

A Perfectly Simple God and Our Complicated Lives

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One important divine attribute Saint Anselm examines and treats is that of simplicity. His treatment brings out some surprising features of simplicity itself which escape the frameworks of the logic of created being, providing us a fuller, albeit still very partial, understanding of the true nature of that attribute. A deep problem can then arise for the created human being in the course of such speculations and investigations: How can a complex, complicated, composite created being more closely approach a perfectly simple divine being? In both our thought and in our practice, it seems that our attempts to approach God simply introduce even more complexity into things. My paper addresses that problem. The first section of the paper presents five short Anselmian lessons about the divine attribute of simplicity. The second section then frames and explores the problem. The third and final section provides an Anselmian resolution to the problem.

It is a great and personally significant honor for me to be invited here to give this lecture at Saint Anselm College. I am deeply humbled, and still astonished as well as honored, to be speaking in the same place where I myself eagerly listened to much better Anselm scholars eloquently and eruditely unfold his thought and their own. I owe this opportunity to impart a few Anselmian lessons to many people, among whom I will mention only two, both of them Benedictine monks, one of them still with us but not present here today, the other very recently passed on to his heavenly rewards. Father John Fortin, the Institute for Saint Anselm Studies's previous and founding director, has been a source of encouragement and information since we first met here at the inaugural conference, and he continues to aid me through his correspondence, conversations, and prayers. It was he who invited me to give this lecture, with greater confidence I think, and with better insight than myself I hope about my abilities.

To the late Dom Paschal Baumstein of Belmont Abbey, whose highly original and significant work on Anselm has influenced my own (though sadly not yet as much as it should), I owe my vocation as a student of Anselm. Father Paschal became to me a genuine mentor, a model of true scholarship and the Christian virtues, as well as a good friend and great benefactor to myself, my wife, and our family. Like certain of Anselm's own relationships, ours was communicated nearly entirely through correspondence, but undergirded and enriched by remembrance, and ever-growing affection and prayers for each other, still continuing today. I would like then to dedicate this lecture particularly to my friend Father Paschal.

So, now, proper thanks given, on to the lecture I owe you. There are three main portions to this lecture. In the first and longest part, I will lead you through a series of short Anselmian lessons exploring the topic of divine simplicity and noting a few implications of Anselm's position. The second part will raise a problematic question about Anselm's and our relationships with this perfectly simple God. I would like, and will try to bring this about, that we understand and feel this problem as deeply and in as much of its complex contours as time permits. So as not

to keep you in unnecessary suspense, the question simply put is this: If God is so perfectly simple, then do not our reasoning, understanding, actions, willing, loves, relationships, and lives, all of which are complex and often involve making matters even more complex, do these not still distance us from our God, even as we try to approach Him? In the third and last part of this talk, I will provide what I hope is a satisfactory answer to this question, suggesting that there are right and wrong ways of complicating matters, and that Anselm provides us with models both for the right ways, which lead us into the divine simplicity, as well as diagnoses of wrong ways, which lead us away and astray.

I. Several Anselmian Lessons About Divine Simplicity

In this first part of the talk, I have five fairly short lessons to present to you, all derived from Anselm’s works and thought about God. Each of them examines one key facet of Anselm’s views about divine simplicity, an attribute of God which turns out upon study and reflection not to be quite so simple as we think, or rather to speak a little more properly but also perhaps a more mysteriously, to be entirely more simple than our conceptions of simplicity. Now, what does Anselm tell us about divine simplicity? The first lesson is that God is indeed perfectly simple. The second and third seemingly go off on divergent paths, for the second lesson is about divine attributes, and the third one bears on the persons of the Trinity. They reunite in the fourth, which examines what I label the “reflexive intensity” of divine attributes. The fifth lesson will lead into the key problem discussed here, by reminding us of a moral significance simplicity possesses.

Lesson 1: God is perfectly simple. Anselm discusses divine simplicity explicitly and at length in only a few of his works, specifically the *Monologion*, the *Proslogion* in which he reprises and condenses *Monologion*’s arguments, and the *De Incarnatione Verbi* in which he refers the reader to these two previous works by name.¹ Along with a number of other important things, Anselm attributes simplicity to the divine substance. The first part of *Monologion* ch. 17’s

¹ DI, 6, p. 20. All translations from Anselm’s treatises are the author’s (I have consulted and greatly benefited from translations by Hopkins and Richardson, Williams, Deane, and Charlesworth) and are from *S. Anselmi Cantuariensis Archiepiscopi opera omnia*, ed. Dom F. S. Schmitt, O.S.B. 5 vols (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson and Sons. 1940–1961), or from *Liber Anselmi de Humanis Moribus*, in *Memorials of Saint Anselm*, R.W. Southern and F. S. Schmitt, O.S.B., eds. (London: Oxford University Press. 1969). All citations of Anselm’s texts will give the chapter number (prefaced where appropriate by the book number), and the page number of the appropriate volume of the *Opera Omnia* or *Memorials*. Each text will be cited with these abbreviations.

M	<i>Monologion</i>	P	<i>Proslogion</i>
R	<i>Responsio Anselmi</i>	DV	<i>De Veritate</i>
DL	<i>De Libertate Arbitrii</i>	DCD	<i>De Casu Diaboli</i>
CDH	<i>Cur Deus Homo</i>	DC	<i>De Conceptu Virginali et de Originali Peccato</i>
DI	<i>De Incarnatione Verbi</i>		
DC	<i>De Concordia Praescientiae et Praedestinationis et Gratiae Dei cum Libero Arbitrio</i>		
DM	<i>Liber Anselmi Archiepiscopi de Humanis Moribus per Similitudines</i>		
DA	<i>(Alexandri Monachi Cantuariensis) Liber Ex Dictis Beati Anselmi</i>		

References to Anselm’s letters are from *The Letters of Saint Anselm of Canterbury*, 3 vols. trans and ed. Walter Frölich (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications); references to Anselm’s prayers are from *The Prayers and Meditations of Saint Anselm*, trans. Benedicta Ward, S.L.G. (New York: Penguin. 1973).

title runs “That He is so simple that all the things I can say of His essence are one same thing in that essence,”² and later in that work he calls God the “supremely simple nature.”³ In *Proslogion*, he calls each person of the Trinity “supremely simple unity and supremely united [una] simplicity,”⁴ an interesting formulation, since it signals the close connection between the attribute of simplicity and that of unity, notions in fact correlative sides of the same basic attribute, when we consider what simplicity actually means for Anselm.

For something to be simple means for it not to be a composite thing, a thing made up of parts, parts on which it is in some way dependent for its being,⁵ and which can be divided (as opposed to distinguished) either in reality or at least by the intellect.⁶ Something which is composite is a plurality rather than entirely a unity [*omnio unum*], and is not entirely what it is, but rather different or other from itself [*diversum a seipso*].⁷ Now, parts could be physical components, like those from which bodies are composed. Another way to be composed from parts is to have the sort of spatio-temporal existence created beings do. Anselm specifies “the condition of space and time” as this: “whatever is closed in by their boundaries does not escape the determination of parts [*partium. . . rationem*], whether that determination which its place takes on according to quantity, or that which its time accepts according to duration [*secundum diuturnitatem*].”⁸ He also notes that such a thing “cannot in any way be contained as a whole [*totum*] by different places or times simultaneously [*simul*].”⁹ It is for analogous reasons that he will say of created beings that they are not entirely what they are,¹⁰ since they are not the same at

² M 17, p. 31.

³ M 29, p. 47.

⁴ P 23, p. 118.

⁵ M 17, p. 31.

⁶ P 18, p. 114. Examples of such division in the intellect would include: the thought experiment carried out in M 31, stripping from rational being its rationality, sentience, life, and reducing it down to bare [*nudum*] being; the lines of reasoning carried out throughout the corpus from DCD on distinguishing between the will-to-justice and the will-to-happiness (or the beneficial, *commodum*), particularly in DCD13 where another thought experiment assumes God giving either the will to happiness or the will to justice to the creature separately from each other.

⁷ P 18, p. 114.

⁸ M 22, p. 40.

⁹ M 22, p. 40. He goes on to say that God in fact can be entirely, and entirely what He is, in particular places and times, since he is “not constrained by being contained in (a) time or (a) space.” Precisely because God is transcendent to any given space and time, he can be entirely in, or rather “with” (*cum*) each and every one of them, as a perfect unity, perfectly and completely what He is. Being bound to spaces and times entails never being entirely present in any one of them.

¹⁰ Anselm touches on this several times in *Monologion*, particularly in 28, where three times he says all things other than God “almost do not exist and barely exist [*fere non esse et uix esse*];” they exist “mutably in some respect [*secundum aliquid*] [and] at some time will be or were what they are not, or they are what at some time they will not be or were not. . . . what they will be is not now . . . what they were no longer is . . . what they are in the wavering and so short and barely existing present hardly is. They thus so mutably exist, that not inappropriately they are denied to exist simply and perfectly, and absolutely, and they are asserted to almost not exist and to barely exist,” p. 46. P 22 clarifies this well: “Therefore you alone, Lord, are what you are, and you are He who is. For what is one thing in its whole, and another in its part, and in which there is something changeable, is not entirely what it is. And what begins from non-being and can be thought not to be, and returns to non-being unless it subsists through another, and what has a past that now it is not and a future which it is not yet, that thing does not exist of itself and absolutely [*non est proprie et absolute*],” p. 116. In the *Responsio*, Anselm generalizes the condition of space-and time-bound things to time itself and the universe [*mundum*]: “For even if it is said that time always is and the universe everywhere, still the former does not always exist as a whole, nor the latter everywhere as a whole,” 1, p.

one time what they are at another. This is how the “law of spaces and times compels [them] to the multiplicity [*ad multiplicitem*] of parts.”¹¹

Yet another way to have parts is for one’s being to be divisible into its properties, attributes, or accidents. God, Anselm tells us, “never grants a place in His simplicity to accidents which produce change,” for these pertain to composite beings, but “with respect to [accidents] not in any way repugnant to the supreme immutability,”¹² i.e. those which do not in any way alter what God is, e.g. certain relations to created beings, these can be said of God. Notice, though, that this involves what God is. This comes up as well in Anselm’s discussion of the simplicity and unity of His attributes, where Anselm contrasts what “is truly said of His essence,” “what He in any way is essentially. . . the whole that He himself is,” with what quality [*qualis*] or what quantity [*quanta*]” one would wrongly ascribe to God, since “Whatever is of a certain quality or to a certain quantity, is something other in a thing than what that thing is, so that it is not simple but composite.”¹³

Lesson 2: The divine attributes are perfectly simple. Simplicity is not only one among many others of God’s attributes. It is also a definitive characteristic of each, as well as of all, of God’s attributes. Anselm discusses such simplicity in two ways, one way pertaining to *each* attribute, the other way connecting *all* the attributes. Before looking at those ways, however, it would be good to remind ourselves what the divine attributes are. Anselm’s most complete listing occurs in *Monologion*, where God is supreme essence, life, reason, salvation, justice, wisdom, truth, goodness, greatness, beauty, immortality, incorruptibility, immutability, blessedness, eternity, power, unity.¹⁴ This is not a complete list of divine attributes Anselm discusses, but sufficient to convey a sense of their scope as well as their seeming diversity. A divine attribute is something that can be said “substantially”¹⁵ about God, i.e. indicating what the divine substance is. Anselm provides a formula for this capping the end of another *Monologion* listing: “whatever likewise it is absolutely better [to be] than not [to be] it [*quidquid similiter absolute melius est quam non ipsum*].”¹⁶

131. While *De Veritate* does not thematize this issue as such, it is notable that on one level the truths of signification, thought (or “opinion”), will, and action are all mutable into falsehood.

¹¹ M 22, p. 40.

¹² M 25, p. 43.

¹³ M 17, p. 31–2.

¹⁴ M 16, p. 31. P 5 provides a much shorter explicit list: “Thus you are just, true, blessed, and whatever is better to be than not to be,” p. 104. This last term opens the door to other attributes (or accidents not changing God’s nature): “sensitive, all-powerful, merciful [not an attribute, but follows from them], impassible,” P 7, p. 105; “living, wise, good. . . eternal”, P 11, p. 110; “that very life, light . . . eternal blessedness and blessed eternity.” P 14, p. 11. Light is an interesting addition in the *Proslogion* listing, and arguably is a divine attribute. Such an argument, which I do not make explicitly here, would rest on four main grounds: 1) the M 6 analogy illuminating *essentia*, *esse*, and *ens* by comparison to *lux*, *lucere*, and *lucens*; 2) The close connection articulated between truth and light in P 14; 3) the later P 16 discussion of the *lux inaccessibilis*; 4) the Johannine language and logic of light undergirding and inspiring Anselm’s own reflections and formulations.

¹⁵ M 15, p. 28.

¹⁶ M 15, p. 29. In P 5, p. 104, “whatever is better to be than not to be,” a formulation which leaves open the door to accidents that do not change God in His being, e.g. mercy.

Now, God is each of these attributes, and in a way radically different from other beings to which these attributes are ascribed. Anselm says that each attribute reveals what God is, not what kind of being he is or how much he is that way [*qualis vel quanta sit*].¹⁷ With other things, “any of them seem to be spoken of through quality or quantity,” i.e. through their participation in the attribute.¹⁸ God, however, simply is the attribute, so that God is not just by *having* and *participating* in justice as created beings do (and as they thus *are*), but by *being* justice: “existing justice,”¹⁹ Anselm says, adding:

about the supreme essence, it is the same thing to say ‘that He is just’, and ‘that He is existing justice.’ And when it is said ‘He is existing justice,’ this is not something other than ‘He is justice.’ Nothing is different in [the supreme essence] if one says ‘He is just’ or ‘He is justice.’ For this reason, when one is asked about what He is, one answers no less appropriately ‘just’ than ‘justice’.²⁰

The same holds for each attribute, so that Anselm ends the listing mentioned earlier by saying “which is not something other than supremely existing, supremely living, and other [activities] [*alia*] in like wise.”²¹ Each attribute is in itself, in God, simple.

They are also simple another way in God, by forming together a perfect unity. Each of them is entirely what the divine substance is, and each likewise is entirely what each and all of the others are. God is not a composition of His attributes, as if they added up to God. Each attribute is entirely permeated by divine plenitude and superabundance, and is not only simple in itself but also with all the other attributes. “[A]ll of them are not many things but one. And so, any one of them is the same thing as all of them, whether [considered] all at the same time or one at a time. So, when He is said to be justice or essence, that signifies the same thing as the other [attributes]”²² Of course, this also goes for unity or simplicity, both being the same, being entirely what God, and being in God entirely what the other attributes are.

Lesson 3: The persons of the Trinity are perfectly simple. In ch. 6 of *De Incarnatione*, arguably the work in which Anselm most fully and profoundly articulates his views on the Trinity, he nevertheless directs his reader back to two sets of sources addressing God’s simplicity, writing:

¹⁷ M 16, p. 30.

¹⁸ M 16, p. 30.

¹⁹ In translating Anselm’s Latin into English, occasionally *esse* as well as *existere* need to be rendered as “exist(s).” Anselm does use *existere* at critical junctures of his work, for instance, in the very end of his *Proslogion* c. 2 proof (*Existit ergo procul dubio aliquid . . .* p. 102), where one might instead expect continued use of *esse*. Clearly, there is some emphasis or difference in signification, rather than just variation or synonym, at work. Determining precisely what Anselm means in such uses of the verb *existere* at critical junctures is a topic admittedly calling for much further study and discussion.

²⁰ M 16, p. 30.

²¹ M 16, p. 31.

²² M 17, p. 31.

That God is one and single and individual and simple nature, and three persons, was argued after the Apostles and Evangelists through incontestable reasonings by the Holy Fathers and in particular the blessed Augustine. But, if one should deign to read my two small works, namely *Monologion* and *Proslogion*, which were written principally so that what we hold by faith about the divine nature and its persons (the Incarnation aside), could be proven by necessary reasonings without use of Scripture's authority. . . I think that there he would find [discussions] about it that he would neither be able to find fault with nor wish to despise.²³

The divine persons' simplicity and unity in the Trinity is a fundamental tenet of Christian faith, mediated by the fertile interplay between Scripture and Tradition, but also offering itself to the genre of rational exploration and explanation not explicitly relying on authority carried out in Anselm's work. So, what does Anselm tell us in those earlier texts? *Proslogion* devotes but a single chapter to the Trinity, in which he tells us that God the Father is "so simple that nothing can be born from You other than what You are," so that in the Word, the Son, "there cannot be something other than what You are, or something more or less than You."²⁴ And, in turn, there is a "love, one and common to You and Your Son, i.e. the Holy Spirit proceeding from both."²⁵ Love is unity between the persons, for:

as much as You love Yourself and the Son, and He You and Himself, so much You are Yourself and Him; nor is what is not unequal to You and the Son something other than You and the Son. . . What each one is singly, is the entire Trinity at the same time, Father and Son and Holy Spirit.²⁶

Monologion explores the Trinity more methodically, and a few points are particularly worth mentioning here.

The Word, "something like the model of the things to be made, or better said the form, or likeness, or rule"²⁷ through which the Creator made and sustains everything, "is not something other than the supreme essence,"²⁸ so that there is distinction, but not difference between them. Anselm also clarifies that the Word is not the "likeness of all the things that were made, but rather their true and simple essence," adding that, "in made things there is no simple and absolute essence but barely some imitation of that true essence."²⁹ This derives from what he argued just earlier, that since the Word "is consubstantial with the supreme nature," which itself is

²³ DI 6, p. 20.

²⁴ P 23, p. 117.

²⁵ P 23, p. 117.

²⁶ P 23, p. 117.

²⁷ M 9, p. 24.

²⁸ M 12, p. 26.

²⁹ M 31, p. 50. I.e. there is diversity and composition in the *totality* of things that were made, and in *each and every* of the things that were made, whether they be individual or universal substances or essences (a wider class than substances).

“supremely simple,” the Word is also perfectly simple, and does not consist of several words, but one Word.”³⁰ The Holy Spirit, which is love, is likewise as great as God,³¹ and is entirely God,³² so Anselm concludes, “Love is the same thing as the supreme wisdom, the supreme truth, the supreme good, and whatever can be said of this supreme spirit.”³³

De Incarnatione, motivated by somewhat different argumentative concerns about the Trinity, illuminates the issue of divine simplicity in several ways relevant here. Anselm clarifies that “we do not speak of three persons because they are three separate things, like three men, but because they have a certain likeness to three separate persons.”³⁴ We must take care not to tailor our understanding of the perfectly simple divine substance and its persons in accordance with the logic of composite things. Accordingly, Anselm diagnoses both intellectual and moral error in maintaining God to be composite: since “simple things are better than composite things,” the consequence would be “either no nature is simple, or there is some other nature that in some way [i.e. by being simple] would be better than God’s nature.”³⁵ Taking the position that God is composite in fact involves the human creature in “say[ing] that one can understand something greater than God. Thus, one’s intellect goes beyond God, which no intellect can do.”³⁶ Holding God to be composite leads to another scandalizing implication: the three persons would be “three discordant things, which cannot harmonize [*concordare*] in the deity except through something else, nor could they contribute perfection or assistance so that God would be.”³⁷ As Anselm

³⁰ M 30, p. 48.

³¹ M 52, p. 65.

³² M 53, p. 66.

³³ M 53, p. 66.

³⁴ DI 12, p. 30. We need to be careful, however, in reasoning through such likenesses. The relation of likeness is not really oriented the way this passage seems to say, since created things are likenesses (and not particularly good ones) of God, rather than the converse. Even fairly good likenesses, where analogies between created things and the Triune God are fairly strong, remain still only analogies. Consider Anselm’s ingenious *De Incarnatione* attempt to explain the Trinity through the analogy of spring, river, lake, and Nile (since it involves more structurally analogous components, a better analogy than e.g. the shamrock analogy attributed to St. Patrick), about which Anselm writes: “Here then is [a case] where three things are said of one entire perfect whole [*uno toto perfecto*], and one perfect whole of three things, but the three themselves are not said of each other; still, this is differently and more perfectly in that most simple nature which is most free of every law of time and space.” DI 13, p. 32. Cf. also Letter 83. For further and deeper discussion of the issue of likenesses between human and divine, cf. Gillian R. Evans, “Saint Anselm’s Analogies,” *Vivarium* v. 2 (1976), and J. Bayart, S.J., “The Concept of Mystery According to Saint Anselm of Canterbury,” *Recherches de Théologie ancienne et médiévale*, v. 9 (1937).

³⁵ DI 4, p. 17.

³⁶ DI 4, p. 18. For Anselm, setting oneself above or beyond God reflects a moral as well as intellectual lapse. It is the very type of foolishness: “If some mind could think of something greater than you, the creature would ascend beyond the creator, and would sit in judgement on the creator, which is absurd. . . . Why then does ‘the Fool say in his heart: There is no God? . . . Why, except that he is stupid and foolish?’” P 3, p. 103. The Devil’s central fault was that “he willed inordinately to be alike to God [*similis esse deo*],” since he willed something by a self-will [*propria voluntate*], which was subject to none else”, and this meant that “he not only willed to be equal to God because he presumed to have a self-will, but by willing what God did not will him to will, he even willed to be greater [than God] since he set his will above the will of God,” DCD 4, p. 242. Cf. also Anselm’s longer discussions of *propria voluntas* in DI 10, in DM and the *Dicta Anselmi*.

³⁷ DI 5, p. 18.

remarks later, “where there is plurality, there is diversity, and where there is diversity, there is not perfect harmony.”³⁸

Lesson 4: Each divine attribute possesses a reflective intensity, in which the divine persons are involved. The last point could raise a puzzle: granted each person of the Trinity is entirely God, entirely what God is substantively, isn't there nevertheless some degree of diversity or at least plurality in the Trinity? The very *De Incarnatione* discussion including the passage just cited includes a solution to this puzzle, one that provides a perfect capstone to several other Anselmian doctrines articulating what I will call the “*reflexive intensity*” of the divine attributes. What I mean by this neologism is best made clear by turning directly to the passages in which it is progressively outlined. First, let us remember the point that for each attribute, God not only is that attribute itself (other things only participating in the attribute) He is also that attribute through what we might call the attribute's distinctive activity or condition. Anselm concludes in *Proslogion*: “You are thus that very life by which you live, and the wisdom by which you are wise, and the goodness by which you are good to both good and evil people, and likewise with similar attributes.”³⁹ God would be the very justice by which He is just, the very eternity by which he is eternal, and so on (including most importantly, the very simplicity by which He is simple). *Monologion* frames this more determinately in the Trinity, first in terms of the Father and the Son, then in terms of all three persons.

Both Father and Son are the essence of the other, a truth that “emphasizes their common nature's supreme unity and simplicity,”⁴⁰ but Anselm adds, it is more fitting for the Son to be called the Father's essence than the converse, so that he is “the Father's virtue, and wisdom or truth, and justice, and anything else which befits the essence of the supreme spirit.”⁴¹ Put in a more active way, the Son is “perfect understanding [*intelligentiam*] or perfect knowing [*cognitiamem*], or knowledge and wisdom of the entire Paternal substance, i.e. he understands, and fully knows [*cognoscit et scit*]⁴² and is wise about the Father's very essence.”⁴³ This leads then to the realization that: “if the Father's very substance is understanding, and knowledge, and wisdom, and truth, consequently it can be gathered that just as the Son is the understanding, and knowledge, and wisdom, and truth of the Father, He is understanding of understanding, knowledge of knowledge, wisdom of wisdom, and truth of truth.”⁴⁴

³⁸ DI 15, p. 33.

³⁹ P 12, p. 110.

⁴⁰ M 44, p. 60.

⁴¹ M 45, p. 62.

⁴² This passage presents particular problems for accurate translation into English. Not only do we suffer a certain lack of analogically corresponding vocabulary with respect to *cognoscere/ scire* (not the case, e.g. with French *connaître / savoir*, or German *kennen / wissen*), but even more problematically the Son or Word's manner of knowledge, and (self)-knowledge of the divine are radically different and greater than our own. The Word's manner of knowing even created things “cannot be comprehended by human knowledge”, M 36, p. 54.

⁴³ M 46, p. 62.

⁴⁴ M 47, p. 63.

By analogous reasoning, the Holy Spirit is “the essence and wisdom, and similar attributes of the Father and the Son.”⁴⁵ Even the three attributes or activities specifically assigned to the persons, memory to the Father, understanding to the Son, and love to the Holy Spirit,⁴⁶ are entirely and self-sufficiently in each of the divine persons.⁴⁷ Thus, through these reasonings we glimpse (though never entirely comprehend) this *reflexive intensity* involved in each divine attribute, a sort of reduplication and intensification of an attribute through the relations and simplicity of the divine persons. Reduplication is a misleading term, though, as *De Incarnatione* reveals, where Anselm at last tells us:

A nature in which repeated things always harmonize [*convenit*] with each other in perfect unity is more worthy than one which admits plurality in itself. . . . [P]erfect harmony is what harmonizes in a one sameness and same oneness [*unam identitatem et eandem unitatem*].⁴⁸

He first applies this to the divine persons’ eternity, or possibly eternities: “If we say that they are many inside each other [*in se invicem*], we must know that however much eternity is repeated inside eternity, it is still only one and the same eternity.”⁴⁹ This intensification occurs within all divine attributes, for “this can be similarly said of many other things, e.g. omnipotence in omnipotence is just one omnipotence.”⁵⁰

Lesson 5: Divine simplicity has moral significance. Given what we have said so far, it should not be surprising that simplicity is ultimately and intimately connected with moral attributes such as goodness and justice. After all, in God, each attribute is entirely what the other attributes are, and will also be entirely in harmony with the other attributes. One key moral aspect of divine simplicity, lending determinate contours to the divine omnipotence, is that there are certain things that God cannot do. God not being able to do these things does not stem, however, from any inability, failure, weakness, or imperfection on God’s part. In *Proslogion*, Anselm says God cannot “be corrupted, or lie, or make the true false, or what has been done not be done, and other similar things,” but then explains that “to be able to do these is not power but

⁴⁵ M 58, p. 69.

⁴⁶ M 59, p. 70.

⁴⁷ M 60, p. 70–1.

⁴⁸ DI 15, p. 33. This raises an important, and all too neglected caution about our conceptual and linguistic resources, and about simplicity and basic status which our linguistic expressions and concepts seem but do not actually possess. Using terms such as “reduplication,” “intensification”, or “reflexive/ reflexivity” very easily lends itself to the mistaken impression that an attribute to be found in divinity is the attribute as we understand it (and we wrongly assume this to be the attribute *as such*, in its *most simple* form) *modified* augmentatively in one way or another (reduplication of the attribute, reflexive application of the attribute to itself, (infinite) intensification). Instead what we actually find (imperfectly, not because it is not perfectly there, but because of inadequacies of our own resources) in the divine substance is what the attribute truly is, in all of its plentitude and dynamicity. Our over-simple and simplistic conceptions of attributes are impoverished in comparison to the divine attributes in their reality.

⁴⁹ DI 15, p. 33.

⁵⁰ DI 15, p. 33. Anselm does not mean for this to be the final and conclusive word on this subject, however, writing: “so, this ought to be discussed more fully in other places.” DI 15, p. 34.

impotence. For one who can do them can do what is not good for oneself and what one ought not. The more one can do them, the more adversity and perversity can do in one, and one can do less against them. Thus, one who can so act, cannot act through power but through powerlessness.”⁵¹

The similarity such acts bear is that they introduce or assume discordant diversity and complication in the agent, who is also acted upon or determined by something else.⁵² Divine goodness, greatness, justice, omnipotence, and simplicity repulses the very possibility of God doing such things. That we can and often do ascribe them, or even think them of God merely reflects our own imperfection, our distance from truth, our own impotence and lack of simplicity. Other examples occur throughout Anselm’s works, and a few are worth mention here. In *Cur Deus Homo* for example, he says “it does not follow that, if God wills to lie, it is just to lie, but rather that he is not God. For no will whatsoever can will to lie, except one in which truth is corrupted, indeed one that has been corrupted by deserting truth.”⁵³ *De Libertate Arbitrii* tells us “nothing is more impossible than that God take away rightness of will,” since this would mean that God “does not will a person to will what God does will him to will.”⁵⁴ *De Casu Diaboli* explicitly frames this in terms of simplicity:

The reason we say God cannot do something opposed to Himself or perverse, is that He is so powerful in blessedness and justice, for indeed blessedness and

⁵¹ P 7, p. 105.

⁵² In this, typically discordance(s) exists between the agent and the patient (who remains an agent, but one compelled or drawn in its action by a more powerful other agent). This is a theme found throughout Anselm’s corpus. Among the treatises, DL, DCD, DVC, and DC all discuss cases in which one wills something inordinately and against God’s will, then finds oneself made captive, subject to what one had wanted, and in which one does not find satisfaction but compulsion.

Repeatedly in DM Anselm writes about a number of ways in which the human will permits itself to be tempted and seduced by diabolical blandishments (though Anselm does not mean to leave out other possible agents, e.g. other evil spirits, evil human beings, one’s own disordered appetites, affections of the will, or conceptions. He would have no problem with the adage that we have three principal enemies: the Devil, the world, and the flesh) to contravene God’s will. The results are evil acts and vices, DM 2; particularly self-will and pride DM 6–7.

In the *Prayers and Meditations*, Anselm addresses, is beset by, and regrets having followed his “sins”, his “wicked deeds” (*Prayer to Mary I*, p. 108). He laments: “Is it thus, unhappy sins, that you keep your promises? When you drew me on, you promised sweetness; when it was done, and I was in your power, you filled me with bitterness,” (*Prayer to St. Paul*, p. 135). He finds himself captive to a “torpor that holds me because of the filth of my sins” (*Prayer to St. Peter*, p. 135), and in danger of continually falling further into an bottomless “abyss” of sins (*Prayer to St. Nicholas*, p. 191), a term also appearing in DC 3.8, where after sinning, one is “plunged by one’s own merit, from one sin to the next [*de peccato in peccatum*], down at last into a bottomless (i.e. deep beyond estimation) abyss of sins,” p. 275.

⁵³ CDH 1.12, p. 70.

⁵⁴ DL 8, p. 221. Cf. also DC 1.6. In fact, Anselm tells us in DC 3. 4 and 3.12 that God not only wills that we persevere in keeping rightness of will when we have it, He even gives us considerable aids, so many that Anselm declines providing a listing of them. “Grace so follows its giving that—whether it be great or small—it never fails in giving it, except when free choice [*liberum arbitrium*], deserts the rectitude it received by willing something else . . . Grace even aids the free choice when it is attacked [to force it] to desert the rectitude it received, by lessening or even removing the strength of the attacking temptation or by increasing the affection for that very rectitude,” p. 268.

justice are not different things in Him but one good, that he is all-powerful in simple goodness that He could do no thing that would harm the supreme good.⁵⁵

God's creation is not itself simple, for it is: "such a heap [*molem*] of things, so numerous a multitude, so beautifully formed, so orderedly varied, so fittingly different."⁵⁶ Yet, the divine will and justice extending to and within all created things are and remain perfectly simple even when embracing and ordering even disordered diversity, and so it is fitting we end this last lesson about divine simplicity by citing this revealing passage from *Cur Deus Homo*: "If nothing is greater or better than God, nothing is more just than that supreme justice, which is not something other than God Himself, preserve His honor in the arrangement of affairs."⁵⁷

II. Complex Human Beings and Their Complicating Approaches to God

Our condition as human beings is to be complex, subjected to the laws of space and time, wholes divisible into frequently inharmonious parts. We inhabit a world, natural, interpersonal, and cultural, itself exceedingly complicated, and filled with other human beings caught up in the same condition (but of course, never in precisely the same ways). Even our basic views on the fundamental human condition reveal diversity and discordances. Our condition is, put simply, one radically different from that of the perfectly simple Triune God. Now, one way to put the basic point and goal of the Christian religion is like this: we want, and we ought to want, to approach God more closely, and we do, and ought to do, what it takes to do so. Admittedly, this wanting and doing is generally carried out in imperfect, at times inconsistent and conflicted, and often unpersevering ways, but let us set those problems aside for the moment.

The God we try to approach is entirely simple. But, if you look at the ways in which we aim to approach Him, even think through them using some of Anselm's texts, you find that these

⁵⁵ DCD 12, p. 253.

⁵⁶ M 7, p. 22.

⁵⁷ CDH 1.13, p. 71. This reflects two important aspects of divine justice, which are worth pointing out. First, there is identity between God Himself, the justice *by which* all things are providentially arranged, and the *justice in the providential arrangement*, i.e. the justice in which the providential arrangement more fully participates than does any other thing. Second, The supreme justice is superlatively just not only by simply being so (i.e. being the supreme and absolute justice from which all things that are just derive that quality and its quantity by participation), but also by actively maintaining a just ordering of all things in relation to the supreme justice. A third aspect, concretely implicated with these other two, is that the divine justice preserves God's honor in the providential arrangement not only through the Incarnation and Atonement, but also through all instances where injustice (even complex, widespread, long-lasting, and to some degree self-replicating orderings and effects of injustice) is permitted by God on the part of creatures. This is a theme Anselm raises in numerous places, often discussing it specifically with reference to the supreme wisdom as well as justice.

Two examples must suffice here. In punishing human beings, the Devil does not thereby become good or just, since "he did not do this by God commanding it, but rather His incomprehensible wisdom, which even orders evil things well, permitting it." CDH 1.7, p. 57. "Thus, if some man or evil angel will not to be subject to the divine will and arrangement, still he cannot escape it, since if he wills to flee from being under the will that commands, he runs right under a will that punishes. . . . Precisely what he perversely wills or does, is diverted by the supreme wisdom back to the order and beauty of the universe." CDH 1.15, p. 73.

ways appear to be irremediably complicated. Worse, it even seems that while following out these ways we can simplify some things, other things become even more complicated. Thus, there seems to be a deep discordance and distance between the perfectly simple God, our complicated lives and our complicated and complicating approaches to Him in those lives. No matter which aspect we examine: reasoning, understanding, action, willing, loves, relationships, all of them seem caught within this problem.

Two Ways of Approaching God. Here to lend the problem a structure, I will borrow some useful formulations from an article by Marilyn McCord Adams. She rightly notes that, in Anselm's view, human beings are teleologically structured and oriented to full relationship with and enjoyment of God, and writes:

Anselm recognizes two significant obstacles to our reaching this goal. (i) First and sufficient, is the ontological incommensuration between a simple, immutable, and eternal God and fleeting creatures that 'scarcely exist' by comparison. . . (ii) Second and reparable, is the damage suffered by human nature as a result of Adam's fall—loss of uprightness of will, blindness, weakness, and lack of emotional control—which mar its image of God and hinder smooth functioning.⁵⁸

Theoretically distinguishable, these two obstacles are not easily disentangled from each other in practice, in concrete human lives. The second obstacle is in some respects more encompassing and problematic than the first. As Adams remarks, when it comes to God, "the subject matter is extremely difficult, even ineffable and impenetrable," but "our problem is severe. . . because (fallen) human nature being as it is, we begin ignorant of how to inquire."⁵⁹

Corresponding to these two obstacles, let us think about two basic types of approaches to God, one primarily intellectual, aiming at approaching God more and more closely by generating more and more adequate knowledge or understanding of Him, and another primarily practical, aiming at approaching God more and more closely by willing and acting in accordance with God's will, as well as through the affections or emotions, particularly through desire, delight, and the sorrow of compunction, but most principally through love. The promise and orientation of the first type of approach is for the human being to get things right in the sense of getting a correct understanding of how things really stand, ideally (though impossibly) to understand and

⁵⁸ Adams, "*Fides Quaerens Intellectum: Saint Anselm's Method in Philosophical Theology*," *Faith and Philosophy*, v. 9, n. 4 (1992), p 410. One might also distinguish a third obstacle interconnected with but distinct from the second: our merit (or lack thereof). In the *Prayer to God*, Anselm asks: "Lord do not give me over either to my human ignorance and weakness or to my own deserts," (p. 90) a revealing formulation. In the fallen state, it is not only the case that the faculties of the human being are damaged, misdirected, infected by perverse habits, so that these detriments to our faculties constitute a type of obstacle to proper relationship to the divine. It is also the case that we *merit* not to be in or have restored to us such a relationship (i.e. we do not merit it, and cannot merit it by our own efforts). God, however, can be perfectly just (i.e. perfectly recognize and act according to merit) and yet redeem the fallen creature (among other things, restoring to it a merit it lacked), in ways and according to a logic CDH, DCV, and the *Meditation on Human Redemption* outline for us.

⁵⁹ Adams, "*Fides Quaerens Intellectum*," p. 411.

know God as He does Himself. That of the second is getting things right in a related but different sense, willing, acting, and feeling the right things, what one ought to, what God wills, and thereby what brings one into closer communion with God, or at least back towards Him (e.g. in repentance, good resolutions, doing penance). Now, neither Anselm, nor Adams, nor any scholar with a solid understanding of Anselm's views on human nature and God, nor even I myself would dream of insisting these two types of approaches to God are separate or even wholly separable from each other. Intellectual inquiry is driven and kept on track by desire, and carried out through willing and acts. In return, doing, feeling, and willing the right things requires that one know, or at least know where to find out, what the right things are. I distinguish them here simply for convenience.

Before examining how these approaches to the perfectly simple God complicate things, we ought to reflect on how complicated things are for us. Recall something mentioned earlier which did not pertain to God, but certainly does pertain to us, the condition of being composite, having parts. Although we are wholes, we are never wholly what we are.⁶⁰ We exist in space and time, or rather over spaces and times. Anselm also notes that we are bodies, and rational, and human, but neither body nor rational by itself is "the whole that is a human being."⁶¹ Our minds and hearts are composed of various parts,⁶² which can be and often are discordant with one another, even with themselves. For example, Anselm distinguishes the human will into the instrument itself, its determinate uses, and its lasting affections,⁶³ and these are often at odds with each other, reflecting lack of simplicity even in this most basic human faculty.⁶⁴ Even putting aside all the problems of temptation and perversity of will, just understanding things rightly, properly employing reason in its function of "discerning the just from the non just, the true from the not true, the good from the not good, and the greater good from the lesser good,"⁶⁵ is difficult because of something God cannot do, but we humans and the malignant spirits can do,

⁶⁰ The exception to this would be our being in the divine Word, discussed in M 31, 35, and 36, and in the supreme Truth, mentioned in DV 7. But, raising these passages simply *reinforces* the point, for not only are we never wholly what we are in relation to ourselves over time, we also fall short ontologically and morally of what we actually are in the divine mind, and ought to be in our substances.

⁶¹ M 17, p. 31

⁶² Anselm tells us for instance that "the soul has in it certain powers which it uses as instruments for their appropriate acts [*ad usus congruos*]. . . Reason or will is not the entire soul, but each one is something in the soul," DC 3.11, p. 279. He mentions reason and imagination as distinct modes of expression in M 10, and contrasts them in DI 1(c.f. also DM 20). M 31 contrasts the senses and reason, DV 6 the senses and thought or opinion, DCV 4 the appetites and the will (which is held culpable for assenting to them). The *Dicta Anselmi* reports Anselm as teaching that "The soul has in itself three natures, namely, reason, will, and appetite," c. 17, p. 174.

⁶³ Anselm will not explicitly make this threefold distinction until his later works DCV, DC, and DM. Already in DL, however, he distinguishes will as instrument from will as use. For further discussion of the progressive development of Anselm's distinctions in the will, cf. my "Freedom, Inclinations of the Will, and Virtue in Anselm's Moral Theory," forthcoming in *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association*, v. 81. cf. also G. Stanley Kane, *Anselm's Doctrine of Freedom and the Will* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press. 1981).

⁶⁴ The distinction of will to justice and will to happiness (or the beneficial) begins to be made from DCD on. One is often tempted to abandon the will to justice in favor of inordinate desires as modalities of will to happiness. From DL on, Anselm discusses temptation, which by itself already reflects conflict and possible bifurcation in the human will.

⁶⁵ M 68, p. 78. Cf. Also CDH 2.1, where Anselm frames it slightly differently: "that it discerns between the just and the unjust, and between the good and the evil, and between the greater good and the lesser good," p. 97.

i.e. lie, generate and introduce to the world untruths, distortions, perversities, portions of malignant nothingness parasitic upon being and goodness.⁶⁶

Lying, possible not only in words or thoughts but even by willing or acting, always represents a sort of bifurcating and obscuring departure from simplicity into complication, reflecting this in the lying being and perhaps reproducing this in the being lied to and believing lies.⁶⁷ Consider the scandalizing situations Anselm describes in *De Veritate*:⁶⁸

If you did not know that one ought not lie and someone lied in your presence, even if he himself were to tell you that one ought not lie, he would tell you more by his action that one ought to lie than by his words that one ought not to. Similarly, when someone thinks of or wills something, if you do not know whether they ought to will it or think about it, if you were to see their will or thought, he would signify to you by that very action that one ought to think of and will it. Now if he ought to do so, he would speak truly, but if not, he would lie. Also, there is similarly true and false signification in the existence of things, for by the very fact a thing exists, it says it ought to exist.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ These perhaps florid formulations are my own, but reflect Anselm's doctrine about human being, injustice, and nothingness articulated in DCD, DC, and DCV.

⁶⁷ Cf. DM 74, where Anselm likens the Devil to an unscrupulous and "shameless pleader," who takes his case to the human heart: "even if he knows that he does not have right, still he asserts there what is false to be true, and what is true to be false. Indeed, he speaks there by thoughts [*cogitatione*] that he sends in, that it is true that a human being ought to love the world, and to desire wealth and honors, and to satisfy the 'desires of the flesh', and to do these things and other similar to them; which is false. And, on another side, he says that it is false that a human being ought to give up the world, to hold wealth and honor in contempt, to cut oneself off from the desires of the flesh, to approach monastic life, and to do these things and many others; which is proven to be entirely true," p. 65. A little earlier, he says that "if [the Devil] at some time he discovers the human heart empty of good thoughts, he immediately fills it up, if he can, with bad ones. Of these evil thoughts, some of them wear away the human heart, like anger and envy; others gum it up and pollute it, like gluttony and prodigality; others take possession of it, like vain things that are not greatly damaging. . . . If, one permits the devil to corrupt one's heart, quickly the vices make their way in through the senses, connected to the types of bad thoughts which are inwardly turned over and over," DM 41, p. 54

⁶⁸ The example involving discrepancy between what a person says and does (e.g. eating herbs which may be healthy or poisonous) appears both in DV 9, and DM 130. In DM 129 and 130, the scandal stems from the fact that: "when someone acts or speaks or thinks, he indicates to others that one ought to act, to speak, and to think in that way," p. 88. The *Vita Anselmi*, c. 22 provides a revealing example of this in Anselm's reproving conversation with the other abbot about the latter's practice of seemingly indiscriminate beatings of his young charges. One might summarize Anselm's views thus: beatings (or indeed any sort of coercion), while often necessary are good only instrumentally, and easily become bad, requiring development and employment of discretion. The beatings the other abbot was in the practice of giving his young charges were generally undeserved and inordinate, and thus produced bad moral effects contravening the proper growth in goodness and holiness of the students. But, worse yet, as Anselm pointed out, they scandalize the boys being beaten, precisely through the example of the abbot and monks administering the beatings: "feeling no love or pity, good-will or tenderness in your attitude towards them, they have in future no faith in your goodness but believe that all your actions proceed from hatred and malice towards them. . . They have been brought up in no true charity towards anyone, so they regard everyone with suspicion and jealousy." The Life of Saint Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury. Trans. R.W. Southern (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons. 1962), p. 38.

⁶⁹ DV 9, p. 189. Anselm does discuss cases where something that exists ought not exist. Evil deeds, at least in some sense, ought not to exist, DV 8. The injustice human beings by their willing (to be sure, Anselm also sees in this the

How complicated things are for us and in us! Attempting to approach God should presumably draw us out of the complications of our lives and closer to his divine simplicity. Is this what occurs with the two types of approaches? It seems not.

Complexity in the Intellectual and Practical Ways. Consider first the intellectual way. Anselm nowhere develops a general epistemology or metaphysics of knowledge, but he does say several relevant things in *Monologion*. First, “created substances exist much differently [*multo aliter esse*] in themselves than they are in our knowledge,” since they are there only “by their likeness.”⁷⁰ As Anselm says, “whatever our mind attempts to truly think by corporeal imagination or by reason, it attempts to express its likeness as best it can in its own thought.”⁷¹ This is actually the third of three types of “expressions” (*verba*) Anselm distinguishes, the first two using “sensible signs”, either outwardly, e.g. in language, or inwardly in our minds, i.e. in thought. By the third type we “speak the things themselves inwardly in our minds, either by imagination of bodies or understanding of reason in place of the diversity of the things themselves.”⁷² Now, all of these ways of expression are complex, particularly when it comes to God for whom neither our language nor our intellectual faculties are adequate.⁷³ As Anselm admits of the divine attributes, “my narrow understanding cannot see them all in one gaze at the same time.”⁷⁴ Consider also that we arrive at the third, most plentifully truthful and

work of the Devil, other fallen angels, and often other human beings) bring about, whether as nothing (i.e. pure privation), or as something detrimental, discussed as such in DCD, DCV, and DC ought not exist.

⁷⁰ M 36, p. 54–5.

⁷¹ M 33, p. 52. Note, though that, reason possesses a priority over imagination in terms of simplicity and unity. Anselm faults his opponent in DI 4 for relying too much on imagination. “If he had a simple understanding and not one covered over with a multiplicity of imaginations [*phantasmatum*], he would understand that simple things are better than composite ones. . . . If he is among those recent dialecticians who believe nothing to exist except what they can comprehend by imagination. . . .” p. 18.

⁷² M 10, p. 25. This is echoed by P 4, where Anselm distinguishes two ways of saying something in one’s heart or thinking something: “One thinks a thing (or state of affairs, *res*) in one way when one thinks the expression [*vox*] signifying it, but in another way when in understands what that every thing is [*id ipsum quod res est*],” p. 103.

Still, we remain reliant upon the mediation of likeness or images: “In human thought, when one thinks of something that is outside the mind, an expression [*verbum*] is not born through the thought of that thing from that very thing, since it is absent from the direct apprehension of thought [*a cogitationis intuitu*], but from the likeness or the image that is in the memory of thought, or perhaps what it brings into the mind when it grasps through the bodily senses from the thing currently present.” M 62, p. 72. Even when the rational mind grasps itself, “it has its own image with itself, born from itself, i.e. the thought of itself formed to its own likeness, as if by its own impression,” p. 52.

⁷³ In DA 9, Anselm provides an analogy: “‘But now we see’ what we speak of ‘in a riddle’, and as if in some picture, for instance when we should see a painted sun or sea. For indeed when we see a depicted sun or sea, we do not see it then as it is in itself [*in se*] or in reality [*in re*]. For when we see the sun shining brilliantly [*clare*], or we discern the turbulent or tranquil sea, we do truthfully grasp [*intuemur*] the thing just as it is, although we are not able to grasp it to the degree it is [*tantam quanta est*]. Now nobody sees the sun’s degree of splendor or its power, and there is nobody who judges the expanse or depth of the sea. And likewise God’s saints will see God ‘just as He is’ in His glory; but they will not be able to fully grasp [*comprehendere*] the divinity’s greatness or the unmeasurableness of His power. For, it would not be immeasurable if it could be fully grasped by any intellect.” p. 148–9.

⁷⁴ P 18, p. 114. Grasping the totality of a thing is an ideal, unrealizable in the case of the divine, but even quite difficult when it is a matter of human arguments. Anselm counsels his student, for instance, in DCD 12, that “so that we may unveil the truth of the thing. . . . It is needful that you are not content to understand the things I say singly, but that you bring all of them together at the same time in memory as if in one grasp [*quasi sub uno intuitu*],” p. 252.

adequate, type of expressions precisely through uses of sensible signs which we do get beyond, but upon which we remain dependent, particularly when we wish to communicate our knowledge or reasoning.

The practical way also remains complex, for doing things in accordance with God's will is not always as simple as it sounds. But why not? Doesn't Anselm give us a very clear and simple formulation of what we ought to do, will and feel, and how we ought to be, by his recurrent definition of justice as "rectitude of will kept for its own sake"? He even provides us a touchstone: "rectitude of will is present in someone when that person wills what God wills them to will."⁷⁵ Would it not be enough for us to echo the *Oratio Universalis* attributed to Clement XI?

I will whatever You will
I will things because You will them
I will things to be as You will them
I will them so long as You will them⁷⁶

This is all fairly simple in the abstract, but as we all know from own experiences, discerning God's will and aligning one's own will with His in our own lives is not quite so simple. Consider just four complicating factors.

First, there are the innumerable concrete consequences of original sin and effects of personal sins. Our wills are weakened, subject to and cast into all sorts of temptations. We will perseveringly what we should only with effort, and the aid of grace. In many of us (certainly myself I will confess), long-developed and deeply rooted vices have taken hold and made their homes,⁷⁷ stemming from, embodying, and exacerbating what Anselm calls *propria voluntate*, perhaps best though imperfectly translated as "self-will,"⁷⁸ opposed to God's, generating complicating discordances in our wills and lives. Our intellectual faculties are themselves affected as well,⁷⁹ and this brings us to the second factor. In his texts, Anselm refers us to a

⁷⁵ DC 1.6, p. 256. "Every rational will of the creature should be subject to the will of God. . . . This is justice or rectitude of will, which makes people just or upright [*rectos*] of heart, i.e. of will." CDH I. 11, p. 68. Later in the same work: "Every rational creature owes [*debet*] that obedience to God." CDH 2.10, p. 111 Earlier in *De Libertate*, "no will is just except one that wills what God wills it to will", 8, p. 220. More specifically: "keeping rectitude of will for the sake of that very rectitude is, for each person, to will what God wills that person to will," DL 8, p. 220.

⁷⁶ "Volo quidquid vis/ volo quia vis/ volo quomodo vis/ volo quamdiu vis," Daily Roman Missal, 6th ed. Fr. James Socias, ed (Chicago: Midwest Theological Forum), p. 2208.

⁷⁷ Anselm's addressing his vices and sins in his written prayers is, I would argue, more than a mere literary device, reflecting the fact that habits of vices and repeated sins take on a sort of life, agency, and almost personal intentionality of their own in the human person. And, they are not easy, generous, or reliable house-mates with whom to share one's soul as abode.

⁷⁸ Hopkins and Richardson translate this term as "autonomous willing," which could lend itself to generating some misunderstanding, given the number of senses of that term in modern moral philosophy. It must be admitted that "self-will" is not a particularly felicitous expression either. In order to gain a better understanding of the term, it is useful to examine Anselm's many uses of it in DM.

⁷⁹ In Anselm's view, once human nature's original justice was lost by Adam's (and Eve's) abandonment of it, our intellectual faculties suffered, not least because in the human being these are inseparably bound up with a body with

number of sources for moral guidance and renewal, of which an incomplete list includes: passages from or exegesis of Scripture, already existing rules, laws, or morally imbued social roles, obedience to superiors, the examples and cultivation of the virtues, and our use of our own rightly ordered and directed minds. How does one discern in concrete situations precisely what willing, acting, feeling, even thinking in accordance with God's will calls for? How does one determine which sources to rely upon, how to interpret them, how to construe a situation? Some cases are in fact simple, but no human life is composed merely of those. More commonly our moral lives and reflections are quite complex, and this leads into the third complicating factor.

This factor and the next one both bear on intellectual as well as practical ways of approaching God. As pointed out several times now, we are beings bound by and, you might say, scattered in our being over time and space. So, even if at moments we further penetrate intellectually into the divine mysteries, at other moments we find ourselves back in the ordinary and complicated, even distracted flow of our thoughts. And, even if over a course of time, we do persevere in doing, willing, feeling, thinking, or saying what brings us closer to the perfectly simple God, these remain a complex assemblage of acts no single one of which entirely embodies our relation with God. A fourth complicating factor resides in the very processes of rectifying our thoughts, wills, actions, or emotions. We strive to make progress towards God by replacing falsity with truth, less adequate understanding and remembrance with better understanding and remembrance, evil actions and vices with good actions and virtues, hatred, disobedience, or indifference towards God with love, desire, and obedience. Does not every such process already involve irreducible complexity, even introduce new complexities into our considerations and lives? When, for instance, we accept and collaborate with the determinate shapes grace takes, and when we adopt good resolutions, intentions, precepts, models, does not each one of these add yet one more thing to our thoughts and our lives, rendering them then that much more complex?

all of its desires and affections. In fact, "all that they [Adam and Eve] were is weakened and corrupted," DCV 2, p. 141, i.e. human being in all of its dimensions is so affected. So, Anselm tells us that once justice has been lost, "the soul, weighed down by the body which is [by loss or privation of justice] corrupted cannot even understand justice, which cannot be kept or even had when it is not understood," DCV 8, p. 149. Admittedly this is a rather extreme formulation, not to be taken as an entirely general depiction of the human condition lacking justice. For, Anselm tells us that "still in Adam, there remained some justice to human nature, so that in certain things it did keep a right will," DCV 24, p. 166. In L 4 Anselm suggests that in the absence of rectitude of will kept for its own sake, reason can still at least recognize that rectitude, this does not mean that the creature can on its own in any given case or situation rightly distinguish it.

Anselm clearly acknowledges problems for the disordered soul lacking justice, e.g., in DCD 10, justice lacking, "how much wearying and multifold passion takes over the mind"; in DC 3.13, the will turns itself to false and bestial beneficial things (*commoda*), suggested by bestial appetites, the Pauline "flesh" and "concupiscence." There are also difficulties in this present life even for those who do keep justice. In DCV 23, he mentions that "our will. . .often and very much hinders the mind from understanding rectitude"; in DCD 21 his student brings up the pain of sympathy, as well as greater persecution, endured by just people. He depicts his own case with artistic vividness but also with technical precision in the *Prayer to St. Nicholas*: "What are these things, O God, what are these things which thus darken my soul, weight it down, enclose and bind it? Perhaps these are my sins? . . . Fleshly love weakens the sap of the spirit within me; attention to earthly things bends my soul away from knowledge of things above; earthly love extinguishes in me delight of heavenly things. The habit of vice has wiped away in me the knowledge of true good," p. 189.

III. Complicating Our Lives in the Right Ways

Given these considerations, should we despair over the prospects of complicated creatures living complicated lives approaching and entering into fuller and deeper relations with our perfectly simple God? Responses to the problem I have raised do exist in and can be drawn out from Anselm's works. Before we look briefly at just a few of them, however, notice something about the last section: the fundamental problem it purportedly laid out and argued for is really a pseudo-problem. What is the unexamined logical basis on which it implicitly rests? It runs along these lines: God is perfectly simple. Our lives are complicated. The complicated and the simple are opposites. Therefore the complexity of our lives must be distant from, even disconnected from or opposed to the simplicity of God. Furthermore, when we attempt to approach God, our ways make matters more complicated. Thus, they must also distance us from God's simplicity. This reasoning is not entirely false, but it does substitute a play of verbal and conceptual abstractions for the sort of examination of how matters do in fact stand (with us and God) which Anselm carries out.⁸⁰ Although some may be, not all manners of being complicated are opposed to divine simplicity. Certain ways in which we seemingly complicate matters also simplify them and ourselves. And, these turn out to be ways in which not only we approach God, but God Himself engages and transforms us, restoring our integrity, mercifully and beneficently leading us to states of greater integration, perfection, unity, concord, and simplicity. Let us look at three of these ways.

The Image of God in Us. As rational creatures, the very fabrics of our beings, running down to their deepest core, are marked and formed by the image of God, an image within us and yet of and participating in a God entirely transcending us.⁸¹ Reflection on and through this image, restoration of this image, actualization of this image, recognition of this image in others, these are among the most fundamental directing currents of Anselm's thought, works, and life. This matter cannot be explored here in the depth and detail it deserves; our goal is only to argue that cultivating this divine image does not further complicate but rather simplifies our lives and selves. This does so by properly restructuring and redirecting them to the perfectly simple God, aligning our intellects, wills, and emotions with Him. Getting things right in these ways simplifies things, even if they remain complex, by leading us away from complications introduced and reproduced by untruth, evil, injustice, and drawing us into the heart of truth in the supreme truth and simplicity, where harmonious plurality reflects simplicity.

⁸⁰ On that theme, it is fitting to mention once again Adams' "*Fides Quaerens Intellectum*," whose central contention (with which I am in entire agreement) is that "Anselmian education does not aim merely at handing down packages of correct doctrine, but rather at developing the student's skills for inquiry. . . . All of Anselm's major treatises train the reader in argumentation, tricky modal notions, the drawing of distinctions, the deployment of analogies, and the detection of improper linguistic usage," p. 415.

⁸¹ One condition of human rationality for Anselm is the capacity of the human rational mind to not only remember or be mindful of (*reminisci*, a synonym for Anselm's more usual *memini*) and understand (*intelligere*) not only itself but also God. "For if the human mind could have no memory or understanding of itself or [the supreme wisdom], it would not distinguish itself from irrational creatures, nor God from all creatures. . ."M 32, p. 52.

Proslogion, as we see in ch. 1, and *Monologion*, as we know from ch. 66–68, provide intellectual scaffolding and models for this simplifying reformation. Adequately grasping this image, however, cannot remain a merely intellectual pursuit isolated from practice, volition, and affectivity. Adams points out: “Rational creatures best express this naturally impressed image, when they strive into God with all of their powers, straining to remember, to understand, and to love Him above all and for his own sake.”⁸² Dom Baumstein reminds us: “One must learn to express that divine image volitionally and by constant application.”⁸³ We discover within our minds,⁸⁴ this “true image of that essence, which by remembrance and understanding and love of itself constitutes the ineffable Trinity,”⁸⁵ albeit “so worn away by the erosion of vices, so obscured by the smoke of sins, that it cannot do what it was made to do, unless [God] renew[s] and reform[s] it,”⁸⁶ which happens not least because the divine image does not rest idle, mute, and static in our thought, but continually offers Himself to us. Additionally, the rational creature can and does remember, understand, and love itself, but if it does so without loving, knowing, and remembering God even more, this will complicate matters. When these reflexive relations to self are properly structured in light of the God whose image it ought to be, the rational creature is transformed through its participation, gradually, more fully, and more constantly and enduringly reflecting the divine simplicity.

⁸² Adams, “*Fides Quaerens Intellectum*,” p. 410.

⁸³ Baumstein, “Saint Anselm and the Prospect of Perfection,” *Faith And Reason*, v. 29 (2004), p. 168.

⁸⁴ The divine image is not a mere static conception or image. Instead, it both signifies and participates in the divine reality, and the more adequately, the more truthfully it does so, the more the image itself is active and personal as is God. Two sets of passages are worth reflecting on in this matter.

1) In M 66, Anselm tells us that the image of God in us: “by its greater likeness better aids the mind seeking the supreme truth to approach it, and by its more excellent created essence teaches better teaches what one ought to determine [*aestimare*] about the creative mind,” p. 77. This particular case (M 66–67) might be regarded as the most obvious case where the image of God contributes to and guides the effort to approach God, for in numerous places, Anselm indicates that he (and his interlocutors) expect and hope that God will aid the very investigation of God, His attributes, persons, or relations with created beings, and not in a purely extrinsic way, but rather more intrinsically, i.e. that as the intellectual object of the study, God will aid the very action and progress of the study in its course. Very clearly this is case in *Proslogion*, a feature which has troubled many commentators but encouraged numerous others (among which must be numbered not only Adams and Dom Baumstein, but particularly commentators on Anselm approaching him through the French tradition of “reflexive philosophy” such as Blondel, Paliard, Forest, De Lubac, Schur, and Rassam, *inter alios*). One also comes across other such passages about the object of the inquiry aiding the inquiry in DCD, CDH, and DC.

2) Even images of other human beings in one’s mind or heart are not static, as a number of Anselm’s letters intimate, particularly numbers 2, 16, 41, 165, 205, and 209. Letter 41 makes this particularly explicit. “Since your soul and my soul can never bear to be absent from each other but are incessantly entwined together, nothing of ourselves is lacking to the other except that we are not present to one another physically. But why do I describe my love to you in a letter when you keep the real image of it carefully in the ark of your heart? For what is your love for me but the image of my love for you?” vol. 1, p. 144. Even an image which is not (in Anselm’s view, unfortunately, since in his view, he lacks the virtues and energy abbot Durand mistakenly ascribes to him) a faithful representation of another can serve some useful purpose. Anselm asks: “I pray, I beseech you not to think of me or love me as if I had already made some progress in the spiritual life, but love me that I can make some, and in loving me pray that I may become [this person],” Letter 71, vol. 1, p. 195. cf. Also letter 189.

⁸⁵ M 67, p. 78.

⁸⁶ P 1, p. 100. Anselm acknowledges his own part in these sins and vices: “You refashioned your gracious image in me, and I superimposed on it the image that is hateful, Alas, alas, how could I? How could I, miserable and crazy man that I am, how could I superimpose that image upon the image of God?” (*Prayer to St. John the Baptist*, p. 129).

Participation in Divine Attributes Through Thinking. It is true that our minds, like ourselves, are composite and complicated things. It is also true that our ideas and conceptions themselves are complex. It is even true that acquiring more adequate understanding or knowledge typically makes matters more complex in certain ways, e.g. introducing additional distinctions, reasoning discursively, uncovering and exploring additional aspects of the realities we attempt to understand, becoming reflexively conscious of limitations and inadequacies of our own intellects and our modes of expression. It is a mistake, however, to assume that when we rightly replace ignorance, foolishness, forgetfulness, and falsity with genuine knowledge, understanding, memory, wisdom, truth, the end result is merely more complication and less simplicity in our thoughts and minds. Instead, we gain correct perspectives on, relations with, and evaluations of things, especially ourselves, other persons, and God.⁸⁷ Though our minds and ideas *remain complex*, they also *become at the same time more truly simple* (i.e. more simple after the way that God is simple) the more truly they approximate by likeness to and more fully and richly participate in God's own attributes. Participation in divine simplicity transforms our thought so that it no longer misinterprets certain realities as entirely isolatable things separated and separable from each other, but in and through their complex but inseparable connections and even identities. Our minds and lives thereby become less cluttered, less disordered, less divided in parts against themselves, more attentive to the determinate calls and demands of goodness, justice, truth, and simplicity in our ongoing concrete lives.

In fact, we cannot discern, think about, or rationally investigate any divine attributes (even as imperfectly as we do) without our thinking and its objects already thereby participating in them to some extent. This enables us to distinguish different quantities and qualitative degrees of them in created things. But, we can also conceive of, and reason about, their plentitude in God beyond quantity and quality, where each and all of the attributes are what each other are, and exist in perfect harmony and simplicity. Doing so, we intellectually approach the perfectly simple God.⁸⁸ In *Monologion* Anselm eventually confesses that attributive names (*nomina*) we

⁸⁷ Eadmer's depiction of Anselm in the *Vita Anselmi* provides numerous examples of how, by having and acting in accordance with such correct evaluations and perspectives, one can engage in the complex affairs of one's own and others' lives while maintaining simplicity. A few examples are particularly striking and worth pointing out. Anselm appears to possess a genuine charism of spiritual counseling and direction. "Being thus inwardly more clearly illuminated with the light of wisdom and guided by his powers of discrimination, he so understood the characters of people of whatever sex or age that you might have seen him opening to each one the secrets of his heart and bringing them into the light of day. . . . And you might have seen such power in every form of good counsel shine forth in him, as to leave no doubt that the spirit of counsel ruled in his heart," ch. 8, p. 13, cf. also ch. 31. Anselm was also able to successfully take on crafty and unscrupulous opponents in lawsuits without engaging in their practices. "[S]ometimes, when the frauds which had been prepared with intricate subtlety were brought to his notice, he would immediately detect and disentangle them. . . . For the charity which envieth not, which doeth no evil, which seeketh not her own, was alive in him, and showed him things at a glance as they appeared in the light of truth., c. 27, p. 46. Anselm's record in these sorts of matters is, however, mixed, and some of his followers repeatedly warned him about the unfaithful, false, and greedy among Anselm's own household, complaining about Anselm's "too great simplicity and lack of prudence," bk. 2, c. 14, p. 82.

⁸⁸ Doubtless, in the lives we presently lead, we cannot all make room for, even endure or carry out, the sort of spiritual, intellectual, and ascetic regime Anselm did. Still, we can follow him, and make use of his texts, intellectually approaching the perfectly simple God in a determinately Anselmian way (which will be one among a variety of determinately Christian ways).

apply to God “do not show Him to me so much through his distinctive essence [*per proprietatem*] as they signify through some likeness. For indeed when I think about significations of those same terms [*earundem uocum*], I more typically conceive by my mind what I behold in created things than that which I understand to transcend every human understanding.”⁸⁹ He adds that “by their signification, they set up [*constituunt*] something in my mind much less than, indeed far from that thing, of which my own mind strives to attain understanding through this feeble signification, would be,”⁹⁰ but the examples Anselm provides actually reflect the content, attainments, and promise of his works. Consider just one: “The name ‘wisdom’ does not suffice to indicate to me that by which all things were made from nothing, and are preserved from nothingness.”⁹¹ On its own, it does not. In our thought, following out the paths Anselm traces for us, these truer significations of the attributes can be progressively though not exhaustively discovered, and articulated. This is precisely what took place in our five earlier lessons about divine simplicity.

Participation and the Practical Way. We also approach God through the practical way of striving after and keeping rectitude by acting, willing, and feeling in the determinate and concrete ways we ought to, those God wills for us. We should not only strive to think about the perfectly simple God and to attain simplicity of mind, but also strive after simplicity in our lives, to participate in, and be transformed by the divine attributes through our very beings, as complex and composite as they are. Dom Baumstein has explored this theme specifically in a series of articles, from which I will cite only a few extracts. First, he writes: “Willing God indicates a state of conformity with Him, a state achieved through the realization of a Divine Attribute.”⁹² Baumstein also interprets virtue in these terms, as participations in divine attributes and articulations of the divine image: “And, since each of the Lord’s attributes is essential, each must be available to the person as well, albeit in their participatory sense.”⁹³ The two divine attributes Baumstein focuses on most closely are truth and simplicity, both of which imply and lead to other conditions of central importance to Anselm and Baumstein, *concordia* or harmony, embodied through *conversatio*⁹⁴. In his interpretation of Anselm, “[t]ruth is the attribute that. . . provides the most ideal and practical standard for human inculcation,”⁹⁵ truth understood in its full range of Anselmian senses, involving things on all their different levels, in all their different

⁸⁹ M 65, p. 76.

⁹⁰ M 65, p. 76.

⁹¹ M 65, p. 76.

⁹² Baumstein, “Anselm’s Thought as a Fulcrum for Benedict’s Rule” *Cistercian Studies*, v. 3 (1991), p. 198.

⁹³ Baumstein, “Anselm on the Dark Night and Truth”, *Cistercian Studies Quarterly*, v. 35, n. 2 (2000), p. 248.

⁹⁴ He signals *concordia*’s importance in “Anselm on the Dark Night and Truth,” and “Saint Anselm and the Prospect of Perfection,” writing in the latter: “It is distinctive and pivotal that Anselm centers *concordia* in being rather than in the more customary locus of the medievals, viz. the will. He looks to character—which informs will and thus deed, of course — rather than to activity. . .” p. 168. *Conversatio*, the “practice of truth,” (p. 168) which “is a matter of continuously turning to the Lord,” (p. 171), an “ongoing application. . . rather than a single, resolute rectification, i.e. *conversio*,” (p. 176) concretely embodies the *concordia* and character, “full and rectitudinous being,” Anselm envisions. For another excellent discussion framing human participation in truth (and thus justice) in terms of the being of the person, cf. Daniel T. Rakus, “The Dynamics of Love in Anselmian Ethics”, *The Downside Review*, n. 421 (2002).

⁹⁵ Baumstein, “Anselm’s Thought” p. 198.

aspects, through all their relations, being as they ought to be and oriented by, to, and within the Supreme Truth.⁹⁶ Baumstein discerns “an almost studied imitation, throughout Anselm’s life and reasonings, of God’s attribute of simplicity, of the lack of parts or process,”⁹⁷ expressed particularly by the fact that “Anselm does not *apply* principles to life so much as he *translates* them.”⁹⁸ Anselm provides us a model, albeit a demanding one, integrating thought, life, action, will, emotion, and being: “In the will, he seeks to realize—within the fallible limits of humanity—God’s attribute of Simplicity. He removes the parts; he summons act from the bowels of essence. He forges a peculiar union with God, a union that is not of the wills; instead his union pertains to an ardent encounter between being and Being.”⁹⁹

To bring this lecture to a close, I will very briefly touch on, though not explore or argue for in detail, three last lessons Anselm teaches about how we complicated creatures in our complicated lives can more closely approach our perfectly simple God: cultivation of the virtue of humility, obedient participation in divine providence and justice, and the affective and volitional engagement of loving charity. In *De Humanibus Moribus* and the *Dicta Anselmi* (both of which I am prepared to accept on Southern’s and Schmitt’s authority as genuinely Anselmian) Anselm describes humility as a mountain with seven ascending levels, and contrasts it against the valley of pride. Humility, the virtues’ genuine and lasting basis, both produces and is an effect of greater and clearer [*clara*] and eventually perfect self-knowledge [*perfecta cognitio sui*],¹⁰⁰ whereas pride involves and inculcates ignorance of self, and exposes us to vices, which take hold upon us. What is concretely involved in the practice of humility (i.e. more fully delving into and realizing the complexities of the human soul, not turning away from them out of fear, laziness, pride, or shame, resisting temptations to reductively oversimplify our moral condition) does not actually complicate things, but simplify them through reintegration of the human creature with itself, with others, and with God.

⁹⁶ Cf. DV 7 and 10. For discussions correlating these different senses of truth, cf. also Dom Robert Pouchet, O.S.B., *La rectitudo chez Saint Anselme: Une itinéraire Augustinien de l’âme à Dieu* (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes. 1964); Donald Duclow, “Structure and Meaning in Anselm’s *De Veritate*,” *American Benedictine Review*, v. 26, n. 6 (1975); Englebert Rechtenwald, “Das id quo maius cogitari non potest als rectitudo: Anselms Gottbeweis im Lichte von *De Veritate*”, in *Twenty-Five Years of Anselm Studies*, ed. Frederick Van Fleterern and Joseph C. Schnaubelt (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen. 1996). Writing of truth as “a calling extended to each individual,” Baumstein notes that “Anselm sees [truth] as a very exacting quality. Rather than quantifiable, relative, or imitative, perfection is participatory. . . It is being, not merely act, that is affected by truth,” “Saint Anselm and the Prospect of Perfection,” p. 170.

⁹⁷ Baumstein, “Anselm’s Intellect and the Embrace of Bec,” p. 222.

⁹⁸ Baumstein, “Anselm’s Thought,” p. 202. He elaborates on this: “Anselm’s logic was ordinarily a translation. Taking form or principle, he devised its translation into act; this dynamic occurred naturally, he believed, not manipulatively. . . Principle had to be prior; act did not legitimate principle,” p. 223. “In Anselm’s vision, the root of a problem rested not in what man could see, but in the divine principles that underscored the reality.” “Anselm’s Intellect,” p. 224.

⁹⁹ Baumstein, “Anselm’s Thought , p. 202. I believe that in this passage, Baumstein may overstate matters slightly in writing “not of the wills”, probably meaning “not *solely* of the wills.” Clearly will is an integral portion of human being; and, the sort of being one is and becomes, while certainly not reducible to the will and its history of volitions, is very much derived from one’s use and habits of will.

¹⁰⁰ DM, 100, p. 81, 101–8, p. 81

Obedience and participation in providence and divine justice similarly simplify our lives. Obedience's opposite is the earlier mentioned creaturely *propria voluntas*,¹⁰¹ which Anselm likens to "a stream, which divides into three main parts, from which derive different and innumerable tributaries. . . different and numberless vices."¹⁰² Obedience of will also possesses and culminates in fecundity, for "one single will, once it is joined to God's will, generates so many virtues and good works."¹⁰³ Nevertheless, Anselm can still define a "simple and true obedience" as "when a rational nature, not by necessity but freely, keeps the will received from God,"¹⁰⁴ i.e., follows, effects, and strives to understand what it needs to of justice, doing what it ought to and taking its place in God's providential ordering of all things. Following obedience's determinate demands and prompting in our lives, which admittedly for us time-bound creatures will remain complex, we allow God to draw us into His perfect, intensive, and harmonious simplicity extending and insinuating itself into the very inmost hearts of all beings.

We do this also, and we might say *superlatively*, through Christian charity or love, a matter upon which Anselm says so much, and which he so often invokes and exemplifies, that I will not attempt to adequately discuss it, nor even to sum it up in a sentence or two here and now. Instead, I will close by simply pointing out that in an Anselmian perspective, through the practice, the affection, the fruit and effects of charity, the tangled complexities and complications of our lives and beings become more and more fully integrated within our own selves, with other persons, and most importantly with and through the perfectly simple God.

¹⁰¹ *Propria voluntas* by itself is not automatically a bad or wrong thing. It is, in fact appropriate to God: "For only God, whatsoever he wills, ought to will by his own will [*propria voluntate*], so that it would not have another, which it ought to follow, over itself. When a man wills something by self-will, he as it were takes from God His crown. For just as the crown is appropriate only for the king, likewise self-will is appropriate only for God. And just as one who takes from the crowned king his crown dishonors him, so a man, who takes from him this privilege of self-will from God dishonors Him, by having what only He ought to have. But just as God's self-will is the stream [*fons*] and spring of everything good, likewise man's self-will is the beginning of every evil," DM 8, p. 41.

¹⁰² DM 9, p. 41.

¹⁰³ DM 4, p. 40. He provides some specific examples: "the will is opened to the disposition of the virtues and to willing what should be preferred [*volendum optanda*], memory to the remembering of things that should be remembered, thought to the thinking of things that should be thought upon, understanding to distinguishing what is to be willed or remembered or thought. And, the soul is raised up to charity, is disposed to humility, is strengthened towards patience, and is opened to the other virtues that ought to be generated," DM 3, p. 40.

¹⁰⁴ CDH 1.10, p. Of course, in this passage he is speaking of Christ—but can we ourselves not have more or less simple obedience?