

THE POWER OF THE CROSS: ANSELM CHRISTOLOGY

ANSELM OF CANTERBURY (1033-1109)

Cur Deus Homo?

Book 1

Why the God-Man?

- More on the mediator rather than the becoming
- Divine justice and divine mercy
- A new exploration: why the death of someone divine and human is the source of our salvation
- Redemption
- The magnitude of sin

Why a creature could not have saved us (1.5)

- Subsistence to the creature
- Dignity of humanity

The wrath of God (1.6)

- This is just his desire for punishment
- Why couldn't he just desire not to punish?
- God's power must be beyond petty vengeance
- There is no power equal to God to which God must give what is due

The power of the devil (1.7)

- The devil could not have rightful power over humanity beyond God's power
- If humanity's slavery is a state of injustice, this cannot be a rightful state for the devil
- The infliction of punishment is an injustice of the devil
- The devil has no right over us

What God wishes must be reasonable (1.8)

- To condemn a just man for the sake of the unjust is not reasonable
- If he was forced to do so by humanity's sin, this is not godly

The obedience of Christ is true human obedience (1.9)

- It is our duty to maintain truth and justice
- Humanity was made holy, happy in the enjoyment of God
- Without sin, humans would not be compelled to die
- Christ gave himself to death because of his perfection in maintaining truth and justice

Why must Christ die: why could God not save humanity in some other way (1.10)

- Why the blood of the innocent?

What is sin? (1.11)

- Humans are created for happiness / they cannot be happy without forgiveness of sin
- Sin is not rendering God his due
- God is due our total obedience: a total and complete debt of honor
- Sin robs God and dishonors him
- The remedy is not merely to begin to offer God his due once again, but to restore to God more than was robbed: he ought to give to God more than is demanded

- This would be paying back the honor of God, making satisfaction for sin

Can God merely forget sin? (1.12)

- If God merely dismissed sin, without repayment, he would not punish for sin
- God cannot leave what should be done not done
- This would render justice meaningless: the guilty and the not guilty would be the same
- Law would be meaningless
- If injustice were countered by mere compassion, then injustice would be freer than justice
- How, if God is “so merciful as that nothing more merciful can be conceived”, can he not merely get over injury done to his honor?
- Freedom is always freedom for what is fitting; mercy is not mercy if it is against God
- If God does what is wrong, then he is not God

It cannot happen that the creature rob God and not restore what was taken away (1.13)

- This destroys the goodness of creation
- Justice must reign supreme; justice is that which maintains God's honor
- Either restoration or punishment must follow injustice

The punishment of the wicked (1.14)

- Punishment is God's taking back what was due him

God's honor cannot be damaged in the slightest (1.15)

- Though we wish to go against God, we cannot escape God's power

The fallen angels (1.16-18)

- Human salvation makes up for the fallen angels
- The fall of the angels must be against the design of God
- Therefore the design of God must be completed
- Humanity is also foreseen to complete the number God had ordained, which was not completed by the angels together

Satisfaction

- Satisfaction proportionate to guilt

Severity of sin

- Powerlessness of the state of sin
- No possibility for happiness

Possibility of salvation

Book 2

Purpose of Incarnation

- Resurrection is perfect restoration
- Completion of God's design

How?

- Perfect God and perfect human
- Necessity of the birth from a woman
- Necessity of personal union made by the Son

How is Christ impeccable

- Freedom of Christ's death
- Sharing in our weakness, not our ignorance

Death atones for all human sin

- Not a necessary death

- How our salvation results

Methodological issues

- Legal context
- Punishment due to sin
- Restitution
- Ontological perspective

Exultet

... O truly necessary sin of Adam, destroyed completely by the Death of Christ!

O happy fault that earned so great, so glorious a Redeemer!

...

See also

Aulen, Gustaf, *Christus Victor* (London: SPCK, 1965).

Exultet

Rejoice, heavenly powers! Sing choirs of angels!
Exult, all creation around God's throne!
Jesus Christ, our King is risen!
Sound the trumpet of salvation!

Rejoice, O earth, in shining splendor, radiant in the brightness of your King!
Christ has conquered! Glory fills you!
Darkness vanishes for ever!
Rejoice, O Mother Church! Exult in glory!
The risen Savior shines upon you!

Let this place resound with joy, echoing the mighty song of all God's people!

...

It is truly right that with full hearts and minds and voices we should praise the unseen God, the all-powerful Father, and his only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

For Christ has ransomed us with his blood, and paid for us the price of Adam's sin
to our eternal Father!

This is our passover feast,

When Christ, the true Lamb, is slain, whose blood consecrates the homes of all believers.

This is the night, when first you saved our fathers: you freed the people of Israel

from their slav'ry,

and led them dry-shod through the sea.

This is the night, when the pillar of fire destroyed the darkness of sin.

This is night, when Christians ev'rywhere, washed clean of sin and freed from all defilement, are restored to grace and grow together in holiness.

This is the night, when Jesus broke the chains of death and rose triumphant from the grave.

What good would life have been to us, had Christ not come as our Redeemer? Father, how wonderful your care for us!

How boundless your merciful love!

To ransom a slave you gave away your Son.

O happy fault, O necessary sin of Adam,

which gained for us so great a Redeemer! Most blessed of all nights, chosen by God to see Christ rising from the dead!

Of this night scripture says:

"The night will be as clear as day:

it will become my light, my joy."

The power of this holy night dispels all evil, washes guilt away, restores lost innocence, brings mourners joy ;

it casts out hatred, brings us peace,

and humbles earthly pride.

Night truly blessed, when heaven is wedded to earth and we are reconciled to God!

Therefore, heavenly Father, in the joy of this night, receive our evening sacrifice of praise,

your Church's solemn offering.

Accept this Easter candle,

a flame divided but undimmed,

a pillar of fire that glows to the honor of God.

Let it mingle with the lights of heaven and continue bravely burning to dispel the darkness of this night!

May the Morning Star which never sets find this flame still burning: Christ, that Morning Star, who came back from the dead, and shed his peaceful light on all mankind, your Son, who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.