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From the St. Anselm Symposium

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FROM THE ST. ANSELM SYMPOSIUM

FOREWORD

The history of philosophy differs from many other histories in that it is not a collection of anachronisms or a “cemetery” of ideas or views no longer meaningful, but a reflection of opinions which, although they were proclaimed ages ago, have not lost their significance and are worth consulting when considering the essence, order and hierarchy of beings, the sources and validity of human cognizance, values such as goodness, beauty and truth as well as the problem of the existence and essence of God and of the phenomenon of religion.

Our appreciation should be expressed to the organizers of the *Cur Anselmus?* symposium, to all its participants who wished to take part and present papers, in order to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the death of Dom. Franciscus Salesius Schmitt OSB, whose great merit was the critical edition of the *Opera omnia* of St. Anselm of Canterbury.

Anselm is one of the key figures of mediaeval Christian philosophy, whose influence may be discerned not only in later mediaeval minds, but also in modern thought.

Anselm's life and activity coincide with the beginning of the second millennium of the Christian era, a time when Western Christian thought was just beginning to develop and when it was confronted with the more advanced Jewish and Islam philosophies. In Christian philosophy, it was the time of the dispute between the so-called dialecticians, who stressed the dominant role of reason in philosophy and theology, and the anti-dialecticians, who did not hold reason in esteem so much and whose position was more of a fundamentalist nature in its understanding of religious faith as the sole path to truth. However, Anselm did not lend his support to either of these extreme currents of thought. He saw them both to be mistaken and harmful, owing to their one-sided attitude as regards the cause of reason and all other elements brought into the dispute. Not intending to bring these extreme attitudes to agreement and bearing in mind the approach to objective truth, Anselm undertook the task to introduce reason and the dialectical method into the service of explaining theological problems. In his opinion, reason is to be the main representative voice of all that pertains to the human being; he nonetheless added that reason cannot be burdened by the human being's physical senses, in order to enable it to be capable of rising to a vision made accessible only in pure contemplation.

His aim was to give a rational foundation to the rectitude and sureness of Revealed Truth. He saw it as serious negligence on the part of the human being, not to attempt to look for an understanding of what it believes in, once it is confirmed in this belief. Faith then, according to Anselm, is not the acceptance of and agreement with something which is incomprehensible (*quia absurdum*), it is not belief in general, nor faith based on a different teaching than that of the Church. Faith ought to have the support of understanding (*fides quaerens intellectum*). Thus Anselm coined the rational methodological principle: "I do not try to understand in order to believe, but I believe in order that I may understand".

The outstanding historical merit of Anselm for the European intellect was the fact of his making it appreciate the light of reason and capable of entering into dialogue with intellectual currents transcending its limits.

In this context, it is worth considering the significance of Anselm's thought for today, many centuries after his death, at the beginning of the third millennium of the Christian era.

It seems highly commendable that in our times more than ever, one should consider the thought of those philosophers who understand philosophy's chief purpose as that of a quest for objective truth regarding the whole of reality and indicating the fundamental role in this process of an unprejudiced mind. This is all the more important in view of the postmodern philosophy in vogue at present, which has disregarded the concept of objective truth and propagates the dictatorship of relativism. Having recourse more to irrational fantasies of fashionable intellectualists, these so-called philosophers amuse themselves with philosophical considerations rather than give themselves to a thoroughly thought-out approach based on reason and common sense.

Archbishop Stanisław Wielgus

ONE SYMPOSIUM – MANY ANNIVERSARIES

Although our symposium is chiefly devoted to the memory of Dom. Francis Salesius Schmitt OSB on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of his death (2nd of May 1972), there are other anniversaries which call our attention: the 90th anniversary of Dom. Schmitt's ordination to the priesthood (6th of August 1922) and two anniversaries of Edith Stein (St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross): the 90th anniversary of her reception into the Catholic Church (1st of January 1922) and the 70th anniversary of her martyrdom in Auschwitz (9th of August 1942).

Seventy years ago too (26th of October 1942) *doctissimus collega noster*, Helmut Kohlenberger, was born.

It was fitting to hold the symposium here in Wrocław (Breslau) – a city much associated with Dom. Schmitt and Edith Stein.

With this rich array of memorable dates, we are inspired not only to commemorate these jubilees, but also to express our gratitude to the Almighty for St. Teresa Benedicta, patron of Europe, for Dom. Schmitt and for Helmut. In one way or another they are all three of them of the mind and heart of St. Anselm (who has no particular anniversary that we could celebrate this year).

The general idea expressed in the symposium's theme "Cur Anselmus?" was meant to provoke its participants to reflect on Anselm's intellectual and spiritual heritage in a personal way: to ascertain what induced each one of them to study and further the cause of Anselm's thought and spirit. Although not all were able to do this openly, everyone, in their own discreet way, gave testimony to their love of and admiration for the *Magnificus doctor Ecclesiae*. Some, as Kalman Viola and David Luscombe, were unable to join us or even write a contribution, due to ill-health and other restrictive circumstances. However, they assured us of their union in mind and spirit.

We do have one extra anniversary, which has occurred between now and last August, in March 2013: Hiroko Yamazaki's jubilee birthday. For many years, Hiroko has travelled far from Japan to be with us in Le Bec (1982), USA (1985), Rome (1997), Hungary (2002), Stuttgart (2004), Canterbury (2009), Krakow (2009) and Wrocław (2012) and has shown her untiring support of Anselm's thought and spirituality.

We wish our dear and venerable colleagues, Hiroko and Helmut, *ad multos annos* and hope that we shall be able to enjoy their company and be inspired by their devotion to our great and holy Archbishop of Canterbury, as long as God wills!

Tadeusz Grzesik