

**COMPLETE PHILOSOPHICAL AND
THEOLOGICAL TREATISES
of
ANSELM of CANTERBURY**

Translated
by
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THE INCARNATION OF THE WORD¹
(Epistola de Incarnatione Verbi)

To the supreme Pontiff Urban, Lord and Father of the universal Church as it sojourns on earth, Brother Anselm, sinner in life, monk in habit, called to be bishop of the chief city Canterbury (by either the command or the permission of God), [offers] due subjection, with humble service and devout prayers.

1

Divine providence has chosen Your Holiness and has appointed you custodian of the Christian faith and life, and ruler of the Church. Therefore, if anything which is contrary to the Catholic faith arises in the Church, there is no one else to whom it is more rightly referred for authoritative correction. And if anyone responds to error, there is no one else to whom this response is more safely referred for prudent scrutiny. Therefore, just as I am not able [to send] the present letter more appropriately to anyone else, so I send it to no one more willingly than to Your Wisdom—(1) so that if anything in it needs to be corrected, it may be set right by your judgment and (2) so that what holds to the rule of truth may be confirmed by your authority.

When I was still abbot at the monastery in Bec, the following assertion was advanced by a certain cleric in France: “If the three persons in God are only one thing (*res*)—and are not three things, each one [existing] separately in itself (as do three angels or three souls) and, yet, [existing] in such way that they are wholly the same in will and in power—then the Father and the Holy Spirit were incarnate with the Son.” When this error was brought to my attention, I began a letter against it. However, I thought it not worth completing, even though a part of it had been written. For since he against whom it was being written had abjured his error in the council called by Rainald, venerable archbishop of Rheims, and since there did not seem to be anyone who was unaware that this man had been mistaken, I thought there to be no need for it. (That part of the letter which I had written was, however, transcribed by certain brothers, without my knowledge, and passed on to oth-

¹Completed toward the beginning of 1094 in Canterbury

ers to read. I mention this (1) so that if this part should come into anyone's hands, then although it contains nothing false, it should nevertheless be discarded as incomplete and unpolished and (2) so that what I there began should here be required to be more carefully undertaken and to be completed.)

Now, after I was seized in England and bound to the episcopate by some unfathomable ordinance of God, I heard that the author of the above-mentioned novelty was persisting in his opinion and was saying that he had abjured his earlier statements only because he was afraid of being killed by the people. For this reason, then, certain brothers petitioned me, urging that I solve the problem in which he was so entangled that he believed he could extricate himself only by committing himself either to the incarnation of God the Father and God the Holy Spirit or else to a plurality of gods. And I, in turn, petition that no one think me to have been so presumptuous as to suppose that the strength of the Christian faith needs the assistance of my defense. Indeed, if, when there are so many holy and wise men everywhere, a contemptibly insignificant man like me were to try to write something to strengthen the foundation of the Christian faith, as if it stood in need of my defense, then assuredly I could be justly called presumptuous and could be viewed as a laughing stock. For if other men saw me—loaded with stakes and ropes and the customary items used to tie down and to render steadfast what is likely to collapse—working around Mount Olympus in order to strengthen it lest as the result of some shock it collapse or be destroyed, it would be amazing if they could restrain themselves from laughter and derision. How much more [this would happen] if with my arguments I should try to strengthen and to render steadfast, as if it were tottering, that stone which, “cut out without hands from a mountain, struck and smashed the statue” which Nebuchadnezzar saw in a dream—that stone which has now become “a great mountain and has filled the whole earth”!¹ Would not those many holy and wise men, who rejoice in having their lives founded upon this mountain's eternal stability, be entitled to be indignant with me and to consider my effort to be the result not of serious learning but of frivolous boasting? Therefore, if in this letter I deal with

¹Daniel 2:34-35.

anything that has to do with the stability of our faith, it is not in order to confirm that stability but to satisfy the requests of my brethren who asked for the discussion.

But if the one who expressed the above-mentioned opinion has already been corrected by God and has returned to the truth, then let him not at all suppose that I am speaking against him in this letter, since he is no longer what he was. For if he was “once darkness but is now light in the Lord,”¹ we ought not to accuse the darkness which no longer exists but to approve the light which shines. But whether he has as yet returned to the light or not, I perceive that there are many who are struggling with the same problem. Accordingly, even though their faith surmounts the reasoning which to them seems inconsistent with faith, I do not think it superfluous to resolve this inconsistency.

But before I examine this question I will say something to curb the presumption of those who, with blasphemous rashness and on the ground that they cannot understand it, dare to argue against something which the Christian faith confesses—those who judge with foolish pride that what they are not able to understand is not at all possible, rather than acknowledging with humble wisdom that many things are possible which they are not able to comprehend. Indeed, no Christian ought to question the truth of what the Catholic Church believes in its heart and confesses with its mouth. Rather, by holding constantly and unhesitatingly to this faith, by loving it and living according to it he ought humbly, and as best he is able, to seek to discover the reason why it is true. If he is able to understand, then let him give thanks to God. But if he cannot understand, let him not toss his horns in strife but let him bow his head in reverence. For self-confident human wisdom can, by thrusting, uproot its horns more quickly than it can, by pushing, roll this stone. For when certain men begin to grow “horns” of self-confident knowledge, then (being ignorant of the fact that if someone thinks he knows something, he does not yet know it as he ought to know it) they are accustomed to mount up presumptuously unto the loftiest questions of faith before they possess spiritual wings through firmness of faith. Consequently, when they try to ascend to those questions which first require the lad-

¹Ephesians 5:8.

der of faith (as it is written, “Unless you believe you will not understand”),¹ but try to ascend in reverse order by means of first understanding, they are constrained to fall into many kinds of errors on account of their defective understanding. For it is apparent that they have no foundation of faith who, because they cannot understand what they believe, argue against the truth of this same faith—a truth confirmed by the holy Fathers. It is as if bats and owls, which see the sky only at night, were to dispute about the midday rays of the sun with eagles, which with unblinded vision gaze directly at the sun.

So *before* we examine and judge the deep things of faith, the heart must be cleansed by faith—just as God is spoken of as “cleansing their hearts by faith.”² And the eyes must be enlightened through keeping the precepts of the Lord, because “the precept of the Lord is light, enlightening the eyes.”³ And through humble obedience to the testimonies of God we ought to become as little children in order to learn the wisdom which the testimony of the Lord gives, testimony “faithful, giving wisdom to little ones.”⁴ Thus, the Lord says: “I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hidden these things from the wise and the prudent and have revealed them to little ones.”⁵ Putting aside the things of the flesh, let us live according to the Spirit *before*, I say, we examine and judge the deep things of faith. For he who lives according to the flesh is carnal or sensual; and of him it is said that “the sensual man does not perceive the things which are of the Spirit of God.”⁶ But he who “by the Spirit puts to death the deeds of the flesh”⁷ is made spiritual; and it is read of him that “the spiritual man judges all things but is himself judged by no one.”⁸ For it is true that the more richly we are fed on those things in Sacred Scripture which nourish us through obedience, the more precisely we are carried on to those things which satisfy through understanding. Indeed, it is vain for someone to try to say “I have understood more than all my teachers” if he does not dare to add “because Your testimonies are my meditation.”⁹ And he utters falsely “I have understood more than the ancients”

¹Isaiah 7:9 (Old Latin Version). ²Acts 15:9. ³Psalms 18:9 (19:8). ⁴Psalms 18:8 (19:7). ⁵Matthew 11:25. ⁶I Corinthians 2:14. ⁷Romans 8:13. ⁸I Corinthians 2:15. ⁹Psalms 118:99 (119:99).

if he is unaware of the continuation: “for I have sought Your commandments.”¹ Assuredly, what I am saying is this: He who does not believe will not understand. For he who does not believe will not experience; and he who has not experienced will not know. For the more experiencing-a-thing is superior to merely hearing about it, the more knowledge from experience surpasses knowledge at second hand.

And not only is the mind prevented from rising to the understanding of higher things when it lacks faith and obedience to the commandments of God, but by the neglect of good conscience even the understanding which has already been given is sometimes removed and faith itself overturned. For the apostle says of certain ones: “When they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God or give Him thanks; but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.”² And when the apostle instructed Timothy to “fight the good fight,” he stated: “having faith and a good conscience, for rejecting conscience some men have made shipwreck of their faith.”³ Therefore, let no one plunge rashly into complex questions concerning divine things without first striving in firmness of faith for earnestness of life and of wisdom—lest running through a misleading mass of sophistries with frivolous lack of care, he be ensnared by some persistent falsehood.

All men are to be warned to approach questions concerning the Sacred Page with utmost care. Nevertheless, in particular, those dialecticians of our day (or rather, heretics of dialectic) who think that universal substances are only vocal sounds [*flatus vocis*], and who cannot comprehend that a color is something distinct from the material object or that a man's wisdom is something distinct from his soul, ought to be blown right out of the discussion of spiritual questions. Indeed, in the souls of these dialecticians, reason—which ought to be the ruler and judge of all that is in man—is so covered over by corporeal images that it cannot extricate itself from them and cannot distinguish from them those things which it ought to contemplate purely and in isolation. For example, how will someone who does not yet understand how several men are one man in species be able to comprehend how in that highest and most mysterious Nature several persons—each one of

¹Psalms 118:100 (119:100). ²Romans 1:21. ³I Timothy 1:18-19.

whom, distinctly, is perfect God—are one God? And how will someone whose mind is too darkened to distinguish between his horse and its color be able to distinguish between the one God and His several relations? Finally, someone who cannot understand a human being [*homo*] to be anything except an individual shall not at all understand a human being to be anything except a human person, for every individual man is a person. How, then, shall he be able to understand that a humanity [*homo*], though not a person, was assumed by the Word? That is, another nature but not another person was assumed.

I have said these things so that no one will presume to examine the highest questions of faith before he is ready—or so that if he does so presume, no difficulty or impossibility of comprehending will be able to shake him from the truth to which he has been holding by faith.

Now we must come to the matter on account of which we began [this letter].

2

This man who is said to maintain that the three persons [of the Trinity] are like three angels or three souls also says, so I hear: “The pagans defend their law; the Jews defend theirs. Therefore, even we Christians ought to defend our faith.” Let us hear how this Christian defends his faith: “If,” says he, “the three persons are only one thing—and are not three things, each one [existing] separately in itself (as do three angels or three souls) and, yet, [existing] in such way that they are wholly the same in will and in power—then the Father and the Holy Spirit were incarnate with the Son.” Look at what this man says! Look at how this Christian defends his faith! Assuredly, either he wants to confess that there are three gods, or else he does not understand what he is saying. Now, if he confesses that there are three gods, he is not a Christian. On the other hand, if he affirms what he does not understand, he ought not to be given credence.

We should not reply to this man by reference to the authority of Sacred Scripture, because either he does not believe Scripture or else he interprets it in a perverse sense. For what does Sacred Scripture say more plainly than that there is only one God? Therefore, his error must be demonstrated by reference to the reason-

ing by which he tries to defend himself. In order to accomplish this demonstration more easily and briefly, I shall discuss only the Father and the Son, because by their own proper names these two persons are clearly indicated to be distinct from each other. (For the name "Holy Spirit" is not alien to the Father and to the Son, since each of them is both spirit and holy.) However, what we shall discover in the case of the Father and the Son concerning the oneness of substance or the plurality of persons will be known without doubt to hold true for each of the three.

Suppose [my opponent] to be saying, then: "If the two persons, Father and Son, are not two things " Let us ask first what he means here by "two things." For we believe that each of the persons is that which is common to both and that which is proper to Himself. For the person of the Father is both God (To be God is common to Him with the Son) and Father (To be Father is His distinguishing property). Similarly, the person of the Son is both God (To be God is common to Him with the Father) and Son (This person alone is called Son). In the case of these two persons, therefore, one thing is common, viz., to be God, and two things are proper, viz., to be Father and to be Son. Now, whatever is common to them—such as to be omnipotent and to be eternal—is understood only in this joint way. And those things which are proper to each—such as to be the begetter or the one who begets (for the Father), to be the Word or the one who is begotten (for the Son)—are signified by the two names "father" and "son."

Therefore, when [my opponent] says that these two persons are two things, I ask what in this instance he is calling two things. Is it that which is common to them, or is it those things each of which is proper to one person alone? Now, if he says that "two things" indicates two distinguishing properties, viz., to be Father and to be Son—yet, so that what is common to the Father and the Son is only one thing and not more than one—then he is speaking superfluously, because no Christian confesses that with respect to these two distinguishing properties the Father and the Son are one thing; rather [every Christian confesses that they are] two [things]. For we customarily apply the word "thing" (*res*) to whatever we in any way say to be something (*aliquid*). Now, whoever says of God that He is Father or is Son says something about Him. Moreover, everyone knows that in the case of God, the Fa-

ther is not the Son and the Son not the Father, even though in the case of a given human being the father is a son and the son a father if the same man is both a father and a son. This difference [between the two cases] occurs because in the case of God, “father” and “son” are predicated in opposition to each other. However, in the case of the given human being the terms are not predicated in relation to each other; rather, the man is called father in relation to a second man, who is his son, and he is called son in relation to a third man, who is his father.

In this way, then, nothing prevents our saying that the two persons, Father and Son, are two things—provided we understand what kind of things they are. For the Father and the Son are two things not in the sense that their substance is two things but in the sense that their relations are two things. Nonetheless, [my opponent] clearly shows, by what he adds, that this is not the manner in which he understands the two persons to be two things. For when he says “If the three persons are only one thing and are not three things,” he then specifies: “[each one existing] separately in itself.” Indeed, he is seen to be setting forth a separation such as would prevent the Father and the Son from being present together in the same man. For only through this separation does he think that he can free the Father from sharing in the incarnation with the Son. For if he believes that God, who is Father and Son, is only one, he does not see that the Father and the Son can be separated (so as not to be together in the same man) according to the separation in terms of which it is one thing to be the Father and another to be the Son, since paternity and filiation are different from each other. Therefore, he is speaking of a separation of the persons of the Father and the Son other than that separation by which the Father and the Son are different from each other in accordance with their respective distinguishing properties. (For in accordance with this latter separation he does not understand the incarnation to be alien to the Father; indeed, if the Father and the Son exist simultaneously, he believes it to follow that the Father shares incarnation with the Son.) Or else if he is speaking about this latter separation, he labors in vain, as I have already said, for this is the manner in which the Christian faith understands the Father and the Son to be two things.

Now, when he says “as do three angels or three souls,” he shows

plainly that he is not talking about that plurality or that separation which is in these persons according to their distinguishing properties. Certainly “two angels” or “two souls” is not predicated of anything that is numerically one and the same. Nor is anything numerically one predicated of two angels or of two souls—as, for example, we predicate “father” or “son” of God, who is numerically one, and predicate “numerically one God” of the Father and the Son. For we believe and say that God is Father and that God is Son—and conversely, that the Father is God and that the Son is God. And yet we believe and say not that there is more than one God but rather that God is one in number as in nature, even though the Father and the Son are not one but two.

Now, we predicate “angel” and “soul” substantially, not relationally. (For although the name “angel” is taken from a function—since “angel” means “messenger”—nevertheless it is understood to indicate a kind of substance, just as does “soul.”) That this is [my opponent's] understanding of the matter is evidenced by his saying, on equal footing, “as do three *angels* or three *souls*.” Therefore, he means the kind of plurality and separation which a plurality of angels or of souls has, i.e., which a plurality of substances has. Furthermore, he is seen to display this viewpoint clearly when he adds “in such way that they are wholly the same in will and in power.” For he understands will and power in these several things analogously to [will and power] in several angels or souls. Now, this viewpoint would be unintelligible if these were being regarded as several things with respect to properties-of-persons rather than with respect to what is predicated of them jointly. For the Father and the Son do not at all have any will or power with respect to their distinguishing properties, i.e., with respect to paternity and filiation; rather, they have will and power with respect to their divine substance, which is common to them.

Therefore, if he means that the three persons are three things with respect to their *distinguishing properties*, it is plain how superfluously he makes this statement. And when he adds “as do three angels or three souls,” it is also plain how inconsistently [he does so].

3

On the other hand, if [my opponent] is saying that these per-

sons are two things with respect to what is *common* to them (i.e., with respect to the fact that by Himself each is, and together all are, one perfect God), then first of all I pose the question of whether he is a Christian. He will reply, I suppose, that he is. Accordingly, he believes that God is one, that He is three persons (viz., Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), and that only the person of the Son was incarnate, although with the cooperation of the other two. Now, whoever believes these doctrines maintains that anyone who wants to contradict any one of them is not a Christian. Thus, if he believes these doctrines, he denies that anyone arguing against them is a Christian.

Let us now consider, however, whether he himself is trying to undermine this faith. Accordingly, when he asserts—to continue (as I have been doing) to state about two persons what is understood of all three—when, I say, he asserts that “If the two persons are one thing and are not two things (as are two angels or two souls), it follows that if the Son was incarnate then so also was the Father,” I think that he is reasoning with himself accordingly:

If God is numerically one and the same thing, and if this very thing is Father and Son, then when the Son was incarnate how is it that the Father also was not incarnate? Indeed, an affirmation and its denial are not both true of one and the same thing at the same time; but nothing prevents us from affirming something of one thing while at the same time denying it of another. For instance, it is not the case that the same man Peter both is and is not an apostle. And even if under one name he is affirmed to be an apostle and under another name is denied to be an apostle (as, for example, “Peter is an apostle” and “Simon is not an apostle”), not both of the statements are true, but rather one of them is false. But “Peter is an apostle” and “Stephen is not an apostle” can both be true, because Peter and Stephen are different men. Hence, if the Father is numerically one and the same thing as the Son, and is not a thing other than the Son, then it is not true that something ought to be affirmed of the Son and denied of the Father, or affirmed of the Father and denied of the Son. Therefore, whatever the Father is, the Son is as well; and what is said of the Son ought not to be denied of the Father. Now, the Son was incarnate. Therefore, the Father also was incarnate.

Now, if this reasoning were sound, then the heresy of Sabellius would be true. For if what is said of the one person were said also of the other simply because the two persons are one thing, then just as the Son is called *Son* and *Word* and *Begotten*, so these terms

would be predicated of the Father as well. And just as the Father is *Father* and *Begetter* and *Unbegotten*, so these terms would have to be predicated of the Son as well. But if so, then the Father would not be other than the Son, nor would the Son be other than the Father. Hence, they would not be two persons but would be one person. For if we grant that God is Father and Son, then the Father and the Son are called two persons because they are believed to be different from each other. For a father is always the father of someone, and a son is always someone's son; a father is never his own father, nor is a son ever his own son. Rather, the father is other than the one of whom he is the father; and, similarly, the son is other than the one whose son he is. Therefore, if there were not in God one who is the Father and another whose father he is, nor one who is the Son and another whose son he is, then God would falsely be called Father or Son. For if in God there were not someone other than the Father—someone of whom the Father is father—then there could not be a father. And, similarly, if in God there were not someone other than the Son—someone of whom the Son is a son—then there could not be a son. Thus, there would be no basis for affirming these two persons in God, for they are called two because God is Father and God is Son, and because the Father is always one and the Son always another.

Do you see, then, how our faith would be destroyed in conformity with the opinion of someone who thinks that if the several persons in God are one thing and not more than one thing, then, as a consequence, the Father was incarnate with the Son? For if this inference of his were true, then the result would be not only what I mentioned about the Father and the Son but also such great confusion with respect to all three persons that whatever is said with respect to the individual properties of any one of them would have to be said commonly of all three. Hence, (just as I have shown in the case of the Father and the Son) there would be no basis for differentiating from each other the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. Consequently, there would not be any relation in God, since a relation exists in no way in God except according to that whereby the persons are other than one another. And so, there would be no plurality of persons.

Indeed, if we posit that the three persons are one thing, then

either his inference does not follow or else all the things that I have just been saying follow together. For the logic of my inference is similar [to that of his] in all respects. So why does he proceed with the incarnation as if it alone posed a problem? Why does he not rather say: "If the three persons are one thing, then there are not three persons"? For he can raise this problem about the time before the incarnation just as well as about the time after the incarnation.

4

On the other hand, if he at all means to claim that the three persons, insofar as each is God, are not one thing but are three things, each one independent, as are three angels, then it is quite clear that he is setting up three gods. Yet, perhaps he himself does not say "as are three angels or three souls" but only affirms that the three persons are three things, without the addition of any comparison. (Perhaps the one who commended this man's question to me introduced this comparison on his own.) Why, then, is he misled or does he mislead others by the word "thing"? For the word "God" signifies this very thing. Undoubtedly, either he will deny that this thing in which there are three persons (or, rather, this thing which we confess to be three persons) is God, or else (if he does not make this denial) it follows that just as he asserts that the three persons are three things and not one thing, so he also affirms that these three persons are three gods and not one God. And let Christians judge how impious these statements are.

But he will reply: "The fact that I say 'three things' does not compel me to admit three gods, because these three things are together one God." And I say that, as a consequence, no one of these three things considered by itself (i.e., no one of these persons considered by Himself) would be God; rather, God would consist of the three things. Hence, the Father would not be God, the Son would not be God, the Holy Spirit would not be God—because God would have to be spoken of only by naming the three together and not by mentioning any one or two of them. And this is, likewise, impious. For if this view were correct, God would not be a simple nature but would be a nature composed of parts. Now, if [my opponent] has an uncluttered intellect, undarkened by a multiplicity of images, he understands that things-simple excel

things-composite (insofar as simplicity and composition are concerned). For everything composite must be able to be divided either actually or conceivably; but this divisibility cannot be understood to hold true of things simple. For no intellect can dissolve into parts something whose parts cannot be conceived. Therefore, if God is composed of three things, then either no nature is simple or else there is some other nature which in some respect is more excellent than the nature of God. But it is clear how false both of these alternatives are. Now, if [my opponent] is one of those modern dialecticians who believe that nothing exists except what they can imagine, and if he does not think there to be anything in which there are no parts, at least he will not deny understanding that if there were something which could neither actually nor conceivably be divided, it would be greater than something which can be divided at least conceivably. Thus, if everything composite can be divided at least in thought, then when [my opponent] says that God is something composite, he is saying that he is able to understand that something is greater than God. Hence, his intellect passes beyond God—a feat which no intellect can perform.

5

But now let us look at what he adds as if to ward off the inconsistency which is seen to arise if the three persons are three things: “and, yet, [existing] in such way that the will and power of these three things is one.” Here we must ask: Are these three things divine natures (1) with respect to that which they are understood to be in separation from one another, (2) with respect to their common will and power, or (3) neither with respect solely to what they have separately nor with respect to what is common to them but with respect to both of these together? (NOT 1) To be sure, if they possessed deity with respect to what they are separately, then there would be three gods. And they could be understood to be divine apart from reference to their will and power. For what is proper is always understood separately from what is common, and what is common is always understood separately from what is proper. The divine nature, though, cannot at all be conceived without reference to will and power. (NOT 2) But if with respect to one common will and power they were God, whether

they are considered singly or two at a time or all three together—what would these three discordant things be doing in the Godhead? For only through some other thing (*per aliud*) could these three things harmonize into a oneness of deity; moreover, they could be of no avail either toward perfecting or toward at all assisting the divine existence. For if one will and power suffice for God's perfection, what are these three things which God needs, or to what end does He need them? Indeed, we believe that God is not in need of anything. So it would be pointless to think that these things are in God. (NOT 3) But if God were constituted not by these three things exclusively nor by will and power exclusively but by all of them together, then, I repeat, He would be composed of parts and would be comprised by things which, by themselves, are neither God nor gods.

But if [my opponent] says that these three things are called God by virtue of their power and will, just as a man is called king by virtue of his kingly power, then “God” would not be the name of a substance; but, rather, the three things (whatever they are) would be called three gods accidentally, just as three men who have the same kingly power are called three kings; for three men cannot be one king. How abominable this view is I need not say.

I would have to fill a large book should I wish to write out the absurdities and impieties which would follow (1) if it were true that because these three persons are one thing with respect to what we predicate commonly of all three, the incarnation of one person of God requires the incarnation of the remaining two persons or (2) if [it were true that] because the Son alone was incarnate, [the three persons] are three separate things, as he against whom I have made these replies supposes. Hence, it is clear how little he ought to be eager to argue about profound matters—especially about issues concerning which one does not err without danger.

6

But perhaps [my opponent] will say to me:

Just as to you it seems that if the conclusion I reach follows logically, then the conclusions you reach follow with equal necessity, so to me it seems that my inference does follow logically. Therefore, show that my inference does not follow logically, and I will admit with you that no inconsistency is entailed if the Son alone was incarnate or if the three

persons are one thing. But if you fail to show this [inconsequence], then instead of solving the disputed point you render it more difficult to solve, since you join with me in proving that numerous inconsistencies arise from it. Now, if these inconsistencies must be rejected, then we both ought, alike, to conclude that “if the Son alone was incarnate, then the three persons are not one thing, or else if they are one thing, then all three persons, alike, were incarnate.”

Accordingly, I must show (1) in what respect [my opponent] is mistaken, (2) how from the incarnation of the Son alone it does not follow that the three persons are three separate things, and (3) how it does not follow that if the three persons are one thing they were all incarnate. But assuredly the holy Fathers (and especially blessed Augustine), following the apostles and evangelists, have argued with irrefutable reasoning that God is three persons and, yet, one unique, individual, and simple nature. Still, if anyone will deign to read my two short works, viz., the *Monologion* and the *Proslogion* (which I wrote especially in order [to show] that what we hold by faith regarding the divine nature and its persons—excluding the topic of incarnation—can be proven by compelling reasons apart from [appeal to] the authority of Scripture)—if, I say, anyone is willing to read these works, then I think that he will there discover, with regard to the matter before us, arguments which he will neither be able to disprove nor will want to treat lightly. If in those writings I have asserted any points which I have not read elsewhere or do not remember having read elsewhere, I ought not at all, I think, to be reproached for having done so. For I asserted these points not as one teaching what our instructors were ignorant of, and not as one correcting what they did not put well, but as one saying something which, it seems, they were silent about, something which nonetheless was consistent with, not in discrepancy with, their teachings. And I advanced these points (1) in order to defend our faith against those who, while unwilling to believe what they do not understand, deride those who do believe, and (2) in order to assist the devout striving of those who humbly seek to understand what they most steadfastly believe. However, I do not want to inflict upon readers of this letter the task of searching out some other writing in order to know by clear reasoning as well as by faith that the three persons are not three gods but only one, or that the incarnation of God with respect to one of

His persons does not necessitate that the same God be incarnate with respect to His other persons. Accordingly, I shall now append an argument which I believe is sufficient to refute the view of this self-styled defender of our faith.

He asserts plainly that either the Father and the Holy Spirit were incarnate with the Son or else these three persons are three separate things. Now, surely he understands this separation to be such that neither the Father nor the Holy Spirit is in the Son. For if the other two persons are in the Son and the Son is in a man, then they also are in that man. Therefore, since the three persons are together in the same man: [my opponent] thinks it to follow that if the three are one thing, the person of the Son cannot at all be incarnate in this man in separation from the other two persons. Nevertheless, he does not deny that there are three persons or that the Son was incarnate.

I have already demonstrated that if the three persons are three separate things, either there must be three gods or else the other absurdities mentioned earlier must be true. Accordingly, with the help of the one and only God I shall now show briefly, first of all, that even if there were three gods, this fact would not help him to keep the Father and the Holy Spirit from being incarnate—even though he thinks they can be kept from incarnation only if they are more than one god. Next, I shall show that there is only one God and not more than one. Finally, I shall make it clear that although the three persons are one God, the incarnation of any one of them does not necessitate the incarnation of the others as well but, instead, renders it impossible.

7

Assuredly, it is a characteristic of the Divine Nature so to exist always and everywhere that never and nowhere does anything exist without its presence. Otherwise, it would not at all be powerful everywhere and always; and that which is not powerful everywhere and always is not at all God. Now, if [my opponent] claims that it is not this Divine Substance but is its power which is present always and everywhere, he will not, however, deny that God possesses His power either accidentally or substantially. But God does not have power accidentally, because although every subject can

exist or be conceived apart from its accidents, God can neither be nor be conceived apart from His power. But if God has His power substantially, either it is a part of His being, or else it is that very thing which His entire being is. But it is not a part, because (as has already been mentioned) that which has parts can be divided either actually or conceivably, and division in either way is totally foreign to God. Therefore, the being of God and the being of His power are the same. Thus, just as the power of God is present always and everywhere, so whatever God is is present always and everywhere. Therefore, when the aforementioned self-styled defender of our faith says that there are three gods, he cannot show how they exist separately—with respect to that separation in terms of which he supposes himself to free the Father and the Holy Spirit from incarnation. Hence, [positing] a plurality of gods cannot help him to keep the Father and the Holy Spirit from being incarnate, for in this plurality of gods cannot be found that separation without which, as he believes, the keeping from incarnation is not at all possible.

8

However, that there is only one God and no more than one is easily proved from the consideration that either (1) God is not the Supreme Good or else (2) there is more than one Supreme Good or else (3) instead of there being several gods there is only one God. (NOT 1) But no one denies that God is the Supreme Good, because whatever is less than something else is not at all God, and whatever is not the Supreme Good is less than some other because it is less than the Supreme Good. (NOT 2) And, assuredly, it is not the case that the Supreme Good admits of plurality and thus that there are several Supreme Goods. For if there were several Supreme Goods, they would be equal. But, indeed, the Supreme Good is that which so excels other goods that it has neither an equal nor a superior. Therefore, there is only one Supreme Good. (3) Hence, instead of there being several gods, there is only one God—just as there is only one Supreme Good and [only one] Supreme Substance, Supreme Being, or Supreme Nature, which, by a process of reasoning exactly similar to that in the case of the Supreme Good, is proved to be unable in any re-

spect to be spoken of plurally.

9

Although this one and only God is three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—it is not necessary (as my opponent thinks) for the other persons to be incarnate when the Son is incarnate; on the contrary, it is impossible. For [my opponent] concedes that since they are other than one another they are several persons. Indeed, if they were not other than one another, they would not be more than one. (In order to explain more briefly and easily what I want to, I will continue to speak, as I have done above, only of the Father and the Son; for by considering them it will be clear what must be understood about the Holy Spirit.) Accordingly, because the Father and the Son are not two substances it is not with respect to substance that they are other than each other and are more than one. The Father is not one substance and the Son another; rather, the Father and the Son are one and the same substance. But because the Father and the Son are two persons and are distinct from each other (rather than being one and the same person) it is with respect to person that they are more than one and are distinct from each other.

So [my opponent] says: “If the Son was incarnate, and if the Son is not a different thing from the Father but is numerically one and the same thing as the Father, then it must be the case that the Father also was incarnate. For it is impossible that numerically one and the same thing both be and not be, at the same time, incarnate in the same man.” I reply that if the Son was incarnate and if the Son is not numerically one and the same person as the Father, but is another person, then it does not follow that, necessarily, the Father also was incarnate. For it is possible that one person be incarnate in a given man and that at the same time another person not be incarnate in this man.

But [my opponent will perhaps say]: “If God the Son was incarnate and if God who is the Son is not other than, but is numerically one and the same as, God who is the Father, then even though the Father and the Son are different persons, the necessity that the Father also be incarnate with the Son because of the oneness of deity seems to outweigh the possibility that because of

the diversity of persons the Father was not incarnate at the same time.” Notice how he who says this is lame in both feet regarding the incarnation of the Son of God. For whoever rightly understands His incarnation believes that He assumed a human nature [*homo*] not into a oneness of nature but into a oneness of person. But [my opponent] dreams that a human nature was assumed by the Son of God into a oneness of nature rather than into a oneness of person. For if this were not his view, he would not have said that the necessity that the Father be incarnate with the Son because the Father and the Son are one God outweighs the possibility that because they are more than one person the Father was not incarnate at the same time. Therefore, regarding the incarnation of the Son of God, who is one nature with the Father and a different person from the Father: whoever thinks that this incarnation so accords with the oneness of nature that the Son cannot be incarnate apart from the Father, and whoever does not understand that the incarnation so accords with the oneness of person that the Father cannot be incarnate with the Son, is lame in both feet, i.e., in both respects.

Indeed, God assumed a human nature not in such way that the divine nature and the human nature were one and the same but in such way that the person of God and the person of the man were one and the same. But this [assumption of a human nature] can occur only in the case of one person of God. For it is incomprehensible that different persons be one and the same person with one and the same man. For if one man were one person with several other distinct persons, then [here would be an instance in which] a plurality of persons who are different from one another would have to be one and the same person—something impossible. Therefore, when God is incarnate with respect to any one of His persons, it is impossible that He be incarnate with respect to another of His persons as well.

10

Although it was not my purpose [to explain] in this letter why God assumed a human nature into a oneness of person with the Son rather than into a oneness with either of the other persons, nevertheless since mention of the matter has been made, I think that an explanation must be given.

Assuredly, if the Holy Spirit had been incarnate—just as the Son was incarnate—the Holy Spirit would have been the son of a human being. Hence, there would be two sons in the Divine Trinity, viz., the Son of God and the son of a human being. Thus, a certain confusing ambiguity would arise when we would speak of God the Son. For both [of the persons] would be God and a son, though one would be the Son of God, the other the son of a human being. Moreover, since the one son would excel by virtue of the dignity of His greater parent, and since the other son would be subordinate because of the lowliness of His lesser parent, there would occur—with respect to their being sons—a seeming inequality in two persons who ought in every respect to be equal. For the greater the nature of God is than the nature of a man, the more becoming it is to be the Son of God than to be the son of a human being. Therefore, if the Holy Spirit had been begotten of a virgin, then since the Son of God would have had a uniquely more excellent birth (viz., from God), and since the Holy Spirit would have had only a lesser birth (viz., from a human being), the one person would be greater and the other lesser with respect to the dignity of birth—an inadmissible consequence.

On the other hand, if the *Father* had assumed a human nature into a oneness with His own person, the plurality of sons would have produced not only the same unbecomingness in God but also an additional one. For if the Father were the son of a virgin, then two persons in the Trinity would have the name “grandson”; for the Father would be the grandson of the parents of the virgin, and His son would be the grandson of the virgin (even though His son would have received nothing from the virgin).

Therefore, since it is impossible for there to be even any small unbecomingness in God, no person of God other than the Son ought to have been incarnate. For if *He* is incarnate nothing inadmissible follows. As for the fact that the Son is said to be less than the Father and the Holy Spirit from the point of view of His humanity: these two persons do not excel the Son, because even the Son has that very majesty by which these two persons are greater than His humanity and by which He Himself, with them, excels His own humanity.

There is another reason why incarnation befits the Son more than another [of the persons]. He who was to be incarnate was

going to pray on behalf of the human race. And the human mind understands it to be much more suitable for the Son to supplicate the Father than for either of the persons other than the Son to make supplication to either of the persons other than the Father—even though this supplication is made not by the Son's divinity but by His humanity to His divinity. The Son of God makes this supplication [on behalf of the human race] because by virtue of a oneness of person the Son of God is a man.¹

Furthermore, the one who was going to assume a human nature was going to come in order to war against the Devil and to intercede, as I have said, on behalf of man. Now, by an act of robbery² both the Devil and man willed to make themselves like unto God when they exercised an autonomous will [*propria voluntas*]. And because by an act of robbery they [thus] willed, they willed only by falsehood, inasmuch as they could only [thus] have willed unjustly. Now, the will of an angel or of a man is autonomous when it wills contrary to the will of God. For when someone wills that which God forbids him to will, he has no author of his will except himself; so his will is autonomous. Now, even though a man might at some time submit his will to the will of another man, still this willing is autonomous if it is in opposition to God. For he only submits his will in order to obtain something that he wants, and thus he himself is the author of the reason why he submits his will to another will. Hence, his will is an autonomous will and is not [in one sense] submitted to another will. Yet, it is the prerogative of God alone to have an autonomous will—i.e., a will which is subject to no other will. Therefore, whoever else exercises an autonomous will tries to attain unto the likeness of God by an act of robbery, and is convicted of depriving (as far as it lies in his power to do so) God of His proper dignity and unique excellence. For if there were another will which were subject to no other will, then the will of God would not be superior to all other wills, nor would it be alone that will which no other will excels.

Therefore, none of the three persons of God more fittingly “emptied Himself and took on the form of a servant”³ (in order to vanquish the Devil and to intercede on behalf of man, who by an act of robbery had presumed unto a false likeness of God) than

¹“... is a man”: i. e., is a human being. ²Philippians 2:6. ³Philippians 2:7.

did the Son, who, being the brilliance of the eternal light and the true image of the Father, “thought it not robbery to be equal to God”¹ but by virtue of a true equality and likeness said, “I and the Father are one” and “He who sees me sees the Father also.”²

Indeed, no one more justly vanquishes or punishes a criminal, or more mercifully spares him or intercedes on his behalf, than does the one against whom the wrong is shown to be the more specifically committed. Nor is anything more fittingly opposed to falsehood in order to vanquish it, or more fittingly applied to it in order to cure it, than is truth. Now, those who have presumed unto a false likeness to God are seen to have sinned the more specifically against Him who is believed to be the true likeness³ of God the Father. But the Son assumed a human nature into a oneness of person, as I have said, in order that two natures—one divine and one human—would be one person.

11

Nevertheless, because an argument can be given on the basis of which Christ can seem (to those viewing the matter too carelessly) to exist of and in two persons, I think it valuable to say something about this oneness of person, which we most steadfastly believe not to be a oneness of two persons in Christ. For there are those who argue:

How is it that we do not say that in Christ there are two persons even as there are two natures? For even before the assumption of human being [*homo*] God was a person; and after the assumption of human being He did not cease to be a person. Moreover, the human being that was assumed (*homo assumptus*) is a person because every individual human being is known to be a person. Therefore, the person of God who existed before the incarnation is one person, and the person of the assumed human being is another. Hence, just as Christ is both God and a man, so there are seen to be two persons in Him.

This argument seems to prove—because of the fact that God is a person and the assumed man (*homo assumptus*) is a person—that there are two persons in Christ. But the argument is not sound. For just as in God one nature is several persons, and the several persons are one nature, so in Christ one person is several natures and the several natures are one person. For just as the Father is God

¹Philippians 2:6. ²John 10:30 and 14:9. ³Colossians 1:15 and Hebrews 1:3.

and the Son is God and the Holy Spirit is God and, yet, there is one God and are not three gods, so in Christ the divine being (*deus*) is a person and the human being (*homo*) is a person and, yet, there is one person and are not two persons. For in Christ the divine being is not one [individual] and the human being another (even though in Christ the divine being is one thing and the human being another). On the contrary, the same [individual] who is human is also divine. For the “Word made flesh”¹ assumed another nature, not another person. Now, when the word “man” (*homo*) is used, only the nature which is common to all men is signified.

But when we say, demonstratively, “this man” or “that man,” or use the proper name “Jesus,” we designate a person—who has not only a nature but also a collection of distinguishing properties by which the common human nature is individuated and marked off from other individuated human natures. When this designation occurs, not just any man at all is understood [to be referred to] but only [the individual] who was announced by the angel—[the individual] who is both divine and human, Son of God and Son of the Virgin (and whatever else it is true to say about Him in accordance either with His deity or with His humanity). For it is not possible to designate personally or to name personally the Son of God without designating or naming the Son of man; nor is it possible to designate or name the Son of man without designating or naming the Son of God. For (1) the same [individual] who is the Son of man is also the Son of God, and (2) the Word and the assumed man have the same collection of distinguishing properties. Now, it is impossible for two different persons to have the same collection of distinguishing properties or for these persons to be called by each other's name. For example, Peter and Paul do not have the same collection of distinguishing properties; and Peter is not called Paul, nor is Paul called Peter.

Therefore, when the “Word was made flesh,”² He assumed a nature. And only this nature is signified by the word “man”; moreover, it is always a different nature from the divine nature. The Word did not assume another person, because the Word has the same collection of distinguishing properties as does the assumed

¹John 1:14. ²*loc. cit.*

man. For man and the man-as-assumed-by-the-Word (viz., Jesus) are not the same thing. For the word “man” (as I have said) signifies only [human] nature; but the phrase “the assumed man” or the name “Jesus” signifies not only [human] nature (i.e., humanity) but also a collection of distinguishing properties which is the same for the Word and the assumed man. Therefore, lest we be saying that that man is no more personally identical with the Word than is any other man, we do not say that the Word and man, in an unrestricted sense, are the same person. Rather, we say that the Word and the assumed man, viz., Jesus, [are the same person]. Similarly, lest we seem to be confessing that the assumed man is the same person as the Father or the Holy Spirit, we do not believe that the assumed man is the same person as God, in an unrestricted sense. Rather, [we believe that the assumed man is the same person] as the person who is Word and Son. But since the Word is God and since the assumed man is human, it is true to say that God and man are the same person. Yet, by “God” must here be understood the Word; and by “man” must here be understood the Son of the Virgin.

Except for the statement I quoted above, I have been able to look at none of the writings of the opponent to whom I am responding in this letter. Nonetheless, I think that the truth of the matter has been made so evident by what I have said that anyone who is intelligent will plainly recognize that nothing said against this truth contains the force of truth.

12

But if when recalled from [subscribing to] a multiplicity of gods [my opponent] rejects the plurality of persons in God, he does so because he does not know what he is talking about. He has in mind not God or His persons but something like a plurality of human persons; and because he sees that it is not possible for one man to be several persons, he denies that God is several persons. But we speak of three persons in God not because they are three separate things as are three men but because they have a certain likeness [*similitudo*] to three separate persons. Let us consider this point in regard to the Father and the Son, and let the same consideration be understood [to apply to] the Holy Spirit.

Accordingly, let us take the case of a man who is only a father without being a son, and of his son, who is only a son without being a father (viz., the case of Adam and Abel). We say, then, of Adam the father and of Abel the son that the father is not the son and the son is not the father. For Adam and Abel are two men and are separate persons; and there is not anyone of whom Adam is the son or anyone of whom Abel is the father. Similarly, then, even though there are not two gods, we confess that, in God, the Father is not the Son and the Son is not the Father, because the Father does not have a father and the Son does not have a son. Similarly, the Holy Spirit is not the Father or the Son, because there is no one whose father He is or whose son He is. Therefore, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are called three persons not because they are three separate things but simply because they are three, and are distinct from one another, and cannot be called by one another's names (just as I have shown about the father and the son in the case of different human persons).

13

But suppose that—on the ground that he cannot understand it in God and does not see any instance of it in other things—[my opponent] denies that something *one* can be called something *three* and that something *three* can be called something *one* (in such way that the three are not called by one another's respective name) as we do in the case of the one God and His three persons. In that event, let him tolerate something which his intellect cannot comprehend to be in God. And with things that are enclosed by place or time or are composed of parts let him not compare that Nature which is above all other things and is free from every law of place, time, and composition of parts. Instead, let him believe that something holds true of this Nature which cannot hold true of those things; and let him submit to Christian authority without contending against it.

However, let us see whether among created things, which are subject to the law of place, time, and composition of parts, we can to some extent find that which [my opponent] denies to hold true of God. Suppose that there is a spring from which originates and flows a river that later accumulates into a lake; and let its

name be the "Nile." Accordingly, we speak so separately of the spring, the river, and the lake that we do not call the spring "river" or "lake," or call the river "spring" or "lake," or call the lake "spring" or "river." And yet, the spring is called the Nile, the river is called the Nile, and the lake is called the Nile. Moreover, the spring and the river taken together are called the Nile, the spring and the lake taken together are called the Nile, and the river and the lake taken together are called the Nile. Furthermore, the spring, the river, and the lake—all three taken together—are called the Nile. Nevertheless, whether the name "Nile" is applied to each separately or to two in combination or to all three together, there are not different Niles; there is one and the same Nile. Hence, the spring, the river, and the lake are three; and they are one Nile, one stream, one nature, one body of water—none of which can be said to be something three, for there are not three Niles or three streams or three bodies of water or three natures. Nor are there three springs or three rivers or three lakes. Here, then, is an example in which something three is called something one and something one is called something three, without the three being called by one another's respective name.

But if [my opponent] objects that the spring, the river, or the lake neither singularly nor in combinations of two are the complete Nile but are only parts of the Nile, then let him think of this whole Nile, from when it began until when it shall end, as its whole life-span, so to speak. For it does not exist as a spatial or a temporal whole at once but exists through parts and will not be complete until it ceases to exist. In this respect it is like a statement, which is not complete as long as it issues from the fountain of the mouth, so to speak; and when it *is* complete it no longer exists. Now, if anyone considers the matter in this way and understands it carefully, he will realize that the whole Nile is the spring, the whole Nile is the river, and the whole Nile is the lake, and that the spring is not the river or the lake, the river is not the lake or the spring, and the lake is not the spring or the river. For the spring is not the same as the river or the lake, even though the river and the lake are the same thing that the spring is, viz., the same Nile, the same stream, the same body of water, the same nature. Therefore, here is a case in which one complete whole is

called something three and something three is called one complete whole, without these three being called by one another's respective name. However, in the case of that Nature which is perfectly simple and perfectly free from the law of all space and time, the foregoing kind of predication occurs in quite a different manner and much more perfectly. Nevertheless, if this kind of predication is seen [to occur] to some extent with respect to something which is composed of parts and is spatial and temporal, then it is not beyond belief for it to occur perfectly in the case of that Nature which is supremely free [of spatial and temporal parts].

Here we ought also to take into consideration—even as we speak [in a similar fashion] of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit—that the spring does not exist from the river or from the lake; but the river so exists only from the spring (and not from the lake), and the lake so exists from both the spring and the river, that the whole river exists from the whole spring, and the whole lake exists both from the whole spring and the whole river. Furthermore, we ought to take into consideration that the river exists from the spring in one way, whereas the lake exists from the spring and the river in another way, so that the lake is said not to be the river—just as in His own way the Word exists from the Father, whereas the Holy Spirit exists from the Father and the Word in another way, so that the Holy Spirit is not the Word, or the Son, but is the one who proceeds.

14

In addition, I want to mention a comparison which is not without some resemblance to the incarnation of the Word, even though the dissimilarity is great. Perhaps one who reads this comparison will treat it with disdain; nonetheless, let me say that I would not altogether disdain the comparison should someone else make it: If the river ran from the spring to the lake through a pipe, then even though the river is not a different Nile from the spring and the lake, is it not the river alone that is “en-piped,” so to speak—just as the Son alone is incarnate, even though He is not a different God from the Father and the Holy Spirit?

15

But since these earthly things are very far removed from the

Supreme Nature, let us with the help of that Nature lift up our minds to it, and with regard to it let us consider briefly some aspects of what we mean.

God is nothing other than simple eternity itself. But a plurality of eternities is unintelligible. For if there were a plurality of eternities, they would be either outside or inside one another. Now, nothing is external to eternity. Therefore, it is not the case that eternity is external to eternity. Likewise, if they were outside one another, they would exist in different places or times—something incompatible with eternity. Therefore, there is not a plurality of eternities outside one another. On the other hand, if we say that there is a plurality of eternities within one another, we ought to know that however often eternity is repeated within eternity, it is only one and the same eternity. For a nature which, when repeated within itself, always integrates into a perfect oneness with itself is of greater worth than a nature which admits of plurality. For where there is plurality there is diversity; and where there is diversity there is not perfect harmony. Indeed, perfect harmony is that which integrates into a unified identity and identical unity. Therefore, if perfect harmony is better than imperfect harmony, and if it is impossible for anything imperfect to exist in the Supreme Good (which is eternity itself), then it is not possible for the nature of eternity to admit of plurality. Hence, however often eternity is repeated within eternity, it is always only one and the same eternity.

In a similar way, the foregoing remarks also apply to many other things. For example, omnipotence within omnipotence is only one omnipotence. Or to cite one of those things which do not have a divine nature but in which the case is similar: a point within a point is only one point. For a point (such as the middle point of the world or a point of time, e.g., the present moment) has some similarity to eternity and is of no small use for the considering of eternity. This issue must be discussed more fully elsewhere. Here let it suffice [to note] only that, like eternity, a point is simple (i.e., without parts) and indivisible; and so, a point together with a point, without an interval, is only one point—just as eternity together with eternity is only one eternity.

Therefore, since God is eternity, there is no plurality of gods; for God is not external to God, nor does God within God add nu-

merically to God. Thus, there is always and only one and the same God. Hence, when God is begotten of God, then since what is begotten is not outside of that from which it is begotten, the offspring is in the parent and the parent in the offspring; i.e., there is one God, who is Father and Son. And when God proceeds from God, who is Father and Son, and does not go outside of God, God (i.e., God the Holy Spirit) remains in God from whom He proceeds; and there is one God, who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And since this begottenness and this procession do not have a beginning—were it otherwise, then an eternity which is begotten and an eternity which proceeds would have a beginning (a consequence which is false)—we absolutely ought not, and absolutely cannot, think that God ever began to be the Father, the Son, or the Holy Spirit.

16

However, just as the divine substance preserves its eternal and singular oneness, so the nature of these relations (viz., of the Father and of the Son; of the one proceeding and of Him from whom He proceeds) retains its inseparable plurality. For just as it is necessary that God always be one and the same rather than many, so with respect to these relations the Father is never identical with His Son, and He who proceeds is never identical with Him from whom He proceeds. Rather, the Father is always distinct from the Son, and He who proceeds is always distinct from Him from whom He proceeds; and no one of the three can ever be called by either of the others' names. Therefore, when God is begotten of God or when God proceeds from God, the substance cannot lose its singularity nor the relations their plurality. For this reason, in God the one thing is three things and the three things are one thing; and yet, the three are not called by one another's respective name. Now, in the case of a Nature which is above all other things and is unlike all other things, it ought not to be preposterous that there is something of which an example cannot perfectly be found in other things. Now, the Latins call these three things *persons*, whereas the Greeks call them *substances*. For just as we say that in God one substance is three persons, so they say that one person is three substances. By the word "substance" they signify in God exactly what we signify by the word "person"; and they

are not at all at variance with us in faith.

As for how the Son is begotten of the Father, and how the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son without being a son: since in this life we cannot behold [this truth] “as it is,”¹ Blessed Augustine, “as through a glass, darkly,”² has studied [the matter] carefully in his book *On the Trinity*; and to the best of my ability I also have discussed [it] in my *Monologion*, which I alluded to earlier. Now, if anyone wants to know why, although there is no sexual distinction in the Supreme Being, the parent in the Supreme Being is called father rather than mother, or the offspring called son rather than daughter, or why only the Father is called unbegotten, only the Son called begotten, and only the Holy Spirit called neither begotten nor unbegotten, then he will find [the answers] clearly [stated] in that same small book of mine.

¹I John 3:2. ²I Corinthians 13:12.