

The Alleged Feudalism of Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo* and the Benedictine Concepts of Obedience, Honor, and Order

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ST. ANSELM'S *Cur Deus Homo*¹ ranks as one of the most influential pieces of Christian theology in the two millennia of reflection upon the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The influence of *Cur Deus Homo*, however, has not been all positive, as much of the modern discussion about the *Cur Deus Homo* has consisted of offering objections to Anselm's understanding of the atoning work of Jesus Christ, with various authors criticizing the work for its feudal background, its violence, or its neglect of the life of Christ. Anselm's argument in the *Cur Deus Homo* often serves as a theological Rorschach test upon which theologians have projected their own theological worries, and much (mis)interpretation of *Cur Deus Homo* results from either importing concepts that are not intrinsic to Anselm's argument or misunderstanding its details. The thesis of this essay is that, rather than focusing on an outdated feudal model, we can better understand the *Cur Deus Homo* by exploring Anselm's monastic background and the connections between the *Cur Deus Homo* and the *Rule of Benedict* (RB or the *Rule*),² particularly in regard to the concepts of obedience, honor, and order.

¹ Anselm, *Opera Omnia*, ed. F. S. Schmitt, 6 vols. (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1946–61). English translation: Anselm, *Anselm of Canterbury: The Major Works*, ed. Brian Davies and G. R. Evans (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). English quotations will be from the Davies volume, but the citations to the *Cur Deus Homo* and Anselm's *Epistles* will be listed as Schmitt with volume, page, and line number following.

² St. Benedict and Timothy Fry, *RB 1980: The Rule of St. Benedict in Latin and English with Notes* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1981).

The Question of Feudalism

Generally speaking, it has been presumed for the better part of a century that the proper context for understanding the concepts of satisfaction, punishment, honor, obedience, and order in the *Cur Deus Homo* was that of the feudal society in which Anselm operated. Without providing a complete historiography, one can point to early arguments by Cremer, Harnack, and Foley³ which claimed that the *Cur Deus Homo* was rife with feudal imagery in such a way as to limit its theological effectiveness for a modern era. Foley ascribed to feudalism Anselm's "conception of God's relation to man, of the loss of God's honour, of Christ's obedience as service, of the mutual relations of the subjects of God the Lord, and of the substitution of Christ's service for ours,"⁴ while Harnack argues that "the worst thing in Anselm's theory [is] the mythological conception of God as the mighty private man, who is incensed at the injury done to His honour and does not forgo His wrath until He has received an at least adequately great equivalent."⁵ The influence of their work, especially that of Harnack, whose *History of Dogma* was a standard history of doctrine text for most of the twentieth century, meant that many theologians were trained to believe that the feudal background was crucial to understanding Anselm's work. More contemporary accounts of Anselm continue to make the feudal claim, with the most prominent being J. Denny Weaver's claim that Anselm's satisfaction theory derived both from the medieval penitential system and "the image of the feudal lord who gave protection to his vassals but also exacted penalties for offenses against his honor,"⁶ while four different authors in a recent anthology of essays on the atonement manage to make the feudal claim.⁷ This is not to say, of course, that these theologians do not have other criticisms of Anselm's argument, but their claims about feudalism have often been vulgarized to

³ Hermann Cremer, "Die Wurzeln des Anselm'schen Satisfactionsbegriffes," *Theologische Studien und Kritiken* 53 (1880): 7–24 and "Der germanische Satisfactionsbegriff in der Versöhnungslehre," *Theologische Studien und Kritiken* 66 (1893): 316–45. Cremer's main emphasis was on Anselm's system as influenced by Teutonic legal codes. Adolf von Harnack, *History of Dogma*, vol. VI (New York: Dover Publications, 1961), 54–83. George C. Foley, *Anselm's Theory of the Atonement: The Bohlen Lectures, 1908* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1909), 113–15.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 114–15.

⁵ Harnack, *History of Dogma*, 76. Harnack, of course, had many other concerns about Anselm's ideas, but this charge is one that continues to resonate.

⁶ J. Denny Weaver, *The Nonviolent Atonement* (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 2001), 16.

⁷ Simon Barrow and Jonathan Bartley, eds., *Consuming Passion: Why the Killing of Jesus Really Matters* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2005), 31, 38, 48, 92.

the point that theologians are often comfortable dismissing Anselm out of hand purely because of the supposed feudal concepts in his argument.⁸

One minority report is specific only to the question of Anselm's idea of satisfaction. In *Christus Victor*, Gustav Aulen claimed that the Anselmian concept of satisfaction was derived from the penitential system of the Middle Ages, but he made this claim while ignoring the importance of the feudal context, not by denying it.⁹ With the exception of a few who have followed Aulen, the feudal charge has remained in place to this day, though sometimes the two are combined, so that Anselm is sometimes said to be best understood through both feudalism and the penitential system.

Only within the last twenty years has a robust alternative explanation of Anselm's conceptual framework been developed, as the Benedictine community has sought to claim the *Rule* as the primary source of Anselm's ideas in *Cur Deus Homo*.¹⁰ In an important, but much neglected, article, Guy Mansini argues that the penitential system from which Anselm derived his concept of satisfaction in the *Cur Deus Homo* "is substantially the same notion of satisfaction to be found in the *Rule*."¹¹ Mansini points to four elements of satisfaction that are found in the *Cur Deus Homo*, which he compares to the concept of satisfaction that is found in seventeen places in the *Rule*:¹² (1) "satisfaction takes place in the context of disrupted personal relations"; (2) "satisfaction is the appropriate means, on the part of the offender, of seeking the forgiveness of the one offended"; (3) "satisfaction is distinct from punishment as the willing from the unwilling bearing of the consequences of offense"; and (4) "satisfaction is supererogatory."¹³ Mansini

⁸ The best defense in English of *Cur Deus Homo* can be found in John McIntyre, *St. Anselm and His Critics: A Re-Interpretation of the Cur Deus Homo* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1954).

⁹ Gustaf Aulen, *Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of Atonement* (New York: Macmillan, 1969), 84–92.

¹⁰ An early exception is Hans Urs von Balthasar, who describes Anselm's reasoning as "monastic, like that of the Areopagite, but it is Benedictine, and that means both communal and dialogic at the same time. Its monastic form is contemplative, beholding, transparent; its Benedictine content is manifest in the consciousness of freedom and in a form of life stamped by freedom." *Studies in Theological Style: Clerical Styles. Vol. II of The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1984), 211.

¹¹ Guy Mansini, "St. Anselm, 'Satisfactio', and the 'Rule' of St. Benedict," *Revue Benedictine* 97 (1987): 102.

¹² Specifically *RB* 5.19, 11.13, 24.4, 24.7, 27.3, 43.6, 43.11, 43.12, 43.16, 44.t, 44.3, 44.8 (x2), 44.9, 45.1, 46.3, and 71.8. Mansini also argues that versions of *emendatio-emendare*, which also pervade *RB*, are conceptual equivalents of satisfaction.

¹³ Mansini, "St. Anselm, 'Satisfactio', and the 'Rule' of St. Benedict," 109. This is Mansini's summary of an argument offered on pp. 104–9.

goes on to demonstrate a textual link between *Epistle* 105, written before *Cur Deus Homo*, and chapter 29 of the *Rule* to indicate Anselm's comfortable familiarity with the Benedictine concept of satisfaction. Finally, Mansini convincingly argues that for Anselm, "the whole of monastic life can be understood as satisfactory."¹⁴ According to Mansini, the disjunction between satisfaction and punishment is central to the *Rule*, and Anselm uses those ideas in the *Cur Deus Homo* as well as in his work as the abbot at Bec.

John Fortin has made the same case for the satisfaction/punishment disjunction and has extended the trend of finding Benedictine roots for Anselm's theology in his description of justice.¹⁵ While not a member of the Benedictine order, Scott Matthews has also sought to locate Anselm's *Proslogion* within its monastic context.¹⁶ The suggestion common to these scholars is that Anselm's thirty-three-year career as a Benedictine monk—fifteen of those years as abbot—had the biggest influence upon his theology; the argument is not that we should ignore Anselm's broader context, but rather that Anselm's primary worldview, and the intellectual model upon which the *Cur Deus Homo* is based, is derived from that life which he knew most intimately and which he considered to be the superior form of life in his time. The *Rule* requires that it "be read often in the community, so that none of the brothers can offer the excuse of ignorance,"¹⁷ and Anselm's reference to the *Rule* in his letters reflects his intimate knowledge and understanding of both its details and its intent.¹⁸ The *Rule* was normative for both Anselm and the community within which he spent the majority of his adult life, though as Sir Richard Southern has pointed out, the authority of the *Rule* for Anselm is a result of its divine source in God and its functional summary of Scripture.¹⁹

Unfortunately, this Benedictine background of Anselm's thought has not made significant inroads into the community of theological scholars,

¹⁴ Ibid., 114.

¹⁵ John Fortin, "Satisfactio in St. Benedict's *Regula* and St. Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo*," *Modern Schoolman* 79 (2002): 305–11, and "The Influence of Benedict's *Regula* on Anselm's Concept of Justice," *American Benedictine Review* 58 (2007): 154–71.

¹⁶ Scott Matthews, *Reason, Community and Religious Tradition: Anselm's Argument and the Friars* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), 15–29.

¹⁷ RB 66.8.

¹⁸ See, for instance, *Epistles* 113 (Schmitt III: 247–48), 123 (Schmitt III: 263–64), 137 (Schmitt III: 281–83), 156 (Schmitt IV: 17–23), 251 (Schmitt IV: 162–63), 267 (Schmitt IV: 182), 375 (Schmitt V: 319), and 450 (Schmitt V: 397–98). English translation: Anselm, *The Letters of Saint Anselm of Canterbury*, trans. Walter Fröhlich, 3 vols. Cistercian Studies Series, nos. 96, 97, and 142 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1990–94).

¹⁹ Richard W. Southern, "Anselm at Canterbury," *Anselm Studies: An Occasional Journal; Proceedings of the Third International Saint Anselm Conference I* (1983): 17.

as the feudal environment continues to be asserted as the primary influence upon Anselm's thought. Therefore, before we look more closely at the Benedictine concepts in the *Cur Deus Homo*, we should investigate the substance of the charge of feudalism and see if the charge is sustainable, given the growth of scholarship on feudalism since the claim was first made at the turn of the twentieth century.

The Feudalism Complaint

Just what is the problem with feudalism, and what is its apparently insidious effect on the *Cur Deus Homo*? Harnack's suggestion that the God of the *Cur Deus Homo* is some kind of petty tyrant overly concerned with his honor is one complaint. Recent commentators are concerned about the influence that the hierarchical structure of feudal life had on Anselm's conception of God and his overall argument.²⁰ There are charges that the argument is too legalistic, because of the influence of feudal law courts, and consequently Anselm's vision of the Atonement requires some change on God's part, or that it is too economic and mechanistic and thus overly concerned with debts.²¹ When theologians complain about the violence of the cross, the underlying concern seems to be that the violence "of the sword"²² propagated by the feudal order with its unruly knights may have had a negative impact on Anselm's conception of the Atonement.

Often, however, theologians do not enumerate the specific problems with feudalism and its influence on Anselm; they treat the charge of feudalism itself as sufficient to dismiss Anselm's argument. One wonders, in fact, whether feudalism is a term used by theologians as a rhetorical device rather than a substantive argument against Anselm. As Elizabeth Brown has pointed out, historians often apply the concept of feudalism "abusively, to those selected elements of the past that were to be overthrown, abolished, or inexorably superseded."²³ Given how often it is Protestant theologians who object to Anselm's feudalism, and yet with little discussion of exactly what the problems are—we are all supposed to be against feudalism, even if perhaps we no longer know why—perhaps the real function of the feudal charge may somehow be to delegitimize Anselm's argument; the term

²⁰ Joerg Rieger, *Christ and Empire: From Paul to Postcolonial Times* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007), 125.

²¹ On the debt aspects of atonement theory see Gary Anderson, *Sin: A History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), especially pp. 189–202 on Anselm.

²² Weaver, *The Nonviolent Atonement*, 5.

²³ Elizabeth A. R. Brown, "The Tyranny of a Construct: Feudalism and Historians of Medieval Europe," *American Historical Review* 79 (October 1974): 1065.

“feudal” has become a stand-in for “medieval” and part of an overall rejection of the medieval church.

This lack of clarity about the exact problems with feudalism, however, is minor compared to the deeper problems with the feudalism charge. First, the very concept of feudalism as a useful model for understanding medieval society, especially in the eleventh century, has come under sustained attack by medieval historians, who argue that feudalism is an eighteenth-century construct, which, when imposed on our study of medieval life, obscures its variety and complexity and causes us to ignore evidence contrary to the feudal thesis. Second, even if one were somehow to rescue the feudal model as explanatory for medieval life, the evidence for its presence in Anselm’s argument is less telling than one might expect; there are better explanations for the concepts Anselm uses, and the technical language of feudalism is practically nonexistent in the *Cur Deus Homo*. Each of these two concerns bears deeper investigation.

Problems with the Feudal Model

Without going into an extensive historiography of feudalism, suffice it to say that the middle parts of the last century witnessed an explosion of scholarship on the subject. Beyond what Harnack and his contemporaries knew about feudalism, the decades around World War II saw prominent historians such as Marc Bloch and F. L. Ganshof write important books about the essential nature of feudalism and the origins of feudal society,²⁴ while English historians spent considerable effort trying to understand the influence of the Norman Conquest on the existing structure of English society. Typical of the efforts to understand feudalism are Bloch’s description of the “fundamental features of European feudalism” as

a subject peasantry; widespread use of the service tenement (i.e. the fief) instead of a salary, which was out of the question; the supremacy of a class of specialized warriors; ties of obedience and protection which bind man to man and, within the warrior class, assume the distinctive form called vassalage; fragmentation of authority—leading inevitably to disorder; and, in the midst of all this, the survival of other forms of association, family and State, of which the latter, during the second feudal age, was to acquire renewed strength.²⁵

²⁴ Marc Bloch, *Feudal Society*, trans. L. A. Manyon with introduction by M. Postan (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961). First published as *La Société féodale* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1939). F. L. Ganshof, *Feudalism*, trans. Philip Grierson, second English ed. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961); first published as *Qu’est-ce la féodalité* (Bruxelles: J. Lebègue and Cie, 1944).

²⁵ Bloch, *Feudal Society*, 446.

While Bloch's definition is expansive and is often the image we have in our minds when we think of feudalism, Ganshof provides a second definition that is restricted to feudo-vassalic relations, where feudalism is

a body of institutions creating and regulating the obligations of obedience and service—mainly military service—on the part of a free man (the vassal) towards another free man (the lord), and the obligations of protection and maintenance on the part of the lord with regard to his vassal. The obligation of maintenance had usually as one of its effects the grant by the lord to his vassal of a unit of real property known as a fief.²⁶

Yet even as these historians delved more deeply into the primary sources, others began to realize that the feudal model they described was insufficient to explain the differences they found when confronted with the evidence, so that they were often forced to extract a notion of feudalism which did not fit the medieval reality. In 1974 Elizabeth Brown published her landmark article, "The Tyranny of a Construct," which challenged the usefulness of the feudal model for understanding medieval society.²⁷ Brown claimed that while other historians had had doubts about the use of the term and realized that it was "an arbitrary pattern imposed by modern writers upon men long dead and events long past,"²⁸ historians often claimed that it was useful for pedagogical purposes, for the purpose of comparing different societies, or served as an indispensable abstraction that allowed historians to deal with the complexities of the medieval world. In response to these claims, Brown pointed out that it is deceptive and condescending to avoid complexity when teaching and those scholars who impose the feudal model in their research

run the risk of having their vision narrowed, their perspective anachronistically skewed, and their receptivity to divergent data consequently blunted unless they firmly divorce themselves from the preconceptions and sets associated with the oversimplified models and abstractions with which they have been indoctrinated and which they themselves pass on to their students.²⁹

The proper use of the term "feudalism" was, according to Brown, best limited to dealing only with fiefs, and historians would be more effective

²⁶ Ganshof, *Feudalism*, xx.

²⁷ Brown, "The Tyranny of a Construct."

²⁸ Ibid., 1067. Here Brown is quoting H. G. Richardson and G. O. Sayles, *The Governance of Mediaeval England from the Conquest to Magna Carta* (Edinburgh: University Press, 1963), 92.

²⁹ Brown, "The Tyranny of a Construct," 1078–79.

in their descriptions of medieval society if they let the complex data speak for itself rather than attempting to impose definitions and extract essential elements of something that never really existed in specific locations. Feudalism, as some kind of ideal kind of political organization to which medieval leaders aspired, never existed except in the minds of later historians. In fact, feudalism is nothing other than

a construct devised in the seventeenth century and then and subsequently used by lawyers, scholars, teachers, and polemicists to refer to phenomena, generally associated more or less closely with the Middle Ages, but always and inevitably phenomena selected by the person employing the term and reflecting that particular viewer's biases, values, and orientations.³⁰

Brown created the theoretical case against imposing the model of feudalism on the historical data; twenty years later, Susan Reynolds provided the hard evidence against the use of the feudal model in both its expansive and its restricted senses in her book *Fiefs and Vassals: The Medieval Evidence Reinterpreted*.³¹ This is an immensely detailed, densely argued, and difficult to summarize book³² that is broken into two parts: the first part of the book argues against seeing feudo-vassalic relations as being the most important institutions of the medieval period, calls into question the supposed prevalence of vassalage, and argues that the majority of property was held freely rather than through some form of service. In the second part, Reynolds gives a location by location review of the evidence from across most of Europe during the period 900–1300. Focusing on the different uses of words, on concepts, and on the phenomena of property relations, Reynolds argues against the reality or usefulness of the kinds of models offered by Bloch and Ganshof. She offers the following conclusions that are relevant to our discussion of the alleged feudalism of Anselm.

First, the conceptual model of feudalism that has been in place since the eighteenth century is the result of the development of academic and professional law in the twelfth and subsequent centuries. Academic lawyers in Italy who were investigating the questions presented by the *Libri Feudorum* found in it old language from the Carolingian empire about vassals;

³⁰ Ibid., 1086.

³¹ Susan Reynolds, *Fiefs and Vassals: The Medieval Evidence Reinterpreted* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

³² Reynolds provides a helpful four-page summary of her conclusions at the beginning of a more recent article, "Fiefs and Vassals in Scotland: A View from Outside," *Scottish Historical Review* 82 (2003): 176–93.

they conjectured about the origin of feudalism from war bands and then incorporated language about vassals into their work. As medieval governments became more centralized and bureaucratic, the language of fiefs and vassals, which had disappeared from the vocabulary after the end of the Carolingian empire, was reincorporated into professional law. Historians and lawyers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries accepted this explanation about the origin of feudalism from war bands and created the model to explain medieval life, often for their own rhetorical purposes.³³

Second, the idea that feudalism began as the result of personal bonds between leaders of war bands and their followers, and was then formalized and territorialized, is false. The image of feudal anarchy, in which knights and barons constantly war on each other at the expense of peasants, is so outdated that no medieval historian now thinks of the medieval period that way.³⁴ Instead, Reynolds offers a counter-hypothesis: that inasmuch as concerns about property law developed in any sort of systematic way, the origin of property law is better understood to have been the result of churches carefully tracking their property over generations. Because churches were not allowed to alienate their property permanently, the church had to ensure that those who held property from the church did not do so for more than several generations without affirming the church's ownership of the property. Reynolds proposes that "we should think less of the church and its property being 'feudalized' than of property rights being 'ecclesiasticized'."³⁵

Third, the primary means of holding property in Anselm's era was not fief-holding; rather, most property was held freely. Fiefs were not a specific category of property until after 1100,³⁶ and the old idea that property held freely (known as *alods* or *allods*) was slowly converted to fiefs and developed into a form of feudal hierarchy after the demise of the Carolingian Empire is belied by the abundance of evidence that most property was held freely. That does not mean that property owners did not owe service or fidelity to the king, for land could be confiscated by kings for acts of betrayal, but service was required not on the basis of property but on the basis of the jurisdiction of kings and other leaders. Typically all landowners owed military service, not just nobles, and all persons were expected to be faithful to the king. Service and faithfulness were not a function of property or specific to feudo-vassalic relations.³⁷

³³ Reynolds, *Fiefs and Vassals: The Medieval Evidence Reinterpreted*, 64–72, 478–79.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 476.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 143.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 59.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 31, 352.

As Reynolds points out, ownership of property always has obligations attached to it, yet those obligations in no way preclude the reality of the property being held freely.³⁸

Fourth, and related to the previous point, in contrast to the model that sees the king as just another feudal lord, the power of feudal lords over kings is greatly inflated, and kingship in Anselm's time remained the primary model of political organization. Reynolds points out that

the fact that the words *dominus* and *senior* were used both of kings and lesser lords need not mean that the king's authority or *dominium* was seen as similar to theirs. God was a *dominus*, but that did not make his *dominium* over the world comparable either to the political authority or to the mere property rights enjoyed by a human lord.³⁹

The feudal hierarchy does not, according to Reynolds, appear until after Anselm's death.⁴⁰ There may have been a hierarchy of jurisdiction in this time period, but at the top of the hierarchy, both in theory and reality, were kings, with dukes and counts clearly having subordinated jurisdiction. And contrary to modern assumptions, those property owners at the higher layers of society had fewer rights to the "use management, and receipt of the income" from their property in comparison to free men who were further removed from the top layers of society.⁴¹

By concentrating this summary on Reynolds's work one may gain the impression that she is a solitary scholar making idiosyncratic claims, but she is not alone in her conclusions. With respect to Normandy, Emily Tabuteau argued that "the widespread existence of definitions of feudal obligations cannot be demonstrated at any time before 1100."⁴² She points to the methodological problem of using twelfth-century sources to understand eleventh-century realities. Norman habits, according to Tabuteau, were "markedly anomalous" with respect to the feudal model.⁴³ There has not been, to date, a substantial piece of work that overturns Reynolds's research or broad conclusions.

³⁸ Ibid., 56. In modern times, for instance, one may own one's property but also be obligated to pay taxes on it or follow the restrictions of a homeowners' association. Those obligations do not mean that the property is not freely held.

³⁹ Ibid., 36.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 70.

⁴¹ Ibid., 394.

⁴² Emily Zack Tabuteau, "Definitions of Feudal Military Obligations in Eleventh-Century Normandy," in *On the Laws and Customs of England: Essays in Honor of Samuel E. Thorne*, ed. M. S. Arnold and others (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981), 19.

⁴³ Ibid., 20.

The emergence of this scholarship calls into question the application of an outdated and distorting historical model as the key to understanding Anselm's argument in the *Cur Deus Homo*. When we impose on Anselm's thought a model that historians and lawyers constructed after he died, we run the methodological risk of either ignoring important aspects of his thought or forcing data that does not fit the model into the model in some inappropriate way. When we combine this methodological risk with the rhetorical purposes for which the feudal model has been developed and utilized, we may miss alternative understandings of Anselm's thought that have greater explanatory force.

The Alleged Feudalism of Cur Deus Homo

The work of Reynolds and others should be sufficient to cause any theologian to shy away from making feudal claims about Anselm or anyone else. Let us, though, for the moment put aside their work, pretend that the feudal model is somehow still licit, and look more specifically at just where the alleged feudalism is to be found in the *Cur Deus Homo*. We can begin with the work of the eminent historian Sir Richard Southern, who makes the strongest case for Anselm's feudalism by applying the feudal model to understanding Anselm's work in his important biography of Anselm, *Saint Anselm: Portrait in a Landscape*,⁴⁴ which continues to shape our thought on the *Cur Deus Homo*. In describing the *Cur Deus Homo*, Southern attempts to rescue it from the feudal charge by better explaining the supposed feudal context in which Anselm was operating, especially with respect to Anselm's idea of honor.⁴⁵ Southern claims that Anselm's "favourite image of the relations between God and Man was that of a lord and his vassals," where the "emphasis is always on their subordination to the lord's will." Because humans, through Adam, had not given their due service to God, they lost their inheritance, just as a vassal would lose his inheritance by refusing his due service to his lord in the feudal model.⁴⁶ Southern fully applies the feudal model to Anselm by referring to a "repressive regime," a "disciplined tenantry," the "repressions

⁴⁴ Richard W. Southern, *Saint Anselm: A Portrait in a Landscape* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 221–27. This section does not seem to have been updated from Southern's earlier biography on Anselm, *St. Anselm and His Biographer: A Study of Monastic Life and Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 107–14, so it does not reflect any of the significant changes in understandings of medieval life and feudalism that occurred in the almost thirty years since Southern first wrote about Anselm.

⁴⁶ Southern, *Saint Anselm: A Portrait in a Landscape*, 222.

of feudal society,” “a lord castigating innocent serfs,” and “the loosening of the social bond, which made the outlaw.”⁴⁷

What is interesting about Southern’s account, besides the fact that it imposes the feudal model, is that in making the claim about the alleged feudalism in the *Cur Deus Homo* he presents evidence for Anselm’s feudalistic imagery not from the *Cur Deus Homo* or from Anselm’s writings, but from conversations and talks reported by others. Southern’s primary evidence for Anselm’s feudalism in the *Cur Deus Homo* are two reports from *De Humanis Moribus per Similitudines*⁴⁸ and one from Eadmer’s *Vita Anselmi*.⁴⁹ The only writing to which Southern points that is actually by Anselm is *Epistle 17*, but that letter only shows that everyone serves under someone else. Southern imposes the feudal model on it by seeing the letter pointing to relations between a lord (*praestandi*) and a serf (*famulandi*), though these translations work only if one presupposes the feudal model.⁵⁰ The only place where Southern actually employs the *Cur Deus Homo* to make the case for feudalism in the *Cur Deus Homo* is in reference to the concept of honor, which Southern takes to be indicative of feudal thought, even though none of the previous three examples he presents as representative of Anselm’s feudalism mention honor in any way whatsoever.

If we look at the *Cur Deus Homo* without “feudal sunglasses”⁵¹ we can begin to see how little there is in it that fits the feudal model. For instance, in no place in the *Cur Deus Homo* do any of the following terms, which are often associated with the feudal model, appear: *vassi* or *vassalli*, *precaria*, *feodum* (or *feodalis*), *casamentum*, *milites*, or *homagium*.⁵² *Fideles* appears twice, but both times in contrast to *infideles* and clearly with respect to the faithful holding of Christian belief.⁵³ Among the remaining technical terms typically used to identify the feudal model, the

⁴⁷ Ibid., 222–26.

⁴⁸ Anselm, *Memorials of St. Anselm*, ed. R. W. Southern and F. S. Schmitt (London: Oxford University Press, 1969). *Similitudo de regno et villa et castello et dungione*, 66–67, and *Similitudo inter monachum et arborem*, 73–74.

⁴⁹ Eadmer, *The Life of St. Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury*, trans. Richard W. Southern (London: T. Nelson, 1962), 93–98.

⁵⁰ *Epistle 17*, translated by Southern on page 168 of *Portrait in a Landscape*; Schmitt III: 122–23, 18–22. Fröhlich provides a translation not infected by the feudal model as ‘superior’ (*praestandi*) and ‘servant’ (*famulandi*). The biblical quotes from 1 Corinthians 7:21–22 should tip us off that the model is not feudal but biblical.

⁵¹ Reynolds, *Fiefs and Vassals: The Medieval Evidence Reinterpreted*, 12.

⁵² G. R. Evans and Anselm, *A Concordance to the Works of St. Anselm*, 4 vols. (Millwood, NY: Kraus International Publications, 1984).

⁵³ *Cur Deus Homo*, preface and 1.1; Schmitt II: 42, 9–11 and 48, 1–2.

term *beneficium* is used in one passage (II.5),⁵⁴ and the terms *servitio* and *honor* appear throughout, but these are feudal only if one presupposes the feudal model.

In addition to the technical terms of feudalism, which do not seem to exist in the *Cur Deus Homo*, scholars also point to supposedly feudal images and parables that Anselm uses to explain parts of his argument. Four places are typically identified as being indicative of feudal thought—*Cur Deus Homo* 1.5, 1.13–15, 2.5 and 2.16. We will look at each in turn.

The first of these, *Cur Deus Homo* 1.5, is a brief discussion of why it would have been inappropriate for someone other than God to restore humans to their proper place, and the basic argument is that if someone other than God were to do so, then humans would be denied their basic dignity by which they were to be equal to angels and to serve God alone. This represents a liberation of humans for Anselm, but it is feudal only if one equates all forms of servitude with feudalism; there is no discussion of property rights, of service for property, of vassalage, etc.

The second, *Cur Deus Homo* 1.13–15, is the famous discussion about God's honor, but otherwise there are no other elements that fit the classic model of feudalism. There is a discussion of justice and its relation to God's honor, but again there is no discussion of God as a petty lord, of humans as vassals, of service for inheritance, or of any of the other things that would lead us to believe that feudo-vassalic relations are the primary model for understanding the divine-human relations. Even if we equate the honor assigned to God as meaning something to do with God's estate or property, as Southern wants to do, this may only reflect an understanding of the rights that a free person had to property during the Anselmian era—it is too great a leap to see simply one concept, that of honor, deployed as the basis for the entire feudal claim. Looking at the *Cur Deus Homo* with a feudal presupposition can cause us to see honor as indicative of the whole feudal model, but this claim would need substantial justification to be anything other than a stretch.

The third passage, *Cur Deus Homo* 2.5, is the one place where derivations of the term *beneficium* appear, a term that sometimes was used to indicate a gift of property perhaps for some form of service. But here the question revolves around the kind of gratitude that one should experience upon the receipt of a gift and how we are to understand the relation between necessity and a gift freely given; the question is not about

⁵⁴ Though as Reynolds points out, it is a mistake to equate a benefice with a fief. Reynolds, *Fiefs and Vassals: The Medieval Evidence Reinterpreted*, 95, 120.

the kind of service that one should provide upon receiving a gift. Further, in explaining this question, Anselm turns not to a secular example to clarify the question, but to a monastic one whereby the necessity of monastic service is the result of an oath freely taken.

The fourth, *Cur Deus Homo* 2.16, is a parable that aims to show how the power of Christ's death could extend across time and be made available to persons who were not living at the time of his crucifixion. Here there is a service offered to a king (not a lord), but it is not in return for inheritable property as in the feudal model, but as a means of saving others from "*mortis damnationem*." Further, the service offered is not necessarily military service; in fact, the exact nature of the service is not mentioned at all—only that it is pleasing to the king. Rather than feudal, the model here is more apparently monastic, as one of the functions of monks in Anselm's era was to do service to God on behalf of others who were unable to do so. Anselm seems to have monastic service in mind here, not feudal service.

In short, the *Cur Deus Homo* lacks the technical terms typically associated with the feudal model, and the reason that people have described the images that Anselm uses as feudal is because they have presupposed the feudal model in interpreting his ideas. It is time for theologians to catch up with medieval historians and stop making this deeply problematic charge with respect to Anselm. In the future, for theologians to make claims about the feudalism of the *Cur Deus Homo* it would seem that they would have three hurdles to overcome. First, they would have to provide an account for the feudal model itself and how it is an accurate understanding of the medieval context in which Anselm operates. It would also be helpful if scholars would also be more explicit about the exact complaint against feudalism and why that period is somehow unique. Second, if they have cleared that hurdle they would need to point more directly to the actual text of the *Cur Deus Homo*, explain its lack of the technical terminology of the feudal model, and argue for how the *Cur Deus Homo* is feudal in spite of this absence. Third, they would then have to argue for how the four examples described above are in fact feudal, rather than monastic or merely medieval.

It is not enough, however, to argue against one framework of understanding without seeking to replace it with another. Two alternative frameworks merit investigation: (1) recent attempts to understand how imperial desires might have shaped the *Cur Deus Homo*, and (2) the framework of monastic life and the *Rule of Benedict*. We can now turn our attention to these two alternative models, which we will discuss in dialogue with each other.

Empire or Benedict?

A recent trend in theology is to assess critically the ways that empire shapes our theology. Chief among these is Joerg Rieger's recent work, *Christ and Empire*,⁵⁵ in which he devotes a chapter to the influence of Anselm's context on the *Cur Deus Homo*. For Rieger, Anselm's controlling social context as well as the primary influence on his thought-world is the imperial dynamic of the Norman Conquest and the political gains of the papacy in Rome, so that "the empire provides the context for Anselm's Christology like water provides the context for fish."⁵⁶

Briefly put, Rieger's overall project is to investigate how empire—"large and ever-changing conglomerates of power that are aimed at controlling all aspects of our lives"⁵⁷—shapes our Christologies in ways that domesticate Christ or use Christ for imperial purposes. There is a twofold movement to Rieger's work: he first seeks to uncover ways that imperial desires have wrongly influenced our understanding of Christ, and then he looks at how Christ manages to escape even imperial depredations by providing a Christological "surplus" that subverts and points beyond the control of the status quo. The Christological surplus allows one to see who and what is being repressed so that one can gain an "alternative perspective" by which one can "see things from the underside that you cannot see from the top, especially the distortions of the system."⁵⁸ Rieger is not so much criticizing particular Christologies as he is attempting to expose the reach of empires even into our conceptions of Christ.

In applying this approach to Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo*, Rieger first spends a considerable amount of time criticizing Anselm for ignoring investiture rules, being beholden to the political elite, paying homage to the king, supporting a hierarchical social order and the *status quo*, promoting a Western epistemic hegemony, and ignoring the lives of Christ and the people,⁵⁹ but he then goes on to identify a "Christological surplus" in which Anselm's atonement theory can be used to resist empire by restoring justice, subverting social structures, addressing systemic sin, and encouraging relational concepts.⁶⁰

While one way of looking at this approach to Anselm is to claim that it is more complex than the feudal model, it ends up being rather confusing, so that one is unsure why Anselm's Christology is even salvageable,

⁵⁵ Rieger, *Christ and Empire: From Paul to Postcolonial Times*, 119–58.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 135.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, vii.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 124–28, 132, 139.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 144–47.

regardless of Christ's ability to slip from an imperial grasp. So on one hand Rieger claims that Anselm finds God "at the top of the society, with the highest powers that be," while on the other hand he seemingly contradicts himself by pointing out that Anselm twice went into exile as a result of conflicts with the kings; he contends that the conflicts did not "call into question his basic allegiance to the Norman Empire."⁶¹ Again, after insinuating that Anselm's investiture at Canterbury was irregular and that the land holdings at Bec expanded because of Anselm's influence, Rieger approvingly quotes Sally Vaughn on Anselm's disinterest in power and wealth.⁶² He declares that the underlying problem that caused the writing of *Cur Deus Homo*, though apparently repressed from Anselm's consciousness, is the conflict with the Muslim empire—and yet he mentions that Anselm opposed the Crusades.⁶³

Perhaps the stark conflicts resulting from Rieger's understanding of Anselm's social context can be explained away as the product of the conflicts inherent in any person who attempts to live a Christian life of responsibility in a difficult world. Rieger, however, is more likely to argue that it is not his reading of Anselm that is conflicted, but rather that Anselm's life and work exhibits conflict as a result of Freudian repression.⁶⁴ For Rieger, one task of the theologian is to reveal that which is repressed, so that he can free the positive features of Anselm's theology from its negative aspects. Rieger would contend that by ignoring, and thus repressing, the alleged feudal and imperial background of Anselm's thought-world, we miss the important elements of Anselm's argument. He summarizes his argument:

In sum, the key concepts of Anselm's approach, including justice, love, order, honor, and satisfaction, emphasize relationship. But the question is what kind of relationship we envision and whether the hierarchical kinds of relation of empire can give way to the kinds of relationship in God's kingdom where, according to Jesus' repeated reminder, "many who are first will be last, and the last will be first" (Mark 10:31).⁶⁵

⁶¹ Ibid., 125. The question of whether the Norman kingdoms were actually an empire, a subject of some dispute among historians, is not taken up by Rieger.

⁶² Ibid., 129.

⁶³ Ibid., 131, 133.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 134. See also Joerg Rieger, *God and the Excluded: Visions and Blind Spots in Contemporary Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), especially chapter five, for Rieger's full description of how theologians can make themselves aware of what is being repressed in their theological formulations.

⁶⁵ Rieger, *Christ and Empire: From Paul to Postcolonial Times*, 146. Rieger's conception of hierarchy is not clear here, as the verse from Mark does not imply an end to

In the remainder of this essay I will argue that what is being repressed is the Benedictine background of those very concepts in Anselm's thought which Rieger finds salutary. Many theologians, including Rieger, mention the fact that Anselm was a Benedictine monk, but few have given sufficient attention to the influence monasticism had on Anselm's thought. Obedience, honor, and order are all elements of the *Rule* and of the *Cur Deus Homo*, and so, following Mansini and Fortin, I will seek to show how these three monastic concepts provide pivotal insight into the *Cur Deus Homo*. Additionally, I will seek to show that, properly understood, monastic concepts of obedience, honor, and order are much more benign and provide a more flexible hierarchy than if conceived as strictly feudal concepts; understood in their proper context, the concepts do not lead to conflicted readings of Anselm, but rather they allow the full integration of both his material and his spiritual realities. The goal is to show that, instead of feudalism or empire, the intellectual and contextual sources of Anselm's argument, and of his entire soteriological understanding, are monastic.

To argue that Anselm looks to secular life, whether consciously or unconsciously, as the primary model for understanding how one is saved is to miss what we might think of as Anselm's monastic soteriology. In Anselm's estimation, abandoning a monastery for life outside of the cloister is akin to the Fall,⁶⁶ and salvation is found in the cloister, since salvation is most certain for those who love God until the end, which happens by perfect monastic obedience. Monks represent for Anselm "the elect" who have renounced the world to follow Christ.⁶⁷ Anselm most explicitly details his monastic soteriology in *Epistle* 121, where he acknowledges that monks are not the only ones who are saved, but he compares monks, who love God alone, with laypersons, who must "couple love of God and love of the world at the same time," and he asserts that "if someone who endeavors to love God alone keeps his intention to the end, his salvation is certain." And, in an echo of the *Proslogion*, Anselm says that a monk who maintains his commitment, even if he has sinned, has made a commitment that "is such that he cannot have a greater (*quo maius habere non potest*)."⁶⁸

hierarchy, but rather the replacement of one hierarchy with another where the "last will be first." An inverted hierarchy, after all, is still a hierarchy.

⁶⁶ *Epistle* 140; Schmitt III: 285–86, 5–8. He describes a monk who has abandoned the monastery as "just like any son of our mother Eve who forfeited the delights of paradise after being deceived in paradise."

⁶⁷ *Epistles* 2 (Schmitt III: 100, 40–47), 51 (Schmitt III: 165, 26–35), 81 (Schmitt III: 205–6, 22–32), 121 (Schmitt III: 261–62, 20–45), and 231 (Schmitt IV: 136–37, 28–39). Note here the parallels with *Cur Deus Homo* 1.18, which details how an elect must replace the fallen angels in heaven.

⁶⁸ *Epistle* 121, Schmitt III: 261, 24–39.

The point here is that if Anselm understands the optimal means of attaining salvation here on earth to be through monastic life, then it would make the most sense to look to this model for understanding salvation on a cosmic scale. Obedience, honor, and order, along with satisfaction, are best understood from within this monastic model, where God is modeled after an abbot and Christ is modeled after a perfectly obedient monk—though Anselm would say in reality that the modeling goes in the opposite direction.

Obedience

While we often associate the spiritual practices of monastic life with prayer, worship, the daily office, and ascetic denial, one can easily make the case that the primary spiritual practice of Benedictine monasticism is obedience. The psychological, theological, and spiritual genius of Benedict, and his predecessors from whom he freely borrowed, was to recognize that the central problem of human life was disobedience caused by self-will and that the cure for self-will was obedience to the will of another. He establishes the contrast in the first few lines of the *Rule*, as he states in the prologue, “The labor of obedience will bring you back to him from whom you had drifted through the sloth of disobedience. This message of mine is for you, then, if you are ready to give up your own will, once and for all, and armed with the strong and noble weapons of obedience to do battle for the true King, Christ the Lord.”⁶⁹ In his descriptions of the four kinds of monks, he praises the cenobites and anchorites who serve under a rule, while he rejects the sarabaites whose “law is what they like to do, whatever strikes their fancy,” as well as the gyrovagues who “are slaves to their own wills.”⁷⁰ It is our self-will, by which we “take pleasure in the satisfaction of [our] desires,”⁷¹ which provides the greatest obstacle to our salvation.

If self-will is the perennial human problem, monastic obedience, properly understood, is the best solution. While we often think of obedience as a restriction that diminishes our autonomy and often results in abuses of power, Benedictine obedience has a completely different rationale and

⁶⁹ *RB* prologue, 2–3. As Fry points out in his footnote, there are strong intimations of an Adam/Christ typology in the disobedience/obedience dialectic of this passage, which seems to be reflected in the *Cur Deus Homo* as well. Benedict and Fry, 157. As we will see below, rather than feudal obedience, it would seem that much of the *Cur Deus Homo* is an extended reflection on Romans 5:19: “For just as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous.”

⁷⁰ *RB* 1.8 and 1.11.

⁷¹ *RB* 7.31

tenor to it, as we can see in two passages where Benedict focuses his attention on obedience. In chapter five of the *Rule*, Benedict links obedience to love of Christ and God, so that obedience is done out of love, since “it is love that impels them to pursue everlasting life.”⁷² Thus obedience is not done for the purpose of serving a hierarchy, but it rather serves the purpose of love for God. The love of God, however, is possible only for one who gives up his self-will and subjects himself to the abbot, so that monks “no longer live by their own judgment, giving in to their whims and appetites; rather they walk according to another’s decisions and directions.”⁷³ At the heart of this passage on obedience is the text from John 6:38, “I have come not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me,” a passage we will see again in Anselm’s reflection on obedience in *Cur Deus Homo* 1.9.

The abbot, who serves in the place of the Christ, plays the crucial role in monastic obedience. Unlike a secular lord, the abbot works for the benefit of those who are to obey him, rather than for his own benefit (though even secular lords, in contrast to the old feudal model, had responsibilities and obligations to their subjects), and the controlling images of the abbot’s role in chapter 2 of the *Rule* are pastoral rather than lordly. The abbot, unlike a secular lord, must not only teach what the Lord would teach, but must also serve as a living example for those members of the monastery who are either too dense or too willful to understand; obedience starts with the abbot obeying, rather than the abbot ordering others to obey. The basic principle is one that we understand even today as we develop programs in spiritual direction, which is that weak souls should place themselves under the rule of others.⁷⁴

The second main passage on obedience is in two of the last three chapters of the *Rule*, where Benedict discusses mutual obedience among monks. Here obedience is not framed in a hierarchical way but in a way that fosters the mutual respect of the brothers. A monk is not supposed “to pursue what he judges better for himself, but instead, what he judges better for someone else,”⁷⁵ which again is a reversal of the alleged feudal relationship. Thus we see that obedience has a highly social element not for the preservation of hierarchy, but rather for preservation of the peace of the community as it seeks to “prefer nothing whatever to Christ.”⁷⁶

⁷² *RB* 5.10.

⁷³ *RB* 5.12.

⁷⁴ Stephen M. Hildebrand, “Oboedientia and Oboedire in the Rule of St. Benedict: A Study of Their Theological and Monastic Meanings,” *American Benedictine Review* 52 (2001): 423.

⁷⁵ *RB* 72.7.

⁷⁶ *RB* 72.11.

The idea of obedience shows up quite frequently in Anselm's letters, and it will be useful to see how he uses the idea in his role as abbot and archbishop before we see how it is deployed in *Cur Deus Homo*. As we would expect after our discussion of obedience in the *Rule*, the will, love, and obedience are all connected in Anselm's mind, so that in one of his early letters he tells a friend that

we must direct our minds to what the Lord to whom we belong wills to do with us, rather than to what we, *who do not belong to ourselves*, want. Let us therefore so preserve our longing for brotherly charity that we observe the command of the heavenly will. And let us so display the obedience of submission which divine ordinance demands that we may keep the warmth of the love which divine dispensation bestows on us.⁷⁷

Anselm applies Benedictine principles of obedience even to the taking up of leadership positions in the abbey. He writes to a friend who has become abbot-elect at another abbey that the monk should refuse to take up the position in any way that he can, unless it would cause him to sin, in which case he should "submit obediently and bear it conscientiously."⁷⁸ Recognizing the risks attendant in being an abbot, where the abbot is liable to be judged for the faults of the monks,⁷⁹ Anselm thinks that only the sin of disobedience can force one to take up a position of responsibility, and it is worth noting that Anselm sees the abbacy more as a position of heavy responsibility than as one of power. In fact, shortly after Anselm sent this letter to his friend, Anselm was nominated for the abbacy at Bec, and he resisted it so vociferously that his friend wrote him back and directly quoted Anselm's letter to him and suggested that Anselm too must take up the position. His friend seems to take great joy in giving Anselm a dose of his own medicine as he boasts that "it is indeed a wonderful victory to prevail over someone with his own weapons."⁸⁰ One might construe all of this resistance to responsibility as a tropological pattern which Anselm inherited, as Sally Vaughn does,⁸¹ but this assumes that Anselm was incapable of expressing his own mind in the first place.

⁷⁷ *Epistle* 5, Schmitt III: 106, 8–14. My emphasis.

⁷⁸ *Epistle* 61, Schmitt III: 176, 22–23. Written fifteen years before Anselm takes a role at Canterbury, one can see here that Anselm's resistance to taking up the archbishopric is not some feigned affect, but rather the result of a lifelong principle that he applied not only to himself but also to others. However, as it is clear, ultimately for Anselm obedience wins out when there is a chance of the sin of disobedience.

⁷⁹ RB 2.7.

⁸⁰ *Epistle* 88, Schmitt III: 213, 15–16.

⁸¹ Sally N. Vaughn, *Anselm of Bec and Robert of Meulan: The Innocence of the Dove and the Wisdom of the Serpent* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 116–21.

We will return to Anselm's letters as they provide insight into his argument in *Cur Deus Homo*, but it seems clear that the concept of obedience in the *Rule* made it into Anselm's daily life as a monk and abbot without much change from Benedict's original formulation.⁸² Indeed, mirroring the Prologue to the *Rule*, the first mention of obedience in the *Cur Deus Homo* occurs when Anselm, paraphrasing Romans 5:19, maintains that "it was appropriate that, just as death entered the human race through a man's disobedience, so life should be restored through a man's obedience."⁸³ The center of Anselm's reflection on obedience, however, occurs in chapters eight and nine of the first book.

In this part of the argument, Boso and Anselm are discussing whether or not God is at fault for Jesus' death by handing him over to die. Anselm claims that "the Father did not coerce Christ to face death against his will, or give permission for him to be killed, but Christ himself of his own volition underwent death in order to save mankind."⁸⁴ In reply, Boso quickly offers up a series of five different proofs from Scripture to the contrary. Anselm argues that there is a key distinction between what Jesus does out of obedience and what is done to Jesus by others as a result of his obedience. There is no way that Jesus could be compelled to die, as any rational being who never sins is not in any way obliged to die, where not sinning is giving to God "what is owed him,"⁸⁵ which would, of course, be obedience. Thus Jesus' death could be something that he voluntarily undergoes, but not something he was required to do out of the "compulsion of obedience."⁸⁶

This idea is also thoroughly Benedictine. As Anselm explains in one of his letters, "this very *Rule* teaches that a monk must subject himself in total obedience to his superior and that, imitating the Lord's example, we must observe obedience until death."⁸⁷ The section of the *Rule* to which Anselm is referring is the famous passage on humility, where Benedict states:

The third step of humility is that a man submits to his superior in all obedience for the love of God, imitating the Lord of whom the Apostle says: *He became obedient even to death* (Phil 2:8).

Vaughn clarifies her understanding of this in a confrontation with Richard Southern: see Sally N. Vaughn, "Anselm: Saint and Statesman," *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies* 20 (1988): 205–20.

⁸² See also *Epistles* 6, 137 and 156 in Schmitt III and IV.

⁸³ *Cur Deus Homo* 1.3, Schmitt II: 51, 5–7; cf. 1 Cor 15:22.

⁸⁴ *Cur Deus Homo* 1.8, Schmitt II: 60, 11–14.

⁸⁵ *Cur Deus Homo* 1.11, Schmitt II: 68, 10.

⁸⁶ *Cur Deus Homo* 1.8, Schmitt II: 61, 1–2.

⁸⁷ *Epistle* 123, Schmitt III: 264, 14–16.

The fourth step of humility is that in this obedience under difficult, unfavorable, or even unjust conditions, his heart quietly embraces suffering and endures it without weakening or seeking escape.⁸⁸

Thus the Benedictine understanding of Jesus' suffering is one in which Jesus obeyed even in the face of unjust suffering; one does not directly will one's own death, and God certainly does not will our deaths,⁸⁹ but rather one wills obedience, which might result in death through no fault of anyone other than the unjust persons who cause one's death. The content of Jesus' obedience, or the proper obedience of all humans, is not death but rather a life of constant "truth and justice,"⁹⁰ which may have the accidental effect of death. By willing God's justice, Christ in effect willed the supererogatory satisfaction that would come through his death, but Christ was in no way directly obedient to anyone's will that he die; God did not will it and Christ is not under any obligation to obey human beings. Christ is exalted not because he died, but because he was perfectly obedient. Here too we see Anselm reflect on the Benedictine discussion of John 6:38, which we mentioned above, and we can see the links between Benedictine obedience and the shaping of the will and Anselm's ideas in the *Cur Deus Homo*.

Another key passage in *Cur Deus Homo* regarding obedience is also best understood through Anselm's conception of the role of obedience in monastic life—the famed "one glance" argument in *Cur Deus Homo* 1.21. Here Anselm is making a case for the weight of sin and how even the smallest sin, something as insignificant as a backwards glance, can create a seemingly insoluble problem for divine/human relations. The example seems so extreme as to make God seem petty and trifling, so that Harnack's charge of an angry lord who needs to be satisfied might seem appropriate. Taken out of its monastic context this charge would likely stick, but since we know that Anselm would always conceive of God as greater than a petty tyrant, we might need to look elsewhere to understand the implications of this argument. Here again, Anselm's letters show a link between monastic obedience and his theological arguments.

⁸⁸ RB 7.34–36. Note that this passage is brought up by Boso in *Cur Deus Homo* 1.8 and explained by Anselm in 1.9.

⁸⁹ Note that the issue in 1.8 is about God's justice. Anselm agrees that it would be unjust for God to condemn or send an innocent man to death, but he argues that if Christ voluntarily goes to his death, then God's justice remains intact. The implied comparison here may be with Pilate, who did send an innocent man to death, so that if God were to send Christ to die, then God would be no different than Pilate.

⁹⁰ *Cur Deus Homo* 1.9, Schmitt II: 61, 13.

In three letters, Anselm ties the existence of the smallest amount of sin to the problems of the preservation of the monastic community; the controlling biblical text is Sirach 19:1, which Anselm quotes in all three letters. The first letter was sent to a group of nuns to thank them for their support while he had been exiled. Anselm tells them that they will

live in a holy manner if you diligently keep your rule and your intention. You do this diligently if you do not scorn the smallest things. Your intention should always be to strive for progress and to dread regress with all your heart. For it is written “that one who despises little things fails little by little” (Sirach 19.1). One who fails makes no progress. Therefore if you wish to progress and dread regress do not despise the little things. As it is true “that one who despises little things fails little by little” so it is true that one who does not despise little things progresses little by little.⁹¹

Anselm extends this idea in a letter sent after completion of *Cur Deus Homo*, a letter in which he tells a group of monks that “in a monastery where the smallest matters are strictly observed, the severity of the monastic rule remains inviolable, there is peace among the brothers and denunciations in chapter come to an end. But where the smallest faults are neglected the whole rule breaks down little by little and is destroyed.”⁹²

Seen in this monastic and biblical context, Anselm’s example of the wayward glance places God in a different light. Instead of a petty feudal tyrant who is easily offended, the smallest sin must be dealt with for the sake of the justice and preservation of the community—in this case the community of the universe—so that the problems will not multiply. The injustice introduced into the universe by sin threatens the preservation of “the whole of creation,”⁹³ and so in consonance with a controlling image of the whole treatise of God as craftsman, God must go on a rescue mission to save us from ourselves and to keep us from falling further away from His goal for our lives.

Honor

Rieger situates the question of honor firmly in a supposed feudal and imperial context, where “honor is based on the interpersonal relation between the lord and vassal, and everything else in the empire finds its

⁹¹ *Epistle* 403, Schmitt V: 347–48, 17–23.

⁹² *Epistle* 231, Schmitt IV: 137, 22–26. See also *Epistle* 450, Schmitt V: 397–98, for a similar discussion.

⁹³ *Cur Deus Homo* 1.21, Schmitt II: 89, 12–13.

place in relation to this order.”⁹⁴ According to Rieger, this relationship is central to understanding both *Cur Deus Homo* and its supposed feudal context, for to dishonor God as ruler is to introduce a break into all of existence in a system “based on the recognition of the honor and status of each member.”⁹⁵ Rieger reflects the understanding of honor—primarily construed as a vertical relationship in which the vassal is required to give honor to the lord—that we find in Southern, who concludes a brief discussion of Anselm’s understanding of God’s honor with the statement that honor was “essentially a social bond which held all ranks of society in their due place.”⁹⁶ In making these claims, both Rieger and Southern neglect the biblical and Benedictine background of Anselm’s concept of honor which informs his argument in *Cur Deus Homo*. To address their concerns we once again look at the *Rule* and then Anselm’s letters as means of better understanding God’s honor in *Cur Deus Homo*.

Although honor does not play as important a role in the *Rule* as does obedience or satisfaction, it is nevertheless worth investigating the few places where it is mentioned, to see how the *Rule* provides insight into how honor is supposed to work both within and without the monastic community.⁹⁷ Honor in the *Rule* is a multi-directional concept rather than a strictly hierarchical one. That is not to say that God is not at the top of the hierarchy⁹⁸ and the *Rule* mentions specifically that monks, during the night office, are to “rise from their seats in honor and reverence for the Holy

⁹⁴ Rieger, *Christ and Empire: From Paul to Postcolonial Times*, 136. Given the case we have made against feudalism above, we can put aside the question about whether something can be both feudal, with its centrifugal forces, and imperial, with its centripetal forces. Whatever the usefulness of those two models for understanding medieval social organization, it is not clear that the two can exist in the same place at the same time. How, for instance, does one reconcile the supposed fragmentation of authority mentioned in Bloch’s definition of feudalism (see above, p. 1060) with the idea of large imperial conglomerates of power mentioned in Rieger’s definition of empire (above, p. 1069)? It is not self-evident that it can be both. By the logic of these two models, Anselm’s argument must be either feudal or imperial, but not both. In actuality, Anselm’s argument is neither.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Southern, *Saint Anselm: A Portrait in a Landscape*, 226.

⁹⁷ Honor is mentioned in the following places in *RB*: 4.8, 9.7, 11.9, 36.4, 53.2, 53.15, 63.10–17, and 72.4. Note that in several of these cases Fry renders the Latin *honor* as “respect.”

⁹⁸ I have never been quite sure what the alternative is to having God at the top of a hierarchy. Is God supposed to be at the same level as us, like the CEO of some organization that is trying to flatten its bureaucracy? Or is he in some way supposed to be less than us? Even a kenotic reading of Jesus’ life presumes that he started from a position at the top of a hierarchy to begin with. Theologians often insinuate that there is something wrong with this conception of God, but

Trinity.”⁹⁹ We might think of this as a kind of liturgical or religious honor that belongs only to God. A similar form of honor is given to the abbot of the monastery, who is naturally at the top of the hierarchy of the monastery and thus is to be accorded the honor due to his station. This honor, however, is not because of any intrinsic merit in the abbot but because “he holds the place of Christ” and so must be honored and loved for the sake of Christ, who is to be loved above all. Even here the honor accorded the abbot comes with significant responsibilities, as the abbot is called upon to make sure that his actions “show himself worthy of such honor.”¹⁰⁰

The greater emphasis in the *Rule*, however, is on mutual honor and on caring for the weakest in the community as an act of obedience and love that displays our honor for God. Honor plays a role both among the relationships within the monastic community and among the relationships the community has with those outside of the cloister.

Benedict first introduces the idea of monastic honor in *RB* 4.8, which is in his discussion of the tools for good works that a monk uses in the spiritual life. Here he quotes 1 Peter 2:17, “you must honor everyone” and quotes from the Golden Rule, immediately establishing the idea that honor applies to all persons, not just those who might be higher up the hierarchy, or even just those who are in the monastic community.¹⁰¹ In addressing the idea of honor within the monastic community, Benedict twice quotes Romans 12:10, which Fry translates as “they should each try to be the first to show respect (*honore*) to the other.”¹⁰² Honor, then, is applied not just up the hierarchy, but through all levels of the community. What makes this mutual honor possible is a call for monks to reject their own self-importance and instead assume a position of humility with respect to others, which is made most clear in Benedict’s famed section on humility in *RB* 7. In the sixth and seventh steps on the ladder of humility, monks are required to be content with both menial treatment and menial work and to be convinced deep in their hearts that they are inferior to all.¹⁰³ Though Benedict does not specifically mention honor here, the basic precepts of humility spelled out in the *Rule* provide a basis for the mutual honoring of those within and without the community.

since they often engage in criticism rather than positive affirmations, one cannot quite ferret out what the correct idea of God is.

⁹⁹ *RB* 9.7.

¹⁰⁰ *RB* 63.13–14

¹⁰¹ *RB* 4.8, “*honorare omnes homines*.”

¹⁰² *RB* 63.17 and 72.4: “*honore se invicem praeveniant*.”

¹⁰³ *RB* 7.49–52. I am grateful to the anonymous reviewer of this article for pointing out the relevance of this passage for this section.

Perhaps even more profoundly influential in Benedict's understanding of honor is his reflection on Matthew 25:31–46. Both of the *Rule's* commands to honor the sick and travelers (in *RB* 36 and 53 respectively) are shaped by Jesus' description of the judgment that will fall upon those who do not care for the sick or for travelers. At the top, then, of the honorific hierarchy in the *Rule* are the sick brothers, for "care of the sick must rank above and before all else, so that they may be truly served as Christ," and yet the sick must "bear in mind that they are served out of honor for God."¹⁰⁴

Likewise, the honor with which guests are to be received is multi-directional rather than bottom-up. Benedict assumes that the natural awe that humans tend to give the wealthy and powerful insures that these will be treated with proper honor when they visit the monastery, so he emphasizes that "great care and concern are to be shown in receiving poor people and pilgrims, because in them more particularly Christ is received."¹⁰⁵ Fry points out that the repetition of the phrase "to all" (*omnibus*) in 53.1, 53.2, 53.6, and 53.13 is likely another allusion to the text of 1 Peter 2:17 that was previously mentioned in *RB* 4.8.¹⁰⁶ Benedictine honor is not a hierarchical phenomenon, but rather Benedictine honor seeks to find Christ in all persons, regardless of background or social status.

In these few mentions of honor in the *Rule* we find honor being construed primarily Christologically. Monks are called to honor others not because of their intrinsic worth or position in society or the monastery, but rather because Christ is to be found in each person, but most especially the less fortunate. Monks are to serve and honor each other because of what Benedict describes, in perhaps the key passage of the entire *Rule*, as the preferential option for Christ: "let them prefer nothing whatever to Christ."¹⁰⁷

We find many of the same concepts of honor in Anselm's correspondence, where honor is mentioned in more than fifty of his letters.¹⁰⁸ The basic honor afforded to travelers is mentioned by Anselm in addressing both recipients and hosts.¹⁰⁹ What is interesting in these particular mentions of honor is how often Anselm links honor and love.¹¹⁰ A typi-

¹⁰⁴ *RB* 36.1–4.

¹⁰⁵ *RB* 53.15

¹⁰⁶ Benedict and Fry, 256, note at 53.2.

¹⁰⁷ *RB* 72.11, "*Christo omino nihil praeponant*."

¹⁰⁸ Evans and Anselm, *A Concordance to the Works of St. Anselm*, s.v. 'honor' and its derivatives.

¹⁰⁹ For instance, *Epistles* 116, 118, 151, 274, 280, 286–87, 407.

¹¹⁰ *Epistles* 58, 65, 66, 87, 147, 274.

cal letter of this type is a letter that Anselm writes to the Archbishop of Rouen asking him to receive William Giffard, the bishop-elect of Winchester, "with love and honor," since Giffard had been forced into exile by the king of England.¹¹¹ The consistent connection between love and honor indicates that for Anselm honor is a social bond created not by one's position in society but by the mutual affection between two persons. Additionally, this love and honor has a transitive property to it, whereby one's love and honor for one person is transferred to another person based on that primary relationship.

Anselm also consistently differentiates between secular and heavenly honors or true and false honors.¹¹² In a letter inveighing against a young man's decision to join the First Crusade instead of the monastery, Anselm tells the young man that "the bloody confusion of wars is wickedness; the insatiable greed for hollow honors and hollow riches is wickedness."¹¹³ The real honor comes not from pursuing the vanity of false honors, but "from cross[ing] over into the freedom of the truth."¹¹⁴ Likewise, Anselm tells a bishop who has resigned his bishopric for the purpose of joining a monastery that the bishop has done a good thing, since "all those follow vanity who desire the dignities and honors and riches of the world."¹¹⁵ For Anselm, true honor is found in the monastery, and he is not at all impressed with the honors outside of it.

The false honor of the secular world is compared with the perfection of the monastic life in Anselm's description of the ideal of monastic life, which he offers to a hermit named Hugh. Here we see echoes of the sixth and seventh steps of the ladder of humility from the *Rule*. By loving others more than themselves, monks "despise riches, power and pleasure and being honored and praised," and so instead must "love contempt, poverty, hard work and submission, as do holy men."¹¹⁶ Anselm follows this with the quotation from Luke 18:14, "he who humbles himself will

¹¹¹ *Epistle* 274, Schmitt IV: 189, 18–21.

¹¹² *Epistles* 117, 134, 160, 251, 418.

¹¹³ *Epistle* 117, Schmitt III: 253, 20.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, Schmitt III: 254, 56.

¹¹⁵ *Epistle* 418, Schmitt V: 363, 6 through 364, 12. Modern writers often presume that medieval people lacked a distinction between religious and secular life, but Anselm clearly sees a patent distinction between these two worlds. The difference is that Anselm draws the boundaries more tightly, so that a bishop is a part of the secular world and only those in the cloister are properly part of the religious world. The difference in these boundaries may partially explain Anselm's resistance to becoming the Archbishop of Canterbury, since holding that secular position would put his salvation at greater risk.

¹¹⁶ *Epistle* 112, Schmitt III: 246, 66–72.

be exalted,” which is the verse that opens the section on humility in the *Rule*. Real honor, that by which one attains the highest exaltation, comes from humility that flows from loving others.

Indeed, in a passage that shows just how deeply subversive of secular honor Anselm’s monastic idea of honor is, he tells the abbess of Winchester that the aforementioned William Giffard’s exile should be understood with gratitude since

God is bestowing such an honor on your bishop. For indeed greater glory and praise are his in the sight of God and of good men for having been despoiled and exiled for the sake of justice than if he had become wealthy with all the riches and all the possessions of the world by violating justice. Therefore, let all his friends rejoice and exult because he could be overcome by no violence or fear, nor could he be separated from truth by any cupidity.¹¹⁷

Anselm was aware of secular ideas of honor, but he surely did not think too highly of them. His description of the honor that Giffard will receive from God from his suffering in exile could easily double as a description of the honor that Christ receives from his suffering from obedience.

With this better understanding of how Anselm’s monasticism shaped his ideas of honor, we can turn to his use of the concept in the *Cur Deus Homo*. The main sections on honor in *Cur Deus Homo* are in chapters thirteen through fifteen in the first book, and Anselm begins by boldly stating his thesis that “there is nothing more intolerable in the universal order than that a creature should take away honor from the creator and not repay what he takes away.”¹¹⁸ God should not tolerate this grave injustice and it would be wrong for God to ignore the slight; it is matter of justice, not pride. God must always be just to Himself, and to rectify this grave injustice, God must either demand a repayment of the honor or inflict punishment. As in the *Rule*, one of the key issues here is that of human self-will, for God’s justice requires either that humans submit to God as an act of free will by not sinning, or make satisfaction by paying recompense for their sin through their free will, or be punished against their free will. Here we see the Benedictine disjunction of satisfaction or punishment come into play, as demonstrated in Mansini’s article. We also see the Benedictine emphasis on the will, because “the sole honour, the complete honour, which we owe to God and which God demands from us” is a righteous will.¹¹⁹ That is, we display our honor for God simply by maintaining a correct will with regard to God.

¹¹⁷ *Epistle* 276, Schmitt IV, 191, 6–11.

¹¹⁸ *Cur Deus Homo* 1.13, Schmitt II: 71, 7–8.

¹¹⁹ *Cur Deus Homo* 1.11, Schmitt II: 68, 15–18.

All this talk of honor, however, seems to make God subject to the whims of human will, as though God were somehow dependent upon us to uphold his honor, and so Anselm quickly moves to assure us that God's intrinsic honor is in fact not harmed at all, but rather the real harm is to the rational creature, "who dishonors God, with regard to himself, since he is not willingly subordinating himself to God's governance, and is disturbing, as far as he is able, the order and beauty of the universe."¹²⁰ The point here is that the honor that humans are due to receive as rational creatures made for the beatific vision is denied to them when they attempt to put their wills above God. Whereas humans might think they can elevate themselves beyond their station through self-will, in fact they lower themselves in the order of things, so that they cannot attain the heights for which God made them. This is not to say that God's honor is not important; rather it is to say that humans can have no direct impact upon God's intrinsic honor. God will maintain his honor through satisfaction or punishment, but God, like a Benedictine abbot, will choose satisfaction over punishment, because that will also restore the honor humans have lost through their disobedience.

The role of the beatific vision in Anselm's argument is often neglected, but without his teleological concept of human beings, the question of honor is too easily construed as just an outworking of feudal concepts rather than the consequence of deep theological commitments. Anselm's point is that we have taken away something from ourselves, not from God:

[S]ince man was created in such a way as to be capable of possessing blessed happiness, if he were not to sin, when he is deprived of blessedness and of all that is good, on account of sin, he is paying back what he has violently seized *from his own property (de suo)*, however much this is against his will.¹²¹

That is, God's justice would consist in our paying back what we stole from ourselves, not from God. The damage is not to God but rather to ourselves, and yet it is a damage that only God can repair; what is at stake

¹²⁰ *Cur Deus Homo* 1.15, Schmitt II: 73, 6–9. Mansini here makes a distinction between God's intrinsic and extrinsic honor. With regard to God's intrinsic honor, we can have no impact. With regard to God's extrinsic honor, as it is found in the beauty of creation, we appear to disturb God's honor when we do not freely subordinate our will to God. Mansini, "St. Anselm, 'Satisfactio', and the 'Rule' of St. Benedict," 103.

¹²¹ *Cur Deus Homo* 1.14, Schmitt II: 72, 16–18. My emphasis. Boso makes a similar argument in *Cur Deus Homo* 1.7 that the devil, as a thief, has persuaded man to steal his own self from his master, God. Schmitt II: 56, 3 through 57, 13.

is the restoration of our own justice and righteousness as well as our proper place in the universe. We honor ourselves and uphold God's extrinsic honor when we do not sin and when we obey God, because by doing so we allow ourselves to reach the high end for which God made us, which is alongside the angels of heaven; we become exalted through our humility in relation to God. Just as God's honor is a matter intrinsic to Himself, so our honor is a matter of giving to ourselves what is due to us by giving to God what is due to God—obedience. God restores our honor by the work of the God-man, by which “human nature was exalted.”¹²² This hardly seems like the kind of honor found in the lord/vassal relationships of the feudal model.

What I hope that I have demonstrated so far is that a Benedictine reading of Anselm's use of the language of honor is best understood in light of monastic—rather than supposedly feudal—commitments. Rieger acknowledges that Anselm's concept of honor is relational,¹²³ but, having presupposed Anselm's feudal and imperial commitments, he cannot quite make sense of why it is so. Because of his feudal reading of Anselm, Rieger has to discard the parts of the argument that he dislikes in favor of a Christological surplus. If, however, we locate Anselm's discussion of honor within its proper context, we can see that God's honor is not at stake, human honor is, and the God-man comes to restore it; God upholds his honor by restoring our lost honor. The God-man comes to heal the sick and welcome the poor who have squandered their heavenly possessions, not to demand satisfaction for God's sake. This is not a Christological surplus but rather a Christological fullness that embraces all of Anselm's argument.

Order

Closely related to the question of honor is that of order, and here again Rieger's concerns can help us identify what is at stake. As Rieger points out,

the term *order* occurs frequently in *CDH*, and sometimes it is translated by different terms in English, including “station in life,” an expression that shows the relational but also hierarchical qualities of the term. This order, based on the relation of ruler and ruled, guarantees stability and welfare. Peace, justice, and the unity of the empire rest on the maintaining of this order. . . . At stake is not personal honor or outward appearances but one's place in society—what we might call the “ontology of the empire.”¹²⁴

¹²² *Cur Deus Homo* 1.8, Schmitt II: 59, 27–28. Again, note the connection between exaltation and humility.

¹²³ Rieger, *Christ and Empire: From Paul to Postcolonial Times*, 146.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 136.

Rieger is absolutely right that the order of the universe is a central concern of Anselm's dialogue. From the very beginning of the discussion Anselm seems to locate the central problem in the disruption of the cosmic order; in that disruption, "the human race, clearly his most precious piece of workmanship, had been completely ruined," and so God's plans were apparently frustrated.¹²⁵ (Note as well that the controlling image of God here, and the one that underlies the whole treatise, is not that of a feudal lord but that of a careful craftsman whose most precious work has been badly damaged.) In the passages regarding honor which we have already investigated (*CDH* 1.13–15), Anselm does emphasize the importance of creatures accepting their proper role in the universal order, especially as rational agents. Placing oneself in the place of God instead of subordinating oneself to God disturbs "the order and beauty of the universe."¹²⁶ For the sake of brevity we need not contest Rieger's point about the importance of order in Anselm's argument or reiterate Anselm's argument on this point. There is, however, the question of whether this worry about order is driven by Anselm's alleged feudal and imperial context or, as I have maintained so far, by Anselm's monastic context.

Once again, a close inspection of the *Rule* points to a conceptual background of monastic reason behind Anselm's concern with order. The Latin term *ordo* is, in both Fry's translation of the *Rule* and Fairweather's translation of the *Cur Deus Homo* in the Davies volume, translated sometimes as *order*, sometimes as *rank*, and sometimes as *station in life*. In chapter 63 of the *Rule*, Benedict describes how the monastery is ordered by describing the rank of the monks; there is a threefold criterion for apportioning rank: "according to the date of their entry, the virtue of their lives, and the decision of the abbot."¹²⁷ The abbot is responsible for maintaining the order of the monks, but he is not allowed to "make any unjust arrangements, as though he had the power to do whatever he wished."¹²⁸ This does not, however, result in a static system, as is the case with the supposed feudal arrangements (and even here there was more mobility than the model would perhaps be able to account for), but rather one in which there is both stability and mobility. While the abbot must keep the order according to justice, he has the flexibility to move people along depending upon their particular circumstances. The selection of deans is made according to their virtues, not their length of service; reading and singing are assigned by ability and not rank; and bad priors can lose their

¹²⁵ *Cur Deus Homo* 1.4, Schmitt II: 52, 8–9.

¹²⁶ *Cur Deus Homo* 1.15, Schmitt II: 73, 8.

¹²⁷ *RB* 63.1.

¹²⁸ *RB* 63.2

rank.¹²⁹ Indeed, Anselm's quick rise through Bec is a clear indication that rank was not so static that one could not move up rapidly, given the proper abilities, both spiritual and intellectual.

More importantly, the assignment of rank is deeply subversive of the secular or so-called "imperial" order; it does not mirror the secular order but overturns it, as "a man born free is not to be given higher rank than a slave who becomes a monk, except for some other good reason," and priests are not accorded any special rank in their admission to the monastery.¹³⁰ Even the abbot is not selected according to seniority, but rather "goodness of life and wisdom in teaching must be the criteria for choosing the one to be made abbot, even if he is the last in community rank."¹³¹ The point here is that while the term *order* may seem to imply a static system in which there is little room for movement, the lived reality allowed for plenty of movement, which was done in a way to maximize peace among the brothers.

Another aspect of Benedictine order was that disobedience resulted in a loss of rank for the offending brother. A brother who came late to Vigils was required to stand at the end of the line of monks, rather than in his assigned rank, and monks who had been excommunicated and then readmitted were given a rank assigned by the abbot.¹³² This aspect of Benedictine order is certainly obvious in Anselm's discussion; the fundamental problem between God and humans arises when humans attempt to be recognized for a rank that is inappropriate to their temporal or moral status. In fact, if we take Benedict's logic seriously, we can see that God would naturally hold the highest rank, since he is both temporally superior to angels and humans, since he is the first being, and also morally superior to them. When humans attempt to disrupt the order by not obeying God, they disturb the peace and order of the universal monastery of which God is, in some sense, the permanent abbot.

At the beginning of his essay, Rieger argues that one must seek a "christological surplus" in Anselm's thought, since Anselm's goal seems to be "the restoration of the status quo,"¹³³ but this is to completely misunderstand both Anselm's goal and the role of order in Anselm's life. For Anselm, the status quo represents a fall from the goodness and beauty of the order of the universe, and so he instead seeks a restoration of the *status quo ante*, in which humans were at peace because they were in proper

¹²⁹ RB 21.4, 38.12, and 65.20 respectively.

¹³⁰ RB 2.18 and 60.7

¹³¹ RB 64.2

¹³² RB 43.5 and 44.5

¹³³ Rieger, *Christ and Empire: From Paul to Postcolonial Times*, 120.

relation to God and to each other. The status quo is, according to a monastic reading of Anselm, a place in which the concerns of empire and the depredations of the secular lords hold sway. And while Anselm certainly managed to thrive in that environment, his focus was on restoration to a state in which all humans were at peace only because they were first at peace with God.¹³⁴ Only, by Anselm's logic, could a God-man restore mankind to its exalted status and there is no way in which his Christology needs to be rescued from feudalism; the whole point of Anselm's Christology is to rescue us from the dreadful consequences of our self-will. If Anselm *were* to look at the situation from a feudal perspective, he would, I think, simply ask us whether we want to be the vassal of the devil or of God.

Conclusion

Feudal interpretations of Anselm, in addition to being now outdated, are too one-sided and emphasize just one side of his social context, rather than his monastic context. As Mansini and Fortin have previously shown, and I hope I have shown as well, Anselm's logic is Benedictine to the core. Rieger's conflicted reading of Anselm comes from repressing the monastic and spiritual side of Anselm's argument; Rieger emphasizes Anselm's four-year stint at Canterbury (at the time of the completion of *Cur Deus Homo*) at the cost of ignoring his previous thirty-three years as a Benedictine monk, prior, and abbot.

There is a striking passage in the middle of the *Rule* where Benedict's and Anselm's interests directly coincide, where obedience, sacrifice, satisfaction, order, and the Paschal mystery all converge in one place. In his description of Lent, Benedict tells us that "the life of a monk ought to be a continuous Lent," and he urges the entire community to keep its life pure through self-denial. Monks are encouraged to "have something above the assigned measure to offer God of his own will *with the joy of the Holy Spirit* (1 Thess 1:6)," ¹³⁵ just as the God-man offers something above the assigned measure in the gift of his life at the end of the Lenten period. This offering is to be made with the approval of the abbot, so obedience and order remain as part of the equation as well. What this passage tells us is that the best way to read the *Cur Deus Homo* is with a copy of the *Rule of Benedict* in one's lap.

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¹³⁴ See *Cur Deus Homo* 2.11, Schmitt II: 100, 8–19, for Anselm's description of how he perceives true human nature.

¹³⁵ *RB* 49.1–7.