

## PROSLOGION

### PREFACE

After I had published, at the pressing entreaties of several of my brethren, a certain short tract [the *Monologion*] as an example of meditation on the meaning of faith from the point of view of one seeking, through silent reasoning within himself, things he knows not—reflecting that this was made up of a connected chain of many arguments, I began to wonder if perhaps it might be possible to find one single argument that for its proof required no other save itself, and that by itself would suffice to prove that God really exists, that He is the supreme good needing no other and is He whom all things have need of for their being and well-being, and also to prove whatever we believe about the Divine Being. But as often and as diligently as I turned my thoughts to this, sometimes it seemed to me that I had almost reached what I was seeking, sometimes it eluded my acutest thinking completely, so that finally, in desperation, I was about to give up what I was looking for as something impossible to find. However, when I had decided to put aside this idea altogether, lest by uselessly occupying my mind it might prevent other ideas with which I could make some progress, then, in spite of my unwillingness and my resistance to it, it began to force itself upon me more and more pressingly. So it was that one day when I was quite worn out with resisting its importunacy, there came to me, in the very conflict of my thoughts, what I had despaired of finding, so that I eagerly grasped the notion which in my distraction I had been rejecting.

Judging, then, that what had given me such joy to discover would

\* Several minor liberties have been taken in the translation. The formula 'that-which-nothing-greater-can-be-thought' and its variants have been hyphenated for the sake of convenience; the Fool of the Psalmist has been given a capital letter; italics have been added in a few passages to make the meaning clearer; and some supplementary words and phrases (enclosed in square brackets) have also been interpolated for the same purpose. Biblical quotations have been translated directly from St Anselm's text which differs slightly from that of the Latin Vulgate version. References to the Psalms follow the Vulgate numbering which differs from that of the Hebrew texts followed by most other versions.

afford pleasure, if it were written down, to anyone who might read it, I have written the following short tract dealing with this question as well as several others, from the point of view of one trying to raise his mind to contemplate God and seeking to understand what he believes. In my opinion, neither this tract nor the other I mentioned before deserves to be called a book or to carry its author's name, and yet I did not think they should be sent forth without some title (by which, so to speak, they might invite those into whose hands they should come, to read them); so I have given to each its title, the first being called *An Example of Meditation on the Meaning of Faith*, and the sequel *Faith in Quest of Understanding*.

However, as both of them, under these titles, had already been copied out by several readers, a number of people (above all the reverend Archbishop of Lyons, Hugh, apostolic delegate to Gaul, who commanded me by his apostolic authority) have urged me to put my name to them. For the sake of greater convenience I have named the first book *Monologion*, that is, a soliloquy; and the other *Proslogion*, that is, an allocution.

### Chapters

1. A rousing of the mind to the contemplation of God
2. That God truly exists
3. That God cannot be thought not to exist
4. How 'the Fool said in his heart' what cannot be thought
5. That God is whatever it is better to be than not to be, and that existing through Himself alone He makes all other beings from nothing
6. How He is perceptive although He is not a body
7. How He is omnipotent although He cannot do many things
8. How He is both merciful and impassible
9. How the all-just and supremely just One spares the wicked and justly has mercy on the wicked
10. How He justly punishes and justly spares the wicked
11. How 'all the ways of the Lord are mercy and truth', and yet how 'the Lord is just in all His ways'

12. That God is the very life by which He lives and that the same holds for like attributes
13. How He alone is limitless and eternal, although other spirits are also limitless and eternal
14. How and why God is both seen and not seen by those seeking Him
15. How He is greater than can be thought
16. That this is the 'inaccessible light' in which He 'dwells'
17. That harmony, fragrance, sweetness, softness, and beauty are in God according to His own ineffable manner
18. That there are no parts in God or in His eternity which He is
19. That He is not in place or time but all things are in Him
20. That He is before and beyond even all eternal things
21. Whether this is the 'age of the age' or the 'ages of the ages'
22. That He alone is what He is and who He is
23. That this good is equally Father and Son and Holy Spirit, and that this is the one necessary being which is altogether and wholly and solely good
24. A speculation as to what kind and how great this good is
25. Which goods belong to those who enjoy this good and how great they are
26. Whether this is the 'fullness of joy' which the Lord promises

1. *A rousing of the mind to the contemplation of God*

Come now, insignificant man, fly for a moment from your affairs, escape for a little while from the tumult of your thoughts. Put aside now your weighty cares and leave your wearisome toils. Abandon yourself for a little to God and rest for a little in Him. Enter into the inner chamber of your soul, shut out everything save God and what can be of help in your quest for Him and having locked the door seek Him out [Matt. 6: 6]. Speak now, my whole heart, speak now to God: 'I seek Your countenance, O Lord, Your countenance I seek' [Ps. 26: 8].

Come then, Lord my God, teach my heart where and how to seek

You, where and how to find You. Lord, if You are not present here, where, since You are absent, shall I look for You? On the other hand, if You are everywhere why then, since You are present, do I not see You? But surely You dwell in 'light inaccessible' [1 Tim. 6: 16]. And where is this inaccessible light, or how can I approach the inaccessible light? Or who shall lead me and take me into it that I may see You in it? Again, by what signs, under what aspect, shall I seek You? Never have I seen You, Lord my God, I do not know Your face. What shall he do, most high Lord, what shall this exile do, far away from You as he is? What shall Your servant do, tormented by love of You and yet cast off 'far from Your face' [Ps. 31: 22]? He yearns to see You and Your countenance is too far away from him. He desires to come close to You, and Your dwelling place is inaccessible; he longs to find You and does not know where You are; he is eager to seek You out and he does not know Your countenance. Lord, You are my God and my Lord, and never have I seen You. You have created me and re-created me and You have given me all the good things I possess, and still I do not know You. In fine, I was made in order to see You, and I have not yet accomplished what I was made for.

How wretched man's lot is when he has lost that for which he was made! Oh how hard and cruel was that Fall! Alas, what has man lost and what has he found? What did he lose and what remains to him? He lost the blessedness for which he was made, and he found the misery for which he was not made. That without which nothing is happy has gone from him and that which by itself is nothing but misery remains to him. Once 'man ate the bread of angels' [Ps. 77: 25], for which now he hungers; now he eats 'the bread of sorrow' [Ps. 126: 2], which then he knew nothing of. Alas the common grief of mankind, alas the universal lamentation of the children of Adam! He groaned with fullness; we sigh with hunger. He was prosperous; we go begging. He in his happiness had possessions and in his misery abandoned them; we in our unhappiness go without and miserably do we yearn and, alas, we remain empty. Why, since it was easy for him, did he not keep for us that which we lack so much? Why did he deprive us of light and surround us with darkness? Why did he take life away from us and inflict death upon us? Poor wretches that we are, whence have we been expelled and whither are we driven? Whence have we been cast down and whither buried? From our

homeland into exile; from the vision of God into our present blindness; from the joy of immortality into the bitterness and horror of death. Oh wretched change from so great a good to so great an evil! What a grievous loss, a grievous sorrow, utterly grievous!

Alas, unfortunate that I am, one of the miserable children of Eve, separated from God. What have I undertaken? What have I actually done? Where was I going? Where have I come to? To what was I aspiring? For what do I yearn? 'I sought goodness' [Ps. 121: 9] and, lo, 'there is confusion' [Jer. 14: 19]. I yearned for God, and I was in my own way. I sought peace within myself and 'I have found tribulation and sadness' in my heart of hearts [Ps. 114: 3]. I wished to laugh from out the happiness of my soul, and 'the sobbing of my heart' [Ps. 37: 9] makes me cry out. I hoped for gladness and, lo, my sighs come thick and fast.

And You, 'O Lord, how long' [Ps. 6: 4]? How long, Lord, will You be unmindful of us? 'How long will You turn Your countenance' from us [Ps. 12: 1]? When will You look upon us and hear us [Ps. 12: 4]? When will You enlighten our eyes and show 'Your countenance' to us [Ps. 79: 4]? When will You give Yourself again to us? Look upon us, Lord; hear us, enlighten us, show Yourself to us. Give Yourself to us that it may be well with us, for without You it goes so ill for us. Have pity upon our efforts and our strivings towards You, for we can avail nothing without You. You call to us, 'so help us' [Ps. 78: 9]. I beseech You, Lord, let me not go sighing hopelessly, but make me breathe hopefully again. My heart is made bitter by its desolation; I beseech You, Lord, sweeten it by Your consolation. I set out hungry to look for You; I beseech You, Lord, do not let me depart from You fasting. I came to You as one famished; do not let me go without food. Poor, I have come to one who is rich. Unfortunate, I have come to one who is merciful. Do not let me return scorned and empty-handed. And if now I sigh before I eat [Job 3: 4], give me to eat after my sighs. Lord, bowed down as I am, I can only look downwards; raise me up that I may look upwards. 'My sins are heaped up over my head'; they cover me over and 'like a heavy load' crush me down [Ps. 37: 5]. Save me, disburden me, 'lest their pit close its mouth over me' [Ps. 68: 16]. Let me discern Your light whether it be from afar or from the depths. Teach me to seek You, and reveal Yourself to me as I seek, because I can neither seek You if You do not teach me how, nor find You unless You reveal Yourself. Let me seek You in desir-

ing You; let me desire You in seeking You; let me find You in loving You; let me love You in finding You.

I acknowledge, Lord, and I give thanks that You have created Your image in me, so that I may remember You, think of You, love You. But this image is so effaced and worn away by vice, so darkened by the smoke of sin, that it cannot do what it was made to do unless You renew it and reform it. I do not try, Lord, to attain Your lofty heights, because my understanding is in no way equal to it. But I do desire to understand Your truth a little, that truth that my heart believes and loves. For I do not seek to understand so that I may believe; but I believe so that I may understand. For I believe this also, that 'unless I believe, I shall not understand' [Isa. 7: 9].

## 2. *That God truly exists*

Well then, Lord, You who give understanding to faith, grant me that I may understand, as much as You see fit, that You exist as we believe You to exist, and that You are what we believe You to be. Now we believe that You are something than which nothing greater can be thought. Or can it be that a thing of such a nature does not exist, since 'the Fool has said in his heart, there is no God' [Ps. 13: 1; 52: 1]? But surely, when this same Fool hears what I am speaking about, namely, 'something-than-which-nothing-greater-can-be-thought', he understands what he hears, and what he understands is in his mind, even if he does not understand that it actually exists. For it is one thing for an object to exist in the mind, and another thing to understand that an object actually exists. Thus, when a painter plans beforehand what he is going to execute, he has [the picture] in his mind, but he does not yet think that it actually exists because he has not yet executed it. However, when he has actually painted it, then he both has it in his mind and understands that it exists because he has now made it. Even the Fool, then, is forced to agree that something-than-which-nothing-greater-can-be-thought exists in the mind, since he understands this when he hears it, and whatever is understood is in the mind. And surely that-than-which-a-greater-cannot-be-thought cannot exist in the mind alone. For if it exists solely in the mind, it can be thought to exist in reality also, which is greater. If then that-than-which-a-greater-cannot-be-thought exists in the mind alone, this same that-than-which-

a-greater-cannot-be-thought is that-than-which-a-greater-can-be-thought. But this is obviously impossible. Therefore there is absolutely no doubt that something-than-which-a-greater-cannot-be-thought exists both in the mind and in reality.

### 3. *That God cannot be thought not to exist*

And certainly this being so truly exists that it cannot be even thought not to exist. For something can be thought to exist that cannot be thought not to exist, and this is greater than that which can be thought not to exist. Hence, if that-than-which-a-greater-cannot-be-thought can be thought not to exist, then that-than-which-a-greater-cannot-be-thought is not the same as that-than-which-a-greater-cannot-be-thought, which is absurd. Something-than-which-a-greater-cannot-be-thought exists so truly then, that it cannot be even thought not to exist.

And You, Lord our God, are this being. You exist so truly, Lord my God, that You cannot even be thought not to exist. And this is as it should be, for if some intelligence could think of something better than You, the creature would be above its Creator and would judge its Creator—and that is completely absurd. In fact, everything else there is, except You alone, can be thought of as not existing. You alone, then, of all things most truly exist and therefore of all things possess existence to the highest degree; for anything else does not exist as truly, and so possesses existence to a lesser degree. Why then did 'the Fool say in his heart, there is no God' [Ps. 13: 1; 52: 1] when it is so evident to any rational mind that You of all things exist to the highest degree? Why indeed, unless because he was stupid and a fool?

### 4. *How 'the Fool said in his heart' what cannot be thought*

How indeed has he 'said in his heart' what he could not think; or how could he not think what he 'said in his heart', since to 'say in one's heart' and to 'think' are the same? But if he really (indeed, since he really) both thought because he 'said in his heart' and did not 'say in his heart' because he could not think, there is not only one sense in which something is 'said in one's heart' or thought. For in one sense a thing is thought when the word signifying it is thought; in

another sense when the very object which the thing is is understood. In the first sense, then, God can be thought not to exist, but not at all in the second sense. No one, indeed, understanding what God is can think that God does not exist, even though he may say these words in his heart either without any [objective] signification or with some peculiar signification. For God is that-than-which-nothing-greater-can-be-thought. Whoever really understands this understands clearly that this same being so exists that not even in thought can it not exist. Thus whoever understands that God exists in such a way cannot think of Him as not existing.

I give thanks, good Lord, I give thanks to You, since what I believed before through Your free gift I now so understand through Your illumination, that if I did not want to *believe* that You existed, I should nevertheless be unable not to *understand* it.

### 5. *That God is whatever it is better to be than not to be and that, existing through Himself alone, He makes all other beings from nothing*

What then are You, Lord God, You than whom nothing greater can be thought? But what are You save that supreme being, existing through Yourself alone, who made everything else from nothing? For whatever is not this is less than that which can be thought of; but this cannot be thought about You. What goodness, then, could be wanting to the supreme good, through which every good exists? Thus You are just, truthful, happy, and whatever it is better to be than not to be—for it is better to be just rather than unjust, and happy rather than unhappy.

### 6. *How He is perceptive although He is not a body*

But since it is better to be perceptive, omnipotent, merciful, impassible, than not to be so, how are You able to perceive if You are not a body; or how are You omnipotent if You are not able to do everything; or how are You merciful and impassible at the same time? For if only corporeal things are capable of perception, since the senses are involved with the body and in the body, how are You perceptive, since You are not a body but the supreme spirit who is better than

any body? But if to perceive is nothing else than to know, or if it is directed to knowing (for he who perceives knows according to the appropriate sense, as, for example, colours are known by sight and flavours through taste), one can say not inappropriately that whatever in any way knows also in some way perceives. So it is, Lord, that although You are not a body You are supremely perceptive, in the sense that You know supremely all things and not in the sense in which an animal knows through a bodily sense-faculty.

7. *How He is omnipotent although He cannot do many things*

Again, how are You omnipotent if You cannot do all things? But, how can You do all things if You cannot be corrupted, or tell lies, or make the true into the false (such as to undo what has been done), and many similar things? Or is the ability to do these things not power but impotence? For he who can do these things can do what is not good for himself and what he ought not to do. And the more he can do these things, the more power adversity and perversity have over him and the less he has against them. He, therefore, who can do these things can do them not by power but by impotence. It is said, then, that he 'can', not because he himself can do them but because his impotence gives another power against him. Or it is said in some other manner of speaking, in the sense in which many words are used improperly, as, for example, when we use 'to be' for 'not to be', and 'to do' for 'not to do' or for 'to do nothing'. Thus we often say to someone who denies that some thing exists: 'It *is* as you say it *is*', although it would seem much more proper to say, 'It *is not* as you say it *is not*'. Again, we say 'This man is sitting', just as we say 'That man is doing [something]'; or we say 'This man is resting', just as we say 'That man is doing [something]'. But 'to sit' *is not* to do something, and 'to rest' is to do *nothing*. In the same way, then, when someone is said to have the 'power' of doing or suffering something which is not to his advantage or which he ought not to do, then by 'power' here we mean 'impotence', for the more he has this 'power', the more adversity and perversity have power over him and the more is he powerless against them. Therefore, Lord God, You are the more truly omnipotent since You can do nothing through impotence and nothing can have power against You.

8. *How He is both merciful and impassible*

But how are You at once both merciful and impassible? For if You are impassible You do not have any compassion; and if You have no compassion Your heart is not sorrowful from compassion with the sorrowful, which is what being merciful is. But if You are not merciful whence comes so much consolation for the sorrowful?

How, then, are You merciful and not merciful, O Lord, unless it be that You are merciful in relation to us and not in relation to Yourself? In fact, You are [merciful] according to our way of looking at things and not according to Your way. For when You look upon us in our misery it is we who feel the effect of Your mercy, but You do not experience the feeling. Therefore You are both merciful because You save the sorrowful and pardon sinners against You; and You are not merciful because You do not experience any feeling of compassion for misery.

9. *How the all-just and supremely just One spares the wicked and justly has mercy on the wicked*

But how do You spare the wicked if You are all-just and supremely just? For how does the all-just and supremely just One do something that is unjust? Or what kind of justice is it to give everlasting life to him who merits eternal death? How then, O good God, good to the good and to the wicked, how do You save the wicked if this is not just and You do not do anything which is not just? Or, since Your goodness is beyond comprehension, is this hidden in the inaccessible light in which You dwell? Truly in the deepest and most secret place of Your goodness is hidden the source whence the stream of Your mercy flows. For though You are all-just and supremely just You are, however—precisely because You are all-just and supremely just—also beneficent even to the wicked. You would, in fact, be less good if You were not beneficent to any wicked man. For he who is good to both good and wicked is better than he who is good only to the good. And he who is good to the wicked by both punishing and sparing them is better than he who is good to the wicked only by punishing them. You are merciful, then, because You are all-good and supremely good. And though perhaps it is apparent why You should reward the good with good and the bad with bad, what is

indeed to be wondered at is why You, the all-just One who wants for nothing, should bestow good things on Your wicked and guilty creatures.

O God, how profound is Your goodness! It is apparent whence Your mercy comes, and yet it is not clearly seen. Whence the stream flows is obvious, and yet the source where it rises is not seen directly. For on the one hand it is from plenitude of goodness that You are gentle with those who sin against You; and on the other hand the reason why You are thus is hidden in the depths of Your goodness. For although from Your goodness You reward the good with good and the bad with bad, yet it seems that the very definition of justice demands this. But when You give good things to the wicked, one both understands that the supreme Good has willed to do this and one wonders why the supremely just One could have willed it.

O mercy, from what abundant sweetness and sweet abundance do you flow forth for us! O boundless goodness of God, with what feeling should You be loved by sinners! For You save the just whom justice commends, but You free sinners whom justice condemns. The former [are saved] by the aid of their merits; the latter despite their merits. The former [are saved] by regarding the good things You have given; the latter by disregarding the bad things which You hate. O boundless goodness which so surpasses all understanding, let that mercy come upon me which proceeds from Your so great abundance! Let that which flows forth from You flow into me! Forbear through mercy lest You be avenged through justice! For even if it be difficult to understand how Your mercy is not apart from Your justice, it is, however, necessary to believe that it is not in any way opposed to justice, for it derives from goodness which is naught apart from justice, which indeed really coincides with justice. Truly, if You are merciful because You are supremely good, and if You are supremely good only in so far as You are supremely just, truly then You are merciful precisely because You are supremely just. Help me, just and merciful God, whose light I seek, help me so that I may understand what I am saying. Truly, then, you are merciful because You are just.

Is Your mercy not then derived from Your justice? Do You not then spare the wicked because of justice? If it is so, Lord, if it is so, teach me how it is so. Is it because it is just that You are so good that You cannot be conceived to be better, and that You act with so much

power that You cannot be thought to be more powerful? For what is more just than this? This, however, would not be the case if You were good only by way of retribution and not by way of forgiveness, and if You made to be good only those not yet good, and not also the wicked. In this way, then, it is just that You spare the wicked and make good men from bad. Finally, what is done unjustly ought not to be done; and what ought not to be done is done unjustly. If, then, it is unjust that You should have mercy on the wicked, You ought not to be merciful; and if You ought not to be merciful it is unjust of You to be merciful. But if it is improper to say this, then it is proper to believe that it is just of You to have mercy on the wicked.

10. *How He justly punishes and justly spares the wicked*

But it is also just that You punish the wicked. For what is more just than that the good should receive good things and the bad receive bad things? How then is it just both that You punish the wicked and that You spare the wicked?

Or do You with justice in one way punish the wicked and with justice in another way spare the wicked? For when You punish the wicked it is just, since it agrees with their merits; however, when You spare the wicked it is just, not because of their merits but because it is befitting to Your goodness. For in sparing the wicked You are just in relation to Yourself and not in relation to us, even as You are merciful in relation to us and not in relation to Yourself. Thus it is, as You are merciful (in saving us whom You might with justice lose) not because You experience any feeling, but because we experience the effect of Your mercy, so You are just not because You give us our due, but because You do what befits You as the supreme good. Thus, then, without inconsistency justly do You punish and justly do You pardon.

11. *How 'all the ways of the Lord are mercy and truth', and yet how 'the Lord is just in all His ways'*

But is it not also just in relation to Yourself, Lord, that You should punish the wicked? It is just inasmuch as You are so just that You cannot be thought to be more just. But You would in no wise be so if You only returned good to the good and did not return bad to the

bad. For he is more just who rewards the merits of both good and bad than he who rewards the merits of the good alone. Therefore it is just in relation to You, O just and benevolent God, both when You punish and when You pardon. Truly, then, 'all the ways of the Lord are mercy and truth' [Ps. 24: 10] and yet 'the Lord is just in all His ways' [Ps. 144: 17]. And [this is so] without any inconsistency at all, since it is not just for those to be saved whom You will to punish, and it is not just for those to be damned whom You will to pardon. For that alone is just which You will, and that is not just which You do not will. Thus, then, Your mercy is derived from Your justice since it is just that You are so good that You are good even in forgiving. And perhaps this is why one who is supremely just can will good for the wicked. But if it can in some way be grasped why You can will to save the wicked, it certainly cannot be understood by any reason why from those who are alike in wickedness You save some rather than others through Your supreme goodness, and damn some rather than others through Your supreme justice.

Thus, then, truly are You perceptive, omnipotent, merciful, and impassible, just as You are living, wise, good, blessed, eternal, and whatever it is better to be rather than not to be.

12. *That God is the very life by which He lives and that the same holds for like attributes*

But clearly, whatever You are, You are not that through another but through Your very self. You are therefore the very life by which You live, the wisdom by which You are wise, the very goodness by which You are good to both good men and wicked, and the same holds for like attributes.

13. *How He alone is limitless and eternal, although other spirits are also limitless and eternal*

All that which is enclosed in any way by place or time is less than that which no law of place or time constrains. Since, then, nothing is greater than You, no place or time confines You but You exist everywhere and always. And because this can be said of You alone, You alone are unlimited and eternal. How then are other spirits also said to be unlimited and eternal?

Now, You alone are said to be eternal because, alone of all beings, You will not cease to exist just as You have not begun to exist. But how are You alone unlimited? Is it that compared with You the created spirit is limited, but unlimited with respect to a body? Certainly that is absolutely limited which, when it is wholly in one place, cannot at the same time be somewhere else. This is seen in the case of bodies alone. But that is unlimited which is wholly everywhere at once; and this is true only of You alone. That, however, is limited and unlimited at the same time which, while wholly in one place, can at the same time be wholly somewhere else but not everywhere; and this is true of created spirits. For if the soul were not wholly in each of the parts of its body it would not sense wholly in each of them. You then, O Lord, are unlimited and eternal in a unique way and yet other spirits are also unlimited and eternal.

14. *How and why God is both seen and not seen by those seeking Him*

Have you found, O my soul, what you were seeking? You were seeking God, and you found Him to be something which is the highest of all, than which a better cannot be thought, and to be life itself, light, wisdom, goodness, eternal blessedness and blessed eternity, and to exist everywhere and always. If you have not found your God, how is He this which you have found, and which you have understood with such certain truth and true certitude? But if you have found [Him], why is it that you do not experience what you have found? Why, O Lord God, does my soul not experience You if it has found You?

Or has it not found that which it has found to be the light and the truth? But then, how did it understand this save by seeing the light and the truth? Could it understand anything at all about You save through 'Your light and Your truth' [Ps. 42: 3]? If, then, it saw the light and the truth, it saw You. If it did not see You then it did not see the light or the truth. Or is it that it saw both the truth and the light, and yet it did not see You because it saw You only partially but did not see You as You are?

Lord my God, You who have formed and reformed me, tell my desiring soul what You are besides what it has seen so that it may see clearly that which it desires. It strives so that it may see more, and it

sees nothing beyond what it has seen save darkness. Or rather it does not see darkness, which is not in You in any way; but it sees that it cannot see more because of its own darkness. Why is this, Lord, why is this? Is its eye darkened by its weakness, or is it dazzled by Your splendour? In truth it is both darkened in itself and dazzled by You. It is indeed both darkened by its own littleness and overwhelmed by Your immensity. It is, in fact, both restricted by its own limitedness and overcome by Your fullness. For how great is that light from which shines every truth that gives light to the understanding! How complete is that truth in which is everything that is true and outside of which nothing exists save nothingness and falsity! How boundless is that which in one glance sees everything that has been made, and by whom and through whom and in what manner it was made from nothing! What purity, what simplicity, what certitude and splendour is there! Truly it is more than can be understood by any creature.

15. *How He is greater than can be thought*

Therefore, Lord, not only are You that than which a greater cannot be thought, but You are also something greater than can be thought. For since it is possible to think that there is such a one, then, if You are not this same being something greater than You could be thought—which cannot be.

16. *That this is the 'inaccessible light' in which He 'dwells'*

Truly, Lord, this is the inaccessible light in which You dwell. For truly there is nothing else which can penetrate through it so that it might discover You there. Truly I do not see this light since it is too much for me; and yet whatever I see I see through it, just as an eye that is weak sees what it sees by the light of the sun which it cannot look at in the sun itself. My understanding is not able [to attain] to that [light]. It shines too much and [my understanding] does not grasp it nor does the eye of my soul allow itself to be turned towards it for too long. It is dazzled by its splendour, overcome by its fullness, overwhelmed by its immensity, confused by its extent. O supreme and inaccessible light; O whole and blessed truth, how far You are from me who am so close to You! How distant You are from

my sight while I am so present to Your sight! You are wholly present everywhere and I do not see You. In You I move and in You I have my being and I cannot come near to You. You are within me and around me and I do not have any experience of You.

17. *That harmony, fragrance, sweetness, softness, and beauty are in God according to His own ineffable manner*

Still You hide away, Lord, from my soul in Your light and blessedness, and so it still dwells in its darkness and misery. For it looks all about, and does not see Your beauty. It listens, and does not hear Your harmony. It smells, and does not sense Your fragrance. It tastes, and does not recognize Your savour. It feels, and does not sense Your softness. For You have in Yourself, Lord, in Your own ineffable manner, those [qualities] You have given to the things created by You according to their own sensible manner. But the senses of my soul, because of the ancient weakness of sin, have become hardened and dulled and obstructed.

18. *That there are no parts in God or in His eternity which He is*

Behold, once more confusion, once more sorrow and grief stand in my way as I seek joy and happiness! Even now my soul hoped for fulfilment, and, lo, once again it is overwhelmed by neediness! Even now I sought to have my fill, and, lo, I hunger the more! I strove to ascend to God's light and I have fallen back into my own darkness. Indeed, not only have I fallen back into it, but I feel myself enclosed within it. I fell before 'my mother conceived me' [Ps. 50: 7]. In that darkness indeed 'I was conceived' [ibid.] and I was born under its shadow. We all, in fact, at one time fell in him 'in whom all of us' sinned [Rom. 5: 12]. In him (who easily possessed and wickedly lost it for himself and for us), we all lost that which, when we wish to look for it, we do not know; that which, when we look for it, we do not find; that which, when we find it, is not what we are looking for. Help me 'because of Your goodness, Lord' [Ps. 24: 7]. 'I sought Your countenance, Your countenance I will seek, O Lord; do not turn Your face away from me' [Ps. 26: 8]. Raise me up from my own self to You. Purify, heal, make sharp, 'illumine' the eye of my soul so that it may see You [Ps. 12: 4]. Let my soul gather its strength

again and with all its understanding strive once more towards You, Lord.

What are You, Lord, what are You; what shall my heart understand You to be? You are, assuredly, life, You are wisdom, You are truth, You are goodness, You are blessedness, You are eternity, and You are every true good. These are many things, and my limited understanding cannot see them all in one single glance so as to delight in all at once. How then, Lord, are You all these things? Are they parts of You, or rather, is each one of these wholly what You are? For whatever is made up of parts is not absolutely one, but in a sense many and other than itself, and it can be broken up either actually or by the mind—all of which things are foreign to You, than whom nothing better can be thought. Therefore there are no parts in You, Lord; neither are You many, but You are so much one and the same with Yourself that in nothing are You dissimilar with Yourself. Indeed You are unity itself not divisible by any mind. Life and wisdom and the other [attributes], then, are not parts of You, but all are one and each one of them is wholly what You are and what all the others are. Since, then, neither You nor Your eternity which You are have parts, no part of You or of Your eternity is anywhere or at any time, but You exist as a whole everywhere and Your eternity exists as a whole always.

19. *That He is not in place or time but all things are in Him*

But if through Your eternity You have been and are and will be, and if to have been is not to be in the future, and to be present is not to have been or to be in the future—how does Your eternity exist as a whole always?

Or is there nothing past in Your eternity, so that it is now no longer; nor anything future, as though it were not already? You were not, therefore, yesterday, nor will You be tomorrow, but yesterday and today and tomorrow You *are*. Indeed You exist neither yesterday nor today nor tomorrow but are absolutely outside all time. For yesterday and today and tomorrow are completely in time; however, You, though nothing can be without You, are nevertheless not in place or time but all things are in You. For nothing contains You, but You contain all things.

20. *That He is before and beyond even all eternal things*

You therefore permeate and embrace all things; You are before and beyond all things. You are before all things of course since, before they came to be, You already *are*. But how are You beyond all things? For in what way are You beyond those things that will never have an end?

Is it because these things can in no way exist without You, though You do not exist any the less even if they return to nothingness? For in this way, in a sense, You are beyond them. Or is it also that they can be thought to have an end while You cannot in any way? For in this way, in a sense, they do indeed have an end, but You do not in any sense. And assuredly that which does not have an end in any way at all is beyond that which does come to an end in some way. Is it also in this way that You surpass even all eternal things, since Your eternity and theirs is wholly present to You, though they do not have the part of their eternity which is yet to come just as they do not now have what is past? In this way, indeed, are You always beyond those things, because You are always present at that point (or because it is always present to You) which they have not yet reached.

21. *Whether this is the 'age of the age' or the 'ages of the ages'*

Is this, then, the 'age of the age' or the 'ages of the ages'? For just as an age of time contains all temporal things, so Your eternity contains also the very ages of time. Indeed this [eternity] is an 'age' because of its indivisible unity, but 'ages' because of its immensity without limit. And although You are so great, Lord, that all things are filled with You and are in You, yet You exist without any spatial extension so that there is neither a middle nor half nor any part in You.

22. *That He alone is what He is and who He is*

You alone then, Lord, are what You are and You are who You are. For what is one thing as a whole and another as to its parts, and has in it something mutable, is not altogether what it is. And what began [to exist] from non-existence, and can be thought not to exist, and

returns to non-existence unless it subsists through some other; and what has had a past existence but does not now exist, and a future existence but does not yet exist—such a thing does not exist in a strict and absolute sense. But You are what You are, for whatever You are at any time or in any way this You are wholly and forever.

And You are the being who exists in a strict and absolute sense because You have neither past nor future existence but only present existence; nor can You be thought not to exist at any time. And You are life and light and wisdom and blessedness and eternity and many suchlike good things; and yet You are nothing save the one and supreme good, You who are completely sufficient unto Yourself, needing nothing, but rather He whom all things need in order that they may have being and well-being.

23. *That this good is equally Father and Son and Holy Spirit; and that this is the one necessary being which is altogether and wholly and solely good*

You are this good, O God the Father; this is Your Word, that is to say, Your Son. For there cannot be any other than what You are, or any thing greater or lesser than You, in the Word by which You utter Yourself. For Your Word is as true as You are truthful and is therefore the very truth that You are and that is not other than You. And You are so simple that there cannot be born of You any other than what You are. This itself is the Love, one and common to You and to Your Son, that is the Holy Spirit proceeding from both. For this same Love is not unequal to You or to Your Son since Your love for Yourself and Him, and His love for You and Himself, are as great as You and He are. Nor is that other than You and than Him which is not different from You and Him; nor can there proceed from Your supreme simplicity what is other than that from which it proceeds. Thus, whatever each is singly, that the whole Trinity is altogether, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; since each singly is not other than the supremely simple unity and the supremely unified simplicity which can be neither multiplied nor differentiated.

‘Moreover, one thing is necessary’ [Luke 10: 42]. This is, moreover, that one thing necessary in which is every good, or rather, which is wholly and uniquely and completely and solely good.

24. *A speculation as to what kind and how great this good is*

Now, my soul, rouse and lift up your whole understanding and think as much as you can on what kind and how great this good is. For if particular goods are enjoyable, consider carefully how enjoyable is that good which contains the joyfulness of all goods; not [a joy] such as we have experienced in created things, but as different from this as the Creator differs from the creature. For if life that is created is good, how good is the Life that creates? If the salvation that has been brought about is joyful, how joyful is the Salvation that brings about all salvation? If wisdom in the knowledge of things that have been brought into being is lovable, how lovable is the Wisdom that has brought all things into being out of nothing? Finally, if there are many great delights in delightful things, of what kind and how great is the delight in Him who made these same delightful things?

25. *Which goods belong to those who enjoy this good, and how great they are*

Oh he who will enjoy this good, what will be his and what will not be his! Whatever he wishes will certainly be his and whatever he does not wish will not be his. In fact, all the goods of body and soul will be there such that ‘neither eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived’ [1 Cor. 2: 9]. Why, then, do you wander about so much, O insignificant man, seeking the goods of your soul and body? Love the one good in which all good things are, and that is sufficient. Desire the simple good which contains every good, and that is enough. For what do you love, O my flesh, what do you desire, O my soul? There it is, there it is, whatever you love, whatever you desire. If beauty delights you, ‘the just will shine as the sun’ [Matt. 13: 43]. If the swiftness or strength or freedom of the body that nothing can withstand [delights you], ‘they will be like the angels of God’ [Matt. 22: 30]; for it is ‘sown as a natural body and shall rise as a spiritual body’ [1 Cor. 15: 44] by a supernatural power. If it is a long and healthy life, a healthy eternity and an eternal health is there since ‘the just will live forever’ [Wis. 5: 16] and ‘the salvation of the just is from the Lord’ [Ps. 36: 39]. If it is satisfaction, they will be satisfied ‘when the glory of God will appear’ [Ps. 16: 15]. If it is quenching of thirst, ‘they will be inebriated with the abundance of the house of God’ [Ps.

35: 9]. If it is melody, there the choirs of angels play unceasingly to God. If it is pleasure of any kind, not impure but pure, God 'will make them drink from the torrent of His pleasure' [Ps. 35: 9]. If it is wisdom, the very Wisdom of God will show itself to them. If it is friendship, they will love God more than themselves and one another as themselves, and God will love them more than they love themselves because it is through Him that they love Him and themselves and one another, and He loves Himself and them through Himself. If it is peace, for all of them there will be one will, since they will have none save the will of God. If it is power, they will be all-powerful with regard to their wills, as God is with His. For just as God will be able to do what He wills through Himself, so through Him they will be able to do what they will; because, just as they will not will anything save what He wills, so He will will whatever they will, and what He intends to will cannot not be. If it is honours and riches, God will set His good and faithful servants over many things [Matt. 25: 21, 23]; indeed, they will be called 'sons of God' and 'Gods' [Matt. 5: 9] and will in fact be so; and where the Son will be there also they will be, 'heirs indeed of God and co-heirs of Christ' [Rom. 8: 17]. If it is real security, they will indeed be as assured that this same [security], or rather this same good, will never in any way fail them, as they will be assured that they will not lose it of their own accord, nor that the loving God will take it away against their will from those who love Him, nor that anything more powerful than God will separate God and them against their will.

What joy there is indeed and how great it is where there exists so great a good! O human heart, O needy heart, O heart experienced in suffering, indeed overwhelmed by suffering, how greatly would you rejoice if you abounded in all these things! Ask your heart whether it could comprehend its joy in its so great blessedness? But surely if someone else whom you loved in every respect as yourself possessed that same blessedness, your joy would be doubled for you would rejoice as much for him as for yourself. If, then, two or three or many more possessed it you would rejoice just as much for each one as for yourself, if you loved each one as yourself. Therefore in that perfect and pure love of the countless holy angels and holy men where no one will love another less than himself, each will rejoice for every other as for himself. If, then, the heart of man will scarcely be able to comprehend the joy that will belong to it from so great a good,

how will it comprehend so many and such great joys? Indeed, to the degree that each one loves some other, so he will rejoice in the good of that other; therefore, just as each one in that perfect happiness will love God incomparably more than himself and all others with him, so he will rejoice immeasurably more over the happiness of God than over his own happiness and that of all the others with him. But if they love God with their whole heart, their whole mind, their whole soul, while yet their whole heart, their whole mind, their whole soul, is not equal to the grandeur of this love, they will assuredly so rejoice with their whole heart, their whole mind, and their whole soul, that their whole heart, their whole mind, their whole soul will not be equal to the fullness of their joy.

26. *Whether this is the 'fullness of joy' which the Lord promises?*

My God and my Lord, my hope and the joy of my heart, tell my soul if this is the joy of which You speak through Your Son: 'Ask and you will receive, that your joy may be complete' [John 16: 24]. For I have discovered a joy that is complete and more than complete. Indeed, when the heart is filled with that joy, the mind is filled with it, the soul is filled with it, the whole man is filled with it, yet joy beyond measure will remain. The whole of that joy, then, will not enter into those who rejoice, but those who rejoice will enter wholly into that joy. Speak, Lord, tell Your servant within his heart if this is the joy into which Your servants will enter who enter 'into the joy of the Lord' [Matt. 25: 21]. But surely that joy in which Your chosen ones will rejoice is that which 'neither eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man' [1 Cor. 2: 9]. I have not yet said or thought, then, Lord, how greatly your blessed will rejoice. They will, no doubt, rejoice as much as they love, and they will love as much as they know. How much will they know You, then, Lord, and how much will they love You? In very truth, 'neither eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man' [ibid.] in this life how much they will know You and love You in that life.

I pray, O God, that I may know You and love You, so that I may rejoice in You. And if I cannot do so fully in this life may I progress gradually until it comes to fullness. Let the knowledge of You grow in me here, and there [in heaven] be made complete; let Your love grow in me here and there be made complete, so that here my joy

may be great in hope, and there be complete in reality. Lord, by Your Son You command, or rather, counsel us to ask and you promise that we shall receive so that our 'joy may be complete' [John 16: 24]. I ask, Lord, as You counsel through our admirable counsellor. May I receive what You promise through Your truth so that my 'joy may be complete' [ibid.]. God of truth, I ask that I may receive so that my 'joy may be complete' [ibid.]. Until then let my mind meditate on it, let my tongue speak of it, let my heart love it, let my mouth preach it. Let my soul hunger for it, let my flesh thirst for it, my whole being desire it, until I enter into the 'joy of the Lord' [Matt. 25: 21], who is God, Three in One, 'blessed forever. Amen' [1 Rom. 1: 25].

PRO INSIPIENTE  
(ON BEHALF OF THE FOOL)  
BY GAUNILO OF MARMOUTIERS

I

To one doubting whether there is, or denying that there is, something of such a nature than which nothing greater can be thought, it is said here [in the *Proslogion*] that its existence is proved, first because the very one who denies or doubts it already has it in his mind, since when he hears it spoken of he understands what is said; and further, because what he understands is necessarily such that it exists not only in the mind but also in reality. And this is proved by the fact that it is greater to exist both in the mind and in reality than in the mind alone. For if this same being exists in the mind alone, anything that existed also in reality would be greater than this being, and thus that which is greater than everything would be less than some thing and would not be greater than everything, which is obviously contradictory. Therefore, it is necessarily the case that that which is greater than everything, being already proved to exist in the mind, should exist not only in the mind but also in reality, since otherwise it would not be greater than everything.

2

But he [the Fool] can perhaps reply that this thing is said already to exist in the mind only in the sense that I understand what is said. For could I not say that all kinds of unreal things, not existing in themselves in any way at all, are equally in the mind since if anyone speaks about them I understand whatever he says? Unless perhaps it is manifest that this being is such that it can be entertained in the mind in a different way from unreal or doubtfully real things, so that I am not said to think of or have in thought what is heard, but to understand and have it in mind, in that I cannot really think of this being in any other way save by understanding it, that is to say, by grasping by certain knowledge that the thing itself actually exists. But if this is the case, first, there will be no difference between having

OXFORD WORLD'S CLASSICS

*For over 100 years Oxford World's Classics have brought readers closer to the world's great literature. Now with over 700 titles—from the 4,000-year-old myths of Mesopotamia to the twentieth century's greatest novels—the series makes available lesser-known as well as celebrated writing.*

*The pocket-sized hardbacks of the early years contained introductions by Virginia Woolf, T. S. Eliot, Graham Greene, and other literary figures which enriched the experience of reading.*

*Today the series is recognized for its fine scholarship and reliability in texts that span world literature, drama and poetry, religion, philosophy and politics. Each edition includes perceptive commentary and essential background information to meet the changing needs of readers.*

OXFORD WORLD'S CLASSICS



ANSELM OF CANTERBURY

*The Major Works*



*Edited with an Introduction by*

BRIAN DAVIES and G. R. EVANS

OXFORD  
UNIVERSITY PRESS