

Synopsis of Anselm, Why God Became Man

This work is written so that believers may delight in the logic of the faith, seeing with certainty that truth which the faith proclaims (p. 260).

- This prefigures the sight/knowledge that we shall have in the next life (compare pp. 265-267).

Against the objections of critics (Jews and Muslims who saw the incarnation as unnecessary and irrational), it will be shown that without the incarnation of the Son of God, no human being could be saved (pp. 261-262).

Instead of offering simple pictures (analogies), an argument needs to demonstrate

- That it was necessary for the redemption of human beings to occur and
- That this could only have been brought about by one who
 - Was both human and divine (thus requiring the incarnation) and
 - Acted voluntarily (not as a result of necessity or compulsion).

The first part of the argument will discuss

- The honor that must be given to God;
- How human beings failed to offer this;
- Why, when honor is not given to God, compensation must be offered;
- Why human beings cannot offer this compensation;
- Why only one who is both God and human can offer this compensation, reconciling fallen human beings to God.

The first part of the argument is intended to respond to this Jewish and Muslim objection:

“If God was not powerless, but had unlimited power, why could God not redeem human beings by a simple (arbitrary) exercise of his power, using not punishment but mercy to achieve his purposes for humanity? In other words, why, if God is completely free, should we think of him as *compelled to punish*?”

Answer:

- Insofar as God is superior in every way, it is right and fitting that he should be honored.
- “[T]o sin is nothing other than not to give God what is owed to him...taking from God what is his” (p. 283).
- Justice requires that to correctly regulate sin (i.e. take account of sin as sin), sin must be punished.
 - In response to man’s rebellion (violently taking/seizing what is God’s), it would be fitting for God to bring man into submission (i.e. back into right order) by taking away what is man’s (those goods essential to man’s blessedness, such as immortality/freedom from death).
- To ignore this requirement (out of some supposed mercy), is to fail to name and respond to sin as sin, either by punishing it or requiring that appropriate compensation be offered (as the law and justice requires).

- God establishes the right order from which justice is judged and this represents his good goals for created beings and indeed the whole created order.
- God would not be more “free” if he gave up his original good purposes for creation, overthrew right order and acted against justice.
 - On the contrary, this would be unfitting for God and contrary to God’s nature (which is to use his freedom always to do what is benevolent, advantageous, just and fitting).
- Though it would be *fitting* for God to punish human beings (though his purposes for the world would not then be achieved), it would be *better* if sinners could be redeemed and converted to the good (which would be even more fitting because it would show God’s transcendent benevolence and would also achieve God’s original good purposes).

The second part of the argument discusses

- The original plan of God
- The origin of sin with the fall of the angels
- How human beings shall be added to fill in this gap and bring to completion the number of those who shall be saved, fulfilling the original design of God.

The second part of the argument shows not only that God cannot allow sin to thwart his original design, but that his design includes a plan to redeem the entire number of those who shall be saved.

- Since God knows what is best, he knows the most fitting number of beings that shall be with God forever.
- If some angels fell and these angels’ departure was foreseen by God, then their number would be made up by those additional humans who were to be saved (see pp. 292-293,297 for discussion).
- This cannot occur unless the sins of these humans are abolished (their debt paid/compensation offered), so that they are made righteous and fit to be received in heaven (pp. 301,311,336).
- Since created beings always owe honor to God and there is no time at which they do not owe God honor, there is no way to offer God something “extra” (something we did not owe but gave voluntarily).
- If there is nothing “extra” to be given (as a surplus), then there is no way for a fallen creature (by himself/herself) now to “make up” for honor that he or she previously failed to offer God (pp. 303-304).
- Furthermore, to wrong God (who is the highest and best being and least deserves being wronged) is the greatest evil (an evil as surpassingly great as God is infinitely good) (see pp. 306, 333-334).
- If this wrong is to be set right, the debt must be paid by a human being, since the debt was incurred by human beings and they are the ones who owe it.
- At the same the debt is so surpassingly great, that the one who pays it would have to make a “payment to God greater than everything that exists apart

from God” (p. 319). The only one who could offer this would be a person who is even greater and that could only be God (p. 320).

- If the only one who *could* pay the debt is God (who does not owe the debt) and the ones who *must* pay the debt are human beings (who cannot pay the debt), then it follows that only one who is both God and man can pay the debt (p. 321,348,351).
- Such a person must not only have no actual sins, but also be free from the stain of original sin. Since everyone born by descent from Adam through sexual reproduction bears the taint of original sin, the God-Man will need to be born human but apart from the normal line of descent created by sexual reproduction (pp. 322, 337,340). (Effectively, he will be a new Adam, but will succeed where Adam failed, having been able to sin, though he did not sin because he did not wish to; see pp. 326-328.)
- When the God-Man offers up his life and suffers death for others when he does not have to (it is not his sin, so he is under no obligation to die), this free acceptance of suffering by so great a person is so supremely benevolent and well-pleasing to God that it is better than anything created (better than anything else save God himself) (pp. 329-331,349-350). So great a sacrifice is sufficient for all those who will be saved in every place and time (pp. 338-339,348,353-354).