

Faith and Reason in Anselm: Two Models

Montague Brown
Saint Anselm College

*In the preface to his *Proslogion*, Anselm gives titles to the two works known best as the *Monologion* and the *Proslogion*. These latter titles are for convenience; the full title of the *Monologion* is *An Example of Meditation on the Meaning of Faith*, and of the *Proslogion*, *Faith in Quest of Understanding*.*

These titles reveal two very different models for the relation between faith and reason. The first is an analytic treatment of the content of the faith and is, according to Anselm, to be carried on without reference to Scripture. It searches for proofs of propositions, such as “God exists,” and “God is a Trinity.” Thus, the arguments are mostly those of natural theology, or at least they are meant to use only reason as an authority. The second is an existential plea for wisdom and holiness. It responds to the command of our Lord that we should have faith, and that only if we have faith will we have understanding. But what does it mean to have faith? It is more than just assenting to propositions (although it is this). It is to believe, not just what God said, but believe in God. This requires the overcoming, not just of ignorance, but of sin. Without prayer, it is impossible.

*This paper intends to examine closely these two models of the relation between faith and reason with an eye to their source in Augustine’s work (most obviously in *On the Trinity*, and the *Confessions*, respectively). Two major questions arise. In the first place, does the existential approach do away with the analytic, systematic approach? After all, what is the point of thinking from the outside about the content of faith when what we need is to live in the wisdom and power of God’s presence? In the second place, if the existential approach does not do away with the systematic approach (which I think is true), how are the two related?*

In the preface to his *Proslogion*, Anselm gives titles to the two works known best as the *Monologion* and the *Proslogion*. These short titles are really for convenience and do not much reveal the spirit of each work. The full title of the *Monologion* is *An Example of Meditation on the Meaning of Faith*, and of the *Proslogion*, *Faith in Quest of Understanding*. These titles indicate two very different models for the relation between faith and reason. The model used in the *Monologion* is an analytic meditation on the content of the faith and is, according to Anselm, to be carried on without reference to Scripture. It searches for evidence for the truth of propositions such as “God exists” and “God is a Trinity.” Thus, the arguments are mostly those of natural theology, using only reason as an authority. The model used in the *Proslogion*, on the other hand, is an existential plea for wisdom and holiness. It responds to the command of our Lord that we should have faith, and that only if we have faith will we have understanding. But what does it mean to have faith? It is more than just assenting to propositions (although it is this). It is not only to believe what God has said, but to believe in God. This requires the overcoming, not just of ignorance, but also of sin. Without prayer, it is impossible. Thus, in the *Proslogion* there is no attempt to limit arguments to natural reason, and Scripture is plentifully invoked.

This paper intends to examine these two models for faith seeking understanding in Anselm's work. Since it is clear that Anselm is influenced in this matter by the writings of Augustine, we shall situate the two models in reference to Augustine's works. Given the dramatic difference between the two models, two questions arise. In the first place, are the two methods so different as to be mutually exclusive? That is, does the existential approach do away with the analytic, systematic approach and vice versa? In the second place, if the two approaches are not mutually exclusive, how are they related?

Thus, the first section of the paper will examine the model used in the *Monologion* and its roots in Augustine's thought, in particular, in *On the Trinity*. In section two, we shall examine the very different approach taken in the *Proslogion* and modeled on Augustine's *Confessions*. In the final section, we shall address our two questions.

I

In the preface to the *Monologion*, Anselm expresses his intention to discuss the things of faith without reference to the authority of Scripture. He has been asked by his brethren to write down, "as a kind of model meditation,"¹ some of the things he has said about the divine essence. The method is to be strictly philosophical: "nothing whatsoever to be argued on the basis of the authority of Scripture, but the constraints of reason concisely to prove, and the clarity of truth clearly to show, in the plain style, with everyday arguments, and down-to-earth dialectic, the conclusions of distinct investigations."² Three important points need to be emphasized here: first of all, the work is to be a mediation, a quiet reflection; secondly, it is to be a reflection on "the meaning of faith"; and third, it is to be a philosophical rather than a theological reflection, relying on natural reason rather than revelation. Anselm is, however, concerned that his work be seen as in the tradition of the Fathers of the Church, and not as some radical departure from the faith. Thus, he cites Augustine's work *On the Trinity* as an authority for what he is doing.

In *On the Trinity*, Augustine makes use of Scripture heavily in the first seven books, but in the last eight books he tries to understand what is revealed in Scripture philosophically, looking for evidence in experience for what we believe. Unlike Anselm, who writes the *Monologion* in response to the requests of a believing community, Augustine writes his work to refute a hostile audience. "The following dissertation concerning the Trinity, as the reader ought to be informed, has been written in order to guard against the sophistries of those who disdain to begin with faith, and are deceived by a crude and perverse love of reason."³ The problem with such thinkers is that they are over-confident in the sufficiency of their own judgments. When they find it difficult to understand such truths of faith as that God is a Trinity, they choose to believe that something is wrong with the truths of the faith, rather than that they could be confused or mistaken in their judgments. Augustine seeks to show these doubters that the Trinity, as the highest good, "cannot be discerned or understood by themselves, because the eye

¹ Anselm, *Monologion*, Prologue, trans. Simon Harrison in *The Major Works*, ed. Brian Davies and G. R. Evans (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 5.

² Ibid.

³ Augustine, *On the Trinity*, 1.1, tr. A. W. Haddan in *Basic Writings of Augustine*, 2 vols., ed. Whitney J. Oates (New York: Random House, 1948), 2: 667.

of the human mind, being weak, is dazzled in that so transcendent light, unless it be invigorated by the nourishment of the righteousness of faith.”⁴ After demonstrating the truth of the Trinity from Scripture in the first seven books, Augustine plans to turn to the doubters to prove to them some certainties from natural reason, so that, “if there be anything in them of either love or fear towards God, they may return and begin from faith in due order: perceiving at length how healthful a medicine has been provided for the faithful in the holy Church, whereby a heedful piety, healing the feebleness of the mind, may render it able to perceive the unchangeable truth, hinder it from falling headlong, through disorderly rashness, into pestilent and false opinion.”⁵

In the preface to Book Eight, Augustine sets up one cardinal rule for his philosophical investigations: “that what has not yet been made clear to our intellect, be nevertheless not loosened from the firmness of our faith.”⁶ Thus, for Augustine, the faith is a reliable guide in our search for wisdom. It checks our pride, and it invites us always to deepen our understanding. Pride kills the intellectual life. Without humility before the truth, there can be no progress in wisdom and understanding, for who will seek to know what he thinks he already knows quite well enough? Mystery, on the other hand, invigorates the intellectual life, for it raises questions unanswerable in the settled context of our categories, always asking us to rethink our presuppositions and revisit the data of experience with fresh eyes.

For Anselm, too, the mysteries of faith, which cannot be comprehended, put a check on the presumption and pride which lead to error. However, in writing the *Monologion*, Anselm presupposes the faith of his audience and so feels free to offer the reasons for what is believed, not fearing that his audience will be puffed up with that intellectual pride that cuts off the continuing growth in understanding the deep mysteries of the faith.

Anselm opens the *Monologion* by affirming the existence of one nature that is supreme. He knows this by faith, but he also thinks that someone who does not share the faith can know it, too. “Now, take someone who either has never heard of, or does not believe in, and so does not know, this—this, or indeed any of the numerous other things which we necessarily believe about God and his creation. I think that he can, even if of average ability, convince himself, to a large extent, of the truth of these beliefs, simply by reason alone.”⁷ In this work, the faith provides the subject matter for reason by supplying true propositions about God, such as that He exists, creates the world, is providential, is a Trinity, and other such things. Faith is assent to true propositions, many of which can also be proven to be true by natural reason.

The purpose of the rest of the *Monologion* is to prove the things of faith without reference to the authority of Scripture or Church teachings. Anselm is true to his word. He never invokes Scripture as an authority. In fact, until the last chapter of the book, he does not ever use the word “God” again. Yet he thinks that the existence of a supreme essence which is cause of everything

⁴ *On the Trinity*, 1.3, 2: 670.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *On the Trinity*, 8.preface, 2: 773.

⁷ *Monologion*, 1, p. 11.

else, and which is a Trinity of persons, can be demonstrated by natural reason. Anselm qualifies this claim to some degree, for he admits, when discussing the three persons in one nature, that the Trinity cannot be comprehended by us. The nature of the supreme essence remains undefined. “This line of reasoning, therefore, allows our conclusions about the supreme nature to be true and the supreme nature itself to remain ineffable.”⁸

For the Augustine of *On the Trinity* and the Anselm of the *Monologion*, faith seeking understanding means meditating on the meaning of the deposit of faith, handed down from the apostles. It is the attempt to find evidences in our experience and the exercise of natural reason for the truths of faith.

II

In contrast to this method, in the *Proslogion* Anselm pours out his heart in prayer, invoking Scripture, in an intense exertion to reach the God he knows exists. Rather than propositions of the faith giving the content for a philosophical meditation, the appalling awareness of his own lack of faith drives Anselm to seek to overcome alienation from God. How different is the beginning of the *Proslogion* from the quiet meditative declaration of the *Monologion*.

Come now, insignificant man, fly for a moment from your affairs, escape for a little while from the tumult of your thought. Put aside now your weighty cares and leave your wearisome toils. Abandon yourself for a little to God and rest for a little in Him. Enter into the inner chamber of your soul, shut out everything save God and what can be of help in your quest for Him and having locked the door seek Him out [Matt. 6:6]. Speak now, my whole heart, speak now to God: ‘I seek Your countenance, O Lord, Your countenance I seek’ [Ps. 26: 8].⁹

Instead of the placid invitation to meditate on the meaning of faith, we have the heart-felt and passionate plea for light. Instead of the mind reflecting on what it has received in Revelation, here the will demands what it does not have—faith. Faith is traditionally held to be a gift from God, not something we can manufacture. But God also tells us to have faith, and upbraids us when we do not have it. Of course we should turn to God and rest in God! But how do we do this? How do we attain what we do not know? Anselm goes on:

Come then, Lord my God, teach me where and how to seek You, where and how to find You. Lord, if You are not present here, where, since You are absent, shall I look for You? On the other hand, if You are everywhere why then, since You are present, do I not see You? But surely You dwell in ‘light inaccessible’ [1 Tim. 6: 16]....Never have I seen You, Lord my God, I do not know Your face.¹⁰

⁸ *Monologion*, 65, p. 71.

⁹ *Proslogion*, 1, trans. M. J. Charlesworth in *The Major Works*, p. 84.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 84-85.

This very different model of faith seeking understanding is prefigured by Augustine's *Confessions*. Unlike his work *On the Trinity*, in which Augustine makes use of reason to understand what the faith teaches, in the *Confessions*, Augustine pleads for faith. The opening, and indeed the whole work, is full of questioning. "Lord, grant me to know and understand which is first, to call upon you or to praise you, and also which is first, to know you or to call upon you? But how does one who does not know you call upon you? For one who does not know you might call upon another instead of you. Or must you rather be called upon so that you may be known?"¹¹ Here, rather than the attempt to know what one holds by faith, we see Augustine wrestling with what it is to have faith in God. We are told that all things are possible to those who have faith, but how do we get this faith? Can we give it to ourselves? Obviously not. But we are expected by our Lord to have it. How can we give ourselves what we do not have? How can we know how to find God, when we do not know what we are looking for?

We find ourselves alienated from God, both by the infinite metaphysical gap between creature and Creator, and by the moral gap of sin. We cannot by natural reason comprehend God, and we have compounded the distance between ourselves and God through our own fault, through sin. Augustine cries out:

Who will give me help, so that I may rest in you?...What am I myself to you, that you command me to love you, and grow angry and threaten me with mighty woes unless I do?...Too narrow is the house of my soul for you to enter into it: let it be enlarged by you. It lies in ruins; build it up again. I confess and I know that it contains things that offend your eyes. Yet who will cleanse it? Or upon what other than you shall I call? 'From my secret sins cleanse me, O Lord.'¹²

In his work *Covenantal Theology*, Fr. Donald Keefe speaks of this model as the distinctively Augustinian method. It is a phenomenological method as opposed to the analytical method used by Aquinas.¹³ It involves the paradox of intuited unity and encountered multiplicity,¹⁴ of knowing oneself as whole and fragmented, as loved and alienated, as "simul justus et peccator," justified and sinner.¹⁵ Knowing oneself as sinner presupposes, in some way, knowledge of what it would be to be good, for sin is a falling short of what we know we should be. Although there seems also to be an analytical method used by Augustine in works such as *On the Trinity* and *On Free Choice of the Will*, Keefe considers this existential or phenomenological method of the *Confessions* as the distinctive Augustinian method.

As in the *Confessions*, in the *Proslogion* the context for the pursuit of wisdom is prayer and confession. It is the paradox of praising God for our salvation and begging God for

¹¹ Augustine, *Confessions*, 1.1, trans. John K. Ryan (Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1960), 43.

¹² *Confessions*, 5, pp. 45-46.

¹³ Donald J. Keefe, *Covenantal Theology* (hereafter, *CT*), two volumes in one (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1996), Preface xv.

¹⁴ *CT*, 6, 2: 481.

¹⁵ *CT*, 6, fn. 1, 2: 592.

salvation. Anselm speaks to God: “I acknowledge, Lord, and I give thanks that You have created Your image in me, so that I may remember You, think of You, love You. But this image is so effaced and worn away by vice, so darkened by the smoke of sin, that it cannot do what it was made to do unless You renew it and reform it.”¹⁶ It is like the plea of the father of the possessed boy in the Gospel of Mark: “I believe; help my unbelief!” (Mark 9: 24, RSV). In the passage, Jesus has just said that all things are possible to one who believes. Knowing that not all things are possible to us, we immediately conclude that we do not believe, at least not as we ought to. This is the fragmentation of our experience of knowledge and ignorance, grace and sin. And it is the context for those famous lines which end the first chapter of the *Proslogion*:

I do not try, Lord, to attain Your lofty heights, because my understanding is in no way equal to it. But I do desire to understand Your truth a little, that truth that my heart believes and loves. For I do not seek to understand so that I may believe; but I believe so that I may understand. For I believe this also, that ‘unless I believe, I shall not understand’ [Isa. 7: 9].¹⁷

Although the contrast between the models for the relation of faith and reason in the *Monologion* and the *Proslogion* is dramatic, there is a kind of transition provided near the end of the *Monologion*. Here, Anselm’s meditation turns from reflecting on the existence and nature of God, to the nature of, and the need for, human happiness. There is a shift from the theoretical study of the nature of God to the practical and existential concern of attaining happiness. Anselm says that we are made for happiness, and that our happiness lies in knowing the supreme essence. “It is quite clear, as a result, that what the rational creation ought to do, is to put all its power and all its will into becoming conscious of, understanding, and loving the supreme good.”¹⁸ But here’s the rub. Anselm has spent quite some time showing how we do not comprehend the supreme good, and in fact can never comprehend it, due to the finitude of our intellect. Nevertheless, we are obliged to understand God. Thus, we will something beyond what we understand.

Given our finitude, it seems that we cannot achieve what we were made for, and so cannot be happy. Anselm denies this conclusion, for it would be absurd for the Creator to make us with the natural desire to know Him while making such knowledge impossible. Thus, if we strive with all our power and will to understand and to love God, then we will be happy. “We may conclude, then, with absolute truth, that every rational soul that strives, as it ought, to love and desire supreme happiness will, at some point, behold and enjoy it.”¹⁹ But equally, Anselm insists that “man’s soul is created such that it will suffer eternal unhappiness if it disdains to love the supreme essence.”²⁰ Who among us loves God as he or she should? Not only are we distracted by other things and grow weary in our search for truth, but we sin. That is, we turn our backs on God’s offer of faith and love. It is not enough to be created in the image of God;

¹⁶ *Proslogion*, 1, p. 87.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Monologion*, 68, p. 74.

¹⁹ *Monologion*, 70, p. 76.

²⁰ *Monologion*, 71, p. 76.

we must exert ourselves to come to know the truth of God and our salvation. But how can we do this on our own, given our finitude and our sin?

We cannot. We need the help of God, the gifts of love, hope and faith. “Everyone must exert himself to attain this good by love and desire, with all his heart, all his soul, and all his mind.”²¹ But, as Anselm says, we would never attempt any such project unless we hoped to accomplish it. Thus we need the gift of hope. Yet, “love and hope are impossible without belief.”²² And what kind of belief do we need? It is not enough to believe propositions about the supreme essence. We must “believe the Supreme Essence.”²³ Nor is this belief just an attitude toward God; rather, it must be a faith that grows from being in God. “This is the reason why I think it is possible and more appropriate to say that one must have faith in the supreme essence, rather than ‘have an attitude of faith towards’ it.”²⁴ As I said above, it is only in the last chapter of the *Monologion* that Anselm uses the word “God”, which is the word we use for that substance which is superior to every other. “This is the kind of substance that is so pre-eminently valuable that people have to worship it; the kind of substance that one ought to pray to for help against the forces that threaten.”²⁵

Anselm prays early and late in the *Proslogion* for help against the twin threats of ignorance and sin. It is not just at the beginning that Anselm prays fervently for help. Even after presenting his famous proof for the existence of God, Anselm insists that God is “hidden in inaccessible light.”²⁶ In Chapter 14, Anselm renews his prayers of petition, admitting that the soul cannot see God both because of God’s brilliance and because of the soul’s darkness. And in Chapter 18, there is a full return to the indigence of the opening. “Behold, once more confusion, once more sorrow and grief stand in my way as I seek joy and happiness! Even now my soul hoped for fulfillment, and, lo, once again it is overwhelmed by neediness! Even now I sought to have my fill, and, lo, I hunger the more! I strove to ascend to God’s light and I have fallen back into my own darkness.”²⁷ In chapter 24, we find the same admonition to rouse our whole understanding that Anselm makes in the opening chapter. And in Chapter 25, Anselm again addresses himself to “insignificant man.”²⁸ Finally, Anselm ends the whole work with a prayer of petition, of neediness.

God of truth I ask that I may receive so that my ‘joy may be complete.’ Until then let my mind meditate on it, let my tongue speak of it, let my heart love it, let my mouth preach it. Let my soul hunger for it, let my flesh thirst for it, my whole being desire it, until I enter into the ‘joy of the Lord’ [Matt. 25:21], who is God, Three in One, ‘blessed forever, amen’ [Rom. 1: 25].²⁹

²¹ *Monologion*, 74, p. 77.

²² *Monologion*, 76, p. 78.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Monologion*, 80, p. 80.

²⁶ *Proslogion*, 9, p. 91.

²⁷ *Proslogion*, 18, p. 97.

²⁸ *Proslogion*, 25, p. 101.

²⁹ *Proslogion*, 26, p. 104.

III

Having considered Anselm's very different models for the relationship between faith and reason in the *Monologion* and the *Proslogion*, let us now turn to our two questions. In the first place, are the two methods mutually exclusive? It seems clear that one cannot practice both methods simultaneously. One cannot be quietly reflecting and passionately seeking at the same time. However, the two methods are not mutually exclusive in the sense that if one buys into one, one must reject the other. In fact, the two methods seem to lead to one another and even to require each other.

Although the two models are, for Anselm, ways of faith seeking understanding and thus theological methods, they can also be found within philosophy and so are somehow intrinsic to reason itself. Let us spend a few minutes considering the philosophers who are in some ways paradigms for the two methods: Plato for the existential search, and Aristotle for the analytical reflection.³⁰ Plato, in a way, begins with mystery and then analyzes it. Aristotle ends his analysis of things in mystery.

It is well known that Aristotle claims that all knowledge comes through sense experience. Thus, if we want to understand the world, its origin, and our place in it, we must analyze the data of sense experience. All material things, even the lowest, are worth studying.³¹ The reality of this world is a given, and Aristotle accepts without question the reliability of the senses and reason. This, of course, is not completely parallel with the faith of an Augustine or an Anselm, for it does not introduce any doctrine to be believed. But it is a kind of faith in the legitimacy of trying to understand the material world and our place in it. Indeed, in the *Physics*, Aristotle rails against anyone who would deny the project. "As far as trying to prove that nature exists, this would be ridiculous, for it is evident that there are many such things; and to try to prove what is evident though what is not evident is a mark of a man who cannot judge what is known through itself from what is known not through itself."³² And in *On the Soul*, Aristotle insists on the reliability of senses and reason.³³

The world of material things raises questions for us, and the pursuit of answers to those questions leads to the affirmation of an ultimate cause that explains the change and order in the universe.³⁴ However, the nature of such an unmoved mover is mysterious. As cause of all motion and change, it cannot itself be subject to change. It is pure actuality. But what this is we do not know. For to know its nature would be to define it, to put it in a category with other things. But things are distinct for the very reason that they have limits, that they are potential in some way, that they are not pure actuality.

³⁰ See Keefe, *CT*, introduction, 1: 14.

³¹ Aristotle, *Parts of Animals* I.5 [645a5-25] in *Aristotle Selected Works*, ed. and trans. by Hippocrates C. Apostle and Lloyd P. Gerson (Grinnell, Iowa: Peripatetic Press, 1982), 322.

³² Aristotle, *Physics* II.1 [193a3-7], *Selected Works*, 182.

³³ Aristotle, *On the Soul* III.6 [430b27-32], *Selected Works*, 291-292.

³⁴ See Aristotle, *Metaphysics* XII.6-10.

Thus, Aristotle's Unmoved Mover, the pure actuality of Self-thinking Thought cannot be conceived or categorized. Our analysis of the world around us points to final causality as the ultimate explanation of everything. And final causality works through love.³⁵ Aristotle identifies the Unmoved Mover as love, the love that moves all things. This is surely mysterious, but the mystery is the fruit of an analytical approach to knowing the reality we experience. Our fulfillment as human beings lies in contemplating the most real thing of all—God.³⁶ At present, we approach such a mysterious being through love. And although we may not know much about God, the little we do know is worth more than the comprehensive knowledge we can have of lower things.³⁷

With Plato, we begin with mystery. We know that we do not know, and we are aware of not willing what we know we ought to will. These judgments presuppose some knowledge of Truth and Goodness. Otherwise, it seems impossible to explain how we could know that we fall short of them. We are “philosophers,” lovers of wisdom, who find ourselves in the paradoxical position of neither having attained it, nor having failed to achieve it at all. Plato reasons that we must have once known Truth and Goodness, but through some tragedy have lost them. Now we must strive with every nerve to recall them. But a quest does not issue from nothing, and it cannot continue without being fed. Here lies room for a kind of faith, again a faith in the project of trying to recover what has been lost. And here also is room for love. The impetus of love, which strives to know the Truth and attain the Good, already knows some truth and already responds to some good. And the humility of declaring that we have not found what we seek puts us in position to learn more about what is true and good.

But this knowledge that we do not know, this awareness of the void that once was full, is not its own end. What would be the point of seeking the Truth if we did not care about finding and understanding it? According to Plato, we should spend all our time trying to live a perfectly virtuous life,³⁸ striving to know the source of all being and knowing,³⁹ and seeking the beautiful.⁴⁰ The more we know, the more we realize how much more there is to know. And so we do our best to put the fruit of our quest into words and to communicate this wisdom to our fellow human beings.⁴¹ What we learn (or in Plato's view remember) must be integrated with what we already know. Such integration requires careful and subtle analysis.

Thus philosophically, neither analysis nor existential desire can exist long in isolation from each other. Analysis reveals mystery, and the intuition of the mystery at the heart of things impels us to want to understand.

³⁵ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* XII.7 [1072b1-5].

³⁶ See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, X, 7.

³⁷ See *On Parts of Animals* I.5 [644b32-36], *Selected Works*, 321-322.

³⁸ Plato, *Apology* (28b-c).

³⁹ Plato, *Republic*, Book VI (506e-511e).

⁴⁰ Plato, *Symposium* (210a-212b).

⁴¹ See the return of the philosopher to the cave in *Republic* VII (514a-521c).

How much more is this true in theology where the mystery revealed is even more profound. The revealed mysteries of God as Incarnate and Triune invite us to analyses which penetrate ever more deeply into the world created by such a God. So as we go back to natural things to look for evidence to support what we know by faith, we are open to finding more complex unities and interrelations. These things and our relations to them become more and more meaningful.

And when we cry to out to God for help, as Augustine does in the *Confessions* and Anselm in the *Proslogion*, our humility is that much greater. For knowing we are created in Christ (John 1:3, Colossians 1:15-16), we know that we are, by gift, joined from the beginning to God and yet are alienated from God through our own will. Out of what depths do we, who have been offered so much and still say no, cry to God. Such humility opens up the possibility of hearing and seeing in some mysterious way, God himself. This is prayer, at once praise and petition.

As to how the two methods are compatible (our second question), it seems that the sustained intellectual life requires a kind of rhythm—a rhythm that moves between the poles of quest and analysis. There is no such thing as an intellectual life that is all analysis: there is no such thing as a literally “disinterested desire to know.” Of course, the quest to find *the* truth, not just *my* truth, is essential for all good science, philosophy, or theology. But the idea that intellectual activity exists without a deeply personal desire that *I* find the truth is absurd. Even to stick close to the strictures of scientific method or formal logic requires a commitment of will. The end of Aristotle’s metaphysical meditation leads him to God who is Life.⁴² But we are not indifferent to life; we want it, too. And if God is Life itself, this is what we want to know and be. Anselm, whether in the closing chapters of the *Monologion* or after the logical precision of the argument in the *Proslogion*, finds that his analysis has brought him face-to-face with the ineffable mystery of God. This is no end to the story, but a constant source of new beginnings.

As for the existential quest, this cannot long survive without reflection and analysis. The yearning itself does not reveal much beyond the paradoxical judgment that one does and does not know the truth, or that one does and does not possess the good. To get beyond this, we must turn to what we find through listening for the answer to our questions. At this stage, either we are meditative, or we do not hear. And whatever is heard or learned must be integrated with what we already know if it is to be understood. In every example of such a method, there is some return to those things which led us to make the quest in the first place. For Plato, it is the particular things of the world which cause us to remember the Forms. But how do they do so? This is an ongoing question.⁴³ For Augustine, it is the things we experience and the light of Truth, our participation in the mind of God, that help us to satisfy our desire to know.⁴⁴ For Anselm in the *Monologion*, and in the *Proslogion* where he is challenged by Gaunilo to explain

⁴² *Metaphysics* XII.7 [1072b25-31].

⁴³ See Plato’s *Phaedo* (78c-79a) and *Symposium* (210a-212b).

⁴⁴ See the end of Augustine’s *On the Teacher* and *On Free Choice of the Will*, 2.3-10.

himself, it is the things we experience, some greater some lesser, that underpin our insight into the existence of God as that than which no greater can be conceived.⁴⁵

In other words, in every intellectual quest, we are moved to seek for wisdom, so much so that we cry out for it. But we also bring our insight back down to earth in our efforts to understand it and to explain what we understand to others, as the philosopher in the *Republic*, who has seen the Forms and the Good as source of every Form, returns to share that wisdom with others.⁴⁶

Conclusion

Anselm, in the *Monologion* and *Proslogion*, presents two quite different methods of relating faith and reason. One takes as its point of departure the teachings of the faith, and meditates on their meaning and how they are corroborated by our experience. The other takes as its point of departure the desire for faith, a faith that is in some way presupposed by the desire, but is radically deficient.

One might say that faith in Anselm's works plays two distinct roles, one negative, and one positive. In the more analytic work, such as the *Monologion*,⁴⁷ faith plays a role similar to that of Socrates' daemon as mentioned in Plato's *Apology*.⁴⁸ Socrates says there that his daemon never tells him what to do, only what not to do. It tells him when he is going wrong. The role of faith in works like the *Monologion* and Augustine's *On the Trinity* is similar to this. Along with supplying the revealed teachings for reflection, faith tells us that these teachings, although they surpass human reason, are **not** absurd. We find it puzzling to think of God as one and three, and Christ as God and man, but these teachings are **not** contradictions, but matter for ever-deeper reflection and analysis. Thus, we are **not** to reject as absurd those mysteries of faith which we cannot comprehend.

The other role, the positive one, is found in the *Proslogion* and in Augustine's *Confessions*. Here faith as grace, rather than propositions, is a positive guide, not through providing conclusions about what is true, good, and beautiful, but by moving us to search for truth, goodness, and beauty—ultimately, for God. As Anselm says near the end of the *Monologion*,⁴⁹ we should focus ourselves on loving God. As God is infinitely true, good, and beautiful, we must strive with all our might to know Him. And it is easy to forget to do so. We are constantly distracted by less important things and by our appetites. To support love's quest for truth, goodness, and beauty, we need to hope that we may succeed. And to hope and love as we should, we must have faith in God. This is not just a commitment to the truth of

⁴⁵ *Monologion*, 1; *Proslogion*, Reply to Gaunilo, 8.

⁴⁶ Plato, *Republic* VII (514a-521c).

⁴⁷ This is true of most of his works—*Cur Deus Homo*, *On Truth*, *On Free Will*, etc.

⁴⁸ *Apology* (40a-c).

⁴⁹ *Monologion*, 74-76.

propositions; rather, this is a commitment to a person. And it is made possible by God's love for us, by the covenant by which He binds himself to us.

At the end of the *Proslogion*, Anselm writes: "Lord, by Your Son You command, or rather, counsel us to ask and you promise that we shall receive so that 'our joy may be complete' [John 16:24]."⁵⁰ Anselm believes that the deep desire we have for God will bring us to Him, that we shall grow in wisdom, virtue, and love—in short, that we shall learn to live the life of God through God's grace. If we would discover who and what God is, God Himself must be our teacher, whether through his creation or his grace.

⁵⁰ *Proslogion*, 26, p. 104.