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ANSELM AND THE UNBELIEVERS: PAGANS, JEWS, AND CHRISTIANS IN THE *CUR DEUS HOMO*

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[Anselm lived a good part of his life without any personal knowledge of other religious traditions. The Cur Deus Homo *contains one of the few places in his writings where he acknowledges the existence of religious "others." The author suggests how Anselm came to this awareness and explores the extent to which his representation of unbelievers in the* Cur Deus Homo *derives from this late recognition.]*

ANSELM WRITES his memorable phrase, *credo ut intelligam* (I believe in order that I may understand), toward the end of the opening prayer of his *Proslogion* on the way to elucidating his most famous argument about the existence of God. Anselm prefaces his credo with a statement of belief, and therefore suggests that only those who believe that understanding comes by believing have any hope of receiving understanding: "For this I also believe: that unless I believe I will not understand" (*Nam et hoc credo: quia nisi credidero non intelligam*). Anselm's *nisi credidero non intelligam* clearly alludes to Augustine's much earlier *nisi credideritis, non intelligetis,* which the latter derives from the pre-Vulgate version of Isaiah 7:9. And yet a world of difference separates Anselm from Augustine. While Augustine lived in a world where the prospect of affirming and participating in other religious traditions was a real one, Anselm lived for a good part of his life without any personal knowledge of other religious traditions. So when Anselm writes about unbelievers, we have reason to ask how he comes by his knowledge of unbelievers, and what purposes his representations of unbelievers serve.

The first work in which Anselm mentions or alludes to unbelievers in any realistic sense is the *Cur Deus Homo.* Anselm began work on the *Cur Deus Homo* in England soon after completing his *Epistola de incarnatione verbi* in 1094. He would finish it in exile in the province of Capua shortly before

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attending the Council of Bari in October 1098. In the meantime, the societies of Normandy, France, Burgundy, and England, to some extent, were experiencing the exhilarating and turbulent happenings connected with the event that came to be known as the First Crusade. The mention of "the unbelievers" (*infideles*) in the opening sections of Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo*[1] draws attention to the possible existence of non-Christians in medieval Western society in the final decade of the eleventh century, if the allusion is not fictive.

To suggest, even in passing, that the *Cur Deus Homo* belongs to the world which gave birth to the First Crusade may seem outlandish. Yet it is in the midst of this momentous event that Anselm offered what, by any account, is probably the most systematic articulation of the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation and the logic of divine love. I leave aside for the purposes of this article the larger question of Anselm's sympathies with the ideology of crusade[2] and what relevance it has for assessing the achievement of the *Cur Deus Homo.* I focus instead on Anselm's representation of the unbelievers (*infideles*). Anselm's representation of the objections of those he defines as *infideles* recognizes "the unbelievers" as a group worthy of serious engagement by people of Christian belief. In a social, cultural, and religious world rife with the enthusiasm generated by the crusading movement,[3] we may also wonder just how Anselm's audience would have received his representations.

DIALOGICAL ASPECTS OF THE *CUR DEUS HOMO*

The *Cur Deus Homo* was not the first dialogue Anselm wrote. Prior to the *Cur Deus Homo* he had written the *De grammatico, De veritate, De libertate arbitrii,* and *De casu diaboli.* The *De grammatico* stood apart enough from the other three because of its subject matter that Anselm excluded it from the compendium which contained the remaining three dialogues. That collection, which Anselm called the *Three Treatises* (*tres tractatus*), was supposed to help his students in their interpretation of Scrip-

[1] All references to Anselm's texts are to F. S. Schmitt, *Sancti Anselmi Opera Omnia,* 6 vols. (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1938–61). Hereafter cited as Schmitt. For Eadmer's *Historia novorum in Anglia* and *Vita Anselmi* I adopt the following: *Eadmer's History of Recent Events in England,* translated by Geoffrey Bosanquet (Philadelphia: Dufuor, 1965) and *The Life of St. Anselm Archbishop of Canterbury by Eadmer,* edited with introduction, notes and translation by R. W. Southern (London: Thomas Nelson, 1962). Henceforth HN and VA respectively.

[2] I address this issue in a forthcoming paper, "Anselm, the Ethics of Solidarity, and the Ideology of Crusade," *The American Benedictine Review* (March 2002).

[3] See, for example, Jonathan Riley-Smith's *The First Crusaders, 1095–1131* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1997).

ture, though some of his modern readers might wonder exactly what he meant by that.

In each of these dialogues Anselm casts himself in the role of a teacher providing manuals of instruction for his students. He adopts this format again with the *Cur Deus Homo* because, as he puts it, the dialogue form aids comprehension: "investigations that are carried on by means of question and answer are clearer to many (especially to slower) minds, and so are more acceptable."[4] So he chose from among those demanding of him a treatise on the subject *Cur Deus Homo* his friend Boso "who among the rest presses me more urgently." Boso represents the student "so that in this way Boso may ask and Anselm answer."[5] The debate or disputation is between two believers.

Anselm goes on to write his dialogue devoting about half of the first book answering the unbelievers. The objections of the unbelievers are placed in the mouth of Boso. It would have been enough to present the *Cur Deus Homo* as a work for those believers who wondered about the Christian story of human redemption and the doctrine of Incarnation. Anselm, however, calls attention to the interreligious nature of the work in the preface. He mentions that the work is composed in two parts, and that the first book contains "the objections of unbelievers who reject the Christian faith because they regard it as contrary to reason, along with the answers of believers." And also, that this first book "ends by proving by necessary reasons (Christ being put out of sight, as if nothing had even been known of him) that it is impossible for any man to be saved without him."[6] Book Two, he asserts, "in the same way, as if nothing were known of Christ," shows "by equally clear reasoning and truth" that human nature was created to enjoy eternal beatitude and that the only way in which such an end can be achieved is through a God-Man "so that all the things we believe concerning Christ must necessarily take place."[7]

It is clear from the way Anselm describes the two parts of the work that Book One contains the most explicitly interreligious part of the project, though almost everything that Anselm presents in the rest of the work lends itself to such a task. Anselm claims in the end to have answered the objections of the unbelievers. Anselm wants everyone to "confess the truth." The final words put in the mouth of Boso imply this much:

> Everything you say seems reasonable to me, and I cannot gainsay it. Also, I think that whatever is contained in the New and Old Testaments has been proved by the

[4] *Cur Deus Homo* 1.1 (Schmitt 2, 48); trans. Eugene R. Fairweather, *A Scholastic Miscellany: Anselm to Ockham* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1956) 101–102.
[5] Ibid.
[6] *Cur Deus Homo, Praefatio* (Schmitt 2, 42–43). *A Scholastic Miscellany* 100.
[7] Ibid.

solution of the one question we put forward. For you prove that God was necessarily made man, in such a way that even if the few things you have cited from our books—for instance, in touching on the three persons of the Godhead, or on Adam—were taken away, you would satisfy not only Jews, but even pagans, by reason alone. And the God-Man himself establishes the New Testament and proves the Old. Therefore, just as we must confess his own truthfulness, so no one can refuse to confess the truth of everything that is contained in both.[8]

The claim to be able to satisfy "not only Jews, but even pagans" (*non solum Iudaeis sed etiam paganis*) by reason alone is significant for two reasons. First, it gets to the heart of Anselm's perception of what the *infideles* pose to Christian thought on the central question of the necessity and reasonableness of the Incarnation. And second, it suggests a conception of "the unbeliever" that recognizes at least two different forms of religious difference that had not always been clearly articulated in Anselm's works. The unbelievers identified at the end of the *Cur Deus Homo* are specified: Jews and pagans. But if what Anselm presents in the early part of this dialogue is any indication, these unbelievers appear to have legitimate grounds for their unbelief.

JEWS, PAGANS, AND THE REASONABLENESS OF UNBELIEF

The unbelievers who have such a presence in the early parts of Book One of *Cur Deus Homo* soon disappear from view only to be recalled in the final words of Boso, no longer as the generic "unbelievers" but in the telling phrase "not only Jews, but even pagans." And why the telling phrase at the conclusion of the work? The absence of the unbelievers in the bulk of the *Cur Deus Homo* accords with Anselm's stated purpose in the preface. Yet, it is curious that Anselm adopts such a different caption at the conclusion of the work, mentioning both Jews and pagans, when at the beginning he is content with simply "the unbelievers."

The reference to Jews and pagans gives the impression that Anselm knew of both Jewish and pagan objectors to Christian teaching or had heard that such existed. But can we be sure of what Anselm knew about Jews and pagans in the last decade of the eleventh century? And if he did, why did he construct his conception of "the unbelievers" in this way? Why does he begin with allusions to putative Jewish objectors in the early part of the work and then resort to the phrase "not only Jews but pagans" at the end? Is the larger grouping, "Jews and pagans," a late recognition on Anselm's part?

While Anselm adopts a number of ways of referring to his Jewish objectors, there is little intimation of pagans as such throughout the dialogue.

[8] *Cur Deus Homo* 2. 22 (Schmitt 2, 133). Ibid. 183.

Anselm's references to Jews often appear in connection with Jewish defense of the Law in the Old Testament and Jewish responses to the depiction of Jesus in the Gospels. On some occasions he uses the biblical expression "children of Israel," especially when discussing Old Testament texts. The references themselves do not establish conclusively that the objectors Anselm has in mind are Jewish, since he would have to deal with biblical texts whether there are any contemporary Jewish objectors around or not. In all these cases there is no formal indication that Anselm is reacting to Jews in medieval society. On the other hand, when Anselm alludes to what the unbelievers are reported to be saying in objection to Christian doctrine, we have reason to suspect that he may have living representatives of Judaism as the object of his remarks. So the use of the category "the unbelievers" in the early part of the work appears to be a reference to Jewish objectors to Christological doctrine.

As for the juxtaposition of the Jews and the pagans, we encounter a different problem. Anselm makes no reference to Jews and pagans in any collective sense except at the end of the work. There is also no separate reference in any part of the work to pagans. This raises a number of questions. If Anselm knew about living Jewish objectors to Christian teaching, when did he come into such knowledge? And second, why did he speak exclusively of these Jewish objectors at the beginning of the works and mentioned the pagans only at the end of the dialogue, in a phrase that implied that what he had done to meet Jewish objections could apply equally well to the pagans?

Anselm has only one other reference to pagans in his major works prior to the concluding comments in *Cur Deus Homo,* and this, in the *Epistola de incarnatione verbi,*[9] the work he completed before beginning the *Cur Deus Homo.* It is also in the *Epistola de incarnatione verbi* (chapter 10) that Anselm announced the theme *cur deus homo,* deferred full treatment of it, and promised to return to the subject at the earliest convenience. The reference to Jews and pagans in both the *Epistola de incarnatione verbi* and *Cur Deus Homo* acknowledges a distinction that is characteristically absent in all of Anselm's early works. But even here, the categories "Christians," "Jews," and "pagans" merely recognize a tripartite division on the spectrum of belief and unbelief. It provides no certain indication that Anselm had any personal knowledge of any Jews and pagans (those who were neither Christian nor Jewish).

The relationship between Anselm's *Epistola de incarnatione verbi* and the *Cur Deus Homo* is an important one, if for no other reason than the fact that Anselm first broaches the topic *Cur Deus Homo* in the former, as I have mentioned already. The possible sources of Anselm's knowledge of

[9] *Epistola de incarnatione verbi,* 2 (Schmitt 2, 10).

Jewish objectors is somewhat more difficult to construct, though as Southern has noted, the most likely background is Anselm's visit to England in Winter 1092/1093. That visit brought him to Westminster Abbey, and into the company of his friend Gilbert Crispin, whose *Disputatio Iudei et Christiani*[10] was in all likelihood completed before Anselm was made archbishop of Canterbury in March 1093.

The Jew in Gilbert Crispin's *Disputatio Iudei et Christiani* is by all indications a literary construct, since he often makes arguments that obviously reflect a knowledge of Anselm's *Proslogion* and other Christian teaching. This, however, does not detract from the real fact that Crispin had indeed had conversations with Jews in London, and that the substance of those conversations had prompted him toward writing the dialogue. It would be from Crispin, then, that Anselm would come to know what these objectors were reported to be saying. This new awareness of living communities of Jews would undoubtedly have impinged on Anselm's theological sensibilities in ways he may not have considered in the past, raising new questions about the variegated forms of belief and unbelief.

If it took his visit to England in 1092/1093 to bring him into some knowledge of the Jews of late-eleventh century Western society, it is in 1098 that Anselm came into contact with living pagans. And this, at just the time when he was completing the *Cur Deus Homo,* compelling him toward the apologetic gestures placed in the mouth of Boso. The phrase "not only Jews but even pagans" is an attempt on Anselm's part to extend his argument beyond the initial scope of meeting the objections of putative Jewish critics of Christological doctrine. So although he knew nothing about the pagans when he set down to write the *Cur Deus Homo,* he would now acknowledge their presence. And then he would go on to claim to have answered them because whatever he had done in meeting Jewish criticism applied equally well to non-Jewish objectors to Christian teaching, whoever these objectors might be. Hence his appropriation of the general category "pagans": indeterminate, vague, and nearly universal.

In the much earlier *Proslogion,* Anselm divides humanity into two groups: those who believe in God and those who, like the Fool, believe there is no God. In both the *Proslogion* and the *Monologion* that preceded it, theism is inherently Christian theism. When Gaunilo, the monk of Marmoutiers, objected to Anselm's argument about the existence of God in *Proslogion* chapters 2–4, Anselm pointed out that the quintessential Fool might think certain thoughts but not a *catholicus* like Gaunilo who, at any

[10] R. W. Southern, "St. Anselm and Gilbert Crispin, Abbot of Westminster," *Mediaeval and Renaissance Studies* 3 (1954) 78–115. See, R. W. Southern, *Saint Anselm: A Portrait in a Landscape* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1990) 198–202.

rate, could not pretend to be a Fool or speak on behalf of the Fool.[11] One is either Catholic or a Fool. There are no alternatives. By the time Anselm writes the *Epistola de incarnatione verbi* and the *Cur Deus Homo* he broadens his conceptualization of belief (and unbelief) to include believers, Jews, and pagans. The gulf separating the Catholic from the Fool in the *Proslogion* is the same one that separates the believers from both Jews and pagans.

In the very opening chapter of *Cur Deus Homo,* however, Anselm states the issue at hand in such a way as to put both believers and unbelievers on the same side of a problematic. He lets it be known that he is writing as much to answer the objections of unbelievers as to provide reasons for believers who have trouble understanding Christian teaching:

> The question at issue is habitually presented as an objection by unbelievers, who scoff at Christian simplicity as absurd, while it is pondered in their hearts by many of the faithful. The questions is this: For what reason or necessity did God become man and, as we believe and confess, by his death restore life to the world, when he could have done this through another person (angelic or human), or even by a sheer act of will? Many of the unlearned, as well as the learned, ask this question and want an answer.[12]

The objections of the unbelievers are the same ones that trouble Christian minds. Unbelievers approach the difficulties from one standpoint, the faithful from another. Those who have entreated Anselm by word of mouth and in letters to commit his proofs to writing do so not because they expect to "come to faith through reason" but "they hope to be gladdened by the understanding and contemplation of the things they believe, and as far as possible" to be ready to give an answer for the hope that is in them (1 Peter 3:15). Anselm conceives of his project as an attempt to provide tools (or reasonable arguments) for believers in articulating their understanding of what they believe and to be ready to give an answer to those who might demand it of them. This implies a missiological and apologetic intent, though the possibility of such interactions between believers and unbelievers seems doubtful, given the social fact of the crusading movement.

Remarkably, Anselm has Boso say that believers and unbelievers stand on opposite sides of an epistemological divide: the believers, the *fideles,* seek to understand what they already believe, while the unbelievers, the *infideles,* seek to understand in order that they might believe. What joins both groups is the need for understanding. So, from the very outset, Anselm presumes a rapprochement between believers and unbelievers, predicated on the desire for understanding. While the believer follows the

[11] *Responsio* 8 (Schmitt 1, 137).
[12] *Cur Deus Homo* 1.1 (Schmitt 2, 48). *A Scholastic Miscellany* 101.

Augustinian impulse of Anselm's *credo ut intelligam* (*Proslogion* 1), the unbeliever adopts the opposite credo, upsetting the right order of things by demanding understanding before believing. Anselm also has Boso insist that the believer becomes careless when he does not seek to understand what he believes (*Cur Deus Homo* 1.1), although Anselm does not explain what possible similarities obtain between the "ignorant belief" of the non-inquiring believer and the lack of understanding of the unbeliever.

For Anselm, the need to understand what the one believes and is a matter of doubt and uncertainty for the other provides the only basis for conversation and a meeting of minds between the believer and the unbeliever. Both the believer and the unbeliever are searching for the same thing, but they begin the quest from two antithetical positions. The methodological dictum of "proving by necessary reasons, Christ being removed out of sight" is a bold attempt to create the conditions of intelligibility for the Christian story of redemption. Anselm seeks to enable the believer first to see the reasonableness of Christian belief and then to be able to articulate this "rationality" to an unbeliever.

Gilbert Crispin's *Disputatio Iudei et Christiani,*[13] which antedates Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo,* implies that dialogue was already a possibility. Gilbert Crispin wrote his work by March 1093, at least three full years before the spring of 1096, when England, Burgundy, and France were in the throes of preparations for the crusade which Urban II had preached in Clermont the previous year. Anselm would finish the *Cur Deus Homo* in late 1098, when the crusading movement was well underway. In 1093 Gilbert Crispin could take for granted the possibility of real dialogue between a Christian and a Jew, if his own experiences provided the background for the literary construction in his *Disputatio Iudei et Christiani.* In 1098 that prospect could not be assumed so easily. By then it was not clear whether what Crispin assumed would have been acceptable to most of those who inhabited that larger world changed by the events surrounding the First Crusade. It would have been unusual if Gilbert Crispin had waited till 1098 to write the *Disputatio* and then made no allusion to the troublesome prospects for dialogue in a world of crusading activity. Anselm, for his part, alludes to the possibility of dialogue in *Cur Deus Homo* without intimating what else the world around him assumed about Christian-Jewish and Christian-Pagan (i.e. Muslim) relations. This is curious.

Anselm certainly did not try writing a *disputatio* between a Jew and a Christian in the manner of Gilbert Crispin. Why? It is not clear. Could this be a recognition on Anselm's part of the changed circumstances between 1093 and 1098? Perhaps. In any event, placing the arguments of the puta-

[13] *The Works of Gilbert Crispin Abbot of Westminster.* Edited by Anna Sapir Abulafia and G. R. Evans (London: Oxford University, 1986) 1–54.

tive Jewish objectors in the mouth of Boso acknowledged their presence in debate while also keeping them at a distance.

Is Anselm's representation of the unbelievers (the Jews and, to a lesser extent, the pagans), then, a stylistic, literary device meant to facilitate a dialogue written primarily for an inquiring Christian audience? Most likely, but not entirely. His putative audience, after all, was made up of those who needed arguments in order to understand what they already believed as the "deep things of Christian faith" (*profunda Christianae fidei*). The *infideles,* for their part, appear in *Cur Deus Homo* in much the same way as the Fool appears in the *Proslogion:* the *infideles* are a foil to Anselm's arguments.

And yet, even without getting into the details of Anselm's arguments in *Cur Deus Homo,* there is a sense in which the objections posed by the unbelievers are taken far more seriously here than anything Anselm was prepared to concede to the Fool in the *Proslogion.* The unbelievers in *Cur Deus Homo* fare better than the Fool in the *Proslogion.* Anselm appreciates the gravity of the criticisms that stand behind the *Cur Deus Homo.* The objections put forth in the *Cur Deus Homo* are specific to the Christian story as the implied objections of the Fool in the *Proslogion* are to theism in general. How interesting, then, for Anselm to venture a response to the objectors by offering to proceed for a good part of the discussion as if "we knew nothing of the Christian story." What did Anselm hope to achieve by this methodological move, if indeed his objectors included both Jews and pagans?

On the face of it, Anselm's approach seems partly evasive and a sleight of hand. Is it ever possible to speak of the logic of the Incarnation without reference to the event as a historical fact? But Anselm's justification is quite simple. If it can be shown without recourse to the details of the Christian narrative that what the Christian story entails is reasonable, then, the Christian story of redemption ought to be recognized by both believers and unbelievers as the reasonable expression of divine love to redeem fallen humanity.

As arguments go, Anselm's attitude toward the objection of "the unbelievers" in *Cur Deus Homo* compares well with what he does in the *Proslogion* with the Fool. In the *Proslogion,* Anselm does not do much with the character of the Fool. Something of this sort might be at work in the representation of the unbelievers in *Cur Deus Homo.* But there is an important difference. It was enough to draw something of a caricature of the Fool in order to dismiss him. It was not quite enough to paint a false portrait of the unbelievers in the hope that that portrait would make the need for serious argumentation unnecessary. A caricature of any sort would be most revealing of the inadequacy of Anselm's understanding of the propriety of the Incarnation as the answer to the human predicament. So Anselm sets out in the *Cur Deus Homo* many of the most serious

objections to the Christian doctrine of redemption, and shows himself to be cognizant of the difficulties attending Christian teaching.

At the same time, because Anselm highlights the objections of the unbelievers as one of the reasons for the work he ended up writing, one must wonder how Anselm came to construct his portrait of the unbelievers. One strains, for example, to catch a glimpse of who and what these unbelievers are beyond the phrase "not only Jews but pagans," and what it is this group of *infideles* represent. There is not the slightest allusion to the turbulent world in which Anselm lived at this particular moment in time. The only indication he provides is the note in the preface that he began the work in England and completed it in exile at Capua. But even this only alludes to Anselm's personal exile from his see in Canterbury and not to the larger world of the crusading movement. All the same, Anselm's depiction of the unbelievers is so far from calumny and derision that one must be impressed by how much it stood outside of much that would have been taken for granted about the *infideles* by Anselm's contemporaries.

Take, for example, the reason offered by some of the participants in the First Crusade for the massacre of Jews at Rouen (probably in the spring of 1096). Guibert of Nogent recounts that "at Rouen one day, some men who had taken the cross with the intention of leaving for the crusade began complaining among themselves. 'Here we are,' they said, 'going to attack God's enemies in the East, having to travel tremendous distances, when there are Jews right here before our very eyes. No race is more hostile to God than they are. Our project is insane."[14] And with these sentiments, "they armed themselves, rounded up some Jews in a church—whether by force or by ruse I don't know—and led them out to put them to the sword regardless of age or sex. Those who agreed to submit to the Christian way of life could, however, escape the impending slaughter."[15] To those at Rouen who provided this rationale for a pogrom, the Jews were, of all people, the most hostile to God. There is no insinuation here that Jews might have reasonable objections to Christian teaching or belief.

Rouen, the episcopal center of Normandy, was an integral part of the world of Anselm's putative reading public. Anselm's articulation of unbelief in *Cur Deus Homo* 1.3–8 is almost the exact opposite of the "Jew as obstinate enemy of God." If nothing else, Anselm depicts the unbelievers as reasonable objectors, whose difficulties with Christian doctrine are not at all different from the difficulties expressed by some Christians. Boso speaks for both believers and unbelievers:

[14] Guibert of Nogent, *De vita sua* 2.5. Translated by Paul J. Archambault, *A Monk's Confession: The Memoirs of Guibert of Nogent* (University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State University, 1995) 111.
[15] Ibid.

Allow me, then, to use the words of the unbelievers. When we eagerly seek out the grounds of our faith, it is fair to put forward the objections of those who will on no account assent to that faith without reason. It is true that they seek the reason because they do not believe, while we seek it because we believe; nevertheless, it is one and the same thing that we seek. And if in your answer you say anything that sacred authority seems to oppose, let me press the point until you make it clear that there is no real opposition.[16]

"It is one and the same thing that we seek." There is an acknowledgment here that the unbelievers are not simply being obstinate and recalcitrant.

Boso gives expression not only to the central contention of the unbelievers, but he also indicates that these very objections troubled Christian minds. Why, after all, did God have to suffer the indignity of becoming a human being, enduring the ignoble death of a crucified man, and why such an act is called redemption? The unbelievers ask too "in what captivity or prison were human beings held to make necessary God's deliverance" (*Cur Deus Homo* 1.6)? And this is not all. The unbelievers, Anselm reports, also see so much of the Christian answers to their objections as just pictures, nice stories without reality (*Cur Deus Homo* 1.4). Anselm highlights these criticisms and recognizes the "rationality" of the objections, even as he is also convinced that there are more valid reasons for the Christian position. If we are to form our opinion of the Jews and pagans from what Anselm says about the unbelievers' objections in the early part of *Cur Deus Homo,* we would have to credit the unbelievers with wit, intelligence, and a clarity of perception about the seeming incongruity and strangeness of the Christian narrative of redemption.

Anselm's attempt at a solution acknowledges the force of the criticism. To the supposed impropriety of God humiliating himself, Anselm adopts the notion that God humbled himself in order to exalt human nature. What the unbelievers consider an affront turns out to be quite the opposite: God invests human nature with dignity and honor. To question the lowliness of God becoming human is to misunderstand what was required for the redemption of human beings. So Anselm goes on to show why this was necessary, given the nature of sin, the need for satisfaction, and the conditions under which satisfaction is possible.

Anselm's carefully fashioned arguments and the later history of the *Cur Deus Homo* make it all too easy to miss the simple fact that Anselm also thought that the logic of the Incarnation was impenetrable to human reason. Anselm stated from the outset that the "deeper reasons for so great a thing" as God becoming a human being will remain hidden (CDH 1.2). Which brings up the question as to whether, in the final analysis, Anselm prefers to invoke the idea of mystery.[17] And if so, why so much argument

[16] *Cur Deus Homo* 1.3 (Schmitt 2, 50). *A Scholastic Miscellany* 104.

[17] See on this J. Bayart, "St. Anselm's Concept of Mystery," *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 9 (1937) 127–66.

in the first place? Anselm's posture amounts to this: the ultimate reason for the Incarnation remains hidden, but if anyone wants to reason about it, they would have to consider the arguments he presents as the most cogent and most persuasive yet.

Consequently, Anselm is not above proposing multiple reasons for the same thing (see, for example, *Cur Deus Homo* 1.10). To this end, he repeats a statement of purpose that he first outlined in *Monologion* chapter 1.

> I want everything that I say to be accepted in the following manner: If I say something which a greater authority does not confirm, then even though I seem to prove it rationally, it should be accepted as certain only in the sense that it appears to me for the time being to be thus, until God somehow reveals the matter to me more fully. But if to some extent I am able to give a satisfactory answer to your question, then assuredly it must be the case that one who is wiser than I would be able to give a more fully satisfactory answer.[18]

Anselm was far from thinking he had dealt conclusively with the theme. The *De conceptu virginali et peccato originali,* written not too long after the *Cur Deus Homo,* shows how much the subject continued to occupy him.

When Anselm completed the *Cur Deus Homo* in October 1098 he had already been in exile for about a year, having left England in November 1097 (VA 98–99, HN 91–92). He would remain in exile until September 1100. By then the completion of the First Crusade was a historical fact. Bari was an important point of the itinerary of the crusaders.[19] So it is doubtful that Anselm would have participated in the Council of Bari in October 1098 while being entirely ignorant of what was going on at this time.

His travels during that year between his departure from England in November 1097 and the Council of Bari in October 1098 would have brought him into a world whose memory of recent events concerned the crusading movement. But to all this the *Cur Deus Homo* seems indifferent. On the other hand, Eadmer, Anselm's traveling companion at this time, provides much that helps toward forming a picture of what Anselm knew of Jews and pagans at the time he was finishing the *Cur Deus Homo.* Whatever uncertainty we might have about the possible sources of Anselm's knowledge of the "objections of the Jews," a number of issues become clearer when we consider Eadmer's narratives about the Jews and pagans in the *Historia novorum in Anglia* and the *Vita Anselmi* respectively. Both works were completed not long after Anselm's death (1109), when Eadmer sought to represent Anselm in a way he believed most people never knew. The details of their travels during that first year of exile

[18] *Cur Deus Homo* 1.2 (Schmitt 2, 50). *A Scholastic Miscellany* 103.

[19] Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The Crusades: A Short History* (New Haven: Yale University, 1987) 20–23.

brings us into a wider world where Anselm may have encountered pagans, as such, for the first time. In addition, Eadmer's narrative suggests that Anselm may have been much more aware of Jews in late eleventh century society than the *Cur Deus Homo* indicates.

EADMER ON THE JEWS AND THE PAGANS

Eadmer writes that in preparation for Robert of Normandy's participation in the crusade to Jerusalem Duke Robert ceded his estate and territory to his brother William Rufus, King of England, for a price covering the three years he expected to be away. Eadmer mentions how costly this procurement was on the citizens of William's kingdom who had to come up with some of the money the king gave over to his brother for his journey East. According to Eadmer, Anselm, as archbishop of Canterbury, had to turn over some church ornaments and possessions toward the king's effort in 1096. This cooperation on Anselm's part had later given currency to criticism among Eadmer's contemporaries after Anselm's death that the late archbishop participated in the despoiling of the English church by doing what he did to help William Rufus. Eadmer sought to counter this viewpoint. Eadmer intended his rendition of William's efforts at procuring money from the people of England to pay for his temporary acquisition of Normandy as one more example of the kings overbearing rule. And there was more.

Eadmer writes that they received reports about much that was deplorable about the conduct of William Rufus during Anselm's absence, while they were on their way to Rome to confer with Pope Urban II about the difficulties between Anselm and the King of England.

> It was reported by such travelers that at about this time, when King William was staying at Rouen, some Jews who lived in that city came to him and complained that some of their co-religionists had then recently abandoned Judaism and become Christians. They asked that for a price paid to him he should compel them to throw over Christianity and to return to Judaism. He agreed and taking the price of apostasy ordered the Jews in question to be brought before him. To cut the story short, he made most of them, broken by threats and intimidation, deny Christ and return to their former error.[20]

From Eadmer's standpoint, William Rufus was doing the unthinkable: compelling Jews who had converted from Judaism to Christianity to return to their former religion, and for a price. Eadmer says nothing of the conditions under which the Jews were said to have converted in the first place, nor does he allude to the massacre of the Jews of Rouen on the eve of the First Crusade. As far as Eadmer is concerned, the Jews were simply in

[20] HN 103.

error and it was much to be regretted that William Rufus, the king of Christian England and temporary ruler of Normandy, should receive money for such perfidy as compelling once-converted Jews to return to their former religion. And then Eadmer adds a rather lengthy account of a story he had heard about the experience of one such Jew who was allegedly compelled to reconvert by William Rufus, but who managed to confound the king.

The story is hearsay. But it is revealing for what Eadmer and his contemporaries believed to be the case or were prepared to believe. The incident Eadmer reports is important for other reasons, too. First, it centers on the Jews of Rouen, the very group who were the subject of Guibert of Nogent's account of a massacre precipitated by the First Crusade. Second, it suggests that Eadmer, and quite possibly Anselm, knew something of the tragic events experienced by the Jews of Rouen, not too long after it happened.

As the story went, a young Jew was converted to Christianity after seeing an apparition of the biblical martyr Stephen (Acts 6:8–7.60) who implored him to convert from Jewish superstition to Christ and receive Christian baptism (HN 103). As Eadmer tells the story, the Jews of Rouen were in great distress about much that was happening to them. When William Rufus visited Normandy, during the time that Duke Robert was on crusade, some of the Jews sought his help to have those who had converted return to Judaism. This appears to be the social context in which the young man's father is said to have approached William Rufus to persuade (or compel) the son to return to Judaism. The young man was unmoved, or so the story went.

> The youth replied, My lord King, I think you must be joking. 'Joking with you,' exclaimed the King indignantly, 'You son of the dungheap! You had better go back and obey my command and that quickly or by the holy face at Lucca I will have your eyes torn out.' The youth quite undismayed in a firm voice replied: 'That I will certainly not do. But you can be sure that, if you were a good Christian, you would never have uttered such words, It is the part of a Christian to join to Christ those who through unbelief have been separated from Him, not to separate from Him those who through faith have been joined to Him.' The Prince, shamed by this reply ordered the youth to be removed from his sight in disgrace and ignominy. So thrust out, he found his father outside awaiting the result of the case. Incensed against him the youth exclaimed: 'You son of death and fodder of eternal perdition, is it not enough for you that you yourself should be damned without your plunging me too with you into the same fate? For myself, now that Christ has become my father, God forbid that I should ever again recognize you as my father, seeing that your father is the devil.'[21]

[21] Ibid. 104–5.

Eadmer tells this story of William Rufus and the young Jewish convert with at least two objectives in mind. First, he wants to show William Rufus as an unscrupulous, greedy king who would do anything for money, including turning someone into an unbeliever if need be. Second, Eadmer highlights an aspect of the derisive language that seemed to have been part of the polemical anti-Judaism of medieval self-consciousness. Not only does William refer to the Jew as a "son of the dungheap," as he swears, the Jewish convert also adopts language in which he speaks of his own father as a "son of the devil." On both levels, Eadmer's account seems to belong to an outlook as far removed from the representation of the Jews in Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo.*

In the *Cur Deus Homo* Anselm argues that the Devil has no legitimate rights over human beings, and that God and human beings owe nothing to the Devil. Eadmer's *Historia novorum,* on the other hand, is not above referring to Jews as "children of the devil," appropriating the language used in the Gospel of John 8:44 in a context where Jesus denounces his opponents as being untrue to the ancestral traditions of the Jewish people. By the time Eadmer wrote the *Historia novorum* in the early years of the second decade of the twelfth century, the First Crusade was a settled fact. Still, it is one thing for the Gospel writer to describe Jesus using such language in the discursive arena of intra-Jewish polemic. It is quite another thing to have Eadmer tell a story of a converted Jew using such language against his father, who wanted him to return to Judaism, and to have such a narrative proffered at such a time as this.

Eadmer's sense of affront at the purported efforts of William Rufus on behalf of the Jewish father corresponds, in some way, to the sense of elation Guibert of Nogent expresses in his description of one Jewish boy saved during the massacre of Jews at Rouen that I mentioned previously. In Guibert's narrative the young boy, Guillaume, was raised as a Christian by those who saved him. He ended up living his life as a monk at Fly. He was well-known to Guibert who had himself been a monk at the monastery at Fly.[22] And as Guibert tells it in his autobiography, he sent Guillaume a copy of his *De incarnatione contra Judaeos,*[23] which he had written (ca. 1111) against the count of Soissons "who was a Judaizer and a heretic."[24] Guibert adds that someone told him that Guillaume "took such an intense interest in this book that he piously set about imitating it by writing a small book defending the faith through reason." Then Guibert recalls an incident at Guillaume's childhood baptism, which was believed to have foretold the

[22] Guibert of Nogent, *De vita sua* 2.5. *A Monk's Confession* 111–114.
[23] PL 156.489–527.
[24] Guibert of Nogent, *De vita sua* 2.5. *A Monk's Confession* 113.

faith that would develop in him, noting at one point that to have such faith in one of Jewish stock was "a rare event in our time."[25]

The elements of Christian diatribe against Judaism that one finds in Guibert of Nogent's *De vita sua, Gesta Dei per Francos* and *De incarnatione contra Judaeos* are not what one finds in Anselm. Eadmer's depiction of William Rufus and the Jews of Rouen, on the other hand, easily fits in the pattern of calumny, suspicion, and derision which are characteristic of Guibert of Nogent's *De vita sua.* While it is not clear that Eadmer shared in the disparagement of Jews and Judaism that is so intrinsic to Guibert's narratives, Eadmer's attitude toward the Jews reflects deep horror at the re-conversion of the Jew in the story that he narrates. What is not clear is whether Anselm shared in these sensibilities. Would Anselm have been horrified in the way that Eadmer seemed to be? And if so, what would that say about Anselm's perceptions of the Jews?

In Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo* we hear next to nothing about Jews seeking conversion or being so impervious to reason as to be indifferent to Christian arguments. Instead, we are confronted with objections of a deeply theological nature, which Anselm himself recognized as touching the very essence of Christianity. In one of his extant letters (*Ep.* 380) we find Anselm writing to the Prior and Archdeacon of Christ Church, Canterbury instructing him to provide for the needs of a new convert lest they make a mockery of Christian love. The convert in question was a certain Jew named Robert. Anselm expresses a great deal of concern about the wellbeing of the new convert, but gives no details about the circumstances surrounding the conversion. It is possible that Anselm, like Eadmer, would have been horrified at Robert returning to Judaism. The emphasis on not making a mockery of Christian love may well have been meant to preclude this possibility, among other things. This is about the only indication we have from Anselm of any personal knowledge or contact with a Jew. The letter, however, postdates the *Cur Deus Homo.*

For Anselm, the unbelievers of the *Cur Deus Homo* had to be met in the field of disputation, their arguments answered with persuasive reasoning. In this, Anselm and Gilbert Crispin seemed to share similar sensibilities. On the other hand, while Guibert of Nogent's *De incarnatione contra Judaeos* appears to be following Anselm's approach outlined in the *Cur Deus Homo,*[26] Guibert's work lacked the openness to counter argument

[25] Ibid.

[26] Anna Sapir Abulafia insists on certain links between Anselm's sensibilities and Guibert of Nogent's attitude toward Jews and Judaism which seem questionable ("Theology and the Commercial Revolution: Guibert of Nogent, St. Anselm and the Jews of Northern France," in *Church and City, 1000–1500: Essays in Honour of*

that one finds in both Gilbert Crispin's *Disputatio* and Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo.*

And while we can not insist that Eadmer's perceptions of the Jews of Rouen reflected Anselm's it is not possible for Anselm to have been ignorant of what was happening to *infideles* in the years after Urban II preached the First Crusade at the Council of Clermont in 1095. Excepting the very real possibility of an unbridled calumny on Eadmer's part, one can detect in Eadmer's account of the Jews of Rouen a consciousness of the boundaries of belief and unbelief, Christian and Jew, truth and error, boundaries which both Eadmer and Anselm took for granted. Eadmer himself seemed conscious of the likelihood that his account of William Rufus' alleged perfidy might not meet with a good hearing, given Eadmer's acknowledged motives in promoting the cause of Anselm. He goes out of his way to tell his readers that the sources of the reports reaching them were credible, since they were relayed by different people of "no mean repute" (HN 106).

At the very least, Eadmer's account demonstrates that the prospect of conversion and re-conversion were not at all unknown in the case of converts from Judaism to Christianity. So when Anselm points out in the preface to the *Cur Deus Homo* that he had received many solicitations urging him to write down his arguments, we must recognize this as the primary impetus for the *Cur Deus Homo.* The *Cur Deus Homo* is the product of Anselm's attempt to settle Christian minds about the reasonableness of what they believe in the face of objections which proved not at all easy to refute.

But what of the pagans? What does Eadmer furnish to suggest anything about Anselm's awareness of their existence? There are hardly any references to pagans in the *Historia novorum.* The category is not applied to anyone, not even to William Rufus who is described in so many ways as being utterly un-Christian in sensibility and politics. The response of the young Jewish convert that a Christian would not do what King William expected him to do is the closest Eadmer comes to calling William a pagan. The word is absent from Eadmer's "history of new things." For pagans, as such, we need to go to the *Vita Anselmi.*

EADMER'S ANSELM AND THE PAGANS

Eadmer records in both the *Historia novorum* and in the *Vita Anselmi* an encounter with the army that was besieging the city of Capua in 1098. The account in the *Vita Anselmi* is much richer than the parallel narrative in the

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Christopher Brooke, ed. David Abulafia, Michael Franklin and Miri Rubin [Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1992] 23–40).

Historia novorum, with Eadmer giving details about Anselm's attitude toward "unbelievers." There are no Jews here, only pagans in the army of the count of Sicily. It is curious that both Anselm and Urban II did not seem to think much of the siege, and neither does Eadmer, who seems to take it as a relatively unproblematic event. Apparently, Anselm could live near a city under siege and still finish work on a treatise like *Cur Deus Homo* without any qualms whatsoever.

Eadmer goes out of his way to present Anselm as an unusual presence in the midst of all that was happening around them. Comparing Anselm's humility to the majesty of the Pope, Eadmer writes that Anselm received any who came to him "even pagans, not to speak of Christians" (VA 111). Eadmer adds that some of them, namely the pagans, "were stirred by the report of [Anselm's] goodness which circulated among them" and they seemed eager to visit Anselm's lodging.

> As a result he was from this time held in such veneration among them, that when we passed through their camp—for they were all encamped together—a huge crowd of them, raising their hands to heaven, would call down blessings on his head; kissing their hands as they are wont, they would do him reverence on their bended knees given thanks for his kindness and liberality. Many of them even, as we discovered, would willingly have submitted themselves to his instruction and would have allowed the yoke of Christian faith to be placed by him upon their shoulders, if they had not feared that the cruelty of their count would have been let loose against them on this account.[27]

Eadmer then adds that "For in truth he [the count] was unwilling to allow any of them to become Christian with impunity" (VA 112). This seems to have troubled Eadmer, who exclaims that "with what policy—if one can use that word—he did this, is no concern of mind: that is between God and himself" (VA 112). In the *Historia novorum* Eadmer does not mention the count of Sicily at all, but the Duke of Apulia, to whom the count of Sicily owed his allegiance. Eadmer describes the Duke seeking Anselm's instruction and benediction.

> Having heard of the fame of Anselm, he sent messengers and asked him to come to him, wishing to see him and to talk with him and to be instructed by him in all that might conduce to his salvation. Accordingly the Father set out to go to him. But when we were yet a great way off the Duke himself, supported by a large company of soldiers, met him and ran to kiss him and thank him for coming. After that we spent many days at the siege living in tents some distance away from the coming and going and the turmoil and din of the camp.[28]

In the parallel account in the *Vita Anselmi* the cruelty of the count is suggested by Eadmer as the reason for his policy on conversion, a policy which seems to have muffled the desires of his pagan troops for Christian

[27] VA 111–12.

[28] HN 101.

instruction. But exactly what was entailed in not having them become Christians with impunity is as vague as it is confounding. Equally ambiguous and unclear is the attitude both Anselm and Urban II seemed to have adopted toward these pagans. In Eadmer's account it appears that both Anselm and Urban II acquiesced to the wishes of the count. Is it not rather surprising that Anselm, who writes so eloquently about the need for understanding the things of faith, should be so indifferent when confronted with a group of pagans whom, in his own theological understanding, were lacking a knowledge of the truth?

Or did Anselm construe the situation differently from Eadmer, who clearly laments a missed opportunity? Or was the category of the unbelievers (Jews and pagans) merely a literary trope to help Anselm's dialogue? In which case, it would not matter whether Anselm had encountered real Jews and pagans before undertaking his defense of Christian doctrine of the incarnation against what he described as the calumny of unbelievers? It is quite possible that Anselm's meeting those pagans in the army besieging Capua was probably his first encounter of this sort. This would explain why he mentions both the Jews and the pagans at the end of the *Cur Deus Homo,* since it was while he was completing the work that he stumbled upon the pagans. In mentioning the pagans at the conclusion of the *Cur Deus Homo,* Anselm merely acknowledges a fact that had not much mattered in his understanding up until the time he completed the *Cur Deus Homo.* Hence, the final words put in the mouth of Boso that Anselm's arguments answer "not only Jews but even pagans."