



# The Major Works of St. Anselm

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## **The Major Works of St. Anselm** St. Anselm

The second Augustine, as St. Anselmus had been called, starts out from the same principle as the first; he holds that faith precedes all reflection and all discussion concerning religious things. The unbelievers, he says, strive to understand because they do not believe; we, on the contrary, strive to understand because we believe. They and we have the same object in view; but inasmuch as they do not believe, they cannot arrive at their goal, which is to understand the dogma. The unbeliever will never understand. In religion faith plays the part played by experience in the understanding of the things of this world. The blind man cannot see the light, and therefore does not understand it; the deaf-mute, who has never perceived sound, cannot have a clear idea of sound. Similarly, not to believe means not to perceive, and not to perceive means not to understand. Hence, we do not reflect in order that we may believe; on the contrary, we believe in order that we may arrive at knowledge. A Christian ought never to doubt the beliefs and teachings of the Holy Catholic Church. All he can do is to strive, as humbly as possible, to understand her teachings by believing them, to love them, and resolutely to observe them in his daily life. Should he succeed in understanding the Christian doctrine, let him render thanks to God, the source of all intelligence! In case he fails, that is no reason why he should obstinately attack the dogma, but a reason why he should bow his head in worship. Faith ought not merely to be the starting-point,—the Christian's aim is not to depart from faith but to remain in it,—but also the fixed rule and goal of thought, the beginning, the middle, and the end of all philosophy.

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