

Saint Anselm of Canterbury



St. Anselm (centre), terra-cotta altarpiece by Luca della Robbia; in the Museo Diocesano, Empoli, ...

Alinari/Art Resource, New York

Saint Anselm of

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

Early life and career

Appointment as archbishop of Canterbury

The satisfaction theory of redemption

Canterbury, (born 1033/34, Aosta, Lombardy—died April 21, 1109, possibly at Canterbury, Kent, England, feast day April 21), Italian-born theologian and philosopher, known as the father of Scholasticism, a philosophical school of thought that dominated the Middle Ages. He was recognized in modern

times as the originator of the ontological argument for the existence of God (based on the idea of an absolutely perfect being, the fact of the idea being in itself a demonstration of existence) and the satisfaction theory of the atonement or redemption (based on the feudal theory of making satisfaction or recompense according to the status of a person against whom an offense has been committed, the infinite God being the offended party and humanity the offender). There is incomplete evidence that he was canonized in 1163, though some scholars contend that he was canonized by Pope Alexander VI in 1494.

EARLY LIFE AND CAREER

Anselm was born in the Piedmont region of northwestern Italy. His birthplace, Aosta, was a town of strategic importance in Roman imperial and in medieval times, because it stood at the juncture of the Great and Little St. Bernard routes. His mother, Ermenberga, belonged to a noble Burgundian family and possessed considerable property. His father, Gondolfo, was a Lombard nobleman who intended that Anselm would make a career of politics and did not approve of his early decision to enter the monastic life. Anselm received an excellent classical education and was considered one of the better Latinists of his day. His early education impressed on him the need to be precise in his use of words, and his writings became known for their clarity.