

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

Translated  
by  
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## PROSLOGION

### PREFACE<sup>1</sup>

Upon the insistent adjurations of certain brothers I wrote a work—as an example of meditating about the rational basis of faith—in the role of someone who by arguing silently with himself investigates what he does not yet know. Afterwards, considering this [work] to be composed of a chain of many arguments, I began to ask myself whether perhaps a single consideration could be found which would require nothing other than itself for proving itself and which would suffice by itself to demonstrate (1) that God truly [i.e., really] exists and (2) that He is the Supreme Good (needing no one else, yet needed by all [else] in order to exist and to fare well) and whatever [else] we believe about the Divine Substance. I often and eagerly directed my thinking to this [goal]. At times what I was in quest of seemed to me to be apprehensible; at times it completely eluded the acute gaze of my mind. At last, despairing, I wanted to desist, as though from pursuit of a thing which was not possible to be found. But just when I wanted completely to exclude from myself this thinking—lest by occupying my mind in vain, it would keep [me] from other [projects] in which I could make headway—just then it began more and more to force itself insistently upon me, unwilling and resisting [as I was]. Then one day when I was tired as a result of vigorously resisting its entreaties, what I had despaired of [finding] appeared in my strife-torn mind in such way that I eagerly embraced the [line-of-]thinking which I, as one who was anxious, had been warding off. Supposing, then, that if what I rejoiced to have discovered were written down it would please its readers, I wrote the following work on this [subject], and on various others, in the role of someone endeavoring to elevate his mind toward contemplating God and in the role of someone seeking to understand what he believes. And I deemed neither this present [writing] nor the one mentioned above to be worthy to be called a treatise or to be something to which the name of the author should be prefixed; and, nevertheless, I thought that they should not be circulated without titles, by

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<sup>1</sup>The *Proslogion* was composed at the Monastery of Bec around 1077-1078.

which in some way they would issue to anyone into whose hands they came an invitation to read them. Hence, I gave a title to each, so that the first was called *An Example of Meditating about the Rational Basis of Faith* and the second was called *Faith Seeking Understanding*. But after several people had already copied both [works] under these [respective] titles, I was urged by several to prefix my name to these [writings—urged] especially by Hugh, the reverend archbishop of Lyon, who was serving as apostolic legate in Gaul and who on the basis of his apostolic authority directed me to do this. In order for the [affixing of my name] to be done more fittingly, I retitled the former [writing] *Monologion*, i.e., a soliloquy, and the present [writing] *Proslogion*, i.e., an address.

## CHAPTER-TITLES

1. Arousal of the mind for contemplating God.
2. God truly [i.e., really] exists.
3. [God] cannot be thought not to exist.
4. How the Fool said in his heart that which cannot be thought.
5. God is whatever it is better to be than not to be. Alone existing through Himself, He makes all other things from nothing.
6. How God is able to perceive even though He is not something corporeal.
7. How He is omnipotent even though He cannot do many things.
8. How He is merciful and impassible.
9. How He who is completely and supremely just spares those who are evil. He is justly merciful to them.
10. How He justly punishes and justly spares those who are evil.
11. How “all the ways of the Lord are mercy and truth,” and yet, “the Lord is just in all His ways.”
12. God is the life by which He lives, and similarly for similar [attributes].
13. How He alone is unlimited and eternal, although other spirits are [also] unlimited and eternal.
14. How and why God is both seen and not seen by those who seek Him.
15. He is greater than can be thought.
16. This is the inaccessible light in which He dwells.
17. Harmony, fragrance, succulence, softness, and beauty are

- present in God in their own ineffable manner.
18. There are no parts in God or in the eternity which He is.
  19. He is not in place or in time; but all things are in Him.
  20. He is before and beyond all things—even eternal things.
  21. Whether this [eternity] is one aeon or more than one.
  22. He alone is what He is and who He is.
  23. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are equally this [supreme] good. It is the one necessary [Being], which is every good, complete good, and the only good.
  24. A conjecture about what kind of good this is and about how great it is.
  25. The kinds and the quantity of goods for those who enjoy this [Good].
  26. Whether this is the full joy which the Lord promises.

## PROSLOGION

### CHAPTER ONE

Arousal of the mind for contemplating God.

Come now, insignificant man, leave behind for a time your preoccupations; seclude yourself for a while from your disquieting thoughts. Turn aside now from heavy cares, and set aside your wearisome tasks. Make time for God, and rest a while in Him. Enter into the inner chamber of your mind; shut out everything except God and what is of aid to you in seeking Him; after closing the chamber door, seek Him out.<sup>1</sup> Speak now, my whole heart; speak now to God: I seek Your countenance; Your countenance, O Lord, do I seek.<sup>2</sup> So come now, Lord my God, teach my heart where and how to seek You, where and how to find You. If You are not here, O Lord, where shall I seek You who are absent? But if You are everywhere, why do I not behold You as present? But surely You dwell in light inaccessible.<sup>3</sup> Yet, where is light inaccessible? Or how shall I approach unto light inaccessible? Or who will lead me to and into this [light] so that in it I may behold You? Furthermore, by what signs, by what facial appearance shall I seek You? Never have I seen You, O Lord my God; I am not acquainted with Your face. What shall this Your distant exile do? What shall

<sup>1</sup>See Matthew 6:6. Isaiah 26:20. <sup>2</sup>Psalms 26:8 (27:8). <sup>3</sup>1 Timothy 6:16.

he do, O most exalted Lord? What shall Your servant do, anguished out of love for You and cast far away from Your face? <sup>1</sup>He pants to see You, but Your face is too far removed from him. He desires to approach You, but Your dwelling place is inaccessible. He desires to find You but does not know Your abode. He longs to seek You but does not know Your countenance. O Lord, You are my God, and You are my Lord; yet, never have I seen You. You have created me and created me anew and have bestowed upon me whatever goods I have; but I am not yet acquainted with You. Indeed, I was made for seeing You; but not yet have I done that for which I was made.

O the unhappy fate of man when he lost that [end] for which he was made! O that hard and ominous fall! Alas, what he lost and what he found, what vanished and what remained! He lost the happiness for which he was made and found an unhappiness for which he was not made. That without which nothing is happy vanished, and there remained what through itself is only unhappy. Man then ate the bread-of-angels<sup>2</sup> for which he now hungers; and now he eats the bread-of-sorrows,<sup>3</sup> which then he did not know. Alas, the common mourning of men, the universal lament of the sons of Adam! Adam burped with satiety; we sigh with hunger. He abounded; we go begging. He happily possessed and unhappily deserted; we unhappily lack and unhappily desire, while, alas, remaining empty. Why did he not, when easily able, keep for us that of which we were so gravely deprived? Why did he block off from us the light and enshroud us in darkness? Why did he take away from us life and inflict death? Wretched [creatures that we are], expelled from that home, impelled to this one!, cast down from that abode, sunken to this one! [We have been banished] from our homeland into exile, from the vision of God into our own blindness, from the delight of immortality into the bitterness and horror of death. O miserable transformation from such great good into such great evil! What a grievous loss, a heavy sorrow, an unmitigated plight!

But, alas, unhappy me, one of the other unhappy sons of Eve who are far removed from God: what did I set out to do?, what have I achieved? For what was I striving?, where have I arrived?

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<sup>1</sup>Psalms 50:13 (51:11). <sup>2</sup>Psalms 77:25 (78:25). <sup>3</sup>Psalms 126: 2 (127:2).

To what was I aspiring?, for what do I sigh? I sought after good things<sup>1</sup> and, behold, [here is] turmoil.<sup>2</sup> I was striving unto God but collided with myself. I was seeking rest in my inner recesses but found tribulation and grief<sup>3</sup> in my inmost being. I wanted to laugh from joy of mind but am constrained to cry out from groaning of heart.<sup>4</sup> I hoped for gladness, but, lo, as a result, my sighs increase! O Lord, how long? How long, O Lord, will You forget us? How long will You turn away Your face from us?<sup>5</sup> When will You look upon us and hear us? When will You enlighten our eyes<sup>6</sup> and show us Your face?<sup>7</sup> When will You restore Yourself to us? Look upon us, O Lord; hear us, enlighten us, reveal Yourself unto us. Restore unto us Yourself—without whom we fare so badly—so that we may fare well. Have compassion upon the efforts and attempts which we, who can do nothing without You, direct toward You. [As] You summon us, [so] aid us,<sup>8</sup> I beseech [You], O Lord, that I may not despair with sighing but may revive in hoping. I beseech You, O Lord: my heart is made bitter by its own desolation; sweeten it by Your consolation. I beseech You, O Lord, that having begun in hunger to seek You, I may not finish without partaking of You. I set out famished; let me not return still unfed. I came as one who is poor to one who is rich, as one who is unhappy to one who is merciful; let me not return empty and spurned. And if before I eat I sigh,<sup>9</sup> grant at least after the sighs that which I may eat. O Lord, bent over [as I am] I can look only downwards; straighten me so that I can look upwards. Having mounted above my head, my iniquities cover me over; and as a heavy burden they weigh me down.<sup>10</sup> Deliver me [from them]; unburden me, so that the abyss of iniquities does not engulf me.<sup>11</sup> Permit me, at least from afar or from the deep, to look upwards toward Your light. Teach me to seek You, and reveal Yourself to me as I seek; for unless You teach [me] I cannot seek You, and unless You reveal Yourself I cannot find You. Let me seek You in desiring You; let me desire You in seeking You. Let me find [You] in loving [You]; let me love [You] in finding [You].

O Lord, I acknowledge and give thanks that You created in me

<sup>1</sup>Psalms 121:9 (122:9). <sup>2</sup>Jeremiah 14:19. <sup>3</sup>Psalms 114:3 (116:3). <sup>4</sup>Psalms 37:9 (38:8). <sup>5</sup>Psalms 6:4 & 12:1 (6:3 & 13:1). <sup>6</sup>Psalms 12:4 (13:3). <sup>7</sup>Psalms 79:4 & 8 (80:3 & 7). <sup>8</sup>Psalms 78:9 (79:9). <sup>9</sup>Job 3:24. <sup>10</sup>Psalms 37:5 (38:4). <sup>11</sup>Psalms 68:16 (69:15).

Your image so that I may remember, contemplate, and love You. But [this image] has been so effaced by the abrasion of transgressions, so hidden from sight by the dark billows of sins, that unless You renew and refashion it, it cannot do what it was created to do. O Lord, I do not attempt to gain access to Your loftiness, because I do not at all consider my intellect to be equal to this [task]. But I yearn to understand some measure of Your truth, which my heart believes and loves. For I do not seek to understand in order to believe, but I believe in order to understand. For I believe even this: that unless I believe, I shall not understand.<sup>1</sup>

#### CHAPTER TWO

God truly [i.e., really] exists.

Therefore, O Lord, You who give understanding to faith, grant me to understand—to the degree You know to be advantageous—that You exist, as we believe, and that You are what we believe [You to be]. Indeed, we believe You to be something than which nothing greater can be thought. Or is there, then, no such nature [as You], for the Fool has said in his heart that God does not exist?<sup>2</sup> But surely when this very same Fool hears my words “something than which nothing greater can be thought,” he understands what he hears. And what he understands is in his understanding, even if he does not understand [i.e., judge] it to exist. For that a thing is in the understanding is distinct from understanding that [this] thing exists. For example, when a painter envisions what he is about to paint: he indeed has in his understanding that which he has not yet made, but he does not yet understand that it exists. But after he has painted [it]: he has in his understanding that which he has made, and he understands that it exists. So even the Fool is convinced that something than which nothing greater can be thought is at least in his understanding; for when he hears of this [being], he understands [what he hears], and whatever is understood is in the understanding. But surely that than which a greater cannot be thought cannot be only in the understanding. For if it were only in the understanding, it could be thought to exist also in reality—something which is greater [than existing only in the

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<sup>1</sup>Isaiah 7:9 (Old Latin translation of the Septuagint). <sup>2</sup>Psalms 13:1 & 52:1 (14:1 & 53:1).



understanding]. Therefore, if that than which a greater cannot be thought were only in the understanding, then that than which a greater *cannot* be thought would be that than which a greater *can* be thought! But surely this [conclusion] is impossible. Hence, without doubt, something than which a greater cannot be thought exists both in the understanding and in reality.

### CHAPTER THREE

[God] cannot be thought not to exist.

Assuredly, this [being] exists so truly [i.e., really] that it cannot even be thought not to exist. For there can be thought to exist something which cannot be thought not to exist; and this thing is greater than that which can be thought not to exist. Therefore, if that than which a greater cannot be thought could be thought not to exist, then that than which a greater cannot be thought would not be that than which a greater cannot be thought—[a consequence] which is contradictory. Hence, something than which a greater cannot be thought exists so truly that it cannot even be thought not to exist. And You are this [being], O Lord our God. Therefore, O Lord my God, You exist so truly that You cannot even be thought not to exist. And this is rightly the case. For if any mind could think of something better than You, the creature would rise above the Creator and would sit in judgment over the Creator—something which is utterly absurd. Indeed, except for You alone, whatever else exists can be thought not to exist. Therefore, You alone exist most truly of all and thus most greatly of all; for whatever else exists does not exist as truly [as do You] and thus exists less greatly [than do You]. Since, then, it is so readily clear to a rational mind that You exist most greatly of all, why did the Fool say in his heart that God does not exist?<sup>1</sup>—why [indeed] exist because [he is] foolish and a fool!

### CHAPTER FOUR

How the Fool said in his heart that which cannot be thought.

Yet, since to speak in one's heart and to think are the same thing, how did [the Fool] say in his heart that which he was unable to think,

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<sup>1</sup>Psalms 13:1 & 52:1 (14:1 & 53:1).

or how was he unable to think that which he did say in his heart? Now, if he truly [i.e., really]—rather, since he truly—both thought [what he did] because he said [it] in his heart and did not say [it] in his heart because he was unable to think [it], then it is not the case that something is said in the heart, or is thought, in only one way. For in one way a thing is thought when the word signifying it is thought, and in another way [it is thought] when that which the thing is is understood. Thus, in the first way but not at all in the second, God can be thought not to exist. Indeed, no one who understands that which God is can think that God does not exist, even though he says these words [viz., “God does not exist”] in his heart either without any signification or with some strange signification. For God is that than which a greater cannot be thought. Anyone who rightly understands this, surely understands that that [than which a greater cannot be thought] exists in such way that it cannot even conceivably not exist. Therefore, anyone who understands that God is such [a being] cannot think that He does not exist.

Thanks to You, good Lord, thanks to You—because what at first I believed through Your giving, now by Your enlightening I understand to such an extent that [even] if I did not want to believe that You exist, I could not fail to understand [that You exist].

#### CHAPTER FIVE

God is whatever it is better to be than  
not to be. Alone existing through Himself,  
He makes all other things from nothing.

What, then, are You, O Lord God, than whom nothing greater can be thought? What indeed are You except that which—as highest of all things, alone existing through Himself—made all other things from nothing? For whatever is not this is less great than can be thought. But this [less greatness] cannot be thought of You. Therefore, what good is lacking to the Supreme Good, through whom every good exists? Consequently, You are just, truthful, blessed, and whatever it is better to be than not to be. For it is better to be just than not-just, blessed than not-blessed.

#### CHAPTER SIX

How God is able to perceive  
even though He is not something corporeal.

Now, since to be able to perceive and to be omnipotent, merciful, and impassible is better than not to be [any of these], how are You able to perceive if You are not something corporeal, or how are You omnipotent if You cannot do all things, or how are You both merciful and impassible? For if only corporeal things are able to perceive (inasmuch as the senses have to do with a body and are in a body), how are You able to perceive, since You are not something corporeal but are Supreme Spirit, which is better than what is corporeal? But if perceiving is only knowing or only for the sake of knowing (for anyone who perceives knows in accordance with the characteristic capabilities of the respective senses—e.g., colors [are known] through sight, flavors through taste), then whatever in some way knows is not unsuitably said in some way to perceive. Therefore, O Lord, even though You are not something corporeal, truly You are supremely able to perceive in the sense that You know supremely all things—not [in the sense that You know] in the way that an animal does, by means of bodily senses.

#### CHAPTER SEVEN

How He is omnipotent even though  
He cannot do many things.

But how are You also omnipotent if You cannot do all things? Or how can You do all things if You are not able to be corrupted or to tell a lie or to make what is true be false—for example, [to make] what has already happened not to have happened—and, likewise, many [other] things? Or is the “ability” to do these things not power but lack of power? For anyone who is able to do these things is able to do what is disadvantageous to himself and what he ought not to do. And the more he is able to do these things, the more powerful are adversity and perversity over him and the less powerful he is against them. Therefore, anyone who in this way is able, is able not by a power but by a lack of power. For it is not the case that he is said to be able because he himself is able; rather, [he is said to be able] because his own lack of power causes something else to be powerful over him—or [for some other reason coinciding] with some other way of speaking (even as we say many things improperly—for example, when we substitute “to be” for “not to be” and substitute “to do” for “not to do” or for

“to do nothing”). For we often say to someone who denies that something is the case, “It’s as you say [it] is,” although we would say more properly, “It’s not, as you say it’s not.” Likewise, we say, “This man is sitting even as that man is [also] doing” or “This man is resting even as that man is [also] doing”—although sitting is not doing anything and resting is doing nothing. So, then, when someone is said to have the power to do or to experience what is not advantageous to himself or what he ought not [to do or to experience], by “power” a powerlessness is understood. For the more he has the [alleged] ability, the more powerful are adversity and perversity over him and the more powerless he is against them. Therefore, O Lord God, You are more truly omnipotent because You are not at all powerful through powerlessness and because nothing is powerful over You.

#### CHAPTER EIGHT

How He is merciful and impassible.

But how are you both merciful and impassible? For if You are impassible You have no compassion. And if You do not have compassion, You do not have a heart sorrowful out of compassion for the wretched—the very thing which being merciful is. And if You are not merciful, from where is there such great consolation for the wretched? How, then, are You and are You not merciful, O Lord, except because You are merciful from our point of view but are not merciful in Yourself? Indeed, You are [merciful] according to our experience but are not [merciful] according to Your experience. For when You behold us in our wretched condition, we experience the effect of Your mercy; but You do not experience any emotion. And so, You are merciful because You save [us] wretched [creatures] and spare [us] who have sinned against You; and You are not merciful, because You do not experience compassion for wretchedness.

#### CHAPTER NINE

How He who is completely and supremely just spares those who are evil. He is justly merciful to them.

But how is it that You spare those who are evil if You are completely and supremely just? For how is it that He who is completely

and supremely just does something which is not just? Or what justice is there in giving eternal life to one deserving eternal death? Why, then, good God—good to those who are good and to those who are evil—why do You save those who are evil, if [to do] this is not just and if You do not do anything that is not just? Inasmuch as Your goodness is incomprehensible, is this [reason] hidden in the inaccessible light in which You dwell?<sup>1</sup> Truly, in the deepest and inmost seat of Your goodness is hidden a fount from which the stream of Your mercy flows. For although You are completely and supremely just, nevertheless because You are completely and supremely good You are also beneficent to those who are evil. For You would be less good if You were beneficent to none of those who are evil. For someone who is good both to those who are good and to those who are evil is better than someone who is good only to those who are good. And someone who is good by virtue of both punishing and sparing those who are evil is better than someone who is good by virtue merely of punishing [them]. Therefore, You are merciful because You are completely and supremely good. Now, although we do perhaps discern why You reward with good things those who are good and with evil things those who are evil, surely we are completely baffled as to why You, who are completely just and in need of no one else, give good things to those who are evil and guilty in Your sight. O God, the depth of Your goodness! We see why You are merciful, and yet we do not fully see why. We see from where the stream [of Your mercy] flows, and yet we do not see the Fount itself from which it flows. For that You are gracious to those who sin against You comes from the abundance of Your goodness; and in the depth of Your goodness lies hidden the reason why You are this. For although out of goodness You reward with good things those who are good and with evil things those who are evil, the principle of justice seems to require this. But when You give good things to those who are evil, we know that He who is supremely good willed to do this, but we wonder why He who is supremely just was able to will this.

O mercy, from what rich sweetness and sweet richness You flow forth unto us! O immensity of divine goodness, with what affection

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<sup>1</sup>I Timothy 6:16.

sinners ought to love You! For You save those-who-are-just, since justice accompanies [them]; but You free those-who-are-evil, even though justice condemns [them]. Those who are just [You save] through the aid of their merits; those who are evil [You free] in spite of their demerits. [You save] the just by taking account of the good things, which You have given them; [You free] those-who-are-evil by overlooking the evil things, which You hate. O immense goodness, which so exceeds all understanding, let there come upon me that mercy which proceeds from Your so great richness! Let there flow into me [the mercy] which flows out of You! Spare [me] out of mercy; do not punish [me] out of justice! For although it is difficult to understand how Your mercy is compatible with Your justice, it is necessary to believe that what flows forth from goodness is not at all opposed to justice. (Without justice, goodness is not goodness—indeed, [goodness] is truly concordant with justice.) Assuredly, if you are merciful because You are supremely good, and if You are supremely good only because You are supremely just, then truly You are merciful because You are supremely just. Help me, O just and merciful God, whose light I seek; help me to understand what I am saying. Truly, then, You are merciful because You are just.

Is Your mercy, then, begotten from Your justice? Do You, then, spare evil ones out of justice? If so, O Lord, if so, then teach me how so. Is it because it is just for You to be so good that You cannot be understood to be any better and [because it is just for You] to work so powerfully that You cannot be thought [to work] more powerfully? For what is more just than this? But surely this would not be the case if You were good only by way of retributing and not [also] by way of sparing—and if You were to make good men only from those who are not good instead of also from those who are evil. And so, in this way, it is just that You spare those who are evil and that You make good men from evil ones. Finally, that which is not done justly ought not to be done; and what ought not to be done is done unjustly. Therefore, if You were not justly merciful to those who are evil, it would be the case that You ought not to be merciful [to them]; and if You ought not to be merciful, then You are unjustly merciful. Now, if it is blasphemous to say this, then it is right to believe that You are justly merciful to those who are evil.

## CHAPTER TEN

How He justly punishes and justly  
spares those who are evil.

Yet, it is also just that You punish those who are evil. For what is more just than for those who are good to receive good things and for those who are evil to receive bad things? But, then, how is it just for You to punish those who are evil and likewise just for You to spare them? Do You justly punish them in one respect and justly spare them in another? For when You punish those who are evil, it is just [for You to do so] because [punishment] besuits their merits. But when You spare them, it is just [for You to do so], not because [sparing them] besuits their merits but because it befits Your goodness. For in sparing them, You are *just* in Yourself but are not just from our viewpoint, even as You are merciful from our viewpoint but are not merciful in Yourself. For in saving us whom You could justly damn, You are *just* not because You requite us as we deserve but because You do what befits You as supremely good, even as You are merciful not because You experience any emotion but because we experience the effect [of Your mercy]. So, then, without inconsistency, You both punish justly and spare justly.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

How “all the ways of the Lord are mercy and truth,”  
and yet, “the Lord is just in all His ways.”

But, O Lord, is it not also just, in accordance with Yourself, for You to punish those who are evil? To be sure, it is just that You be so just that You cannot be thought to be more just. But You would not at all be this if You rewarded only those who are good with good things but not those who are evil with bad things. For someone who rewards according to their merits both those who are good and those who are evil is more just than someone who rewards only those who are good. Thus, O just and beneficent God, in accordance with Yourself it is just both when You punish and when You spare. Truly, then, “all the ways of the Lord are mercy and truth,” and yet, “the Lord is just in all His ways.”<sup>1</sup> And, assuredly, [these two statements hold true] without inconsistency, because it is not just that those whom You will to punish should be

<sup>1</sup>Psalms 24:10 & 144:17 (25:10 & 145:17).

saved nor just that those whom You will to spare should be condemned. For only what You will is just, and only what You do not will is not just. So, then, Your mercy is begotten from Your justice, because it is just for You to be good to such an extent that You are good even in sparing. And perhaps this is why He who is supremely just can will good things for those who are evil. But if we can somehow grasp why You can will to save those who are evil, surely we cannot at all comprehend why from among those who are similarly evil You save some and not others because of Your supreme goodness, and condemn some and not others because of Your supreme justice.

So, then, truly You are able to perceive and are omnipotent, merciful, and impassible—as well as living, wise, good, blessed, eternal, and what-ever it is better to be than not to be.

#### CHAPTER TWELVE

God is the life by which He lives,  
and similarly for similar [attributes].

But, surely, whatever You are You are through no other than through Yourself. Therefore, You are the life by which You live, the wisdom by which You are wise, the goodness by which You are good both to those who are good and to those who are evil, and similarly for similar [attributes].

#### CHAPTER THIRTEEN

How He alone is unlimited and eternal, although  
other spirits are [also] unlimited and eternal.

Now, anything which is at all confined by place or by time is less great than that which is not at all subject to the law of place or of time. Therefore, since it is not the case that anything is greater than You, no place or time restricts You, but You exist everywhere and always. Because this can be said of You alone, You alone are unlimited and eternal. How, then, are other spirits, as well, said to be unlimited and eternal? To be sure, You alone are eternal because You alone of all things do not begin to exist, even as You do not cease to exist. Yet, how are You alone unlimited? Is a created spirit, although unlimited in comparison with something corporeal, limited in comparison with You? Assuredly, that which while exist-



ing somewhere as a whole is not able at the same time to exist elsewhere is limited in every respect—something which is seen to be the case with corporeal objects only. And what exists at once everywhere as a whole is unlimited—something which is understood to be the case with You alone. But that which while existing somewhere as a whole is able at the same time to exist as a whole elsewhere, but not everywhere, is both limited and unlimited—something which is known to be the case with created spirits. For example, if the soul were not present as a whole in each of the members of its body, the soul as a whole would not experience feeling in each of them. Therefore, 0 Lord, You are uniquely unlimited and eternal; and yet, other spirits are also unlimited and eternal.

#### CHAPTER FOURTEEN

How and why God is both seen and  
not seen by those who seek Him.

My soul, have you found that which You were seeking? You were seeking God, and you have found that He is something highest of all—than which nothing better can be thought. [And you have found that] this [Being] is life itself, light, wisdom, goodness, eternal blessedness, and blessed eternity and that this [Being] exists everywhere and always. Now, if you have not found your God, then how is He this [Being] which you have found and which with such certain truth and true certainty you have understood Him to be? On the other hand, if you have found [Him], then why is it that you do not experience what you have found? 0 Lord God, why does my soul not experience You if it has found You? Has it not found Him whom it has found to be light and truth? For how has it understood this except by seeing light and truth? Was it able to understand anything at all about You except through Your light and Your truth?<sup>1</sup> Therefore, if [my soul] saw light and truth, it saw You. If it did not see You, it did not see light and truth. Or [is it rather the case that] light and truth are what it saw but [that] it has not yet seen You, because it saw You to some extent but did not see You as You are?<sup>2</sup>

0 Lord my God, my Creator and Renewer, tell my yearning soul

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<sup>1</sup>Psalms 42:3 (43:3). <sup>2</sup>See I John 3:2.

what else You are other than what it has seen, so that it may see clearly what it longs [to see. My soul] strains to see more; but beyond what it has already seen it sees only darkness. Or better, it does not see darkness, which is not present in You;<sup>1</sup> rather, it sees that it can see no farther because of its own darkness. Why is this, O Lord? Why is this? Is the eye of the soul darkened as a result of its own weakness, or is it dazzled by Your brilliance? Surely, the soul's eye is both darkened within itself and dazzled by You. Surely, it is darkened because of its own shortness of vision and is overwhelmed by Your immensity; truly, it is restricted because of its own narrowness and is overcome by Your vastness. For how great that Light is from which shines everything true that illumines the rational mind! How vast that Truth is in which resides everything that is true and outside of which there is only nothing and what is false! How immense [that Truth] is which beholds in one spectrum all created things and beholds by whom, through whom, and in what manner [all things] were created from nothing! What purity, what simplicity, what assurance and splendor are present there! Surely, [these] surpass what can be understood by any creature.

#### CHAPTER FIFTEEN

He is greater than can be thought.

Therefore, O 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 there can be thought to exist something of this kind, if You were not this [Being] then something greater than You could be thought—[a consequence] which is impossible.

#### CHAPTER SIXTEEN

This is the inaccessible light in which He dwells.

Truly, O Lord, this is the inaccessible light in which You dwell.<sup>2</sup> For, truly, there is not anything else which can penetrate this [light], so that it sees You therein. Truly, the reason I cannot stand to look at this [light] is that it is too resplendent for me. Nevertheless, whatever I see I see by means of this [light]—even as a frail eye sees what it does by means of sunlight, which it cannot stand to

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<sup>1</sup>See I John 1:5.   <sup>2</sup>I Timothy 6:16.

look at in the sun itself. My understanding is not able to comprehend this light, which shines forth too brilliantly. [My understanding] does not grasp it; and the eye of my soul cannot bear to gaze at length upon it. [My soul's eye] is dazzled by its splendor, overcome by its vastness, overwhelmed by its immensity, confounded by its capacity. O supreme and inaccessible Light, O complete and blessed Truth, how distant You are from me, who am so near for You! How far removed You are from my sight, though I am so present to Yours! You are everywhere present as a whole; and yet, I do not see You. In You I move, and in You I exist;<sup>1</sup> and yet, I cannot approach You. You are within me and round about me; and yet, I do not experience You.

#### CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Harmony, fragrance, succulence, softness, and beauty are present in God in their own ineffable manner.

Amidst Your blessedness and light, O Lord, You are still hidden from my soul. Therefore, my soul still dwells in darkness and in its own unhappiness. For it looks in all directions but does not see Your beauty. It listens but does not hear Your harmony. It fills its nostrils but does not smell Your fragrance. It tastes but does not savor Your succulence. It feels but does not detect Your softness. For in Your ineffable manner, O Lord God, You have these [features] within You; and You have bestowed them, in their own perceptible manner, upon the things created by You. But the senses of my soul have been stiffened and deadened and impaired by the oldtime infirmity of sin.

#### CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

There are no parts in God or in the eternity which He is.

And, behold, once again confusion!<sup>2</sup> Behold, once again sorrow and grief beset me as I seek joy and gladness.<sup>3</sup> My soul hoped for fullness; and, lo, once again it is overwhelmed with need. I desired to eat; and, lo, the more I hunger! I tried to mount upward to the divine light, but I lapsed downward into my own darkness. Indeed, not only did I fall into darkness but I feel enshrouded by

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<sup>1</sup>Acts 17:28. <sup>2</sup>Jeremiah 14:19. <sup>3</sup>See Psalms 50:10 (51:8).

it. I fell before my mother conceived me.<sup>1</sup> Surely, I was conceived in darkness and born surrounded by it. Surely, once long ago we all fell in him<sup>2</sup> in whom we all sinned. In him (who easily possessed but evilly lost for himself and for us) we all lost that which when we desire we do not know how to seek, when we seek we do not find, when we find is not what we are seeking. Help me, O Lord, because of Your goodness.<sup>3</sup> “I have sought Your countenance; Your countenance, O Lord, will I seek. Do not turn Your face from me.”<sup>4</sup> Raise me out of myself and unto You. Cleanse, heal, focus, illumine<sup>5</sup> the eye of my mind so that it may behold You.<sup>6</sup> Let my soul muster its strength and with all its understanding strive once more unto You, O Lord. What are You, O Lord?

What are You? What shall my heart understand You to be? Surely, You are life, wisdom, truth, goodness, blessedness, eternity—You are every true good. These are many things; and my limited understanding cannot in a single view behold so many at one time in order to delight in all together. How is it, then, O Lord, that You are all these things? Are they Your parts, or, instead, is each one of them the whole of what You are? For whatever is composed of parts is not absolutely one but is in a way many and is different from itself and can be divided actually or conceivably (*intellectu*). But these [consequences] are foreign to You, than whom nothing better can be thought. Hence, there are no parts in You, O Lord. Nor are You more than one thing. Rather, You are something so one and the same with Yourself that in no respect are You dissimilar to Yourself. Indeed, You are Oneness itself, divisible in no respect (*nullo intellectu*). Therefore, life and wisdom and the other [characteristics] are not parts of You but are all one thing; and each one of them is the whole of what You are and the whole of what all the others are. Thus, since neither You nor the eternity which You are has any parts, nowhere and never is there a part of You or of Your eternity; rather, You exist everywhere as a whole, and Your eternity exists always as a whole.

#### CHAPTER NINETEEN

He is not in place or in time; but all things are in Him.

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<sup>1</sup>Psalms 50:7 (51:5). <sup>2</sup>Romans 5:12. <sup>3</sup>See Psalms 24:7 (25:7). <sup>4</sup>Psalms 26:9 (27:9). <sup>5</sup>Psalms 12:4 (13:3). <sup>6</sup>Canticle of Canticles 6:12.

But if through Your eternity You were, You are, and You will be, and if (1) being past is not being future and (2) being present is not being past or being future, how is it that Your eternity exists always as a whole? Or does none of Your eternity pass away, so that it no longer is? And is none of it going to be—as if it not yet were? Then, in no case *were* You yesterday or *will* You *be* tomorrow; instead, yesterday, today, and tomorrow You *are*. Or better, You do not exist yesterday or today or tomorrow, but You simply *are*—[existing] beyond all time. For yesterday, today, and tomorrow are nothing other than [distinctions] in time. Now, although without You nothing would exist, You are not in place or in time, but all things are in You. For You are not contained by anything, but, rather, You contain all [other] things.

#### CHAPTER TWENTY

He is before and beyond all things—even eternal things.

Therefore, You fill and encompass all things; You are before and beyond all things. Indeed, You are before all things because before they were made You already are.<sup>1</sup> But how is it that You are beyond all things? For how are You beyond those things which will have no end? Is it because they cannot at all exist without You, whereas You would not at all be less great even if they returned to nothing? For in this way You are beyond them in a certain respect. Is it also because they can be thought to have an end, whereas You [can] not at all [be thought to have an end]? For, indeed, they do in this respect have a kind of end, whereas You [do] not in any respect [have an end]. Now, surely what in no respect has an end is beyond that which in some respect has an end. Do You also surpass all things—even eternal things—in that both Your eternity and theirs is present to You as a whole, whereas they do not yet have that [part] of their eternity which is yet to come, even as they no longer have that [part] which is already past? Indeed, then, You are always beyond them because You are always [wholly] present to Yourself and because there is always present to You that [part of their eternity] to which they have not yet come.

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<sup>1</sup>Psalms 89:2 (90:2).

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

Whether this [eternity] is one aeon or more than one.

Is, then, this [eternity of Yours] one aeon or more than one? For just as the aeon of times contains all things temporal, so Your eternity contains even the aeons of times. Indeed, Your eternity is one aeon on account of its indivisible oneness, but it is more than one aeon on account of its endless immensity. Moreover, although You are so great, O Lord, that all things are filled with Your presence and exist in You, nevertheless You are so free from all spatial determination that in You there is neither center nor half nor any part.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

He alone is what He is and who He is.

Therefore, O Lord, You alone are what You are, and You are who You are. For anything having parts distinct from its whole, and anything in which there is something mutable, is not altogether what it is. And what (1) began to exist from not-being, (2) can be thought not to exist, (3) returns to not-being unless it exists through something else, (4) has a past which it no longer is, and (5) has a future which it not yet is—this does not exist in the proper and unqualified sense [of "existing"] But You are what You are, because whatever You once or in any respect are, this You are always and as a whole.

And in a proper and unqualified sense You are who You are,<sup>1</sup> because You have neither a past nor a future, but only a present, and because You cannot be thought ever not to exist. And You are life and light and wisdom and blessedness and eternity and many such good things. Nevertheless, You are only one supreme good, altogether sufficient unto Yourself, needing no one [else] but needed by all [other] things in order to exist and to fare well.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are equally this [supreme] good. It is the one necessary [Being], which is every good, complete good, and the only good.

You, God the Father, are this [supreme] good; and Your Word,

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<sup>1</sup>Exodus 3:14.

i.e., Your Son, is this [supreme good]. For in the Word by which You speak of Yourself there cannot be anything other than what You are or anything greater or lesser than You. For Your Word is as true as You are truthful; and so, just as are You, it is Truth itself—not [a truth that is] other than You. You are so simple [in nature] that from You cannot be begotten anything other than what You are. The one Love common to You and to Your Son, viz., the Holy Spirit who proceeds from You both, is [also] this [same supreme good]. For this Love is not unequal to You or to Your Son; for You love Yourself and Your Son, and He loves Himself and You, in proportion to Your greatness and His. And what is not unequal to You and to Him is not something other than You and Him; nor can there proceed from Supreme Simplicity anything which is other than what the one from whom it proceeds is. But that which each of them (considered distinctly) is, this the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—is as a whole and all together. For each, considered distinctly, is nothing other than a supremely simple oneness and a supremely singular simplicity which cannot be made multiple and cannot be different things.

Now, one thing is necessary,<sup>1</sup> viz., the one necessary [Being] in which there is every good—yea, which is every good, one good, complete good, and the only good.

#### CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

A conjecture about what kind of good  
this is and about how great it is.

And now, my soul, arouse and elevate your whole understanding; ponder as best you can what kind of good this is and how great it is. For if the individual good things are enjoyable, reflect attentively upon how enjoyable is that Good which contains the joyfulness of all good things. [This is] not the kind [of joyfulness] that we have experienced in created things but rather is as different [therefrom] as the Creator is different from the creature. For if created life is good, how good is that Life which creates! If created security (*salus*) is enjoyable, how enjoyable is the Salvation (*salus*) which creates all security! If wisdom in regard to the knowledge of created things is lovable, how lovable is the Wisdom which

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<sup>1</sup>Luke 10:42.

created all things from nothing! In short, if there are many great joys in enjoyable things, how rich and how great is the joy [to be found] in Him who made these enjoyable things!

#### CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

The kinds and the quantity of goods  
for those who enjoy this [Good].

0 what he shall have who will enjoy this Good, and what he shall not have! Surely, he shall have whatever he shall want and shall not have what he shall not want. Indeed, he shall there possess the goods of the body and of the soul—[goods] of such kind as the eye has not seen nor the ear heard nor the human heart conceived.<sup>1</sup> 0 insignificant man, why then do you go from one good to another in quest of what is good for your soul and good for your body? Love the one Good in which are all goods, and it shall suffice [you]. Desire the simple Good which itself is every good, and it shall be enough [for you]. For what do you love, 0 my flesh? What do you desire, 0 my soul? It is there; all that both of you love is there, all that you desire. If *beauty* delights [you]: the just shall shine forth as the sun.<sup>2</sup> If [you take delight in] the *swiftness*, *strength*, or *freedom of a body* which nothing can resist: [the just] shall be like the angels of God<sup>3</sup> because their bodies are sown as fleshly but will arise as spiritual<sup>4</sup>—[bodies spiritual], of course, in power not in nature. If a *long* and *sound life* [delights you]: a sound eternity and an eternal soundness is there, because the just shall live forever<sup>5</sup> and the salvation of the just comes from the Lord.<sup>6</sup> If [you delight in] *fullness*: [the just] shall be filled when the glory of God is manifested.<sup>7</sup> If *intoxication*: they shall be intoxicated from the abundance of the house of God.<sup>8</sup> If *melody*: there choirs of angels sing to God without end. If any *pleasure* whatsoever that is not impure: God shall grant to them to drink from the torrent of His pleasure.<sup>9</sup> If *wisdom*: the wisdom of God shall manifest itself unto them.<sup>10</sup> If *friendship*: they shall love God more than themselves and shall love one another as themselves;<sup>11</sup> and God [shall love] them more than they [love] themselves. For through Him

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<sup>1</sup>I Corinthians 2:9. <sup>2</sup>Matthew 13:43. <sup>3</sup>Matthew 22:30. <sup>4</sup>I Corinthians 15:44. <sup>5</sup>Wisdom 5:16. <sup>6</sup>Psalms 36:39 (37:39). <sup>7</sup>Psalms 16:15 (17:15). <sup>8</sup>Psalms 35:9 (36:8). <sup>9</sup>Psalms 35:9 (36:8). <sup>10</sup>See John 14:21. <sup>11</sup>See Matthew 22:37-39.



they [shall love] Him and themselves and one another; but He [loves] Himself and them through Himself. If [you delight in] *unison*: they shall all have one will, because they shall have no will except the will of God. If *power*: they shall be all-powerful in will, even as God is all-powerful in will. For just as God is able to do through Himself that which He wills, so they shall be able to do through Him that which they shall will. For just as they shall will nothing other than what He [shall will], so He shall will whatever they shall will. And what He shall will cannot fail to occur. If *honor* and *riches* [delight you]: God shall set His good and faithful servants over many things;<sup>1</sup> indeed, they shall be, as well as be called, sons of God<sup>2</sup> and gods.<sup>3</sup> And where His Son shall be, there they too shall be; indeed, [they are] heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ.<sup>4</sup> If true *security*: surely, they shall be certain that they shall never in any way lack these many goods—or, rather, this [one] Good—even as they shall be certain (1) that they shall not lose it of their own free wills, (2) that God, who loves them, shall not rend it away from them against their wills while they are loving Him, and (3) that nothing more powerful than God shall separate them from God against their wills.<sup>5</sup>

But where a good of such quality and of such magnitude is present, how rich and how intense is the [corresponding] joy! O human heart, heart beset with need, heart versed in tribulations—yea, overwhelmed with tribulations—how much you would rejoice were you to abound in all these [goods]! Ask your inmost self whether it can contain its own joy over its own so great happiness. Now, surely, if someone else whom you loved in every respect as you do yourself were also to have the same [kind of] happiness, then your own joy would be doubled; for you would rejoice for him no less than for yourself. And if two or three or many more [persons] were to have the same [kind of joy], you would rejoice for each of them as much as for yourself—assuming that you loved each as you do yourself. Therefore, in the case of that perfect love on the part of countless blessed angels and men, where no one [of them] will love the other less than himself, each [of them] will rejoice for each of the others no differently than for himself. If, then, the heart of man shall scarcely [be able to] contain its own

<sup>1</sup>See Matthew 25:21 & 23. <sup>2</sup>Matthew 5:9. <sup>3</sup>See John 10:34. <sup>4</sup>Romans 8:17.  
<sup>5</sup>Romans 8:38-39.

joy over its own so great good, how shall it be able to contain so many [other] very great joys?

Surely, each person rejoices in another's good [fortune] to the extent that he loves this other. Therefore, in that perfect happiness, just as each [person] will love God incomparably more than himself and all those who are with himself, so [each] will rejoice inestimably more over the blessedness of God than over either his own blessedness or that of all the others who are with himself. But if [each of the just] shall love God—with all his heart, all his mind, and all his soul,<sup>1</sup> but in such way that his whole heart, whole mind, and whole soul will not suffice [to fill up the measure of God's] worthiness to be loved—surely, with all his heart, all his mind, and all his soul [each] shall so rejoice that his whole heart, whole mind, and whole soul will not be able to contain the fullness of [that] joy.

#### CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

Whether this is the full joy which the Lord promises.

My Lord and my God, my hope and my heart's joy, tell my soul whether this is the joy about which You speak to us through Your Son, [who said]: ask and you shall receive, so that your joy may be full.<sup>2</sup> For I have found an abundant joy—even a superabundant joy. Indeed, when the heart, the mind, the soul—when the whole man—is filled with that joy, there will still remain joy without limit. Therefore, the whole of that joy will not enter into those who are rejoicing; instead, all those who are rejoicing will enter into Your joy. Speak, O Lord, and tell Your servant in his heart whether this is the joy into which Your servants will enter when they will enter into the joy of their Lord.<sup>3</sup> Now, surely, no eye has seen, no ear has heard—nor has there entered into the heart of man—that joy with which Your elect ones will rejoice.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, I have not yet said or thought, O Lord, how much Your blessed ones will rejoice. Surely, they will rejoice in the degree that they will love. And they will love in the degree that they will know. How much will they know You in that day, O Lord? How much will they love You? Surely, in this life no eye has seen, no ear has heard, nor has there entered into the heart of man how much they will know and love You

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<sup>1</sup>Matthew 22:37. <sup>2</sup>John 16:24. <sup>3</sup>Matthew 25:21. <sup>4</sup>I Corinthians 2:9.

in the next life.

0 God, I pray, let me know and love You, so that I may rejoice in You. And if I cannot in this life [know, love, and rejoice in You] fully, at least let me advance day by day until the point of fullness comes. Let knowledge of You progress in me here and be made full [in me] there. Let love for You grow [in me here] and be [made] full [in me] there, so that here my joy may be great with expectancy and there may be full in realization. 0 Lord, You command—or, rather, You counsel—[us] to ask through Your Son; and You promise [that we shall] receive, so that our joy may be full.<sup>1</sup> 0 Lord, I ask for what You counsel through our marvelous Counselor;<sup>2</sup> may I receive what You promise through Your Truth, so that my joy may be full. 0 God of Truth, I ask; may I receive, so that my joy may be full. Until then, may my mind meditate upon [what You have promised]; may my tongue speak of it. May my heart love it; may my mouth proclaim it. May my soul hunger for it; may my flesh thirst for [it];<sup>3</sup> may my whole substance desire [it] until such time as I enter into the joy of my Lord,<sup>4</sup> the trine and one God, blessed forever.<sup>5</sup> Amen.

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<sup>1</sup>John 16:24. <sup>2</sup>Isaiah 9:6. <sup>3</sup>See Psalms 62:2 (63:1). <sup>4</sup>Matthew 25:21. <sup>5</sup>Romans 1:25.