut poena, uenia ex castigatione, poena ex damnatione."

offended. In other words, the quality of the wrong and of the compensation was measured by the status or "honour position" of the one harmed, as quantified in the Wergeld. Since the punishment for injured honour was usually carried out as a cruel act of revenge and had general lawlessness as its consequence, the payment of the Bußgeld or monetary penalty *(satisfactio),* as a friendly and peaceful settlement (*compositio*), took priority over the vindictive punishment. "Associated with the admission of guilt, the Bußgeld counted as a perfectly adequate performance of satisfaction, since it involved the humiliation of the offender," and also recognised the injured honour of the other party, and thereby preserved the general order of law and peace.

With this excursus we have now investigated the life context and the sociological horizon in which Anselm's soteriology stood, from which it has its plausibility and coherence, and the whole point of it can be truly seen: God's government of the world is conceived by Anselm on analogy with that of a Germanic king or supreme feudal lord, whose honour provided the foundation for and guaranteed the general maintenance of law, order, and peace. Human sin is an assault on this *honor dignitatis* ["honour of dignity"]; it is a breach of loyalty, the removal of the submission that God deserves, and thereby it is at the same time the destruction of the order of the world, the breaking of the peace of the universe.

The Anthropological-Sociological Function of the "Honour of God"

However, if one looks more closely, Anselm corrects this model of Germanic constitutional law that had been given to him in advance for the purposes of his theological message. Whereas there the breaking of allegiance was directed both to the personal honour of the offended party and to the public legal system, which was constituted through it, here sin against God only offends the order of the world; it offends only the creature itself, not the [334] personal honour of God. "God's honour cannot be increased or decreased," Anselm expressly remarks. Precisely this point of view has either been completely overlooked or not fully appreciated in the interpretation of Anselm up until now, since they do not take note of the sociological context by means of which the anthropological-sociological function of the "honour of God" as constituting the order of creation becomes understandable. If according to Anselm God demands satisfaction for his injured honour, this has nothing to do with God in himself; he does not bring forward the demand on analogy with an injured private individual, as Harnack would have it, but rather as the very one who could restore the world and its order, in that

humanity acknowledges him again as Lord. The point of demanding satisfaction is not, therefore, the reconciliation of an angered lord, but the reconciliation of the world. "God had no need," says Anselm expressly, "that he should save the human being, but human nature needed that God gave satisfaction in this way." And in this way a second modification can be seen which Anselm carries out on the sociological model which is given to him in advance: the character of expiation and punishment, which *satisfactio* had in both Germanic and Roman law, fades further and further away in Anselm's theological argumentation. The satisfaction that God demands is not punishment, but rather something *purely positive*: humanity has to completely restore honour to God, which means that it must once again acknowledge him as Lord and submit its freedom to him, for it is precisely there that there is freedom and peace, law and meaningfulness for the world.

And so we can see the sociological model according to which Anselm thinks the God-human relationship: if God demands the restoration of his honour through *satisfactio*, this does not involve God at all; rather, it is only about people.

[335] The connection between the sociological model and the theological message that has been demonstrated in the case of the interpretation of Anselm is clearly confirmed again if one considers the subsequent historical development. Since the middle of the twelfth century (more precisely, from 1158, the Diet of Roncaglia, at which jurists of Roman law from the school of Bologna were consulted), Roman constitutional law made advances in Germanic lands. The most important innovation that introduced was "the connecting element of the unified authority of the state, from whose abundance all authority was derived." Not only this, but also under the influence of Roman constitutional law the feudal state and feudal law decayed and were gradually re-organised "into a system of objective order."

What becomes of the Anselmic concept of the "honour of God", now that its sociological basis and its social context are being transformed? The theological consequences can be read in Thomas Aquinas. For Thomas, God is no longer primarily conceived of as the One constituting the world order through the acknowledgement of his honour, but rather as absolute sovereign, who in the event of human guilt can act as a sort of private person. God can remit human sins out of pure compassion (without *satisfactio*!), "just as every man can forgive an insult committed against him without satisfaction out of compassion and does not act unjustly in doing so." God is a sovereign free lord as well; he can remit unconditionally the sins directed against him; *satisfactio* is no longer an absolutely necessary legal demand. In this way theology has also changed its representational

model according to the change in the legal order. Out of the God conceived on analogy with a supreme feudal lord, who insists on the recognition of his honour for the sake of the ordering of creation, has emerged the "sovereign" who no longer stands in a relational-interpersonal legal order, but who is the very definition of sovereign of law and order.

This observation concerning the subsequent development similarly confirms *e contrario* the specific Anselmic understanding of satisfaction: satisfaction is demanded so that in the acknowledgement of God's honour the world may recover its order. But no human being can achieve this "satisfaction". To the objection raised by his dialogue partner Boso—but the human being could devote himself to God after his sin through repentance, new obedience and new love—Anselm answers pregnantly: "You have just not grasped what weight sin has." Sin is not a mere episode, after which a human being can turn himself back to God and let the past rest by itself; [336] rather, through sin that which holds together and guarantees the order of the world, the recognition of God, is totally deformed. Only the attitude of unconditional obedience and radical devotion on the side of the creature could provide new ground for the honour of God in creation, and thus for the very order of creation. But no human being is capable of such an unconditional attitude. Anselm explains this incapacity again, all in the context of his sociological model of Germanic law, as he asks for an infinite payment almost really balancing the infinitely injured honour of God—which in many interpretations is emphasised as the specific centre of the Anselmian conception of soteriology. But one should not overlook that this measuring of equivalents is for Anselm just *one* dialectical step amongst others, so that it can be seen that an infinite personal devotion and unlimited love is demanded for the restoration of creation, which quite simply exceeds the capacity of corrupted humanity.

"Satisfactio" as a Moment of Freedom

But what now? Is humanity therefore to be abandoned to the punishment of its own meaninglessness and purposelessness? No, for "then it would seem as if he (God) either has changed his mind about the good (of creation) that he had begun, or that he could not execute his plan." Humanity would have been created "in vain". But that is unthinkable. For when God freely created the human being for fellowship with himself, his will and his decision for the creature was absolute and not open to revision. For this reason, God owes it to himself, to his goodness and loyalty, to bring to fulfilment the work of

creation that he has begun. [337] But how can this come about? Does the unconditional Yes of God to the human being posit a radically new beginning? Does an act of all-powerful compassion undo sin? For Anselm, neither of these things is possible. God does not correct his work through a second creation. And, even more so, he does not replace the free will of creation through an act of his omnipotence. For then humanity would be injured in its most precious capacity, precisely where its worth and distinction lies, namely, human freedom and independence. Were the unconditional all-powerful compassion of God to take humanity to beatitude, salvation would sweep over the human being; it would simply confirm humanity in its powerlessness and in this way make it for all eternity "needy", "defiled", and thus "unblessed," make it unable to achieve what it was created for. So, humanity would not regain its original dignity and freedom. For humanity was created free, wherein lies its "dignity, power, and beauty." By virtue of their freedom, they should themselves overcome evil and devote themselves to God. They should freely, through the recognition of God and love of him, maintain the order and beauty of the world and so find their way to beatitude. If, therefore, salvation should be the restoration of the freedom of human beings, if it should place them back again in the original position of free partner as willed by God at creation, then salvation cannot and may not be achieved as a sovereign act of the divine compassion over humanity, but rather it must be "just" [*gerecht*], it must put human beings back in the right [*Recht*], make them capable of being responsible in freedom for their own salvation.

[338] With this it is clear what Anselm means by *iustitia* or *ordo iustitiae*—not an abstract, mythical ordering that envelops even God himself, but that righteousness which God himself is and in which he remains "righteous to his own self". It is the righteousness by virtue of which the God of creation said Yes to human beings and their freedom and autonomy and carries this Yes through. The *ordo iustitiae* is therefore nothing other than the unconditional loyalty of God to the free, independent creature—a loyalty which goes so far that—and now come what are probably the sharpest but also clearest and most unambiguous words of Anselm— "if the human race lifts itself up again after the Fall, it must lift and erect itself right out by means of itself." For this reason, *satisfactio*, that means the action of the human being, is demanded, not because in this way God receives something from human beings, but because in this way the freedom and autonomy of the

human being remains preserved in the process of salvation, in this way—yes! —salvation is achieved by the free human being himself.

But since the sinful human being is incapable of such *satisfactio*, God made it possible through the sending of his Son, who *as human* in absolute freedom and spontaneity—in his death as the final consequence of a life of radical obedience and unconditional love—standing in the place of the whole human race, gives honour to God (with this phrase meant according to the explanations we have just had): who in his own person also re-establishes creation for us as well. Therefore for Anselm Jesus is in no way at all God's whipping-boy;[*] [339] in him God does not punish the innocent for the guilty; nor is his death on the cross the consequence of a conflict between divine attributes of compassion and justice; for Anselm God does not stand against God; rather, the voluntary death of Jesus is the culmination of a life which radically gave itself away to God and to the others and precisely in this way fulfilled creation in freedom and re-constituted everything for us. In his death a space for reconciliation as true peace and true freedom is opened, in which humanity—as *imitatores* [imitators], as Anselm says—may and can enter through discipleship.

But why, according to Anselm, must it be the "Son" who is the God-man? Could not some other sinless creature act as substitute in fulfilling the same free deed of radical obedience? For Anselm this possibility is excluded, because human freedom would not be fully restored in this way either. Right from its creation, humanity should be responsible for itself, should be independent and subordinate its freedom to God alone, should find its true freedom in this single act of submission. Now if another creature, even if it were sinless, were to bring salvation, the human being would be indebted to it. And so a new limitation of human freedom would arise. Only the one who is God and human being simultaneously can bestow freedom without making one "unfree" in a new way.

This is as far as research has been able to present anew the basic lines of Anselm's soteriology at this stage. Certainly, today a great deal of this sort of thought is foreign and strange. Especially on account of its close interconnectedness with Germanic legal concepts, the theology of Anselm seems to represent merely a historical curiosity from a time long past,

[*] In earlier centuries if a young prince deserved to be punished (e.g., for misbehaving in lessons), to avoid the disgrace of physically attacking royalty, the punishment would be carried out on a servant, the "whipping boy".

without relevance and normativity for us today. However, in the course of the explanations it should have been continually more apparent that, essentially, Anselm's thoughts come straight from a biblical covenant theology. Insofar as Anselm understands the *iustitia Dei* or the *ordo iustitiae* [340] as the unconditional loyalty of God to his free, autonomous creation, he comes very close to the biblical understanding of justice. For according to Scripture *iustitia Dei* [the justice of God] means the same as God's covenant loyalty. God in his justice—*sedakah*—never ceases to offer humanity the living-space of the covenant, in which humanity is allowed to be not merely the recipient of the divine goodness, but also the free partner of God, whom it is allowed to receive in freedom as both gift and task. The free recognition of the "honour of God" is the response of humanity appropriate to the covenant, which offers it "Life" and leaves creation intact. If humanity refuses this response, then it becomes enslaved to "death," insofar as it does not in freedom carry out *satisfactio*, the behaviour appropriate to the new covenant. So, the covenant obliges humanity and at the same time sets it free for a freedom which God always respects. Anselm translates this fundamental structure of biblical covenant theology (which we have already described in terms of Anselmic concepts) into Germanic constitutional law, not without considerable corrections, and thereby renders meaningful for his time the idea that redemption arises from the absolute loyalty of God to the dignity and freedom of humanity, and that it is carried out respecting and taking into account the freedom and autonomy of humanity. It was not the sociological idea-system described above, nor the ways of speaking and thinking that are strange to us in so many respects, but rather the fundamental understanding of redemption as the freeing of human freedom through the deputisation of a freeman brought to expression and translated within Anselm's thought itself, which allowed it to be a unique and enduring achievement in theological history.

This can be seen observed more precisely in a short historical outline.

II. The Place and Significance of Anselm in the History of Theology

If one looks over the history of Christian soteriology, one can see there a remarkable development. In the Greek Fathers, human redemption is regarded as pointedly theocentric, i.e., the active subject of the redemption is God, or, to be precise, the *Logos*, the divine nature of Christ. God and God

alone brings salvation and rescue to fallen humanity. Human freedom can only passively receive the work of redemption wrought by God alone.

Contrary to this broadly outlined theocentric concept of the Greek Fathers, western or Latin theology brings to light [341] to a greater degree the *human* side of the redemption. In western soteriology the cross stands in centre stage as the reconciliatory sacrifice of humanity, which the *human being* Jesus, deputising for all, offers to the Father, so as to heal the broken relationship between God and humanity. Admittedly, God is also seen here in so far as he is the decisive subject of the act of redemption, as he appoints Jesus as the mediator with humanity and has assumed humanity in the hypostatic union. And yet it is important to see the change of perspective: in Western theology God is no longer the only acting subject, but in and through Jesus humanity is included in its own liberation.

Anselm stands on this western-Latin line, but—in my opinion—at a singular moment. He combines the concept of *satisfactio* in the minutest detail with human freedom and dignity. The human race must lift and erect itself right out by means of itself. Humanity itself is responsible in freedom for the restoration of creation. God's redeeming compassion is thereby the empowerment of humanity for its own redemption, and, more specifically through the sending of the representative, the God-man Jesus, who precisely *as a free human being* is our representative. In Anselm's theory his divine nature has—as A. Ritschl has already correctly remarked—merely the function of being "that which establishes the value of human nature in action/transaction." Or in Anselm's words, "In all this, the divine nature is not lowered but the human nature is exalted." Thus, in the work of Anselm, redemption is thought through on the basis of human freedom in a totally unique way, in that it revolves around the focus of *iustitia*, God's covenant loyalty with a free partner.

With this passion for freedom, which always permeates the theological work of Anselm and which is combined in its minutest detail with the praxis of freedom, which Anselm proved through his conduct in the Investiture Crisis, [342] Anselm's soteriology is an extremely important step in the history of freedom in the West. If one does not rashly let oneself become deterred by scholastic formulations, but knows how to listen to the language of a time long gone, the basic lines of Anselm's soteriology are the very first outlines of that modern theory of redemption, which is determined by the question of emancipation, i.e., of human self-liberation.

Yet, Anselm's initiatives were not carried through. Although with him, on the basis of his understanding of God's covenant loyalty, God's compassion and justice were inseparably combined, in Scotism and Nominalism there was introduced the disastrous division of the divine compassion and justice—the latter understood as punitive justice—,which formed the pre-condition and background of the Reformation re-interpretation of Anselm's soteriology. In Luther and Calvin the representative *satisfactio* of Christ was rethought as a *satispassio* ["sufficient suffering"]. Christ suffered God's wrath for us, so that God's compassion for us occurs therein *sub contrario* ["under its opposite"]. Here one can no longer feel any trace of freedom and the empowerment of creation, but now just the gloomy mediation of the divine attributes of compassion and justice on the back of Jesus Christ. God against God! Just in the way that Anselm did not understand it. Therefore, the modern critic of his doctrine of satisfaction does not meet him at all, but that remodelling of his teaching, at most only his concepts; the spirit of Anselm, however, no longer survives.

But what does the genuine "spirit" of Anselm have to say to us today? With this we come to the third and final part, in which on the basis of Anselm some very fragmentary perspectives for the conveying of the message of redemption today will be sketched. Therefore, it is not at all the case of an unmediated re-issuing of Anselm's soteriology, attached to a bygone age, which would scarcely be possible without substantially violating it, but rather it is a case of setting some critical and perhaps also enhancing directions for contemporary formulations of soteriology.

[343] III. The Message of Redemption Today

It is probably not a simplification if one says that today the Christian message of redemption appears in two different forms, or more precisely, *between two opposing poles*.

The first, more traditional formulation lies on the line which has marked western teaching on grace since Augustine. According to this formulation, redemption consists in the *interior* salvation of the human being, in the justification and sanctification of human subjectivity through God's grace. This grace is understood as an internal power that establishes the foundational operations of faith, hope, and love and gives a share in the divine life. Through it, Christ was able to live in a still unredeemed and unreconciled world in the inner freedom of the child of God; he is driven by

the Spirit to love in a reality that is still full of hate; he receives the strength and the hope to see it through in a world full of confusion and darkness. So, the human being finds his identity in the isolated space of subjective or interpersonal-ecclesial inwardness. This inner freedom, this inner finding of identity through grace to a great extent, of course, leaves the unredeemed world out there; the world is perhaps the addressee and the workspace of redeemed life and action. But the gift of freedom itself, the grace of redemption, is fundamentally interior, invisible, mysterious, without any constitutive link to the world. Here it would certainly be the right time to ask whether in this way a fundamental element of the biblical message of redemption is overlooked. For Scripture, redemption is quite essentially an event, "which takes place in public, on the stage of history and in the medium of community, in short, which takes place decisively in the world and it cannot be thought without such a manifestation," as the Jewish theologian Gershom Scholem writes, who thereby also presents the objections of Judaism against this form of Christian teaching on redemption.

In the face of this question, Anselm's concept of *ordo* can, under other conditions and within a transformed thought-horizon, be a critical corrective. Anselm does not locate his soteriology in the inner salvation of the individual. For him it concerns the restoration of creation disfigured through sin, the healing of the broken order of the world. Redemption as a new ordering of justice, peace, and freedom can, according to him, provide just that place where creation gives honour to God, i.e., where all worldly reality is through humanity included in an attitude of obedience; where humanity does not make itself the ultimate concern in its dealings with the world, [344] divinise itself and thereby violate just about everything, oversubscribes, destroys, but where it leaves the last place free, or, more precisely, where it hands over its freedom to God as to the Lord, who is love and who gives the freedom to love. In the life and death of Jesus such radical obedience has taken place in a way that is representative and normative for all of us. But his act of representation does not mean a quintessential substitute for one's own deed, a relieving of one's own responsibility. By closely combining the concept of representation with the idea of discipleship, Anselm made it clear: the representation of Jesus designates the place where our freedom also has its foundation, where the redemption of the world for all time can be found.

In saying this, we now touch on the other opposing pole of the Christian representation of redemption today. We are thinking of those theories which

in different ways combine with modern ideas of emancipation. According to these theories, redemption is purely a future goal, to be achieved first of all through human activity. On the journey there, the messages of Christianity, especially the "Jesus thing," have the function of an ethical impulse and a real-utopian ideal, which is able to initiate the critical emancipation process and to maintain it as it goes along.

Such tendencies can be found especially in the field of *political* and *social-theoretical* theology. Anselm would critically question them at the point where they understand radical and exclusive redemption as a future for freedom to be made by human being: do they not burden and demand something from humanity which simply overtaxes it and makes it "unfree" all over again? "You have not yet understood what weight sin has," remarks Anselm. Have such theories really gauged the utter abandonment and entanglement of humanity in its own "unfreedom"? How is freedom possible under the conditions of unfreedom? And how are brotherhood and love possible under the conditions of hatred and oppression? To elevate love, brotherhood and peace to be merely the postulate of duty is—as T. W. Adorno writes—a "self-perpetuating item of ideology, which perpetuates the freeze. It possesses the compulsion and oppression that works against the capacity for love." So, it is no wonder that blind-activist engagement for freedom on the one side and weary resignation on the other—as we can often observe today—are merely complementary forms of the one unfreedom, which obviously seizes humanity just where all the realisation of redemption as the future goal of his own activity is loaded on him. And in this way is not that astonishing up-to-date sounding insight of Anselm's confirmed, that precisely where redemption comes solely from humanity, there always also arise at the same time new conditions on freedom, new unfreedoms?

[345] For Anselm, redemption is only guaranteed in the actual representative redemptive act of the God-man. It is thereby established beyond doubt that redemption is not an outstanding [in the sense both of "yet to be achieved" and "standing outside"] *goal* that unceasingly overtaxes humanity, but that it *is* [already] achieved, and precisely *in humanity, out of human freedom*—albeit enabled by God. The human being Jesus in his freedom allowed and enabled to take place that stance of *satisfactio*, that unconditional obedience and uncompromising love, which alone redeemed the world. Of course, this representative action of one individual is not exclusive. On the contrary, it enables and provides the pattern for

discipleship, as the representative shares the way which he has travelled, the way whose destination is called the fulness of life. So, Jesus in his representation is no mere substitute, who does what we were unwilling or unable to do. He is the one-who-stands-in-our-place, i.e., he has opened for us and keeps open for us the only place in which the world can finds identity. "The human race has its own place with God," as is sung at the conclusion of J. S. Bach's *Christmas Oratorio*. According to Anselm, this "place" is the posture of Jesus, the posture of radical obedience and unbounded love, which, so long as reconciliation is still lacking in the world, will always bear the signature of the cross, the signature of dedication, of self-surrender, of powerlessness, of pain, but also of hope and confidence. Until God shall be "all in all," we are on the way to this place and we find there our identity and freedom only partially and never fully, or as we could better put it: we find them in that identification in which Jesus identified himself with each one of us, in that identification which unburdens us, sets us free and precisely in this way encourages us to discipleship, which in a still unreconciled world necessarily leads us to the place where Jesus stands in for us. So, the cross under the conditions of history is the place of our identity and freedom. It is clear that this "place" cannot be found at a lesser cost.