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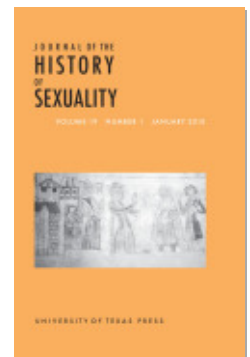
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Saint Anselm and His Students Writing about Love: A Theological Foundation for the Rise of Romantic Love in Europe

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STEPHEN JAEGER, IN HIS PATHBREAKING BOOK *Ennobling Love: In Search of a Lost Sensibility*, redefines the birth of romantic love in literature in twelfth-century Europe. He argues persuasively that in the twelfth century the idealistic, spiritual, chastely passionate, morally instructive, and reverential “ennobling love” in the Western tradition that had begun with the Greeks was transformed into medieval courtly love, a new concept rooted in the new “inclusion of women in a social code that until then had been almost exclusively the preserve of men.”¹ Courtly love then created an “unsolvable problem” of taking physical “sexuality into the idealism of ennobling love,” forcing “a union of eros and agape. . . . The great challenge . . . was to maintain love’s ability to ennoble even while declaring the sexual act and its fulfillment a quasi-legitimate element.” But how, Jaeger asks, could passionate love confer on the medieval aristocracy aura, prestige, and rank, as ennobling love had? “How can it claim virtue, while admitting virtue’s old enemy, the sexual act, as the natural end of love and full partner in the exalting process?”²

The concept would be hard to overcome, let alone transform. As Dyan Elliott remarks, “Most of the church fathers were apprehensive of human sexuality, as sexual relations were generally considered to be a reminder of humanity’s fallen state.”³ Yet Jaeger suggests that there was a variety of solutions, including such “founding moments” as the passionate tragic love of Héloïse and Abelard, the “frank sexuality . . . of the student milieu in Paris,” and Christina of Markyate’s incorporation of passion and sexual desire between male and female into an ascetic, chaste, and monastic

¹ C. Stephen Jaeger, *Ennobling Love: In Search of a Lost Sensibility* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 158.

² *Ibid.*, 159.

³ Dyan Elliott, *Spiritual Marriage: Sexual Abstinence in Medieval Wedlock* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993), 4.

context. There were also the romantic solutions of the fictional courtly epics that reconciled ennobling love with physical love by domesticizing sexual passions in the “marriage romances,” especially of Chrétien de Troyes and Wolfram von Eschenbach, and by mystifying sexual passion and exalting it into a realm beyond reason, as in the courtly Tristan romances of Gottfried von Strassburg.⁴

In Jaeger’s *schema*, eleventh-century Saint Anselm and his Bec monastic colleagues and students belonged firmly in the earlier world of ennobling love: Ciceronian, all male, and sexual only in the language used. But since Jaeger, who drew his conclusions from Anselm’s early letters, wrote, Anselm’s friendships have been reconsidered, revealing that he had a number of vibrant and close friendships with women as well as with men.⁵ Jaeger drew his conclusions from Anselm’s early letters, but a careful examination of the entire body of Anselm’s writings, both as abbot of Bec and as archbishop of Canterbury, as well as the works of some of his students suggests that Anselm not only considered the nature of friendship and love between men and women but also interpreted its ideal state in chaste male-female friendships and in married love as profoundly ennobling. In doing so Anselm redefined the concept of original sin. It should not be surprising that Anselm developed these ideas around his meditations on the Virgin Mary and her womanly nature as it related to the Universe. As he contemplated the role of Mary and its reflection in the roles of women, especially married women, Anselm developed theological theories that were foundational to the development of the twelfth-century concepts of courtly love and to Western romantic love in general.

Anselm wrote glowingly and with great emotional intensity about love in all its manifestations: between friends, between monks, between masters and students, between parents and children, between God and human beings, and even between married couples. To examine all of Anselm’s discussions of love and its practice on both the real and ideal levels might well take a book. His comments on love are scattered throughout his varied writings: in his letters, in his prayers and meditations, in his theology, and in the stories he told or that were told about him, recounted by his biographer Eadmer and by his Canterbury monks, students, and friends after his death. Let us examine these many expressions of Anselm’s love.

Anselm wrote so intensely about love between male friends—that is, his love for his fellow monks from Bec in Normandy and their love for him—that he has been thought by some to have been at the very least a

⁴ Jaeger, *Ennobling Love*, 174, 186–93.

⁵ Sally N. Vaughn, *St. Anselm and the Handmaidens of God: A Study of Anselm’s Correspondence with Women* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2002). See also H. M. Canatella, “Friendship in Anselm of Canterbury’s Correspondence: Ideals and Experience,” *Viator: Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 38, no. 2 (2007): 351–67.

latent homosexual and at most one of the foremost gay figures in medieval European history.⁶ For as a monk, he wrote to his fellow Bec students in the passionate rhetoric of physical, sexual love, speaking of kissing and embracing his friends, holding them, longing for their physical presence in their absence, and indeed often as soul mates united into one soul. Anselm addressed Gundulf “as lover to beloved . . . you who are my other self.”⁷ He calls him “most beloved of my soul . . . everything I feel about you is sweet and joyful to my heart. Everything I wish for you is the best my mind can imagine. For I see you as the sort of person I must love, as you know I do; I hear about you as the sort of person I must long for, as God knows I do. From this it follows that wherever you go my love follows you, and wherever I may be, my longing for you embraces you.”⁸ He further described Gundulf as “my second soul” and “my other heart.”⁹ Anselm urged Gundulf—indeed commanded him—to “go into the secret place of your heart and consider the affection of your true love and you will learn the love of your true friend . . . for I confess that my tepid love is surpassed by your fervent love. . . . Just as you try hard to love me with no less ardour than you love yourself, so I strive not to love you with more coolness than myself.”¹⁰

Anselm wrote similarly to many other Bec monks, especially during his student years but also during his years as prior there. Interestingly, Anselm wrote passionate letters also to his lay friends, suggesting that this passionate language of love was not exclusive to the Bec community. To Roger, whom he sought to persuade to become a monk, he wrote: “To his own beloved Roger, longed for, hoped for, awaited in Christ; from brother Anselm, his own lover: May God be very gracious and health giving to you to choose prudently, to hold fast tenaciously, to ascend together with me joyfully.”¹¹ The language he used is that of a lover for his beloved, and this language too he explicitly used in letters to at least a dozen other men, including

⁶ Brian Patrick McGuire, *Friendship and Community: The Monastic Experience, 350–1250* (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian Publications, 1988), 211; John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 204–19.

⁷ Anselm, Epistula (hereafter Ep.) 7, in *S. Anselmi Cantuariensis archiepiscopi opera omnia*, ed. F. S. Schmitt, 6 vols. (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson, 1946–61), 3:108–10. Cited below by epistle number, then the volume and page from the edition when quoted, otherwise by epistle number only. Anselm’s prayers and meditations and his treatises are also cited by volume and page. Since Anselm’s letters, prayers and meditations, and treatises are so widely translated and so readily available in both Latin and English, I have included the Latin in the text and footnotes only when the Latin is essential to my interpretation. All translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.

⁸ Anselm, Ep. 4, ed. Schmitt, 3:103–5.

⁹ Anselm, Epp. 16 and 28, ed. Schmitt, 3:121–22, 135–36.

¹⁰ Anselm, Ep. 16, ed. Schmitt, 3:121–22.

¹¹ Anselm, Ep. 76, ed. Schmitt, 3:198.

the young men whom Anselm taught in the monastery.¹² Was Bec then a hotbed of homosexuality?

The prospect seems rather slight. Indeed, given Anselm's stellar career and the sterling careers of those very same Bec monks (Gundulf, future bishop of Rochester; Henry, future prior of Canterbury and abbot of Battle; Ralph, future prior of Saint Étienne of Caen; William Bona Anima, future abbot of Saint Étienne of Caen and archbishop of Rouen; and, finally, Anselm's teacher Lanfranc, who ascended from the priorate at Bec to the abbacy at Saint Étienne of Caen and then to the archbishopric of Canterbury), all without the slightest breath of scandal, such a conclusion is improbable at the least. Why, then, did all these Bec monks write to each other and even to those outside the Bec community with such passionate language? Jaeger's answer is that Anselm followed the classical, Ciceronian concepts of ennobling love between men.

Yet more can be said. John Boswell, taking Anselm's passionate language quite literally and quite wrongly, saw Anselm as one of the world's great historical gay men.¹³ Brian Patrick McGuire, in his exhaustive study of monastic friendship, concludes that Anselm's letters were most concerned with communal, spiritual friendship, involving only monastic men. Indeed, quite rightly, he credits Anselm and his circle as inspiring and promoting new ways of talking about friendship, creating a "revolution in the expression of human sentiment." Nevertheless, he suspects Anselm of at least latent homosexuality, focusing particularly on Anselm's passionate affection for his young student Osbern, whose death Anselm mourned profoundly.¹⁴ Sir Richard Southern, like McGuire, saw Anselm's construction of intimate friendships in his monastic community as innovative in the extremeness of its emotionally intense language—and also viewed it as confined rather exclusively to Anselm's monastic community. Yet he also saw Anselm as profoundly individualistic, especially in the introspection of his prayers and meditations as expressions of self.¹⁵ Julian Haseldine has looked at Anselm's

¹² See Anselm, Epp. 1, 14, 23, 25, 27, 30, 31, 32, 49, 57, 66, 72, 77 addressed to Lanfranc; 4, 7, 16, 28, 34, 41, 51, 59, 68, 78 to Gundulf; 5, 17, 24, 33, 40, 50, 51, 58, 63, 67, 73 to Henry, who became prior of Canterbury; 8, 35, 51 to Bec monk Herluin; 9, 53 to Bec monk Hernost; 42, 43, 47, 51, 60, 64 to Bec monk Maurice; 31, 75 to Lanfranc, the nephew of Lanfranc; 84 to Bec monk Gilbert Crispin; 80 to Bec monk Paul, later abbot of Saint Alban's; 12, 13, 29 to Bec monk Ralph, later prior of Saint Étienne of Caen; 18, 46, 52 to Bec monk William Bona Anima; and others, comprising about half of Anselm's correspondence as prior. This correspondence with Bec monks continued when he became abbot, but it was in the earlier years that Anselm's passionate language of friendship predominated. For lists of Anselm's prioral and abbatial correspondence broken down according to recipients see Vaughn, *St. Anselm and the Handmaidens*, 44–49.

¹³ Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality*, 204, 218–19.

¹⁴ McGuire, *Friendship and Community*, 211–12, 218.

¹⁵ R. W. Southern, *Saint Anselm: A Portrait in a Landscape* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 140–41, 100–101. While Southern rightly sees Anselm's prayers as

male friendships as well and also sees them in the context of a male community.¹⁶ Yet, as we shall see, Anselm's love for Osbern may be interpreted quite differently and as part of that revolution in the expression of human sentiment, in this case, as a teacher loving his student and as a foster parent loving a foster child.

What has been mostly ignored in all of these scholarly discussions of Anselm is that he also enjoyed close friendships with women, to whom he also wrote in emotionally intense and sometimes physical language.¹⁷ Only recently, H. M. Canatella has argued that Anselm enjoyed almost parallel spiritual friendships with his closest monastic and episcopal friend, Gundulf of Rochester, and his neighbor and close spiritual friend, Countess Ida of Boulogne, whom he addressed with equal emotionally intense and loving language. Canatella argues strongly that these two friendships were entirely spiritual and chaste, although expressed in somewhat erotic language. "Drawing on preexisting traditions, both pagan and Christian, Anselm articulated a classical mode of Christian friendship," particularly in the traditions of Cicero and John Cassian, Canatella writes, but these spiritual friendships were not theoretical but real, mutually dependent and mutually beneficial, and intended to increase reciprocal piety between friends and to bring both closer to God, even while Anselm "expressed them in terms of idealized friendship in his letters" in the language of physical love.¹⁸

Were there any consequences and repercussions from this practice of passionate language used to express friendship both spiritual and real and between men and men as well as between men and women in Anselm's eleventh-century world? Maybe. And perhaps herein lies an extension of McGuire's and Southern's conclusions that Anselm's terms of friendship amounted to a revolution in expressions of human emotion. Let us recall that "God is love," according to the Christian Bible (1 John 4:8), and without love one cannot know God. As Canatella reminds us, "in the medieval mind, and thus in Anselm's mind, love on earth became a reflection of divine love."¹⁹ But divine love encompassed far more than either Cicero's idealized male friendship or Cassian's spiritual friendship within monastic communities. Surely if God's love was the key to all aspects of life, as Anselm would have discerned, then women's experience of love was another aspect of life that Anselm would have clearly thought about and reflected upon.

a profound expression of self, he casts this aspect of Anselm as a "horror of self" that I find unpersuasive.

¹⁶ J. P. Haseldine, "Love, Separation and Male Friendship: Words and Actions in Saint Anselm's Letters to His Friends," in *Masculinity in Medieval Europe*, ed. D. M. Hadley (London: Longman, 1999), 248.

¹⁷ Vaughn, *St. Anselm and the Handmaidens*, 41, 99–105, 111.

¹⁸ Canatella, "Friendship," 366–67.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 357.

For Anselm did not confine this passionate language or language of passion (to use a typically Anselmian turn of phrase) only to Bec monks. He wrote to the laymen Odo and Lanzo: "True love honorably bestowed demands to be loved blamelessly in return. . . . [Thus] I display my love for you . . . either to gain yours for me . . . or to render it [my own love] more perfect." The continuing separation of Anselm from these two laymen diminished in no way his deep love for them: "By drawing you close in the embrace of love," Anselm's soul impressed a clear image of them on itself.²⁰ Elsewhere, Eadmer quoted Anselm as comparing the time of youth to a piece of wax ripe for receiving the perfect impress of the "seal" of his teaching.²¹ The two reciprocal images of impressing love and teaching as a seal suggests the reciprocal benefits of love for both lover and beloved.

Anselm also wrote to Adelaide, a daughter of Duke William of Normandy, to give her "a garland of psalms," and although not a gift encrusted with gold and gems, he added, nevertheless it was made entirely of loving faithfulness and given with faithful love by "the servant and friend of your soul."²² To a certain Lady Frodelina, whom he addressed as his "beloved lady, revered with love for the merit of her holiness . . . with the reverence of a lover" and whom he had never met, he sent a plea for friendship between them in a "communion of love."²³ Thus Anselm cultivated friendships among men and women unconnected to either Bec or monasticism using the language of love familiar to his fellow monks that Jaeger has noted.²⁴ Anselm also wrote to Bec supporter and patron Ida, countess of Boulogne, his close and dear friend, in similarly intense and almost erotic language: "I know and am sure, lady dearest to me in God, most beloved sister, sweetest daughter, that your holy love, by which you ever embrace me reverently and affectionately in your heart as if I, your spiritual father, were present, ceaselessly desires to know everything about me and all that concerns me, and also to hear or to read something from me, in order that you may rejoice or suffer with me following the rule of true love [*secundum verae caritatis regulam*]."²⁵ Anselm and Ida thus shared "true love," in his view, as we shall see below. We might note here that Anselm seems to have conceived of a kind of "rule [*regula*]" of love, suggesting that there were laws governing love parallel perhaps to a monastic rule.

Anselm also wrote about other kinds of love, like that between parents and children, especially in his letters to his sister Richeza. All of her children

²⁰ Anselm, Ep. 2, ed. Schmitt, 3:98–101.

²¹ Eadmer, *The Life of St. Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury*, ed. and trans. R. W. Southern (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972), 20–21.

²² Anselm, Ep. 10, ed. Schmitt, 3:113–14.

²³ Anselm, Ep. 45, ed. Schmitt, 3:158–59.

²⁴ Jaeger, *Ennobling Love*, 14, 152. Jaeger confined his discussion to Anselm's letters to monks and did not look at his letters to others.

²⁵ Anselm, Ep. 167, ed. Schmitt, 4:41–42.

but one had died. Anselm suggested that she and her husband should focus on saving their own souls so that “you will reach with your free will the place where the Lord . . . took your dead children . . . [and] that this [remaining] son will also reach that place where all together—father, mother, sons and daughters—you will rejoice in the sight of God in eternal bliss, and each one will be glorified on account of each of the others as much as himself.”²⁶ Anselm’s concept of an ideal family was of a family eternally united on earth and in heaven, and indeed he wrote to comfort a loving mother of such a family.

Anselm also had an enormously exalted view of mothers as well as fathers and even of the wet nurses who served as substitute mothers. In his prayer to Saint Paul he famously extolled Jesus as a mother, as Carolyn Walker Bynum has noted.²⁷ But he began the same prayer by describing Paul as “the nurse [*nutrix*] of the faithful, caressing his sons, . . . sweet nurse, sweet mother, . . . a nurse who not only cared for her sons but *brought them forth a second time* [*parturiens*], with careful and marvelous tenderness.”²⁸ Anselm here drew on good New Testament roots, for 1 Thessalonians 2:27 says that Paul was “like a nurse tenderly caring for her children.” Galatians 4:19 compares him to a mother in labor with those “whom by teaching the faith of Christ” he bore and instructed.²⁹ Because Paul had not known Jesus but came to belief later and then advanced Christianity, he became a wet nurse (*nutrix*) to others, caring for the children who were not his own, and a foster mother who taught the faith to her foster sons—not just a milk-giver but a substitute and somewhat superior parent.³⁰ These sons are reborn under Paul’s care and thereby “know the heart of a mother’s goodness” a second time under such a nurse. Jesus is also a mother “who, like a hen, gathers her chicks under her wings [*gallina congregat sub alas pullos suos*],” according to

²⁶ Anselm, Ep. 211, ed. Schmitt, 4:107–8.

²⁷ Carolyn Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in Spirituality in the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 113–15.

²⁸ Anselm, “Oratio ad sanctum Paulum,” ed. Schmitt, 3:33, lines 6–8, my emphasis. See also Anselm, *The Prayers and Meditations of Saint Anselm with the Proslogion*, trans. Sister Benedicta Ward (London: Penguin, 1973), 141; and Jean-François Cottier, *Anima Mea: Prières privées et textes de dévotion du moyen âge latin: Autour des prières ou méditations attribuées à saint Anselme de Cantorbéry (Xie–XIIe siècle)* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2001). Cottier discusses Anselm’s prayers and meditations at some length and edits related prayers and apocryphal prayers with French translations. Rachel Fulton (*From Judgment to Passion: Devotion to Christ and the Virgin Mary, 800–1200* [New York: Columbia University Press, 2002]) provides a full and splendid analysis of the milieu in which Anselm wrote his prayers and meditations and also of his predecessors and successors in this tradition.

²⁹ For these biblical references see Fulton, *From Judgment to Passion*, 238.

³⁰ Anselm, “Oratio ad sanctum Paulum,” ed. Schmitt, 3:39–40, lines 177–96, trans. Ward, 152–53, lines 358–72.

Anselm, quoting the gospels. But he is both mother and father: father by his effect, mother by affection; father by authority, mother by kindness; father by teaching, mother by mercy.³¹

Here we see Anselm's ideas of the ideal parents of a family, both crucial to a child's development. But there is a third member of the triumvirate involved in the loving of a child: an ideal nurse and teacher who becomes a foster parent in guiding the child to a "second birth," a more conscious, intellectual birth. Interestingly, the nurse, who has the feminine aspect of a foster mother, takes on also the male aspects of the father in his authority and teaching. This image is particularly interesting in relation to Mia Münster-Swendsen's persuasive arguments that eleventh- and twelfth-century students and teachers enjoyed intense emotional bonds superseding any parental bonds and far more influential and lasting than parental bonds.³² It is in this context—Anselm's image of the role of the nurse or foster parent or perhaps *magister* in the child's development—that we might better consider Anselm's intense love of his student Osbern. Anselm's love for Osbern, far from reflecting either latent or openly homosexual urges, may more plausibly be seen as the love of a nurse or nurturer or teacher on the model of Saint Paul. It was in this student-teacher relationship that the teacher's "seal" was impressed on the soft wax of youth.

Although Anselm shared this view of the especially strong emotional intensity of the bonds between master and student, nevertheless, in his view, mothers were especially crucial to a person's intellectual, spiritual, and emotional development. Eadmer, discussing Anselm's childhood, reported that he learned about God at his mother's knee. It was Anselm's mother's industry and good common sense that helped the family prosper, since his father was irresponsible.³³ A story Anselm told of his mother was preserved at Bec. Little Anselm had begged to learn his letters, so his parents sent him to a relative to be taught. But this teacher locked Anselm up and forced him to study all the time. Anselm broke under such emotional strain and returned to his parents mute and unresponsive to anyone. Anselm's "wise mother" turned the problem over in her mind and instructed all the servants to agree with anything Anselm did, said, or wanted until he slowly returned to his former happy self. It was her

³¹ Ibid., ed. Schmitt, 3:40, lines 197–99, 204–9, trans. Ward, 153–55, lines 416–26. Anselm's reference is to Matthew 23:37 and Luke 13:34, both of which portray Jesus as a mother hen.

³² Mia Münster-Swendsen, "The Model of Scholastic Mastery, ca. 970–ca. 1200," in *Teaching and Learning in Northern Europe, 1000–1200*, ed. Sally N. Vaughn and Jay Rubenstein (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2006), 307–42. See also McGuire, *Friendship and Community*, 210–27, esp. 211–12; and Vaughn, *St. Anselm and the Handmaidens*, 84–90.

³³ Eadmer, *Life of St. Anselm*, 3–4.

insight into his psychological problems that saved him from disaster.³⁴ I have argued elsewhere that Anselm adopted his mother's teaching methods as he taught the young monks at Bec.³⁵

Anselm described Christ as his mother who not only gathers her chicks under her wings but also comforts the badly frightened by gentleness, revives the despairing by her sweet smell, gives life to the dead by her warmth, justifies sinners by her touch, and refashions her son in her "whole and unceasing grace."³⁶ Such is the role of the good mother—and in these writings Anselm has ventured into new realms of love undiscovered in traditional ennobling love. This vision of parents' love for children and the love of a mother for her child clearly extends the arena of ennobling love to women even while it was also adopted by and applied to the good teacher as foster mother. Anselm's devotion to the Virgin Mary, to whom the monastery at Bec was dedicated, must surely have led him to consider such aspects of both parental and motherly love.

Parental love, however, was only part of Anselm's view of the structure and function of a unified family. In Anselm's view there was plenty of room for a kind of romantic love between husband and wife. As Eadmer remembered Anselm:

To married persons he taught how great was the *fidelity, love, and companionship* with which they should be bound together both in matters pertaining to God *and to the things of this world*; that the man on his side should love his wife as himself, knowing none other but her, having regard for the welfare of her body as of his own and entertaining no evil suspicions. That the woman likewise should submit to her husband with all loving obedience, that she should diligently encourage him in well-doing, and calm his spirit with her mildness if he were perchance unjustly stirred up against anyone.³⁷

Married love was thus reciprocal: each partner had loving duties toward the other, and those duties improved, nourished, and ennobled each partner. Surely a marriage was strengthened by such love, as Anselm would have understood. Eadmer said that Anselm gave these married couples familiar

³⁴ The story is printed in *ibid.*, appendix, 172–73. See also Southern's introduction (*Saint Anselm*, xiv). Southern believed that this story was on a loose leaf in the Bec manuscript of Eadmer's *Life of St. Anselm* (now lost) because it introduced the life in two of the manuscripts in the Bec line of manuscripts, and in a third it appeared with a note that it should introduce the life. This story was not included in any of the manuscripts emanating from Saint Bertin's abbey in Flanders or in any of the Canterbury manuscripts but only in the manuscripts emanating from Bec.

³⁵ Vaughn, *St. Anselm and the Handmaidens*. See also Sally N. Vaughn, "Anselm of Bec: The Pattern of His Teaching," in Vaughn and Rubenstein, *Teaching and Learning*, 99–128.

³⁶ Anselm, "Oratio ad sanctum Paulum," ed. Schmitt, 3:41, lines 230–37, trans. Ward, 155–56, lines 470–85.

³⁷ Eadmer, *Life of St. Anselm*, 55–56, emphasis mine.

examples from daily life and supported them with solid reason.³⁸ This exalted view of married love, showing the couple bound together by faith, love, and companionship and loving each other as they loved themselves, suggests the exalted romantic love to be found later in the twelfth century, especially the married love described by Chrétien de Troyes. Anselm referred to physical love, exhorting the husband to care for his wife's welfare as for his own while at the same time recommending that the wife's love should ennoble the husband as she teaches him by encouragement and guidance against rash anger. As in Anselm's prayer to Saint Paul praising Jesus as a mother, the father has the power and the duty of authority and teaching (that is, caregiving in material ways), while the mother has the duty of mercy, kindness, and love in the emotional realm.³⁹ Anselm saw parents as having reciprocal and complementary responsibilities toward their children, just as he saw marriage as having reciprocal and complementary roles for husband and wife.

This reciprocal care that Anselm envisioned was spiritual as well as physical. To his sister Richeza and her husband, Burgundius, he wrote: "This should be the conversation between yourselves: 'My lord, my dear lady . . . how are we spending our lives? . . . Let us so prepare ourselves that we can go forward confidently to the judgement. . . . God has joined us in this life; let us act so that He may join us in eternal life and we may there see our children whom God has already taken to himself.'"⁴⁰ Thus, Anselm seemed to see the family as existing eternally. Later, when Burgundius decided to join the First Crusade, Anselm praised him for first seeking both Anselm's consent and that of Burgundius and Richeza's only surviving son, Anselm the Younger (who was with Anselm in England), and told Burgundius to "see that you have no sin in respect of your wife, whose goodness you know better than I; she shall so remain behind that she may not be without support and counsel, whatever God may do with you, nor be driven from your house and estate against her will as long as she lives."⁴¹ Again, Anselm's vision of the tender, caring love between husband and wife shines through his words and carries with it material, worldly, and spiritual obligations.

Once he became archbishop of Canterbury, Anselm taught other aristocratic and royal husbands and wives to love each other as equals and to help each other. To Clemence, countess of Flanders, he wrote that he knew her husband did not invest abbots, then a matter of considerable ecclesiastical debate. More importantly, Anselm believed that the count would not have acted without his wife's counsel.

³⁸ Ibid., 56.

³⁹ Anselm, "Oratio ad sanctum Paulum," ed. Schmitt, 3:40, lines 204–8, trans. Ward, 154, lines 420–25.

⁴⁰ Anselm, Ep. 258, ed. Schmitt, 4:170–71.

⁴¹ Anselm, Ep. 264, ed. Schmitt, 4:179.

As this was not done without his prudent clemency, so I am certain that it was not done without your clement prudence. The more I rejoice about this good deed of yours, the more truly do I love you both in God . . . [as] true children and faithful advocates of the Church, the spouse of God. . . . It is your duty, reverend lady and dearest daughter, to mention this and other similar things frequently to your husband and advise him to prove that he is not lord of the Church but her advocate, not her step-son but her true son. . . . Admonish him never to oppose God's law. . . . I beg that the Countess Clemence should admonish and counsel her husband so that divine clemency may raise both him and her to the kingdom of heaven.⁴²

Anselm wrote in similar fashion to Queen Edith-Matilda of England, whom he called his spiritual daughter. He told her to advise her husband to follow the guidance of God and not men, "privately and publicly, and repeat them often, and . . . undertake them [yourself] with zeal."⁴³ Husband and wife shared a reciprocal partnership. Here, the queen's duty was to correct the king's "barbarous" tendencies, to keep him on the right path and reinforce his commitment to God's plan. As an ideal wife she was to tame her husband's wildness, leading him by her prudent counsel toward Christian behavior and good conduct to responsible rule.⁴⁴ Edith-Matilda should also soften the heart of the king toward Anselm, which would be both fitting to her, useful to the king, and pleasing to God.⁴⁵ Interestingly, just as the queen should counsel the king in his rule, so should the archbishop, making the three of them partners, a kind of troika, an earthly trinity, in the rule of England.⁴⁶

Anselm clearly expressed this triune and reciprocal partnership specifically in regard to the queen, whom he admonished to take all the churches of England under her wing "like the mother hen in the gospels [*ad similitudinem evangelicae gallinae*]."⁴⁷ He evoked once again this image of Christ, which he applied to himself after he had left Bec, describing "the church . . . of Bec, with all of its chicks that I always carry with me in my heart [*ecclesiam . . . Becci, cum omnibus pullis suis mecum porto semper in corde meo*]."⁴⁸ By analogy, too, it referred to his role as archbishop of Canterbury,

⁴² Anselm, Ep. 249, ed. Schmitt, 4:159–60; cf. Ep. 248, ed. Schmitt, 4:158.

⁴³ Anselm, Ep. 296, ed. Schmitt, 4:216–17.

⁴⁴ See Vaughn, *St. Anselm and the Handmaidens*, 222 and n. 80.

⁴⁵ Anselm, Ep. 246, ed. Schmitt, 4:156.

⁴⁶ Vaughn, *St. Anselm and the Handmaidens*, 222–41, 247–50 (on Anselm's full correspondence with Edith-Matilda), 259–62 (on ideal aristocratic marriages), 258–65 (for Anselm's concept of troika).

⁴⁷ Anselm, Ep. 288, ed. Schmitt, 4:207–8.

⁴⁸ Anselm, Ep. 205, ed. Schmitt, 4:97–98. See also n. 34. Anselm wrote to the monks of Bec probably just after his election and consecration as archbishop. Schmitt dates this letter to between 1094 and 1097, but I think it belongs to the group of letters he wrote to the monks of Bec as he made the transfer to Canterbury.

whose role was to care for all the churches of England. If this role were also to be filled by England's queen, and, as Anselm stated elsewhere, England's king and archbishop were in a double harness like two oxen yoked together pulling the plow of God's church through England,⁴⁹ then king, queen, and archbishop were three equal partners in the rule of England. Once again, Anselm expressed an exalted concept of womanhood, in this case through queenship.

Not least in Anselm's elevated concept of womanhood was his spiritual friendship with Countess Ida of Boulogne (1040–1113), the only woman with whom he corresponded throughout his entire adult lifetime. She was his consoler and counsellor, his confidante, adviser, and comforter in both his joys and his troubles, his constant supporter politically, financially, and spiritually, his hostess on numerous visits through her dominions, and his lifelong dearest friend.⁵⁰ Anselm and Ida must have arrived in the same region at about the same time, in the early 1050s, when both were young—Ida, a second wife to the much older Count Eustace II of Boulogne, and Anselm, a young lay student at Bec, whence he had followed his teacher Lanfranc from Italy. Anselm wrote his first surviving letter to Ida after he had become prior of Bec in 1060, but it is clear that they were already fast friends of long standing.⁵¹ Ida's anonymous biographer called her noble and "wise," educated at an early age in a way "appropriate in years to her girlhood." She was sensible and had good judgment, and "her counsels were worthy."⁵² When Ida's mother died, her father, Godfrey of Lorraine, married the Countess Beatrice of Tuscany, and so the future Countess Matilda of Tuscany was Ida's stepsister. By all indications, these two young women were equally thoroughly well educated.⁵³ Matilda, six years Ida's junior, is known to have been extraordinarily well educated and fluent in three languages. Perhaps Ida was equally gifted.

⁴⁹ Eadmer, *Historia novorum in Anglia*, ed. M. Rule, Rolls Series 81 (London, 1884), 37, cf. 48–49.

⁵⁰ Vaughn, *St. Anselm and the Handmaidens*, 126–60; Anselm, Epp. 82, 114, 131, 167, 208, 235, 244, 247. On Anselm and Ida see also H. M. Canatella, "Long-Distance Love: The Ideology of Male-Female Spiritual Friendship in Goscelin of Saint Bertin's *Liber confortatorius*," in this issue.

⁵¹ Anselm, Ep. 82, ed. Schmitt, 3:206–7. He thanked her there for her past kind actions toward Bec, including her generosity toward a Bec monk, whom Ida had saved from abandonment by sending him to Bec. Thus, this letter displays an existing relationship between Ida and Anselm well before he became prior.

⁵² *Vita beatae Idae comitissae viduae*, by an anonymous monk of Saint Vaast, ed. G. Henschenius and D. Papebrochius, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 11 April (Antwerp, 1645), 139–45, at 141.

⁵³ Vaughn, *St. Anselm and the Handmaidens*, 128–29. On Ida's family background see J. C. Andressohn, *The Ancestry and Life of Godfrey of Bouillon* (Bloomington: Indiana University Publications, 1947), 9–16. On Ida see also Canatella, "Friendship," 361–66, for a thorough analysis of Anselm's letters to Ida; and Heather J. Tanner, *Families, Friends and Allies: Boulogne and Politics in Northern France and England, c. 879–1160* (Leiden, the Netherlands: Brill, 2004), 123, 133, 258, and n. 52.

Anselm's student Guibert of Nogent called Ida "learned," and he was very familiar with her and her sons.⁵⁴

Ida would have been one of the few women in the vicinity of Normandy who would have been Anselm's intellectual equal at that time. Although it is unclear when or where they met, they clearly became fast friends and remained close thereafter.⁵⁵ Anselm admired Ida's piety, respected her judgment and abilities, and even saw her as capable of looking after a man's welfare—both physical and spiritual. In his request to her to look after his messenger, he implored her to "strengthen him, according to the understanding of your prudence, and in all things in which he may have need of your help to assist him for the sake of God's love and our own."⁵⁶

Anselm's deep affection for Ida is revealed in a letter he wrote to her just after his election and consecration to the archbishopric of Canterbury. It followed an anguished time when King William Rufus had refused to appoint an archbishop of Canterbury while Anselm felt that he himself was God's choice for the office. On his way to England to urge the king to fill the archbishopric, Anselm visited Ida at Boulogne and stayed there for a rather long time, apparently to confer with her.⁵⁷ Anselm's subsequent letter begins: "Lady beloved in God, I know and it is certain to me, beloved sister, sweetest daughter, since I love your sanctity, that I am always present in your heart, revered like a spiritual father." He wrote to confirm what she had already heard or read: that he had been elected archbishop and that he did not know whether she should congratulate him or commiserate with him. He knew that she "ceaselessly desires to know everything about [him] and all that concerns [him], and also to hear or to read something from [him]" so that she might either rejoice or suffer with him following the "rule of true love [*secundum verae caritatis regulam*]."⁵⁸ Anselm also was certain that Ida's holy love "ever embraced" him reverently and affectionately in her heart as if he were present with her. "According to this letter," Canatella writes, "Ida can continue to love Anselm as if he were physically present by 'embracing [*amplecteris*]' him within her heart. The same is true for the new archbishop: 'Indeed, to this love of yours my heart replies with like affection.'"⁵⁹

⁵⁴ Guibert of Nogent, *The Deeds of God through the Franks*, trans. Robert Levine (Woodbridge, U.K.: Boydell, 1997), 52.

⁵⁵ See Canatella, "Friendship," 362, for some suggestions.

⁵⁶ Anselm, Ep. 114, ed. Schmitt, 3:249; Canatella, "Friendship," 363.

⁵⁷ See 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], 116–40) for the evidence for Anselm's conviction that God intended him for Canterbury while claiming that he did not desire high office. He journeyed to England to pursue this end, visiting Countess Ida on the way (Eadmer, *Historia novorum*, 28).

⁵⁸ Anselm, Ep. 167, ed. Schmitt, 4:41–42.

⁵⁹ Canatella, "Friendship," 365.

Anselm continued to write to Ida during his pontificate in England and visited her on his Continental trips during his exiles; she may well have visited him in England at some time after 1100.⁶⁰ Thus, Anselm enjoyed a warm, lifelong friendship with Countess Ida, a real woman who shared his intimate thoughts and feelings with him at the most crucial times of his life and corresponded with him over his lifetime.

Anselm's letters to Ida contain terms of endearment and ideals of a love relationship foreshadowing the loving relationships between men and women expressed by the twelfth-century poets of courtly love. While it seems probable that the love between Anselm and Ida was spiritual, as Canatella also argues, nevertheless Anselm expressed his love for her in those very same passionate and physical terms he had also used with his fellow monks of Bec. It is significant that Anselm met her as a young married woman but continued his correspondence with her when she became a widow, sometime between 1076 and 1082.⁶¹

It may be significant that Anselm wrote a meditation entitled *Deploratio virginitatis amissae per fornicationem* (Lament for Virginity Cast out through Fornication). Benedicta Ward writes of it that "there seems to be no reason for not taking it in its natural sense, as the lament of someone, [if] not necessarily Anselm himself," who had lost his virginity.⁶² The meditation itself is filled with profound anguish: the lost virginity is an inconsolable loss, the fornication is an intolerable torment. His tortured soul laments the loss of its unity with God in the most vivid and gripping language. One line suggests that, if Anselm was reflecting on his own experience, it occurred while he was young: "May sorrow and sour mourning trouble my youth and my age without tiring."⁶³ Southern believes that stylistically and linguistically it belongs among "the most turbulent" of Anselm's earliest writings.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Only three more letters survive: Anselm, Epp. 167, 244, and 247; however, Anselm's continued visits to Boulogne suggest he was in more frequent touch with her. In 1097 he first left England for exile—driven out by King William Rufus—and traveled to Ida's abbeys of Saint Bertin and Saint Omer. At every stop he was met with great joy and enthusiasm by great crowds of people, according to Eadmer (*Life of St. Anselm*, 99–102); it seems unlikely that his good friend Ida was not among them. His second exile began in 1103, as he was leaving Rome after visiting Pope Paschal and was informed by King Henry I's messenger that he was no longer welcome in England. This second exile lasted until 1106. Since Ida's biographer said that she visited England at some time between September 1100 and April 1103 (*Vita Idae*, 143), it is quite likely she went to visit Anselm during the crises before his second exile. See Vaughn, *St. Anselm and the Handmaidens*, 146 (for Anselm's visits to Boulogne in 1097), 154 (for Ida's visit to England after 1100).

⁶¹ See Vaughn (*St. Anselm and the Handmaidens*, 142) for a discussion of the possible dates of Eustace II's death.

⁶² Benedicta Ward, introduction to Anselm, *The Prayers and Meditations*, 74–75.

⁶³ Anselm, *Deploratio virginitatis amissae per fornicationem*, ed. Schmitt, 3:80, lines 25–26, trans. Ward, 225, line 30; see also *ibid.*, ed. Schmitt, 3:83, lines 61–63, trans. Ward, 229, lines 82–85.

⁶⁴ Southern, *Saint Anselm*, 105.

Whether Anselm had just imagined what it would be like to lose his virginity and commit fornication or had actually succumbed, this meditation must be a part of his deep involvement with all forms of love, including sexual love between men and women, considered within his own life experience.⁶⁵ For, as I have argued elsewhere, Anselm explicitly enjoyed friendships with and even exalted real women, most of them married and mothers, throughout his entire lifetime, including not only Ida of Boulogne but also Adela of Blois, Queen Edith-Matilda of England, Countess Clemence of Flanders, and Matilda of Tuscany and counted them as some of his closest friends and political allies. This view was not always generally popular with the ecclesiastical reformers of Anselm's day, who often prohibited or restricted bishops associating with women because of fears of sexual scandals.⁶⁶ Nevertheless, Anselm's ideal woman was a married woman, reciprocally bound to her husband by fidelity and love. This love clearly involved sexual love, and Anselm seems to have accepted such love as legitimate within marriage. For he also exalted both the offspring of such sexual love and the outcome of such sexual love, seeing the wife as a nurturing mother solicitous of her children, like Anselm's own mother.⁶⁷

Perhaps nowhere else is the exaltation of women as wives and mothers more pronounced than in Anselm's prayers and meditations. Here, he dealt with women in a theoretical, meaning theological and spiritual, way. In his prayer to Christ he said that he yearned for Christ to be the bridegroom to his soul and made frequent references to the biblical Song of Solomon. Tears are his bread—"until it is said to me, 'Behold your God'; until I hear, 'Soul, behold your husband.'"⁶⁸ He thus cast his soul as a woman and addressed Christ in the language of passionate physical love: "I thirst for you; I hope for you, I desire you, I sigh for you, I covet you." Although he said that he was like an orphan deprived of a father, his language was passionate: "Who will tell me of my beloved? For I am sick from love. The joy of my heart fails me. My laughter is turned to mourning." His soul was like a widow, he wrote, without her husband, Christ.⁶⁹ Was this Anselm's vision of his concept of married love? Or was it more of the passionate language of love he used for his friends? Was ennobling love, as expressed in the language of physical passion, as appropriate between spouses as between

⁶⁵ On bishops succumbing to the temptations of the flesh see in this issue Megan McLaughlin, "The Bishop in the Bedroom: Witnessing Episcopal Sexuality in an Age of Reform," on body heat and desire, especially in youth, at nn. 49 and 51, and on Wulfstan of Worcester resisting temptation and Hildebert of Lavardin succumbing to temptation, at nn. 50 and 54.

⁶⁶ See *ibid.*, n. 43.

⁶⁷ See Vaughn, *St. Anselm and the Handmaidens*, 65–91.

⁶⁸ Anselm, "Oratio ad Christum, cum mens vult eius amore fervere," ed. Schmitt, 3:9, lines 93–94, trans. Ward, 98–99, lines 182–84: "donec dicatur mihi: 'ecce deus tuus'; donec audiam: 'anima, ecce sponsus tuus.'"

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, ed. Schmitt, 3:9, lines 72–82, trans. Ward, 97–98, lines 143–50.

male friends in his view? And if so, was sexual love thus endowed with love's ennobling capabilities? For if God is love, could any form of legitimate love be excluded?

The answers to these questions may be found in Anselm's prayers to the Virgin Mary. In one he exclaimed: "By your glorious childbearing [*glorioso partu*] you have brought salvation to all fruitfulness," since Mary's "womb embraced the reconciliation of the world [*uterus mundi fovit reconciliationem*]." ⁷⁰ The female role in childbirth is thus sanctified by Mary's life. Motherhood is sanctified by God-bearing. This event would have profound repercussions: "How can the mother of God not care when the lost cry to her?" ⁷¹ She is a loving mother writ large. Anselm then led the reader through his own version of the role of Mary in the Christian mystery of the incarnation of Christ. He said to Mary: "O human virgin, of you was born a human God [*O virgo homo, de qua natus est deus homo*], to save human sinners." ⁷² He repeatedly called Jesus the "son of man," then "the good God, the gentle man, the merciful son of God, the good son of man." While Mary was the good mother of man, she was also the mighty mother of God. ⁷³ Jesus is at the same time God and the son of God and the son of *man*. Let us consider Anselm's words in all their majesty:

All nature is created from God, and God was born from Mary.
 God created all, and Mary gave birth to God
God who made all things, made himself from Mary.
 And so all things which he created, she re-created.
 He who was able to create all things from nothingness
 Did not wish the *broken creation* to be refashioned unless first he had
 made the son of Mary.
 God is thus the father of all created things
 And Mary the mother of all re-created things.
 God is the father of the constitution of all things
 And Mary is the mother of all reconstituted things.
 God indeed generated him through whom all things were made
 And Mary gave birth to him through whom all things are saved.
 God generated him without whom nothing at all exists
 And Mary gave birth to him without whom nothing is completely good.
O truly "the Lord is with you," to whom the Lord granted
That all nature should owe so much along with him to you. ⁷⁴

⁷⁰ Anselm, "Oratio ad sanctam Mariam cum mens est sollicita timore," ed. Schmitt, 3:15–17, lines 6, 14, trans. Ward, 110, lines 6–7, 21–22.

⁷¹ Ibid., ed. Schmitt, 3:16, lines 26–27, trans. Ward, 111, lines 45–46.

⁷² Ibid., ed. Schmitt, 3:16, lines 32–33, trans. Ward, 111, lines 56–59.

⁷³ Ibid., ed. Schmitt, 3:16, lines 29–30, trans. Ward, 111, lines 50–55.

⁷⁴ Ibid., ed. Schmitt, 3:21–22, lines 93–106, trans. Ward, 120–21, lines 184–201, emphasis mine and with my modifications.

This reciprocity has profound implications. God has become a “human God”—through Mary, he has become human. “Not only is the creature blessed by the Creator, but the Creator is blessed by the creature, too [*non solum creata a creatore, sed et creator a creatura*].”⁷⁵ Indeed, the Creature has become part of the Creator, and the Creator has become part of the Creature, and God has absorbed humanness through his birth from Mary. Anselm continued this line of reasoning inexorably: “By you, Mary, the elements are renewed, hell is redeemed, . . . even the fallen angels are restored to their place.”⁷⁶

Anselm’s astonishing reasoning declares that God re-created himself and all creation, incorporating humanity and his creatures in himself at the moment of Mary’s giving birth to Christ. Implied here is the union of God and Mary into one flesh, an analogy to the biblical metaphor for sexual union. “You are the mother of justifier and justified, bearer of reconciliation and the reconciled, parent of salvation and of the saved.” And as the mother of this humanized God she likewise re-forms the bonds that join all humanity: “If you, Lady, are His mother, surely then your sons are his brothers; . . . the Savior of the world is our brother, our God through Mary is our brother [*Deus noster est factus per Mariam frater noster*].”⁷⁷ Here is Anselm’s one allusion to the consequences for humanity of God’s re-creation of the universe: all mankind is now redeemed from original sin, the sin of Adam and Eve that had initiated sexual activity. In the re-creation of the universe, perhaps sexual love was also transformed, because human beings, sharing God’s nature once more, were freed from sin.

Clearly, sexual love still exists. What are we to make of it in the re-created universe? Through Mary’s virginity, Anselm wrote, his “soul is loved by its lord and is married to God.”⁷⁸ It is in this role as a soul married to God (and who is one flesh with Mary) that Anselm addressed these words to Mary: “O Beautiful to gaze upon, lovely to contemplate, delightful to love, the same one, that naturally one might be the son of God and of Mary.”⁷⁹ And farther on: “Speak and give my soul the gift of remembering you with love, delighting in you, rejoicing in you, so that I may come to you. Let me rise up to your love, desiring to be always with you, my heart is sick of love, my soul melts in me, my flesh fails. If only my inmost being might be on fire with the sweet fervour of your love, so that my outer being of flesh might wither away.”⁸⁰ These are words of love, of a lover for his beloved. But God is love, after all, and if we are God’s brothers through Mary, we

⁷⁵ Ibid., ed. Schmitt, 3:16, 17, 21, lines 32–34, 62–63, 85–87, my translation.

⁷⁶ Anselm, “Oratio ad sanctam Mariam pro impetrando eius et Christi amore,” ed. Schmitt, 3:21, lines 85–87, my translation.

⁷⁷ Ibid., ed. Schmitt, 3:23, lines 124–26, 132–33, 140–42, trans. Ward, 122–23, lines 237–39, 252–53.

⁷⁸ Ibid., ed. Schmitt, 3:19, lines 34–35, trans. Ward, 116, lines 56–57.

⁷⁹ Ibid., ed. Schmitt, 3:20, lines 89–90, trans. Ward, 120, lines 167–68.

⁸⁰ Ibid., ed. Schmitt, 3:24, lines 156–62, trans. Ward, 124, lines 293–301.

are love too. Anselm has sanctified the sexual love of men and women by attributing it to God and Mary—and to their human siblings. Moreover, it is as if Mary has become the third person in the Trinity, whose three persons are now mother, father, and son but still one flesh, a holy family in a holy marriage that humans can join through their brotherhood with Christ. Anselm seems to anticipate a mystical sexual love like that expounded by Gottfried von Strassburg almost a century later. In his quest to understand the nature of Mary, her union—dare we say marriage?—with God, and her relationship to Jesus, Anselm applied his sweet conception of the reciprocity and equality of married love between husbands and wives, by which union becomes one flesh, as well as the sanctity of mothers.

Which came first, though, Anselm's adoration of the Virgin Mary or his adoration of married women and mothers? All of Anselm's surviving writings were written in "his mature years," after he had been at Bec for over a decade, that is, no earlier than 1070.⁸¹ Nevertheless, among Anselm's earliest writings were his prayers and meditations, which Richard Southern considers to have been very personal, private devotions, not meant for public consumption—partly because they were theologically so daring.⁸² Curiously, Southern considers much of what Anselm wrote in his prayers "word-play," wrought with a "wild extravagance" and freewheeling association of ideas.⁸³ Yet the stirring poetry of Anselm's prayerful expressions did present coherent, logical arguments, as we saw above. And Anselm was indeed concerned about the theological soundness of the prayers he composed to the Virgin Mary: he sent them to his good friend Gundulf, at Canterbury at that time, for his consideration and comments, stating that he had written three prayers because the first and second seemed unsatisfactory to him.⁸⁴

One might think that Anselm might be afraid of accusations of heresy. He was with the *Monologion*, perhaps his most famous treatise on the existence of God, written at about the same time.⁸⁵ Clearly, Anselm was also thinking about parents and offspring in that work. He began it with the proposition that the Word derives its existence from the Supreme Spirit like the offspring of a parent and just as hair is said to be "born" of the head or fruit "born" from a tree. Thus, one might say that the Word is given existence by birth from the Supreme Spirit.⁸⁶ In this long discussion Anselm carefully used *parens* and *proles* for "parent" and "child," choosing Latin terms that

⁸¹ Jasper Hopkins and Herbert Richardson, introduction to Anselm, *Complete Philosophical and Theological Treatises of Anselm of Canterbury*, trans. Jasper Hopkins and Herbert Richardson (Minneapolis: Arthur J. Banning, 2000), xii.

⁸² R. W. Southern, foreword in *The Prayers and Meditations of Saint Anselm, with the Prologion*, trans. Benedicta Ward (London: Penguin, 1973), 10.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁸⁴ Anselm, Ep. 28.

⁸⁵ Anselm, Ep. 72, ed. Schmitt, 3:193. Cf. Epp. 77, 83, ed. Schmitt, 3:77–78, 207–8.

⁸⁶ Anselm, *Monologion* 39, ed. Schmitt, 3:57.

avoided gender. He even wondered whether this supreme *parens* might be male or female, paying particular attention to two of the greatest attributes of the Supreme Being, *veritas* (truth) and *sapientia* (wisdom), which are feminine words. He speculated that in most “natures” that have genders the male is stronger than the female and superior to it. But in some, such as among certain kinds of birds, the female is larger and stronger, while the male is smaller and weaker.⁸⁷ He concluded that the Supreme Being ought to be called “Father” because, according to his view of reproduction, the maternal cause is always preceded by the paternal cause.⁸⁸ These questions about the gender of the Supreme Being, however, and Anselm’s answers suggest that he saw both male and female aspects to God—who could give birth to the Word, for example—and remind us of his allusions in the prayers to the Virgin that God and Mary were united in the same flesh after the conception of Christ.

Thus, through the actual events of Anselm’s life and both his real relationships with women and his meditations about them Anselm reached his own resolutions to the questions that, according to Jaeger, had created an “unsolvable problem.” Courtly love, he suggested, took physical “sexuality into the idealism of ennobling love,” forcing “a union of eros and agape. . . . The great challenge . . . was to maintain love’s ability to ennoble even while declaring the sexual act and its fulfillment a quasi-legitimate element.” How, Jaeger asks, could passionate love confer on the medieval aristocracy the same aura, prestige, and rank that ennobling love had? “How can it claim virtue, while admitting virtue’s old enemy, the sexual act, as the natural end of love and full partner in the exalting process?”⁸⁹

Anselm had proposed his own solution to this problem. Marriage was a sacred, reciprocal relationship between husbands and wives to be nurtured and cherished by both parties. The married woman, as both wife and mother, reflected the goodness and virtue shown by the Virgin Mary as the ideal woman writ large, a cocreator of the universe through her union with God, who was both her husband and her son. As they became one flesh, the universe became imbued with human flesh, and God absorbed humanity,

⁸⁷ Anselm, *Monologion* 42, ed. Schmitt, 3:58–59.

⁸⁸ Anselm’s discussion of reproduction is quite interesting. He rejected the notion that the male sex is better and stronger, noting that in some species (birds, for example) the reverse is true. Yet he concluded that the first and principal cause of offspring is the father, which paternal cause always precedes the maternal cause in the begetting of offspring. This is in the midst of a long discussion in which he proved that the Word must be truly said to be begotten but from the Supreme Spirit alone and not from any other cause. His discussion of maternal and paternal causes stems from his question of whether the pair should be called rightly “father and son” or “mother and daughter.” See Anselm, *Monologion* 39–42, ed. Schmitt, 3:57–59.

⁸⁹ Jaeger, *Ennobling Love*, 159.

truly making all men brothers, and brothers of the God/Christ. Mary's conception of Christ re-created humankind in God's image, releasing it from Adam's sin. By implication, the sexual act in its creation of a new life and a new universe attained the status of ennoblement.

As God, Mary, and Christ were ennobled in their human/divine unification, so the sexual union ennobled married women and sanctified them as mothers, just as the Virgin Mary had been sanctified. It endowed them with the tender, loving mien of the ideal wife and mother. Christ not only redeemed mankind, in other words; he redeemed womankind, too, by sanctifying the reproductive role initiated by Eve and Adam in sin. Through his spiritual and theological musings, steeped in the passionate emotions of fervent love, Anselm also reached a resolution to the second problem Jaeger posits, the dilemma of incorporating women into courtly male society. Indeed, given the wide dissemination of his *vita* by Eadmer, the positive reception of his theology, and the popularity of his prayers and meditations, one might posit that Anselm's resolutions to the problem of how to transform ennobling love into courtly love formed the precedent and foundation⁹⁰ for their eventual construction in the literary sources of a century later.

⁹⁰ The *Life of St. Anselm* spread very quickly all over the Continent from Bec and Saint Bertin, Ida's abbey, and less speedily from Rochester throughout England. See Southern, introduction to Eadmer, *Life of St. Anselm*, viii–xxv. By 1104 the prayers and meditations were circulating detached from the collection of psalms to which they were originally appended; they were so popular that they attracted multiple additions by imitators that were then attributed to Anselm himself. It is only recently that these spurious meditations have been identified as not by Anselm. The manuscript tradition is discussed at length in Cottier, *Anima Mea*, lxxxiv–cxvi, and in Fulton, *From Judgment to Passion*, 147–49.