

CALVIN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

**TRITHEISM
AND
DIVINE PERSON AS CENTER OF CONSCIOUSNESS
WITH A COMPARATIVE APPRAISAL OF
JÜRGEN MOLTMANN AND WILLIAM HILL
AS TEST CASES**

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
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This dissertation entitled

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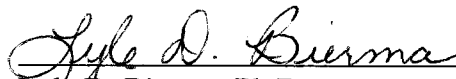
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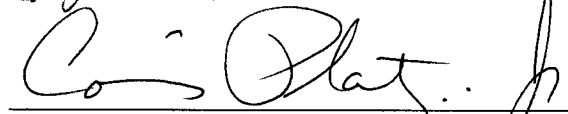
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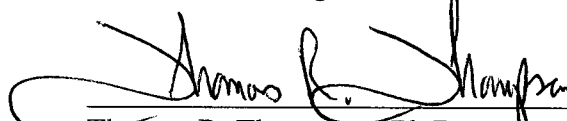
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In memory of Mr. JongSoon Kim

My loving father

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ABSTRACT

Together with the retrieval of the doctrine of the Trinity in the latter half of the twentieth century, a controversy over tritheism took place centering around the notion of divine persons as centers of consciousness. Since Barth, the theological landscape has been divided into opponents and supporters of the notion of divine persons as centers of consciousness. Opponents charge supporters with tritheism; supporters accuse opponents of modalism. The reciprocal criticism demands that we re-examine tritheism and modalism.

The task that this dissertation chooses is that of understanding tritheism. The dissertation intends to accomplish three things: (1) to suggest a definition of tritheism by uncovering historical criteria for tritheism contained in the responses of the church councils to various tritheist positions and evaluating and deepening those historical criteria, (2) to discuss whether the notion of the three personal subjects in the Trinity necessitates tritheism, with reference to the Cappadocians, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Gregory Palamas, Cornelius Plantinga Jr., William Sherlock, and Karl Barth, and (3) to show that not all theologians supporting the three divine personal subjects are tritheist, through applying the tritheist criteria of the dissertation to two so-called social trinitarians, Jürgen Moltmann and William Hill.

For a definition of tritheism, the dissertation concludes that tritheism is any trinitarian theory that fails to confirm the substantial unity of the three divine persons (i.e., the doctrine that the substantial unity of the triune God is not nominal, but ontologically real; the doctrine of *opera trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa*; the doctrine of perichoresis), asserting of the three divine persons three distinct, individual, particular

natures in divinity or in kind. The dissertation claims that the notion of the three divine persons as centers of consciousness does not necessarily entail tritheism when measured against a definition of tritheism derived from both the historical study of official church pronouncements and the theological analysis of them. Yet the dissertation does not imply that no so-called social trinitarian theories are tritheist. For instance, the dissertation claims that Moltmann is close to tritheism, and that Hill is not.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Why Do We Need to Talk about the Problem of Tritheism?

The doctrine of the Trinity was in the middle of theological discussions in the latter part of the twentieth century. The historical moment of the so-called renaissance of the doctrine of the Trinity can be said to have begun with Karl Barth. Until Karl Barth published *Church Dogmatics I/1* (1936 in German), the doctrine of the Trinity “was either being pronounced dead by the rationalists or tediously transmitted in rather embalmed scholastic form by the Catholic and Protestant orthodox.”¹ According to Claude Welch’s analysis of the theological situation of the Trinity in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, “the doctrine of the Trinity abruptly disappeared from the forefront of Protestant theological discussion,” and “was either ignored or relegated to a relatively unimportant place in the theological structure,” after Friedrich Schleiermacher’s *The Christian Faith* (1831) and F. C. Baur’s *Über die Christliche Lehre von der Dreieinigkeit und der Menschwerdung* (1841 ff.).² In the 19th and early 20th centuries, there were several responses to the preceding challenges to the doctrine of the Trinity. Ted Peters offers a good summary of those as follows: “(1) some theologians follow Schleiermacher, who denies that the doctrine of the Trinity is essential to the

¹ Thomas R. Thompson, “*Imitatio Trinitas: The Trinity as a Social Model in the Theologies of Jürgen Moltmann and Leonard Boff*” (Ph.D. diss., Princeton Theological Seminary, 1996), pp. 10-11.

² Claude Welch, *In This Name: The Doctrine of the Trinity in Contemporary Theology* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1952), vii. Welch points to three reasons for the nineteenth century-neglect of the doctrine of the Trinity: (1) Enlightenment challenges in the eighteenth century like rationalism, empiricism, naturalism and natural religion related to them. (2) The effect of biblical criticism (for example, the denial of the authenticity of Jesus’ utterances concerning himself in the Gospel of John). (3) The revolution of the theological method inaugurated by Schleiermacher to relegate the doctrine of the Trinity to an appendix. See *In This Name*, pp. 3-5.

expression of the Christian faith, thereby relegating it to the status of a second-rank doctrine; (2) those who follow Hegel affirm a version of the Trinity that is the equivalent of a metaphysical truth that can be established more or less independently of the Christian revelation; (3) conservative spokespersons for orthodox Christianity continue to hold the classical position because it is held to be a direct and unmistakable deliverance of an authoritative scripture or a tradition rooted in scripture and interpreted by an infallible church.”³ Against the background of anti-trinitarian movements in nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and several responses to them, it was really Barth who initiated the challenge to the relegation of the doctrine of the Trinity to the periphery of the Church’s life and thought.⁴ In Welch’s thought, thus, it is no longer possible to assert that the doctrine of the Trinity is archaic and interesting only to historians, or that it is simply the product of a speculative philosophy with which modern people are not familiar, or that it does not reflect the central interests of the gospel.⁵

However, the theological landscape after Barth did not reflect a vivid resurgence of trinitarian theology. In his article, Robinson criticizes Welch, stating:

It is plain that in spite of the confident, and in many ways quite legitimate, expectation of Welch concerning the development of modern theology in the

³ Ted Peters, *God As Trinity: Relationality and Temporality in Divine Life* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), p. 83. Actually, Peters’ summary covers *Chapter One, The Doctrine of the Trinity in the Nineteenth Century* of Welch’s book *In This Name*, but misses mentioning two other responses: (1) the monotheistic influence of the theology of Albrecht Ritschl to deny the relevance of the doctrine of the Trinity to the heart of the evangelical faith and to remove it from the proper area of theological investigation; (2) two directions of British and American thought that are represented by the unitarian protest against the trinitarianism and the modalistic interpretation of the Trinity on the one hand, and the first development of the so-called social trinitarianism on the other hand.

⁴ T. F. Torrance compliments Barth on his feat of re-opening of trinitarian theology, writing that “On the basis of God’s incarnate self-revelation, (Barth) reintegrated the doctrine of the Trinity of God with the evangelical message of his saving and redeeming activity in Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, thereby restoring express knowledge of the Holy Trinity to its place in the centre of the Church’s faith and worship.” Thomas F. Torrance, *The Christian God* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), p. 9.

⁵ Claude Welch, *In This Name*, p. 218.

direction of trinitarian reconstruction, that expectation has ... been very far from realized, that on the contrary the trinitarian concept has disappeared in all but name from the prevailing articulations of the Christian faith, and that, in particular, a strong doctrine of the Holy Spirit has been replaced by the factual possibility of a new life in faith and even by a matter of logical necessity.⁶

In Robinson's observation, Rudolf Bultmann, together with English empiricists of religious thinking such as Paul van Buren, Donald Evans, and Ian T. Ramsey, frustrates Welch's expectation concerning the development of modern theology in the direction of trinitarian reconstruction.⁷ Agreeing with N. H. G. Robinson, T. Thompson writes, "Though Welch was certainly correct to anticipate that future reflection on the Trinity would markedly bear the influence of Barth, his optimism concerning a resurgence of this doctrine appeared a bit premature."⁸ In addition to Bultmannian existentialists and English empiricists, T. Thompson pays regard to the fact that other so-called neo-orthodox theologians such as Bonhoeffer, Brunner, the Niebuhr brothers, and Tillich were much oriented to christological concentration rather than trinitarian. In Thompson's analysis, moreover, "the theological turbulence of the sixties – the crisis over God-talk, the *Wirrwarr* in theological method, the stints with Secular, Religionless and Death of God theologies" provides the ground to justify Robinson's criticism against Welch's prospect.⁹

⁶ N. H. G. Robinson, "Trinitarianism and Post-Barthian Theology," *Journal of Theological Studies* 20 (1969), pp. 197-198.

⁷ Here Robinson has in mind Bultmann's effort to demythologize and reinterpret the Christian faith in an existentialist way. Also, Robinson means by "English empiricists of religious thinking" the group of those who are "greatly concerned not to use religious language to which it cannot give what it calls a 'cash-value'." The efforts of them found it hard to use the Trinitarian formula, which would bring a lot of misunderstanding of religious reality. N. H. G. Robinson, pp. 192-197.

⁸ Thomas R. Thompson, p. 12.

⁹ Thomas R. Thompson, pp. 12-13.

One year before Robinson gave his “Honorary Presidential Address to the Scottish Church Theology Society” in 1968, which appeared in *Journal of Theological Studies*,¹⁰ Karl Rahner wrote an essay, “Der dreifaltige Gott als transzendenter Urgrund der Heilsgeschichte,” in *Mysterium Salutis*,¹¹ which was translated into English in 1970. With this essay, Rahner opened the era of the renaissance of the doctrine of the Trinity in the post-Barth era. Indeed, this does not mean that it is Rahner alone who contributed to the resurgence of interest in the trinitarian theology. As Christoph Schwöbel rightly points out, “one of the major influences for an increasing awareness of the significance of trinitarian questions in theology and in the life of the church in Western churches is without doubt the encounter with Eastern Orthodoxy, its liturgy and its theology, in the ecumenical context.”¹² Rahner’s effort to find an alternative to “the Augustinian-Western conception of the Trinity,”¹³ and Eastern Orthodoxy’s criticism against Western trinitarianism for minimizing the Trinity into a mere monotheistic structure,¹⁴ are major

¹⁰ Cf. *Journal of Theological Studies* 20 (1969).

¹¹ Cf. *Mysterium Salutis* vol. 2 (1967).

¹² Christoph Schwöbel, “Introduction - The Renaissance of Trinitarian Theology: Reasons, Problems and Tasks,” in *Trinitarian Theology Today*, ed. Christoph Schwöbel (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), p. 3.

¹³ In his book, *The Trinity*, Rahner argues that the historical or theological reason for such a rueful lamentation that “despite their orthodox confession of the Trinity, Christians are, in their practical life, almost mere ‘monotheist’” should be attributed to the “the Augustine-Western conception of the Trinity.” Rahner’s challenge to detect a way to restore the unity of the two separated treatises, *On the One God* and *On the Triune God*, reawoke interest in trinitarian theology, with the support of the rising voice of Eastern Orthodox theology. For Rahner’s view, *The Trinity*, trans. J. Donceel (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Co., 1997), pp. 15-21.

¹⁴ The influences of Eastern Orthodoxy on the current trinitarian movements were led by Vladimir Lossky, John D. Zizioulas, and John Meyendorff. Their significant monographs as regards trinitarian issues are: Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of The Eastern Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1976); idem, *In the Image and Likeness of God* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1985); idem, *Orthodox Theology* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1989); John Meyendorff, *A Study of Gregory Palamas* (Wing Road, UK: the Faith Press, 1964); idem, *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends & Doctrinal Themes* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1974); idem,

factors stimulating the new interest in trinitarian theology. The impetus of Barth to reverse the nineteenth-century anti-trinitarian trend and to awaken an interest in the trinitarian conception has been effectuated through “the interplay between the inspiration of Eastern trinitarianism and the self-critical re-examination of the history of Western trinitarianism.”¹⁵

This movement of the renaissance of the trinitarian theology spread into the debates of major scholars of all major ecclesiastical traditions – Protestant,¹⁶ Roman

Christ in Eastern Christian Thought (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1975); John D. Zizioulas, *Being As Communion* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1985; second printing, 1993).

¹⁵ Christoph Schwöbel, p. 5.

¹⁶ After Karl Barth, major theologians who published monographs on the doctrine of the Trinity or wrote significant essays or articles are: David Brown, *The Divine Trinity* (La Salle: Open Court, 1985); Colin Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991); Leonard Hodgson, *The Doctrine of the Trinity* (New York: Charles Scribners Sons, 1944); idem, *How Can God be Both One and Three?* (London: SPCK, 1960); Robert Jenson, *The Triune Identity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982); idem, “The Logic of the Doctrine of the Trinity,” *Dialog* 26 (1987), pp. 245-49; Eberhard Jüngel, *The Doctrine of the Trinity: God’s Being Is in Becoming* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976); Alister McGrath, *Understanding the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 1988); Bruce D. Marshall, *Trinity and Truth* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom* (New York: Harper & Row, 1981); *History and the Triune God: Contributions to Trinitarian Theology* (London: SCM, 1991); idem, “Die Einheit des dreieinigen Gottes: Bemerkungen zur heilsgeschichtlichen Begründung und zur Begrifflichkeit der Trinitätslehre,” in *Trinität: Aktuelle Perspektiven der Theologie* (Freiburg: Herder, 1984); Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology* vol. 1, tr. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991); idem, “Die Subjektivität Gottes und die Trinitätslehre: Ein Beitrag zur Beziehung zwischen Karl Barth und der Philosophie Hegels,” in *Grundfragen Systematischer Theologie 2* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980); Ted Peters, *God as Trinity: Relationality and Temporality in Divine Life* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1993); Cornelius Plantinga Jr., “Gregory of Nyssa and the Social Analogy of the Trinity,” *The Thomist* 50 (1986), pp. 325-352; idem, “The Threeness/Oneness Problem of the Trinity,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 23 (1988), pp. 37-53; idem, “Social Trinity and Tritheism,” in *Trinity, Incarnation, and Atonement*, Ronald Feenstra and Cornelius Plantinga Jr. eds. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), pp. 21-47; Duncan Reid, *Energies of the Spirit: Trinitarian Models in Eastern Orthodox and Western Theology* (Atlanta: The American Academy of Religion, 1997); Cyril C. Richardson, *The Doctrine of the Trinity* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1958); Christoph Schwöbel and Colin E. Gunton, eds., *Persons, Divine and Human* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991); Christoph Schwöbel, ed., *Essays on Divine Being and Act* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995); John Thompson, *Modern Trinitarian Perspectives* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); Thomas R. Thompson, “Trinitarianism Today: Doctrinal Renaissance, Ethical Relevance, Social Redolence,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 32 (1997), pp. 9-42; Peter Toon, *Our Triune God* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996); Thomas F. Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996); Claude Welch, *In This Name: The Doctrine of the Trinity in Contemporary Theology* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1952).

Catholic,¹⁷ Eastern Orthodox.¹⁸ Moreover, today's interests in the Trinity tend to lead scholars to examine and reformulate every part of the Christian dogmatics in the light of the trinitarian theological structure. It has not merely brought about the attempts to

¹⁷ Besides Karl Rahner, major Roman Catholic theologians leading the study of the doctrine of the Trinity are as follows: Johann Auer, *Gott-Der Eine und Dreieine: Kleine Katholische Dogmatik II*, ed. J. Auer and J. Ratzinger (Regensburg: Pustet, 1978); Leonard Boff, *Trinity and Society*, tr. Paul Burns (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1988); François Bourassa, *Questions de Théologie trinitaire* (Rome: Presses de L'Université Grégorienne, 1970); idem, "Personne et conscience en théologie trinitaire – I, II," *Gregorianum* 55 (1974), pp. 471-93; 677-720; Joseph Bracken, "The Holy Trinity As a Community of Divine Persons," *Heythrop Journal* 15 (1974), pp. 166-82; "Process Philosophy and Trinitarian Theology I," *Process Studies* 8 (1978), pp. 217-230; idem, "Process Philosophy and Trinitarian Theology II," *Process Studies* 11 (1981), pp. 83-96; idem, *The Triune Symbol: Persons, Process and Community* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1985); Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, tr. David Smith (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1997); Bertrand de Margerie, *The Christian Trinity in History*, tr. Edmund J. Fortman, S.J. (Petersham, Mass.: St. Bede's, 1982); Edmund Fortman, *The Triune God: A Historical Study of the Doctrine of the Trinity* (London: Hutchinson, 1972); William Hill, *The Three-Personed God: the Trinity As a Mystery of Salvation* (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1982); Walter Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, tr. Matthew J. O'Connell (New York: Crossroads Pub. Co., 1986); Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991); idem, "Philosophers and Theologians on the Trinity," *Modern Theology* 2 (1986), pp. 169-181; idem, "Current Trends in Trinitarian Theology," *Religious Studies Review* 13 (1987), pp. 141-147; Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1972); idem, *Divinarum Personarum Conceptionem Analogicam* (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1957); idem, *De Deo Trino*, 2 vols. (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1964); idem, *The Way to Nicea*, tr. C. O'Donovan (Philadelphia: the Westminster Press, 1976);); John O'Donnel, *The Mystery of the Triune God*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1989); idem, *Trinity and Temporality: The Christian Doctrine of God in the Light of Process Theology and the Theology of Hope* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983); idem, "The Trinity As Divine Community: a Critical Reflection upon recent Theological Developments," *Gregorianum* 69 (1988), pp. 5-34; Piet Schoonenberg, "Zur Trinitätslehre Karl Rhaners," in *Glaube in Prozess*, eds. Elmar Klinger and Klaus Wittstadt (Freiburg: Herder, 1984), pp. 471-91; idem, "The Doctrine of the Trinity: An Empty Dogma or a Fruitful Theologoumenon?" *Louvain Studies* 16 (1991), pp. 195-206.

¹⁸ In addition to those three theologians mentioned above - V. Lossky, J. D. Zizioulas, and J. Meyendorff, the voice of the Greek Orthodox theology is amplified by such scholars as the following: Maximos Aghiorgoussis, "Christian Existentialism of the Greek Fathers: Persons, Essence and Energies in God," *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 23 (1978), pp. 15-41; Thomas Leo Anastos, "Essence, Energies and Hypostasis: an Epistemological Analysis of the Eastern Orthodox Model of God," (Ph. D., diss., Yale University, 1986); idem, "Gregory Palamas' Radicalization of the Essence, Energies, and Hypostasis Model of God," *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 38 (1993), pp. 335-349; Boris Bobrinsky, *Le Mystère de la Trinité: Cours de théologie orthodoxe* (Paris: Cerf, 1986); idem, "Models of Trinitarian Revelation," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 39 (1995), pp. 115-126; Christos Giannaras (Yannaros), "The Distinction between Essence and Energies and Its Importance for Theology," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 19 (1975), pp. 232-245; idem, "Orthodoxy and the West," *Eastern Churches Review* 3 (1971), pp. 286-300; Gregory Havrilak, "Karl Rahner and the Greek Trinity," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 34 (1990), pp. 61-77; Verna Harrison, "Perichoresis in the Greek Fathers," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 35 (1991), pp. 53-65; G. I. Mantzarides, "The Ethical Significance of the Trinitarian Dogma," *Sobornost* 5 (1970), pp. 720-729; idem, "Tradition and Renewal in the Theology of Saint Gregory Palamas," *Eastern Churches Review* 9 (1977), pp. 1-18; Christos Voulgaris, "The Biblical and Patristic Doctrine of the Trinity," *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 37 (1992), pp. 165-201; Kallistos Ware, "The Debate about Palamism," *Eastern Churches Review* 9 (1977), pp. 45-63.

reformulate the doctrine of the Trinity itself. It has also effected attempts to reconsider major doctrinal topics such as anthropology,¹⁹ ecclesiology,²⁰ the doctrine of creation,²¹

¹⁹ Cf. Colin Gunton, "The Triune God and the Freedom of the Creature," in *Karl Barth: Centenary Essays*, ed. S. W. Sykes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); idem, "Immanence and Otherness: Divine Sovereignty and Human Freedom in the Theology of Robert W. Jenson," *Dialogue* 30 (1991), pp. 17-26; idem, "Barth, The Trinity, and Human Freedom," *Theology Today* 43 (1990); idem, "Relation and Relativity: The Trinity and the Created World," in *Trinitarian Theology Today: Essays on Divine Being and Act*, ed. Christoph Schwöbel (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995); idem, *The One, The Three and the Many: God, Creation and the Culture of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Shirley Guthrie, "Pastoral, Counseling, Trinitarian Theology, and Christian Anthropology," *Interpretation* 33 (1979), pp. 130-143; Trebor Hart, "Person & Prerogative in Perichoretic Perspective," *The Irish Theological Quarterly* 58 (1992), pp. 46-57; Jan Milic Lochman, "The Trinity and Human Life," *Theology* 78 (1975), pp. 173-83; Alistair McFadyen I, *The Call to Personhood: A Christian Theory of the individual in Social Relationships* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); idem, "The Trinity and Human Individuality: the Conditions for Relevance," *Theology* 95 (1992), pp. 10-18; John Macmurray, *Persons in Relations* (London: Faber and Faber, 1961); Albert Outler, "The Beginnings of Personhood: Theological Considerations," *Perkins Journal* 27 (1973), pp. 28-34; Wolfhart Pannenberg, "Person und Subjekt: Zur Überwindung des Subjektivismus im Menschenbild und im Gottesverständnis," *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 18 (1976), pp. 133-48; Joseph Ratzinger, "Concerning the Notion of Person in Theology," *Communio: International Catholic Review* 17 (1990), pp. 440-448; Demitru Staniloae, "Der dreieinige Gott und die Einheit der Menschen," *Evangelische Theologie* 41 (1981), pp. 439-450; Alan J. Torrance, *Persons in Communion* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996).

²⁰ Cf. André Birmelé, "Ökumenische Überlegungen zu Pneumatologie und Ekklesiologie," in *Der heilige Geist: Ökumenische und Reformatorische Untersuchungen*, ed. Joachim Heubach (Erlangen: Martin-Luther-Verlag, 1996); Robert Jenson, "What Would a Full Doctrine of the Spirit Mean for the Doctrine of the Church?" in *Der Heilige Geist: Ökumenische und reformatorische Untersuchungen*, ed. Joachim Heubach (Erlangen: Martin-Luther-Verlag, 1996); Robert Kress, "The Church as 'Communio': Trinity and Incarnation As the Foundations of Ecclesiology," *The Jurist* 36 (1976), pp. 127-58; idem, *The Church: Communion, Sacrament, Communication* (New York: Paulist, 1985); Gennadios Limouris, "The Church: A Mystery of Unity in Diversity," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 31 (1987), pp. 123-42; George Maloney, "A Trinitarian Church of One in Many: A Mysticism of Community," *Diakonia* 15 (1980), pp. 200-219; Richard H. Niebuhr, "The Doctrine of the Trinity and the Unity of the Church," *Theology Today* 3 (1946), pp. 371-84; Elmar Salmann, "Trinität und Kirche," *Catholica* 38 (1984), pp. 352-374; Robert T. Sears, "Trinitarian Love as Ground of the Church," *Theological Studies* 37 (1976), pp. 652-679; Dumitru Staniloae, "Trinitarian Relations and the Life of the Church," in *Theology and the Church*, tr. Robert Barringer (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1980); idem, "The Holy Spirit in the Theology and Life of the Orthodox Church," *Sobornost* 7 (1975), pp. 4-21; Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998); John D. Zizioulas, *Being As Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985); idem, "The Eucharistic Community and the Catholicity of the Church," in *The New Man: An Orthodox and Reformed Dialogue*, ed. J. Meyendorff and J. McLelland (New Brunswick, N.J.: Agora Books, 1973).

²¹ Cf. Hans Urs von Balthasar, "Schöpfung und Trinität," *Communio* 17 (1988), pp. 205-212; Janice M. Bell, "Creation as the Work of God the Three-in-One," *Colloquium* 18 (1986), pp. 25-30; Emilio Brito, "Trinité et création: L'approche de Schelling," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 62 (1986), pp. 66-88; Dominique Cerbelaud, "Création et Trinité," *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques* 72 (1988), pp. 88-94; Greg Cootsona, "Trinitarian Creation of a Complex World," *Dialog* 36 (1997), pp. 175-79; Gilles Emery, "Trinité et création: Le principe trinitaire de la création dans les commentaires d'Albert le Grand, de Bonaventure et de Thomas d'Aquin sur les Sentences," *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques* 79 (1995), pp. 405-430; Thomas N. Finger, "Modern Alienation and Trinitarian Creation,"

and eschatology.²² Now, it seems incorrect to say that the doctrine of the Trinity is a mere appendix to Christian dogmatics.

Yet the retrieval of trinitarian theology has brought forth a controversial issue on what is the right way of explaining how God can be both one and three. This issue was related to the notion of divine person as “center of consciousness.”²³ K. Barth occasioned this controversy in the modern context of the renaissance of the Trinity. Since Barth, the theological landscape has been divided into two opposing groups, with two views – the first and second views – in the first group and three – the third and fourth and fifth views – in the second group. The first group argues that any theory positing three divine conscious subjects is tritheism, for the Christian God is one personal subject. According to the second group, any theory arguing that there is only one personal subject in God is modalism, for the Christian God is one Being of three distinct conscious subjects.

Evangelical Review of Theology 17 (1993), pp. 190-208; Colin Gunton, *The Triune Creator: A Historical & Systematic Study* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998); Robert W. Jenson, “Creation as a Triune Act,” *Word & World* 2 (1982), pp. 34-42; R. C. Neville, “Creation and the Trinity,” *Theological Studies* 30 (1969), pp. 3-26; Paul D Molnar, “The Function of the *Trinity* in Moltmann’s Ecological Doctrine of Creation,” *Theological Studies* 51 (1990), pp. 673-697; Joseph Sittler, “The Presence and Acts of the Triune God in Creation and History,” in *The Gospel and Human Destiny*, ed. Vilmost Vajta (Minneapolis: Augsburg Pub., 1971); Iain R. Torrance, “The Trinity in Relation to *Creation* and *Incarnation*,” *Neue Zeitschrift für systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 38 (1996), pp. 29-37; Amos Yong, “Oneness and the Trinity: The Theological and Ecumenical Implications of Creation Ex Nihilo for an Intra-Pentecostal Dispute,” *Pneuma* 19 (1997), pp. 81-107.

²² Cf. Ingolf U. Dalferth, “The Eschatological Roots of the Doctrine of the Trinity,” in *Trinitarian Theology Today*, ed. Christoph Schwöbel (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995); Christiaan Mostert, “From *Eschatology* to Trinity: Pannenberg’s Doctrine of God,” *Pacifica* 10 (1997), pp. 70-83; Gerhard Noller, “Trinitarische Eschatologie,” in *Auf dem Wege: H Diem*, eds. Martin Honecker and Lothar Steiger (München: C. Kaiser, 1965); Roger Olson, “Trinity and *Eschatology*: the Historical Being of God in Jürgen Moltmann and Wolfhart Pannenberg,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 36 (1983), pp. 213-227; Jean-Louis Souletie, “Une Christologie en perspective eschatologique: Jürgen Moltmann,” *Irénikon* 70 (1997), pp. 41-63; Daniel A. Tappeiner, “Doxophany: a Trinitarian Eschatological vision,” in *Church, Word and Spirit*, eds. J. Bradley and R. Muller (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987).

²³ In most cases, the controversy on the tritheism is related to the notion of divine person as “center of consciousness.” In the dissertation, the notion of divine person as “center of consciousness” actually includes the understanding of divine persons as three spiritual centers of activity, subjectivity, and liberty. Refer to p. 24 of the text.

Each group is supported by distinguished scholars from various theological positions. For example, the first group is represented by Karl Barth, Karl Rahner, D. M. Baillie, Claude Welch, John Macquarrie, Robert W. Jenson, Donald Bloesch, John Thompson, and process theologians such as Lewis S. Ford, Bernard Lee, Roland Faber and Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki.²⁴ This group, however, may be distinguished into two views. For the first view (including Barth, Rahner and their students), the notion of the one divine essence makes it necessary to take God as uni-personal subject, for the one divine essence entails only one personal subjectivity. The second view (including Jenson and process theologians such as Ford, Lee, Faber, and Suchocki), puts its focus on how to interpret threeness rather than what is oneness. They attempt to leave a traditional way of doing theology, for example, a substantial theology, as we see examples in Jenson's effort for "revisionary metaphysics"²⁵ and Ford's for "process metaphysics." For the second view, the threeness of God means the three discrete names or ways to identify one reality or event that implies one personal subject.

The second group consists of scholars who claim that the notion of divine persons in the full sense of "person," namely, "person as conscious center of action," leads to

²⁴ Cf. D. M. Baillie, *God Was In Christ* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948); John Macquarrie, *Principles of Christian Theology* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1966); Donald G. Bloesch, *Essentials of Evangelical Theology* vol. 1 (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978; reprint, HarperCollins, 1982); Lewis S. Ford, "Process Trinitarianism," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 43 (1975), pp. 199-213; *The Lure of God: A Biblical Background for Process Theism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978); "Contingent Trinitarianism," in *Trinity in Process: A Relational Theology of God*, eds. Joseph A. Bracken and Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki (New York: Continuum, 1997); Bernard Lee, "An 'Other' Trinity," in *Trinity in Process*, pp. 191-214; Roland Faber, "Trinity, Analogy, and Coherence," in *Trinity in Process*, pp. 147-172; Marjorie H. Suchocki, "Unmale God: Reconsidering the Trinity," *Quarterly Review* 3 (1983), pp. 34-49; idem, "Spirit in and through the World," in *Trinity in Process*, pp. 173-190. For others' references, See n. 16 and n. 17.

²⁵ Robert Jenson identifies his own theological approach with a theology based on "revisionary metaphysics," where he argues that "the metaphysics that construes being as perdurance, and contingency as an ontological deficit, is antithetical to the gospel." See his reply to Paul D. Molnar's critical review

tritheism only when it implies “individual separateness,” but does not result in tritheism so long as divine persons are inter-active, inter-relative, or indwelling in each other. In other words, for this group, the doctrine of perichoresis saves the theory positing the three divine conscious subjects from the charge of tritheism. This group, however, is divided into three views (the third, fourth and fifth ones as categorized before) according to whether the unity of perichoresis is grounded on the ontological unity of substance or the social unity of community.²⁶

For the third view, any trinitarian view that conceives of divine person as “subject with a distinct center of consciousness” and yet lacks the substantial unity among them, is regarded as tritheism. For this view believes that the unity of perichoresis is derived from the substantial unity. This view is made up of Leonard Hodgson, Zdenek Trtík, Cornelius Plantinga Jr., Wolfhart Pannenberg, Thomas F. Torrance, John D. Zizioulas, Bernard Lonergan, Bertrand de Margerie, William Hill, Walter Kasper, and Leonardo Boff.²⁷

The fourth view agrees with the third view that the doctrine of the unity of God can be explained through the doctrine of perichoresis. They understand, however, the doctrine of perichoresis as having no relation with the consubstantiality of three divine persons, because they favor the metaphysics of communal process over the metaphysics

article. Cf. Paul D. Molnar, “Robert W. Jenson’s *Systematic Theology, Volume I: The Triune God*,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 52 (1999), pp. 117-131; Robert W. Jenson, “A Reply,” p. 132.

²⁶ The distinction of the second view into three groups might look a little hazy, because some different features can be observed in a same group, and some common in different groups. For example, the fifth group into which Moltmann who is categorized, does not have all the same voices in every matter of the Trinitarian controversy. At least, Moltmann does not give up the notion of person as individual substance as seen in Boethius’ teaching, which is strongly depreciated by Colin Gunton in the same group. As regards the notion of person as individual substance, Moltmann might be close to the fourth group. But he is not a process theologian.

²⁷ Cf. Zdenek Trtík, “Der Personbegriff im dogmatischen Denken Karl Barths: Eine kritische Untersuchung,” *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 5 (1963), pp. 263-

of substance. This view includes such process theologians as Joseph A. Bracken and Gregory A. Boyd.²⁸

The fifth view is a non-process theological version claiming that the unity of the three divine persons should be understood in the light of “the general metaphysical category of person-in-relationship.” This view is also distinguished from the third view in that it tends to make more negative judgments on the Augustinian tradition of the Trinity and to put less emphasis on the divine consubstantiality in favor of the doctrine of perichoresis based on the metaphysic of person-in-relationship, than the third view.²⁹ Jürgen Moltmann, Catherine M. LaCugna, and Colin Gunton belong to this view.³⁰

295; idem, “Die Trinität als ewiges Subjekt,” *Theologische Zeitschrift* 37 (1981), pp. 35-44. For others’ references, see n. 14, 16, 17 and 18.

²⁸ The process theologians’ views on the notion of divine person are not univocal. Marjorie H. Suchocki does not think that any idea of divine person as “conscious subject of action” goes together with process theology. Lewis Ford, Roland Faber and Bernard J. Lee drive their concept of God even to risk the danger of modalism. In contrast, Bracken and Boyd argues that God, the one necessary being, must eternally exist as distinct socially related centers. See Bracken’s articles as mentioned above, and Boyd’s essay, “The Self-Sufficient Sociality of God: A Trinitarian Revision of Hartshorne’s Metaphysics,” in *Trinity in Process*, pp. 73-94. For others’ views, refer to the references in n. 24.

²⁹ For example, LaCugna argues that Augustine is responsible for the Latin trend to separate “the theology of God from the economy of salvation by treating *De Deo Uno* and *De Deo Trino* as discrete treatises.” In her criticism, the theology of the Trinity has been relegated to a mere appendix since Augustine. See LaCugna, *God for Us*, p. 10, 81-109. Colin Gunton goes so far as to say that Augustine disconnected the theological heritage of the Cappadocians from the Western theological history. In Gunton’s eye, Augustine cannot avoid the charge that Augustine’s way of doing a trinitarian theology led to the fundamental problems of the contemporary controversies on the doctrine of the Trinity today. Gunton writes, “The conceptual and ontological revolution achieved by the Cappadocians is that God is as he is made known by the Son and the Spirit: he is other – distinct – in person, to be sure, but not in being as God – for he is made known *as he is*. The danger of Augustine’s failure to maintain that revolution is that the insight will be lost, as indeed it has been for much of Western theological history, certainly in recent centuries. It is not being suggested that Augustine is propounding straightforward versions of the various heresies to which he is near. ... The question which this paper is designed to ask is whether he has the conceptual equipment to avoid a final collapse into something like them, and the answer must be that he has not. And if he has not, then how are we to avoid the conclusion that the road which he took did in fact lead, albeit by many twists and turns, to that deepseated problematic about the knowledge of God with which we now so anxiously wrestle?” Colin Gunton, “Augustine, the Trinity and the Theological Crisis of the West,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 43 (1990), p. 58.

³⁰ For references, see n. 16 and n. 17.

In comparison with the first and second views, the third, fourth, and fifth views may be commonly called “social trinitarian.” For they acknowledge the concept of the three divine persons as three distinct conscious centers of action and at the same time emphasize the unity of the social or inter-personal communion, no matter whether such a social unity is grounded on the homogeneous unit of substance or on the metaphysics of person-in-relationship, or communal process. For the first and second views, all the so-called social trinitarians are in danger of tritheism. For the third, fourth, and fifth views, the first and second views that denies each divine person a status of “personal subject” looks like a position close to modalism.

The mutual criticism against each other for tritheistic or modalistic tint³¹ drives us to acknowledge that we should re-examine the notions of modalism and tritheism, including the proper understanding of the Trinity. Without well-defined notions of modalism and tritheism, today’s renaissance of trinitarian theology might be reduced to a mere chaotic eruption of psuedo-trinitarian theories, that is, theories that are mistaken, though honest, attempts to formulate the teaching of the Trinity.³² Here we observe that there is an urgent necessity to clarify the criteria to tell the differences between the notion of modalism and tritheism, between the notion of the Trinity and each of them. Otherwise, one of the two opposite groups on the issue of the divine person as conscious center of action continues to doubt the validity of a trinitarian theory supporting the other. In the

³¹ This point is well described by Jan Rohls. He states that once “person” is recognized as the ultimate subject to act from himself, by himself, either the notion of God as Person or the notion of three persons in God must be given up. For Rohls, both cannot be justified together. Unless the trinitarian person concept is defined, Rohls worries, all the talks about the Trinity would be equivocal. Jan Rohls, “Die Persönlichkeit Gottes und die Trinitätslehre,” *Evangelische Theologie* 45 (1985), pp. 126-127.

³² I do not mean by “psuedo-trinitarian theories,” that many contemporary teachings of the Trinity would end in heresies. What I intend to do here is not for “heresy-hunting,” but for emphasizing the necessity to resolve the opposition between two disagreeing views.

end, such a situation might bring out the loss of the normative understanding of the Trinity. Paradoxically, then, the retrieval of the doctrine of the Trinity might be relegated again to a marginal doctrine of Christianity, for there is no universal agreement in interpreting the doctrine of the Trinity.

The task to explain what tritheism and modalism are is not simple. Truly, tritheism and modalism have opposite characteristics in many respects; the historical study of modalism has its own scope that is different from that of tritheism. To discern what elements make a theory modalist is one thing, and to discern what elements make a theory tritheist is another.³³ To deal with both modalism and tritheism would demand too much for this dissertation. Therefore, the dissertation attempts to deal with the controversy over the threeness/oneness problem of the Trinity in regard to the notion of divine person as conscious center of action, in connection with the study of tritheism, rather than with the study of both.

How can tritheism be defined? According to Cornelius Plantinga Jr., there seems actually no unanimously agreed definition of tritheism.³⁴ A simple understanding of

³³ This does not mean that the premise of modalism and tritheism is entirely separated from each other. For example, Sabellianism and Arianism share their common conviction of the absolute uniqueness and oneness of God. For modalism, the threeness of the Trinity should be compromised in such a way that no independent subsistence is allotted to each divine person. Otherwise, the blasphemy of three Gods would occur since three independent subsistences contradict the belief in the Godhead as a monad. For Arianism, on the other hand, the oneness of the Trinity should not be interpreted as meaning that the three divine persons share the being or essence of the Godhead in common. Otherwise, there would result a triplicity of divine beings, which contracts the uniqueness and oneness of God. The Sabellian interpretation of the Trinity is that the Godhead as a monad expressed itself in three operations. The Arian idea is that the three divine persons are entirely different beings, not holding the same nature or essence in common at all. In other words, it can be said that Sabellianism and Arianism had one conviction in common that one divine subject requires one divine nature, and vice versa. The three divine persons cannot be three subjects, which would mean three natures. Thus, the three divine persons are mere operations of one subject of divine monad. This is modalism. Or since the three divine persons are three subjects, there are three natures, which should be different. For the one divine nature cannot be divisible, communicable. This is Arianism.

³⁴ Cornelius Plantinga Jr., "Social Trinity and Tritheism," in *Trinity, Incarnation, and Atonement*, eds. Ronald J. Feenstra and Cornelius Plantinga Jr. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), pp. 21-47.

tritheism may be a teaching about the Trinity that denies or invalidates the oneness of substance among the three divine Persons. It may be defined as just a belief in three gods who have different degrees in divinity from one another. Arianism may be taken as one historical example of this kind of tritheism.³⁵

It seems, however, that later tritheistic views frustrate a simple definition of tritheism as believing that there are three different divine essences, as we see in those of John Philoponus in the sixth century³⁶ and Roscelin of Compiègne in the twelfth

³⁵ According to J. N. D. Kelly, the teaching of Arius on the Trinity is summarized as follows: (1) The Son must be a creature, though not to be compared with the rest of creation, owing His being wholly to the Father's will. (2) As a creature the Son must have had a beginning. (3) The Son can have no communion with His father. The Father remains ineffable to the Son, and the Word can neither see nor know the Father perfectly and accurately. What He knows and sees, He knows and sees proportionately to His capacity, just as our knowledge is adapted to our powers. (4) The Son must be liable to change and even sin. See John Norman Davidson Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (San Francisco: HarperSan Francisco, 1978; first edition, 1960), pp. 226-231. The background and reason why Arians designed their teaching in such a way are explained in two ways – traditional and recent. In a traditional way, it has been assumed that Arius is illogical, unspiritual and ill-intentioned. Yet recent studies refute such a traditional assumption. They argue that Arianism was carefully and logically designed to enable Christians to believe a suffering God. In other words, Arianism was formulated to postulate a suffering God not only from the metaphysical side, but also from the soteriological side. The recent studies do not say Arianism is orthodox. In defense of Arianism, recent studies conclude that the Arian solution to its contemporary extreme views such as Sabellian modalism, was “a most unsatisfactory one, though it was, we must now admit, well-intentioned.” See Richard Hanson, “The Achievement of Orthodoxy in the Fourth Century AD,” in *The Making of Orthodoxy*, ed. Rowan D. Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 142-156. In addition to this, refer to the followings for recent studies: Richard Hanson, “The Doctrine of the Trinity Achieved in 381,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 36 (1983), pp. 41-57; idem, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988); R. D. Williams, “The Logic of Arianism,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 34 (1983), pp. 56-81; idem, “Does It Make Sense To Speak of Pre-Nicene Orthodoxy?” in *The Making of Orthodoxy*, pp. 1-23; Maurice Wiles, “In Defense of Arianism,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 13 (1962), pp. 339-347; idem, “The Philosophy in Christianity: Arius and Athanasius,” in *The Philosophy in Christianity*, ed. Godfrey Vesey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Robert C. Gregg and Dennis E. Groh, “The Centrality of Soteriology in Early Arianism,” *Studia Patristica* 15 (1984), pp. 305-316; idem, *Early Arianism: A View of Salvation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981). It is interesting to note that in the early eighteenth century, there was an Arian controversy in England. Samuel Clarke (*Scripture-Doctrine of the Trinity*, 1712) was charged with Arianism by his contemporaries, including Daniel Waterland (*A Vindication of Christ's Divinity: Being a Defence of Some Queries, Relating to Dr. Clarke's Scheme of the Holy Trinity, in Answer to a Clergyman in the Country*). James P. Ferguson affirms an Arianism in Clarke. However, Thomas C. Pfizenmaier denies its validity. According to Pfizenmaier, Clarke should be categorized into the orthodox line following Irenaeus, Origen, Eusebius and the Cappadocians. Cf. James P. Ferguson, *Dr. Samuel Clarke: An Eighteenth Century Heretic* (Kineton: The Roundwood Press, 1976); Thomas C. Pfizenmaier, *The Trinitarian Theology of Dr. Samuel Clarke (1675-1729)* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1997). The quote is from Pfizenmaier, p. 220.

³⁶ Basing his idea on the authority of Aristotle who teaches the particular or individual essence and the common essence, Philoponus argues that there are three particular essences in the Holy Trinity, and one

century.³⁷ For they did not seemingly deny that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have a common nature and substance. They were condemned as tritheist for reasons that are not

common essence. “The common nature, considered in itself, is one for the whole species but in so far as it exists in the individuals it is multiple.” In his applying this distinction of Aristotle’s to the doctrine of the Trinity, Philoponus takes the common nature as only a product of the mind, arguing that “the nature called common, has no reality of its own alongside any of the existents, but is either nothing at all – which is actually the case – or only subsists as (formed) by our mind from particular things.” He writes: “When the common nature of man ... is realised in each of the individual human beings it becomes proper to that individual; then it is no longer common to any other individual ... The rational animal I am is not common to any other animal.” This nominalistic feature of Philoponus’ idea leads him to face the charge of tritheism. In Philoponus’ thought, the three divine hypostases in the Trinity imply more than the three divine individual substances or natures. “Hypostasis comprises not merely the common nature realised in an individual, but the special properties belonging to that individual as well.” Insofar as “hypostasis” is defined as “common nature” plus “existence proper to each individual,” then, the three divine hypostases are different from one another “in such wise that no equality exists between different hypostases any more than there is an equality between beings of the same genus but different species.” To put it precisely, consubstantiality “exists between individual substances and not between hypostases because *qua* hypostases they differ from one another.” Furthermore, the consubstantiality existing between individual substances is not an objective reality, but purely intellectual, which “has no proper existence of its own *per se* but has reality only in the individuals.” For a reference of John Philoponus, see Gustave Bardy, “Jean Philopon,” *Dictionnaire de théologie Catholique*: cols. 831-39; I. A. Dorner, *History of the Development of the Doctrine of the Person of Christ* vol. 1, tr. D. W. Simon (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1872); R. Y. Ebied, A. Van Roey, and L. R. Wickham, *Peter of Callinicum: Anti-Tritheist Dossier* (Leuven: Oriental Lovaniensia Analecta, 1981); Joahnn Albert Fabricius, “De Ioanne Philopono Grammatico,” in *Bibliotheca Graeca* vol. 10 (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1967); C. J. Hefele, *A History of the Councils of the Church*, vol. 5, *A.D. 626 to the Close of the Second Council of Nicaea, A.D. 787* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1896; Reprint, 1972); Philipp Meyer, “Johannes Philoponos,” *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*: cols. 196-197; J. R. O’Donnel, “John Philoponus,” *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, p. 1066; A. Sanda, *Opuscula Monophysitica: Ioannis Philoponi* (Beirut, Syria: Typographia Catholica PP., 1930); J. M. Schönfelder, *Die Kirchengeschichte des Johannes von Ephesus* (München: J. J. Lentner, 1862), pp. 286-297; Moritz Steinschneider, “Joh. Philoponus bei den Arabern,” in *AL-FARABI: Des Arabischen Philosophen Leben und Schriften* (St. Pétersbourg: L’Académie Impériale des sciences, 1869), pp. 152-176, 220-224, 250-252; A. Van Roey, “Les Fragments Trithéites de Jean Philopon,” *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica* 11 (1980), pp. 135-163. All the quotes above come from *Peter of Callinicum: Anti-Tritheist Dossier*, pp. 20-33.

³⁷ Roscelin was one of the most outstanding founder and defender of nominalism in the Middle Age, in particular in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Roscelin’s theories are known through the works of his opponents such as Anselm, Abelard, and John of Salisbury. The only document so far confidently attributed to Roscelin is a letter to his pupil, Abelard, where Roscelin upbraided Abelard for his making some serious offences against Roscelin himself, one of which was to depreciate the differences between the three persons of the Trinity. Roscelin’s theses can be summarized as four propositions: “(1) all existents are particular; (2) there is no distinction – no metaphysically grounded distinction – between the property of a thing and the thing itself; (3) there is no composition, and *a fortiori* no metaphysical composition; and finally, (4) universality is a property of words (terms), and hence is to be found only in the domains of languages.” The application of these theses to the doctrine of the Trinity results in the claim that the three persons of the Trinity must be distinct substances. For Roscelin, it is evident that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit must be three separate things in God. For otherwise, he thinks, we cannot but absurdly conclude that the Father became incarnate with the Son. Since “the three things in God” of Roseclin was taken as meaning “three gods” by his opponents like Anselm, Roscelin was condemned as tritheism. Cf. F. Courtney, “Roscelin of Compiègne,” *New Catholic Encyclopeida*, p. 673; M.-M. Gorce, “Roscelin ou Roscellin,” *Dictionnaire de théologie Catholique*: cols., 2911-2915; Jean Jolivet, “Trois variations médiévales sur

the same as in the case of Arianism. Their problems lay in their nominal interpretations of the consubstantiality of the three divine Persons, where the three divine Persons are distinct individual substances and the common nature shared by the three divine persons is a mere intellectual abstraction. But all of them (including Arians) wrongly assumed that in God one nature entails one person and three persons three natures. In other words, they failed to recognize that in God there is no numerical agreement between nature and person, because divine nature is simple.

The controversies of tritheism and its condemnation in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries shed a little different light on the understanding of tritheism. The case of Gilbert of Poitiers who was charged with tritheism by contemporaries theologians such as Geoffrey of Auxerre, John of Salisbury, Otto of Freising, and St. Bernard, shows that in orthodoxy no real distinction has been allowed between the form of divinity and God Himself, between the divine essence and the persons, and between the persons themselves and the personal properties. Otherwise, there would be quarternity, not trinity.³⁸ The Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 A.D. clarified an additional criterion to

l'universel et l'individu: Roscelin, Abélard, Gilbert de la Porrée," *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* 97 (1992), pp. 111-155; Eike-Henner W. Kluge, "Roscelin and the Medieval Problem of Universals," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 16 (1976), pp. 405-414; Constant J. Mews, "Nominals and Theology before Abaelard: New Light on Roscelin of Compiègne," *Vivarium* 30 (1992), pp. 4-33; François Picavet, *Roscelin Philosophie et Théologien* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1911); Jos Reiners, *Der Nominalismus in der Frühscholastik* (Münster: Aschendorffschen Buchhandlung, 1910). The quotes above are from Eike-Henner W. Kluge, p. 407.

³⁸ It is doubted in modern historical scholarly works that Gilbert of Poitiers really denied the divine simplicity to such an extent that the Trinity was deformed into the quarternity. N. M. Haring summarized Otto of Freising's charge against Gilbert concerning the Trinity as follows: (1) "The divine essence is not God." (2) "The *propriates* of the persons are not the persons themselves." (3) The divine persons are not predicated in any statement." Then, Haring shows his own judgment on such a charge, saying that major contemporary accusation against Gilbert are not substantially accurate in reflecting his teaching. According to Michael E. Williams, at least, those criticisms of Gilbert's teaching cannot be substantiated from Gilbert's known writing, in particular his own commentaries on most of Boethius' *Opuscula Sacra*, i.e., four of its five tracts – *Quomodo Trinitas unus Deus ac non Tres Dii*, *Utrum Pater et Filius ac Spiritus Sanctus de Divinitate substantialiter praedicentur liber*, *Quomodo Substantiae in eo quod sint, cum non sint substantialia bona, liber*, *Liber de Persona et Duabus Naturis contra Eutychen et*

define tritheism through the procedure of condemning Joachim of Fiore's doctrine of the Trinity. The condemnation of the Fourth Lateran Council against Joachim suggests an exposition about what the unity of the three divine persons should be like. The conciliar view is that the unity of the trinitarian divine persons should not be understood to be a mere moral unity of collective community. The communal unity of the three divine persons should be supported by the homogeneity of the divine substance.³⁹

Nestorium, as printed in Migne PL 64 – except one tract, *Brevis Fidei Christianae Complexio*. In fact, Haring concludes, “no official papal pronouncement on the results of the trial dealing with Gilbert’s orthodoxy was ever published.” F. Vernet shows the same opinion as Haring’s, writing that Gilbert defended himself so well and the absence of the proofs from his writings and the contradictions between Gilbert’s opponents and supporters made the charge so obscure that Pope Eugene delayed making his judgment at the council. (One example to oppose some scholarly attempts to defend the orthodoxy of Gilbert is taken from Morton W. Bloomfield who insists that Haring ignores a tritheistic element of Gilbert’s teaching since he misinterprets Gilbert’s statement “Omnis persona est per se una.” See his article, “Joachim of Flora,” *Traditio* 13 (1957), p. 273 and n. 100) The reason why the dissertation mention Gilbert here, nevertheless, is that it is necessary to figure out what the church opposes concerning tritheism, no matter whether its opposition may be validated in its interpretation of its opponent – Gilbert here. Gilbert may not be tritheist. The accusations against Gilbert at Rheim (1148) reveal what the orthodoxy feared. Cf. M.-D. Chenu, “Grammaire et Théologie aux XII et XIII Siècles,” *Archives D’Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Age* 10 (1936), pp. 5-28; Suitbert Gammersbach, *Gilbert von Poitiers und seine Prozesse im Urteil der Zeitgenossen* (Köln: Bohlau, 1959); Nicholas M. Haring, “A Treatise on the Trinity by Gilbert of Poitiers,” *Recherches de Théologie Ancienne et Médiévale* 29 (1972), pp. 14-50; idem, “Notes on the Council and the Consistory of Reims,” *Mediaeval Studies* 28 (1966), pp. 52-57; idem, “The Writings against Gilbert of Poitiers by Geoffrey of Auxerre,” *Analecta Sacri Ordinis Cisterciensis* 22 (1966), pp. 3-29; idem, “The Case of Gilbert de la Porrée, Bishop of Poitiers, 1142-1154,” *Mediaeval Studies* 13 (1951), pp. 1-40; idem, “Das Sogenannte Glaubensbekenntnis des Reimser Konsistoriums von 1148,” *Scholastik* 40 (1965), pp. 55-90; idem, “Gilbert de la Porrée,” *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, pp. 478-479; idem, ed., *The Commentaries on Boethius by Gilbert of Poitiers* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1966); A. Hayen, “Le Concile de Reims et L’erreur Théologique de Gilbert de la Porrée,” *Archives D’Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Age* 10 (1936), pp. 29-102; F. Vernet, “Gilbert de la Porrée,” *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*: cols. 1350-1358, Michael E. Williams, *The Teaching of Gilbert Porreta on the Trinity* (Rome: Apud Aedes Universitatis Gregoriana, 1951). Among the quotes above, N. M. Haring’s are from “A Treatise on the Trinity by Gilbert of Poitiers.”

³⁹ A summary of Joachim of Fiore on the doctrine of the Trinity is given from Delno C. West and Sandra Zimdars-Swartz. According to them, Joachim took pains to refute three heresies in his teaching of the doctrine of the Trinity, illustrating them through an analogy of trees. The first error is Arianism, which insists that “the divine substance may be divided into three, as the olive, myrtle, and palm are all trees but are of three different natures.” The second error is Sabellianism, which “would liken the Trinity to three olive trees, the same in nature but having three different bodies.” The third is the error of Peter Lombard’s formulation of trinitarian doctrine. “The third error would liken the Trinity to one tree, of which the root is the divine substance and the branches are the three Persons,” with a result that it introduces a quarternity rather than a Trinity, “making the divine substance a ‘fourth something’ (*quartum aliquid*) separable from the three Persons.” “Maintaining the unity of the Trinity” was the fundamental principle of Joachim’s teaching of the Trinity. This seems to contradict the conciliar condemnation of tritheism against Joachim. For Joachim, yet, the doctrine of the ineffable unity of the Trinity leads to the doctrine that “the names of

In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, when there was a great revival of interest in the Trinity in England,⁴⁰ we see a trinitarian controversy that foreshadowed the modern debate on the threeness/oneness problem of the Trinity. Making use of the notion of “self-consciousness” as personality by Descartes and John Locke, William Sherlock presented the three divine persons, Father, Son, and Spirit, not only as three distinct individual substances, but also as three Self-Consciousnesses or

the Trinity are not empty names but denote three complete, co-eternal and co-equal Persons,” where the Arians and Sabellians made heretical mistakes. Also, Joachim’s obsession of the unity of God led him to insist that the three Persons and the divine essence should be commonly understood according to the same substance. For him, “the distinction between the three Persons based on their ‘origin’ is also a part of this simple divine nature.” Otherwise, in his thought, the divine essence is a fourth something separable from the three persons. With this idea, Joachim wrongly applied the third error to Peter Lombard. But the analogy that Joachim used to describe the divine unity that is safe from the error of quarternity, gave rise to a suspicion of tritheism. He states that the three persons are one “in the same manner that the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and Levi are called one people.” To the orthodoxy’s eye, this analogy was interpreted to deny that the unity of the three persons are “true and proper (*vera et propria*)” but not “collective and similar (*collectiva et similitudinaria*).” Unlike Gilbert of Poitiers, the condemnation of the council against Joachim of Fiore is undoubted. Yet there is a view to argue that Joachim is not a tritheist at least insofar as his commentary on the Psalms, *Psalterium decem chordarum* is concerned, as it is represented by Morton W. Bloomfield. This view admits that Joachim’s analogy is not proper, but doubts that Joachim intended to deny the unity of the three Persons as *vera et propria*. The connection of Joachim with Gilbert of Poitiers does not seem confirmed yet among scholars. According to Jordan, M. Fournier suggests two sources of Joachim’s thought: Greek theology and Gilbert’s teaching. But Bloomfield acknowledges neither of them. Cf. David Allen, “Abbot Joachim of Fiore: The Trinity and the Church of the Spirit,” *Paraclete* 23 (1989), pp. 29-32; Henry Bett, *Joachim of Flora* (London: methuen, 1931; reprint, Merrick, NY: Richwood, 1976); Morton W. Bloomfield, “Joachim of Flora: A Critical Survey of His Canon, Teachings, Sources, Biography and Influence,” *Traditio* 13 (1957), pp. 249-311; Paul Fournier, *Études sur Joachim de Flore et ses doctrines* (Paris: Librairie Alphonse Picard & Fils, 1909); Herbert Grundmann, *Neue Forschungen über Joachim von Fiore* (Marburg: Simons, 1950); E. Jordan, “Joachim de Flore,” *Dictionnaire de théologie Catholique*: clos. 1425-1458; M. F. Laughlin, “Joachim of Fiore,” *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, pp. 990-991; Bernard McGinn, *The Calabrian Abbot: Joachim of Fiore in the History of Western Thought* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Co., 1985); Henri Mottu, *La manifestation de l’Esprit selon Joachim de Fiore* (Neuchâtel and Paris: Delachaux and Niestle, 1977); E. Schott, “Joachim, der Abt von Floris,” *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 22 (1901), pp. 343-361; idem, “Die Gedanken des Abtes Joachim von floris,” *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 23 (1902), pp. 157-186; Delno C. West and Sandra Zimdars-Swartz, *Joachim of Fiore: a Study in Spiritual Perception and History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983). The quotes from Delno C. West and Sandra Zimdars-Swartz come from their book, pp. 41-68; Bloomfield’s from pp. 262-265, 271-274; Jordan’s from col. 1432.

⁴⁰ According to Pfizenmaier, the precise reason why the interest of the Trinity in England was rekindled so vehemently is hard to tell. Yet he conjectures with Charles Abbey and John Overton that the great controversy over the doctrine of the Trinity in England was launched by the attack from anti-trinitarians at that time. According to Pfizenmaier, the controversy dates from the publication of George Bull’s *Defence of the Nicene Faith*, 1685. Cf. Charles Abbey and John Overton, *The English Church in the Eighteenth Century*, 2nd ed. (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1887). The quote are from Thomas C. Pfizenmaier, *The Trinitarian Theology of Dr. Samuel Clarke (1675-1729)*, p. 179.

Infinite Minds. At the same time, Sherlock made efforts to affirm the numerical unity of divine nature in order to avoid being charged with tritheism. By a decree issued by the Convocation of the University of Oxford in 1695, however, Sherlock's teaching of the Trinity "was 'judged, declared, and decreed false, impious, and heretical, contrary to the doctrine of the Catholic Church and the publicly received doctrine of the Church of England.'" For seventeenth century Protestant Orthodoxy, Sherlock's notion of the three intelligent beings leads to tritheism, even when it affirms the numerical unity of God.⁴¹

⁴¹ William Sherlock's teaching of the Trinity was originally intended to refute the two tracts on the Unitarian side which argued that Jesus was called 'the Messenger, Minister, and Creature of God' and the Trinity was not the doctrine of the whole Church. Against the Socinians, Sherlock defended "the real Trinity" – comparable to the nominal Trinity, where the divine Persons are defined as "modes of being" – that understands the three trinitarian Persons as Persons according to the common acceptation of the word. Yet, Sherlock was attacked not only by the Socinians, but also by the Orthodoxy. Sherlock criticized a definition of the trinitarian persons as "mode of being" or "relation," through explaining that either "the mode of being" or "relation" is a mere property of person, not person himself. For Sherlock, each person of the Trinity is distinguished from one another by "a distinct manner of substance proper to each Person," or by "the proper and distinguishing characters of each Person." But those themselves are not "persons." Sherlock understood the three divine persons as the three divine Self-conscious Beings, the three Infinite Minds. How did Sherlock explain the unity of the three persons? According to Jan Rohls, Sherlock attempted to explain the divine unity through the thesis that "these Divine Persons are intimately conscious to each other, which ... makes them One numerical God," since each of divine Persons are conscious not only of Himself, but also of other Persons like of Himself. John Hunter confirms that the unity of Sherlock's teaching is not the same as a moral union. For example, Sherlock did not approve John Howe in regard to the notion of the unity, who defended Sherlock's idea of divine personhood from the charge of tritheism. John Hunter describes John Howe like this: "Howe had supposed three spirits, united eternally but never identified, each having its individual essence, so that the three were never one, except by such union as unites a body to a soul." Sherlock judged Howe's approach to be a genuine tritheist. For Sherlock, the unity of the three Infinite Minds is numerically one, which is consistent to the nature of God as Spirit. Nevertheless, the exact definition of Sherlock's of three Persons as three Self-Conscious Realities or Beings, or three Infinite Minds brought about the effect that he was condemned of tritheism by the Oxford Heads. The opponents of Sherlock can be named by Robert South, John Wallis, Edward Stillingfleet, and John Owen. Interestingly, R. S. Frank interprets Sherlock's doctrine as the teaching that modernized the Cappdoician father's. Cf. George Park Fisher, *History of Christian Doctrine*, 2^d ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1896); Edmund J. Fortman, *The Triune God: A Historical Study of the Doctrine of the Trinity* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972); R. S. Franks, *The Doctrine of the Trinity* (London: Gerald Duckworth and Co. Ltd., 1953); John Hunt, *Religious Thought in England* (London: Strahan & Co., Publishers, 1871); Jan Rohls, "Subjekt, Trinität und Persönlichkeit Gottes," in *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 30 (1988), pp. 40-71. For primary references, see W. Sherlock, *A Vindication of the Doctrine of the Holy and Ever Blessed Trinity* (London, 1691); Robert South, *Tritheism charged upon Dr. Sherlock's New Notion of the Trinity* (London, 1695). The quotes above are from R. S. Frank, pp. 149-151; John Hunt, p. 215, 221; Jan Rohls, p. 54.

With all the historical resources of controversies on tritheism, the modern debate on the problem of threeness/oneness initiated by Barth is still boiling hot. Few social trinitarians explicitly argue for three different divine essences or realities. Most of them do not seem to deny the consubstantiality of the three divine persons. At the same time, all of them favor the doctrine of perichoresis to emphasize the unity of the three divine persons in a sense of “inter-personal relationality or communality.” Since no historical example exactly fits most contemporary social trinitarians, any charge of tritheism against them needs to demonstrate that the notion of person as “conscious center of action” necessarily leads to tritheism. Or it needs to show at least that a social trinitarian theory hides within it a theological element of tritheism.

Obviously, in order to discuss the relationship between the notion of person as “conscious center of action” and tritheism, and to adjudicate whether so-called social trinitarians are tritheists, first of all, tritheism needs defining. However, it might seem almost impossible to set down a definition of tritheism that is unanimously acknowledged. For the understanding of tritheism may differ according to different theological traditions. To make matters worse, there are some disagreements among modern scholars even in understanding those traditions. Furthermore, some modern efforts (for example, process theology) to seek a theological methodology that is not traditional makes it more complicated to formulate a notion of tritheism that might be generally acknowledged.

The difficulty in dealing with the issue of the threeness/oneness of the Trinity is well testified in the debates among the modern analytic philosophers of religion.⁴² Recently, some religious philosophers have attempted to defend a social trinitarian theory,

⁴² It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to discuss the present issue with analytical philosophers of religion. For references to this discussion, see the next several notes below.

where three divine persons are understood among them as three numerically distinct divine realities, or beings, or where “the distinctness of the persons takes precedence over the unity of the Godhead.”⁴³ In their thought, social trinitarianism comports well to the Scriptures, and is neither logically absurd nor incoherent.⁴⁴ Other philosophers, on the other hand, reject every attempt by social trinitarians to justify a social theory of the Trinity using analytic philosophy. In their criticism, they try to demonstrate logically that

⁴³ The social trinitarian group tend to distinguish themselves from the traditional view, calling it as “Relative Trinitarianism.” For example, see T. W. Bartel’s description of “social trinitarianism,” – “no wonder ... that a sizable number of philosophers and theologians now regard the Trinitarian persons as numerically distinct *simpliciter*, a view we are entitled to call ‘Social Theory of the Trinity.’” T. W. Bartel, “Could There Be More Than One Almighty?” *Religious Studies* 29 (1993), pp. 465-466. We can see another description of it – the latter in the text – in William P. Alston’s review article of Richard Swinburne’s *The Christian God*. Swinburne himself suggests a substantially same depiction as Alston’s, stating that a social trinitarianism stresses the separateness of the persons.” See William P. Alston, review of *The Christian God*, by Richard Swinburne, *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 41 (1997), p. 39; Richard Swinburne, *The Christian God* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p. 189.

⁴⁴ Roughly speaking, among the supporters of social trinitarianism, there are Timothy W. Bartel, “The Plight of the Relative Trinitarianism,” *Religious Studies* 24 (1988), pp. 129-55; idem, “Could There Be More Than One Almighty?” *Religious Studies* 29 (1993), pp. 465-495; idem, “Could There Be More Than One Lord,” *Faith and Philosophy* 11 (1994), pp. 357-378; David Brown, *The Divine Trinity* (La Salle, Ill: Open Court, 1985); idem, “Trinitarian Personhood and Individuality,” in *Trinity, Incarnation and Atonement*, eds. Ronald J. Feenstra and Cornelius Plantinga Jr. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), pp. 48-78; William Hasker, “Tri-Unity,” *Journal of Religion* 50 (1970), pp. 1-32; C. Stephen Layman, “Tritheism and the Trinity,” *Faith and Philosophy* 5 (1988), pp. 291-298; Thomas V. Morris, “Some Trinitarian Concerns,” in *The Logic of God Incarnate* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1986), pp. 205-218; Richard Swinburne, “Could There Be More Than One God?” *Faith and Philosophy* 5 (1988), pp. 225-241; idem, *The Christian God* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994); Peter van Inwagen, “And Yet They Are Not Three Gods But One God,” in *God, Knowledge, and Mystery* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1995), pp. 222-259, originally in *Philosophy and the Christian Faith*, ed. Thomas V. Morris (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988); C. J. F. Williams, “Neither Confounding the Persons nor Dividing the Substance,” in *Reason and the Christian Religion*, ed. Alan G. Padgett (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), pp. 227-243. Interestingly, William P. Alston may not be categorized into a social trinitarian group, but supports the notion of divine Person in a psychological or moral sense. He writes: “... the Fathers were quite clear that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are distinctively personal in possessing knowledge, purpose, and intentions, and in performing intentional actions, including actions vis-à-vis human and other persons. ... The fact that the persons of the Trinity all together constitute one God inhibits our thinking of them in those terms. But there is a more fundamental notion of a person, as distinct from other types of substances, that would seem to be common to Christian theology and our talk of human persons through the centuries.” See William P. Alston, “Substance and the Trinity,” in *The Trinity*, edited by S. T. Davis, D. Kendall, and G. O’Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 187.

a social trinitarian theory, no matter what modified form it may have, would contradict the traditional understanding of the unity of God.⁴⁵

In sum, as we have seen so far, the recent resurgence of the interests in the doctrine of the Trinity has brought out a controversy over what is a right way of understanding the threeness/oneness problem of the Trinity – more concretely what is a right understanding of the divine personhood. The two chief views on the contemporary issue are so extremely opposite that the normative understanding of the Trinity would be weakened. Paradoxically, then, the doctrine of the Trinity might be relegated again to a marginal doctrine of Christianity, for it seems that there is no harmonious understanding of the Trinity. In spite of many difficulties caused by the diversity of theological traditions and the modern disagreement of theological methodologies, therefore, one of those that are desperately needed in the theological context of the doctrine of the Trinity is to define tritheism. Surely, it will not be easy at all to complete such a task, but it needs to be done, even if partially or incompletely.

1.2. Tasks, Terminology, Theses, Methodology, and Outline

This section will summarize the dissertation's tasks, its terminology, its claims, its limitations with respect to methodology, and its outline.

⁴⁵ The defense of "Classical or Latin Trinitarianism" is represented by those as follows: Kelly James Clark, "Trinity or Tritheism," *Religious Studies* 32 (1996), pp. 463-476; Sarah Coakley, "'Persons' in the 'Social' Doctrine of the Trinity: A Critique of Current Analytic Discussion," in *The Trinity: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Trinity*, eds. by Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, and Gerald O'Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 123-144; Charles J. Kelly, "Classical Theism and the Doctrine of the Trinity," *Religious Studies* 30 (1994), pp. 67-88; Brian Leftow, "Anti Social Trinitarianism," in *The Trinity: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Trinity*, pp. 203-249; William Wainwright, "Monotheism," in *Rationality, Religious Belief and Moral Commitment*, eds. Robert Audi and William Wainwright (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986), pp. 289-314. For further references, see Wainwright, "Monotheism."

Tasks

The main task of the dissertation is to demonstrate that the notion of the three divine persons as centers of consciousness in the Trinity is not necessarily tritheist. In order to fulfill this task, the dissertation attempts to accomplish several things: (1) to suggest a definition of tritheism through uncovering historical criteria for tritheism in the responses of the church councils to various tritheist positions and theologically evaluating and deepening those historical criteria, (2) to discuss whether the notion of the three divine personal subjects in the Trinity necessitates tritheism, with reference to the Cappadocians, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Gregory Palamas, Cornelius Plantinga Jr., William Sherlock, and Karl Barth, and (3) to show that not all theologians who support the three divine personal subjects in the Trinity are tritheist, through applying the tritheist criteria of the dissertation to two so-called social trinitarians, Jürgen Moltmann and William Hill.

Terminology

First of all, what I mean by person in a “psychological” or “modern” sense is the “person as center of consciousness,” which is intended to reflect both psychological and moral aspects of personality – *consciousness* and *action*, – as we see in Locke and Kant.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Cf. John Locke defines “person” as follows: “(Person), I think, is a thinking intelligent being, that has reason and reflection, and can consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing in different times and places.” Immanuel Kant gives us a definition of person from the perspective of morality: “A *person* is a subject whose actions can be *imputed* to him. *Moral* personality is therefore nothing other than the freedom of a rational being under moral laws (whereas psychological personality is merely the ability to be conscious of one’s identity in different conditions of one’s existence. From this it follows that a person is subject to no other laws than those he gives to himself (either alone or at least along with others.)” John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Kenneth P. Winkler (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1996, originally published in 1689), p. 138 (II. 27. 9). Immanuel Kant,

Yet two points should be clarified here. In the notion of person in a psychological or moral sense, I have no intention to imply any kind of extreme individualism in an ontological sense. What I intend to do is to understand the psychological and moral functions or aspects of divine persons, no matter what they may be ontologically defined to be, that is to say, whether they may be defined as “modes of being,” or as “subsistent relation.” Furthermore, I am aware of the fact that the “modern” concept of person connotes “inter-relationship” or “inter-subjectivity,” as we see in Martin Buber, Gabriel Marcel, Ferdinand Ebner, and Franz Rosenzweig.⁴⁷

Next, by “social trinitarianism,” I mean any theory that acknowledges the concept of three divine persons as distinct conscious centers of action, or in general, distinct subjects or personalities, and at the same time emphasizes the social or interpersonal unity of three distinct persons. The dissertation is conscious of the fact that some of the social trinitarians go so far as to press their theories to the extreme limit where it is hard to avoid the charge of tritheism. It is thus not my intention to justify every kind of social trinitarian theory.

Finally, in dealing with “essence,” “substance” or “nature” in God, I do not presuppose that there is any distinction between primary and secondary sense in an Aristotelian way. For in ancient theology, such a distinction does not apply to the Trinity. In order to denote the trinitarian distinction in God, ancient theology employs other terms

The Metaphysics of Morals, trans. and ed. Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 16.

⁴⁷ Cf. M. Friedman, “Existentialism,” in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, pp. 730-738; Walter Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, trans. M. J. O’Connell (New York: Crossroad, 1994), p. 289.

such as hypostasis or person rather than primary substances, for primary substance implies materiality and accidents while the individuality of each divine person who are immaterial is relationally distinguished. The personal distinction in God is not expressed as substantial (even in a primary sense) but relational. In other words, the term to discern the individuality of three divine persons is not substance (in primary sense) but hypostasis or person (relationally distinct). And for each divine person, the divine substance may be expressed as secondary substance because the divine substance is common in three divine persons. But the term of secondary substance is avoided, because each divine person is not a member of divine species, unlike human beings who are members of human species.⁴⁸

Historically, the employment of three substances (primary) tended to cause a criticism of tritheism. John Philoponus is one example. When Philoponus applied the Aristotelian distinction between particular nature and common nature to his idea of the Trinity, he was opposed as a tritheist in these two regards. One is that he broke the theological grammar (as the Cappadocian fathers suggested) that does not employ a term of substance (even in a primary sense) but hypostasis or person (relationally distinct) in order to discern the personal distinctions among divine persons. The other is that he reduced the common nature to a nominal notion formed by human mind.⁴⁹

The case is the same with Roscelin of Compiègne. He argued that the three divine

⁴⁸ For a detailed discussion on primary and secondary substances in relation to divine substance, see Christopher Stead, "Substance after Aristotle," in *Divine Substance*, pp. 110-118 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977); idem, "The Significance of the 'Homoousios'," in *Studia Patristica* 3 (1961), pp. 397-412; idem, "Unity of Substance," in *Philosophy in Christian Antiquity*, pp. 160-172 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Alwyn Pettersen, *Athanasius* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1995).

⁴⁹ Cf. 2.2 of the dissertation.

persons are three separate things or substances. For, otherwise, the Father should be incarnated with the Son because the Father is not separate from the Son. Roscelin was charged as a tritheist. Roscelin's "three separate things or substances" may be interpreted as "three separate primary substances." But his idea that gave rise to a charge of tritheism is that the three divine persons should be substantially distinct in order to be really distinct. This certainly contradicts the ancient theological grammar that explains that the three divine persons are really distinct, not by substance (whether in a primary sense or in a secondary sense) but by relation.⁵⁰

Yet I do not deny that the notion of three particular natures in the Trinity may be permissible according to such a modern theological grammar as we see in Cornelius Plantinga Jr. A particular or personal nature in a modern grammar denotes a property of individuating uniqueness of each divine person. Thus, it can be said according to Plantinga's grammar that three divine persons *have* three particular natures. But it cannot be said that three divine persons *are* three particular natures, as it is said according to an Aristotelian distinction that three divine persons are three individual natures. In short, I do not assume that in ancient trinitarian grammar, divine substance needs to be distinct by two kinds of substance (both in a primary sense and in a secondary sense). In God, there is only one divine essence or substance, which is common in the three divine persons.

⁵⁰ Cf. 2.3 of the dissertation.

Theses

As for a definition of tritheism, the dissertation concludes that tritheism is any trinitarian theory that fails to confirm the substantial unity of the three divine persons (i.e., the doctrine that the substantial unity of the triune God is not nominal, but ontologically real; the doctrine of *opera trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa*; the doctrine of perichoresis), asserting of the three divine persons three distinct, individual, particular natures in divinity or in kind. The dissertation claims that the notion of the three divine persons as centers of consciousness does not necessarily entail tritheism when measured against a definition of tritheism derived from both the historical study of official church pronouncements and the theological analysis of them. However, the dissertation does not imply that no so-called social trinitarian theories are tritheist. For instance, the dissertation claims that Moltmann is close to tritheism, and that Hill is not.

Methodology

The dissertation is methodologically limited in several ways in claiming its theses. For an attempt to clarify what the conciliar teachings about tritheism were like, the dissertation makes a survey of decrees of the ecumenical councils, using *Conciliarum Oecumenicorum Decreta*, edited by Josephus Alberigo and others, and its English edition, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, edited by Norman P. Tanner, and *The Sources of Catholic Dogma*, an English version of Henry Denzinger's *Enchiridion Symbolorum*. In making an analysis of conciliar decrees, the dissertation will make a brief study of historical tritheism related to those councils, such as Councils of Nicaea (325),

Constantinople (381), Constantinople III (680), Soissons (1092), Rheims (1148), and Lateran IV (1215).

In evaluating historical criteria and formulating a definition of tritheism, the dissertation will place its focus first on what the church councils understand as tritheism and what four patristic and medieval theologians (i.e., the Cappadocians, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas and Gregory of Palamas) teach in their doctrines of the Trinity and the divine simplicity. The dissertation recognizes that there are other important figures in history (for instance, Duns Scotus), apart from those four names; it will limit its scope of ancient theologians to those four names. In the dissertation, Greek theology or tradition signifies the Cappadocian fathers and Gregory of Palamas; Latin theology or tradition indicates Augustine and Aquinas. This is only for the sake of convenience; it does not mean that there are no other significant theologies or traditions besides those theologians in each tradition.

In formulating a definition of tritheism, in addition, the dissertation will consider a modern grammar of theology that is partly different from the ancient grammar of theology, in particular, with regard to the doctrine of the Trinity. Cornelius Plantinga Jr., for example, suggests that each of the three divine persons possess the generic divine essence and a personal essence.⁵¹ Cornelius Plantinga Jr.'s proposal employs Alvin Plantinga's idea of essence, which provides Cornelius Plantinga Jr. with a way of analyzing divine nature into personal essences and generic essence.

Therefore, in formulating its definition of tritheism, the dissertation will limit its scope to the theological views of the church councils historically related to tritheist

⁵¹ Cf. his article, "The Threeness/Oneness Problem of the Trinity," *Calvin Theological Journal* 23 (1988), pp. 325-352.

controversies and to the Cappadocian fathers, Gregory Palamas (Greek theology) and Augustine and Aquinas (Latin theology), and Cornelius Plantinga Jr. (modern theology). Within this scope and methodology, the dissertation will intend to define tritheism and deal with the tritheist issue related to the notion of center of consciousness according to the definition of tritheism of the dissertation's own. Undoubtedly, those methodological limitations of the dissertation will limit the value and validity of its theses.

Outline

Chapter 1 (Introduction) intends to show why we need to talk about tritheism in a contemporary context where we see such a retrieval of the doctrine of the Trinity. It argues that today's renaissance of the doctrine of the Trinity and its related developments of doctrines would be merely pseudo-trinitarian, or at least under the confusion of equivocation in using a term, *person*, without an attempt to settle the controversy centering around the notion of the person in a modern or psychological sense. Finally, the tasks, terminology, theses, methodology and outline of the dissertation follow.

Chapters 2 and 3 contribute to making a definition of tritheism. The historical approach of chapter 2 is to clarify theological reasons that are discovered in various responses of the church councils against tritheists. Five historical cases were taken, such as Arians, John Philoponus, Roscelin of Compiègne, Gilbert of Poitiers, and Joachim of Fiore.

The theological approach of chapter 3 is to evaluate the understanding of tritheism obtained through historical study, referring to some ancient theologians such as the Cappadocians, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, and Gregory Palamas and to a modern

theologian, Cornelius Plantinga Jr. An evaluation is made by examining four points: (1) the distinction between nature and person; (2) the conceptual distinction between nature and person; (3) the denial of three different natures; (4) the substantial unity of the three divine persons.

Chapter 4 discusses whether the notion of three centers of consciousness in the Trinity necessarily leads to a danger of tritheism in light of the understanding of tritheism defined in chapter 3. The three divine persons are confirmed as the supposit of divine nature, each being a psychological and moral agent, rather than a mere mode of being or manner of coming into existence. Two grounds are suggested. First, both in Greek and Latin theology, divine person is a supposit of divine nature, though in Latin theology, it is so conceptually and analogically; in Greek theology, it is so ontologically. Secondly, the divine nature as source of consciousness is eternally enhypostatized in each divine person. In addition, it is denied that the three personal subjects in the Trinity would bring up tritheism because they would necessitate three consciousnesses. For in the Trinity, there are three notional consciousnesses within interpersonal relations in the divine life, while there is only one consciousness in the essential dimension *ad extra*. Finally, the criticism of William Sherlock and Karl Barth is followed. Sherlock supports the notion of three consciousnesses; Barth argues for one center of consciousness.

Chapter 5 intends to show that not all theologians who understand the divine persons as centers of consciousness are not necessarily tritheist. In other words, chapter 5 clarifies that chapter 4 does not imply that all the social trinitarians are safe from the charge of tritheism. Jürgen Moltmann and William Hill are taken. The dissertation claims that Jürgen Moltmann is on the verge of tritheism; William Hill is completely safe from

the charge of tritheism. Both Moltmann and Hill agree in claiming that the unity of the Trinity may be understood as “interpersonal unity,” or “integrating unity.” However, Hill emphasizes the substantial unity of the three divine persons in a real sense, whereas Moltmann reduces it to a mere nominal sense. Hill denies the notion of the three divine persons as three particular individual natures, whereas Moltmann affirms it. For Hill, the divine personal distinctions are not on the plane of divine essence. But Moltmann grounds the divine personal distinctions in substance, denying the concept of divine person in a generic sense when applying the word “person” to the Father, the Son and the Spirit. For Hill, the homogeneous substance of the three divine persons does not impede “interpersonal unity,” whereas for Moltmann, the homogeneity of the divine substance blocks “integrating unity.”

Finally, the conclusion will appear as chapter 6.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL VIEWS OF TRITHEISM

Chapter 2 intends to figure out what theological opposition the councils of the church had against various tritheist positions in the history of church. Chapter 2 selects several historical cases that were condemned as tritheist heresies by the church councils: John Philoponus, Roscelin of Compiègne, Gilbert of Poitiers, and Joachim of Fiore. Besides, Arius is added to them. Although Arius may not be categorized exactly as a tritheist, through the controversies against Arius and Neo-Arians, the councils of the church have laid the cornerstone on which the doctrine of the Trinity has been formulated. In the light of that cornerstone, Arius and Neo-Arians may be understood as tritheist.¹ At the end of this section, we will see a summary of the understanding of tritheism that is grounded in the historical research. Yet chapter 2 does not presuppose that all the church councils have the same authority in all the matters that they are addressing, since each council was under the influence of the theological tradition where it belongs. Here chapter 2 intends to examine and clarify what theological elements so offended the church that they were condemned in church councils.

¹ Cornelius Plantinga Jr. designates Arianism as a standard tritheist heresy, “because, despite Arius’s own insistence on the unity and simplicity of God, Arians worshipped Christ and the Spirit and, baptized in their name *while refusing them full ontological deity* (Plantinga’s italic).” See his essay, “Social Trinity and Tritheism,” eds. Ronald J. Feenstra and Cornelius Plantinga Jr. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), p. 34. For his claim, Plantinga refers to Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, vol. 1, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), pp. 199-200. Pelikan states: “... The opponents of Arianism, from Athanasius and Hilary through Marcellus of Ancyra and Boethius, accused it of being polytheistic despite its rigid monotheism; for by worshipping as divine one whom they refused to call divine, they would ‘certainly be going on to more gods’ and would ‘lead into a plurality’ of divine beings.”

2.1. Contra Arians: The Councils of Nicaea (325) and Constantinople (381)

The Council of Nicaea² was summoned by the emperor Constantine³ in order to settle a theological controversy over the issue of Jesus Christ's divinity. This controversy actually had flared up in Alexandria between Alexander, the bishop of that city, and his presbyter Arius. According to Basil Studer, the conflict between Alexander and Arius broke out within the Origenist theology both of them shared.⁴ For example, "in

² J. N. D. Kelly explains the confusion of this period through four moments according to chronology: "Though the detail belongs to the Church history, the student of doctrine ought to be given at least a bird's-eye view of the chief phases in the fluctuating debate. The first, lasting until Constantine's death in 337, saw a widespread reaction against Nicaea. ... The Eusebians [the followers of Eusebius of Nicomedia] ... were able to engineer the deposition and exile of their principal opponents, Athanasius, Eustathius of Antioch and Marcellus of Ancyra. [Secondly,] from 337 to 350, although the 'Arianizing' Constantius ruled the East, the Western emperor, Constans, backed the Nicene cause and protected its leaders. ... From 350 to 361 Constantius reigned as sole emperor and made a determined effort to bypass the Nicene doctrine. The genuinely Arian elements in the great anti-Nicene party now took the initiative and succeeded in getting a thoroughly subordinationist creed omitting the ban on Arianism accepted at the third council of Sirmium (357), and Homoean creeds at the synods of Nicé (359) and Constantinople (360). ... At the same time, however, as a result of the very triumph of extremism, the moderates in the vast amorphous party began to rally under Basil of Ancyra around the compromise formula 'of like substance' (*homoiousios*). The final phase, from 361 to 381, witnessed the overthrow of Arianism and the gradual conversion of the now dominant 'Homoeousians' to acceptance of the homoousion. At the council of Constantinople (381) the Nicene faith was reaffirmed, and the various Arian and Arianizing deviations were placed under a ban." J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, revised edition 1978), pp. 237-238.

³ Basil Studer, *Trinity and Incarnation: the Faith of the Early Church*, tr. Matthias Westerhoff (Collegville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1993), p. 13. The scholars are not sure how many bishops were present at the Council because the ancient documents indicate round figures. For example, Eusebius of Caesarea witnesses 'more than 250,' Eustathius of Antioch 'about 270,' Athanasius 'about 300,' Gelasius of Cyzicus 'more than 300,' and Hilary of Poitiers '318,' among which the final one by Hilary became traditional, but seems to be symbolic of the number of the men of Abraham's household when Abraham rescued his nephew Lot (Gen. 14:14). See Norman P. Tanner, ed., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* vol. I (London and Washington DC: Sheed & Ward and Georgetown University Press, 1990), p. 1; Hanson, pp. 155-156.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 102. Concerning the relation between Origen and Arius, according to Hanson, many scholars such as A. Harnack, G. L. Prestige, F. Loofs, and R. Klein, have conjectured that Arian idea is an inheritance from Origen's doctrine, while some, like T. F. Pollard and C. Kannengiesser, have countered this argument by insisting that Origenism may have affected the doctrine of later Arians rather than Arius himself. See R. P. C. Hanson, p. 62. Probably one reason for this contradiction concerning the relation between Origen and Arius is that Origen did not give fixed definitions to his vocabulary, so that it is not easy to perceive the balance of antitheses, pro-Arian or anti-Arian, in his teaching. For detail, see Henri Crouzel, *Origen*, tr. A.S. Worrall (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1989), pp. 169-179. On the other hand, Hanson confirmed M. Simonetti's connection between Origen and Alexander and F. Loofs' argument to "see

developing further Origen's theology of Logos, Arius placed the Logos on the side of creation, thus blurring the difference between the eternal generation of the Son and the creation of all things. Alexander, on the other hand, in opposition to him upheld Christ's eternal divinity."⁵

Alexander as on the opposite wing of Origenism to Arius." R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy 318-381* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), pp. 143-145.

⁵ Ibid., p. 103. In Studer's view, this conflict on the issue related to the difference between the eternal generation of the Son and the creation of all things is not surprising. Indeed, Origen succeeded in formulating the Logos-Christology in a systematic consistency, in clarifying the real distinctions between Father, Son and Spirit, the difference between divine and human ousia in Christ, while not risking the unity of the Trinity and the union of the divine and human in Christ. For Origen, the Logos-Christology was a solution to the problem of Greek philosophy, that of the relation of the One to the Many, which necessitates a mediator. The Son as the Logos was understood as fulfilling the mediatorship through two aspects: "In relation to the Father he is Wisdom, whose knowledge he is. In relation to the world he is Word, the communication of what he beholds in the Father." However, Origen "had to leave unanswered ... a number of questions: concerning the origin of the Holy Spirit, the difference between creation and generation, the equality in essence of Father, Son and Spirit, the origin of the soul of Jesus." Ibid., p. 80, 86. As for the difference between Alexander and Arius, refer to R.P.C. Hanson. According to Hanson, for Alexander, "the Son is like in *ousia* to the Father and unchanging in nature, and ... knows the Father perfectly." Referring frequently to St. John's Gospel, Alexander argued that "far from the Son being made 'out of non-existence,' ... there is no interval between the Son and the Father," and went on to assert the eternal generation of the Son, which demonstrates "the Son's inalienable and natural (not adoptive) Sonship." For Alexander, the argument for the Son's eternal generation and eternal divinity does not imply the two ultimate principles. For "the Son has a 'mediating only-begotten nature, ... through which the Father made all things.'" R. P. C. Hanson, pp. 138-142. From the letter that Alexander sent to bishops, Hanson quotes Alexander's teaching concerning the eternal generation of the Son as follows: "The Father exists for ever in the presence of the Son, which is why he is called 'Father.' In the eternal presence of the Son with him, the Father exists perfectly, needing no supplement in goodness, having begotten ... the only-begotten Son not in time nor after an interval nor from non-existence." Ibid., p. 141. As for Arius' teaching, Hanson explains, "revelation and redemption on the part of God necessitated a reduction or lowering so that they had to be undertaken by a being who, though divine, was less than fully divine." Ibid., p. 100. Accordingly, "Arians taught that the weakness and limitations of the incarnate Christ applied to the divine Word as well as to the human body; indeed, these weaknesses and limitations were a proof of the inferiority of the Son to the Father." Ibid., p. 106. Against the traditional understanding of the theological difference between Alexander and Arius as differentiations of Origen theology, there is an attempt to find Arius' assertion of the ontological subordination of the Son in connection with Soteriology. According to R.C. Gregg and D.E. Groh, "the conflict between Alexandrian orthodoxy and early Arianism is at base a clash between two soteriological programmes which are radically different at every important point." On the part of the orthodoxy, the essential identity of the Son with the Father should be confirmed for the effectuation of salvation. For Arianism, on the other hand, salvation is effected by the Son's identity with the creatures. See R. C. Gregg and D. E. Groh, "The Centrality of Soteriology in Early Arianism," *Studia Patristica* 15 (1984), p. 306. For a detailed study of their thesis, refer to their monograph, *Early Arianism: A View of Salvation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981). Yet R. D. Williams rejects the emphasis of Gregg and Groh on the soteriological distinctiveness of Arius and his followers. In his idea, rather, the distinctiveness of Arius lies on his criticism against a logical dilemma that he sees in Alexander's use of "language about the 'substantial' unity of God and his Son": "Alexander's language is either (nonsensically) ditheistic, or else it is Sabellian." See R. D. Williams, "The Logic of Arianism," *Journal of Theological Studies* 34 (1983), pp. 56-58. While welcoming the emphasis on the soteriology of Arius and his followers, Hanson places some

The reason for Arius' subordination of the Son to the Father through denying the eternal deity of the Son is his theology of God's suffering. In this regard, Hanson identifies the heart of Arianism: "The Arians want to have a God who can suffer, but they cannot attribute suffering to the High God, and this is what (with some reason) they believed the Homoousian doctrine would entail."⁶ The desire to seek a concept of a suffering God drove the Arians to interpret the relationship between the Father and the Son as "two distinct and unique substances which do not share substantial attributes and properties."⁷ For them, there is no substantial identity between the Father and the Son.

Athanasius rejected the Arian subordination of the Son to the Father because it would bring about a polytheist view of God and the loss of the hope for human redemption in Christ. J.N.D. Kelly explains Athanasius' condemnation of Arius as the three following respects.

First, ... Arianism undermined the Christian doctrine of God by presupposing that the divine Triad is not eternal and by virtually reintroducing polytheism. Secondly, it made nonsense of the established liturgical customs of baptizing in the Son's name as well as the Father's, and of addressing prayers to the Son. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, it undermined the Christian idea of redemption in Christ, since only if the Mediator was Himself divine could man hope to re-establish fellowship with God.⁸

objections to Gregg and Groh, first against their connection of Arianism with Stoicism, and in particular, their approach to Arian Christology from the standpoint of Stoic ethics, i.e., in a way of moral perfectionism, and secondly against their neglect of Arius' conspicuous idea to imply that the Son cannot give an example of human achievement of perfection, because the Son assumed a body without a human mind and soul. R. P. C. Hanson, pp. 96-98. In conclusion, it would be right to say that two different theologies of Alexander and Arius reflect both a theological issue on the Son's deity and its related soteriological consequences.

⁶ R. P. C. Hanson, p. 112.

⁷ Alvyn Pettersen, *Athanasius* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1995), p. 138.

⁸ J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, p. 233.

For Athanasius, Arian thinking created a soteriological crisis as well as an improper understanding of God or Christ.⁹ In the Council of Nicaea, thus, Athanasius defended not only the Son's divinity, but also "God's eternal Fatherhood and a particular understanding of divine oneness."¹⁰ Agreeing with Athanasius, the fathers of the Council of Nicaea felt it necessary to express the Christ's true divinity as well as the uniqueness of the divine substance by means of the formula, *homoousios* with the Father.¹¹ Finally, the term *homoousios* of the Council of Nicaea was the only real bulwark against Arianism.¹²

⁹ C. Kannengiesser focuses the insight of Athanasian theology on its Christocentricism, which was the rationale for his wholly refuting Arianism. He states: "In any case, the fundamental intuition of Athanasius over which no doubt could be entertained and which motivates his entire refutation of Arianism is essentially Christological. ... Athanasius insists that the Arians are mistaken in their concept of theology, because they believe they are able to form a Christian idea of God by first developing in isolation the theory of the divinity of the Father and the Son, without taking into consideration right from the start the mystery of the incarnation of the Son. Although Athanasius changed his technical terminology several times, he remained faithful throughout his life to this fundamental intuition: that which is first in the exposition of the Christian faith is not God as such, nor the universe in its divine origin, but the historical event of salvation accomplished in Christ." See Charles Kannengiesser, "Athanasius of Alexandria and the Foundation of Traditional Christology," *Theological Studies* 34 (1973), p. 112.

¹⁰ Alvyn Pettersen, p. 139.

¹¹ Basil Studer, p. 106. An alternative to *homoousion* in the Council was the term *homoion*. Hanson clarifies that Athanasius inserted the term *homoousion* in the Creed of Nicaea in order to exclude any possibility of the Arian idea to regard the Son as a creature, observing that the Arians present in the Council "winked and muttered to each other that they could accept these epithets (= 'like' *homoion* the Father, and exactly as the Father in all things, and immutable and always in the Father) because they could parallel expressions to all these applied in the Scripture to creatures and not God." Hanson, p. 162. See also Charles Joseph Hefele, *A History of The Christian Councils*, vol. 1: To the Close of the Council of Nicaea (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1894), pp. 286-287. From then on, *Homoousios* became a symbolic term to counter the Arian belief that the Son was not very God. Nevertheless, "it is surprising then that Athanasius, the great Nicene, employs the term but once in his three central anti-Arian treatises." Pettersen guesses that Athanasius did because he worried the confusion or misconception as to the term's meaning which might be read in a Sabellian sense or in a material sense of Origen theology. According to Adolph Harnack, in fact, the Eusebians fought against *homoousion* because they saw in it a materializing of the Godhead as well as a Sabellian danger, and because it did not occur in Holy Scripture. See Alvyn Pettersen, p. 147; Adolph Harnack, *History of Dogma*, vol. iv (Oxford: Williams & Norgate, 1898), p. 55; H. M. Gwatkin, *Studies of Arianism* (Cambridge: Deighton Bell and Co., 1900), pp. 46-47; William Bright, *The Age of the Fathers*, vol. 1 (New York: 1903; New York: AMS Press, 1970), p. 91 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

¹² What this *homoousios* exactly means, however, is not unanimously settled down among the modern scholars. Generally speaking, the debate over the meaning of *homoousios* among them is related to

Yet the council of Nicaea did not clarify how to define the term *homoousios* and how to understand the unity of God in relation to the true deity of Sonship confirmed by the concept of *homoousios*. Furthermore, the Nicene Creed was not yet at the stage of making two terms, *hypostasis* and *ousia*, distinct in order to clarify the relationship of

a way of interpreting *homoousios* in the light of the generic sense, or of the sense of the numerical identity of substance. In J. N. D. Kelly's thought, this question could arise from the fact that "the root word οὐσία could signify the kind of substance or stuff common to several individuals of a class, or it could connote an individual thing as such." Cf. J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, p. 234. The scholarship on the term *homoousios* in the Nicene Creed are divided into three different views. The first view, which is relatively oldest among those three, is that *homoousios* was meant in the sense of the numerical identity of substance. For example, Adolph Harnack argues: "It (= *homoousios*) signified oneness of substance, not likeness of substance, 'unius of substantiae.' Father and Son possess in common one and the same substance, substance in the sense of the totality of all that which they are." See Adolph Harnack, *History of Dogma*, vol. iv (Oxford: Williams & Norgate, 1898), p. 36. This view was supported by J. F. Bethune-Baker, R. Seeberg, and J. Quasten. Cf. J.F. Bethune-Baker, *The Meaning of Homoousios in the 'Constantinopolitan' Creed*, Texts and Studies, ed. J. Armitage Robinson, vol. vii (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1901), pp. 28-32; Reinhold Seeberg, *Text-Book of the History of Doctrines*, vol. 1, *History of Doctrines in the Ancient Church* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1997), pp. 232-233; Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, vol. III (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1960), p. 230. The second view is proposed by J. N. D. Kelly and Basil Studer. In their thoughts, the *homoousios* doctrine of the Nicene Creed implies "of the same nature" in a generic sense rather than in a numerical sense of identity, and makes it explicit that "the Son was fully God, in the sense of sharing the same divine nature as His Father." J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, pp. 234-235; Basil Studer, p. 106. Lastly, major recent studies suggest the third view. According to G.L. Prestige, the Council of Nicaea did not actually express the doctrine of the unity of God in relation to the term *homoousios*. Cf. G.L. Prestige, *God In Patristic Thought* (London: S.P.C.K., 1952), pp. 214-215. C. Stead seems to take side with this view when he states in relation to Athanasius' theology that "the question, whether the οὐσία that is common to Father and Son is πρώτη οὐσία or δευτέρα οὐσία, is misleading and should be avoided." See Christopher Stead, "The Significance of the Homoousios," in *Studia Patristica III*, ed. F. L. Cross, *Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur* 78 (Berlin, 1961; reprinted, in *Substance and Illusion in the Christian Fathers*, London: Variorum Reprints, 1985), p. 411 (page citation is to the original edition). In this essay, Stead refutes the interpretation of Athanasius' notion of *homoousios* as indicating a "single concrete object" in a primary sense of *ousia*. Stead points out an observation that Athanasius himself and his followers used *homoousios* in a weaker, more generic sense in various places. His conclusion that Athanasius does not seem to be consistent in his usage of *ousia*, sometimes in a primary sense or other times in a second sense, seems to imply that it is hard to tell in what sense of *ousia* the term *homoousios* of the Nicene Creed was accepted by the contemporaries. A. Pettersen expresses the same idea as Stead: "This term (i.e., *homoousios*) the fathers, who were not trained philosophers, introduced at Nicaea. To be historically accurate, one must remember both that these fathers were quite unfamiliar with the Aristotelian distinction of *ousia* as either individual, the primary form of being, or generic, and that they only half understood the variety of senses which all the terms that they then had available might carry." See Alvyn Pettersen, pp. 147-148. In the light of the study of the use of *homoousios* before the Council of Nicaea, Hanson confirms that "it would be unwise to give the word (i.e., *homoousios*) a strictly defined or strongly meaning," no matter whether it might mean 'identity of being,' or 'generic being'. He concludes: "We can therefore be pretty sure that *homoousios* was not intended to express the numerical identity of the Father and the Son. ... It was intended to have a looser, more ambiguous sense than has in the past history of scholarship been attached to it." See R.P.C. Hanson, p. 196, 202. The one surest thing unanimously acknowledged by the scholarship is that the term *homoousios* of the Council of Nicaea was the only, even if not unanimously satisfactory, bulwark against Arianism.

divine plurality with divine unity. Thus, its mentioning *hypostasis* and *ousia* as interchangeable terms in one of its anathemas provided one reason for confusion over the unity of God.¹³

The controversy over the term *homoousios*, that is to say, the notion of the unity of God,¹⁴ was settled at the Council of Constantinople (381) with the help of the

¹³ The direct quote from Hanson is worthy of reading: “The search for the Christian doctrine of God in the fourth century was in fact complicated and exasperated by semantic confusion, so that people holding different views were using the same words as those who opposed them, but, unawares, giving them different meanings from those applied to them by those opponents. ... It has already been made clear that for many people at the beginning of the fourth century the word *hypostasis* and the word *ousia* had pretty well the same meaning. ... In fact for most (but not all) writers in Greek at the beginning of the controversy and for a long time after it had begun, there was no single agreed word available and widely used for what God is as Three in distinction from what he is as One.” See R. P. C. Hanson, pp. 181-190. In addition to a part of anathema, “of a different *hypostasis* or *ousia* from the Father,” there are two more statements involving the word *ousia*: “from the *ousia* of the Father” and “*homoousios* with the Father.” If the assumption of the synonymous interchangeability between *hypostasis* and *ousia* is regarded as valid, in Hanson’s thought, the three statements of the involving the word *ousia* may not be meant “to establish equality of status between Father and Son, but once again to ensure that the Son was not derived from some source other than the Father,” as most recent studies like C. Stead insist. R. P. C. Hanson, pp. 188-189.

¹⁴ Roughly, four major theological divisions can be identified over the issue of the unity of God in relation to the deity of the Son shortly before the Council of Constantinople (381): the Homoousians, the Homoiousians, the Homoians, and the Neo-Arians. First, the Homoiousians, represented by Basil of Ancyra, opposed Homoousians, while they definitely refuted Arianism. Referring to an ancient historian, Sozomen, J. N. Steenson explains why the homoiousia group opposed the usage of *homoousian* as follows: “From the Homoiousia point of view the fundamental principle for the doctrine of God was that spiritual substances must necessarily be related to each other solely in terms of similarity, since a relationship of identity is a conception appropriate only to material substances: *homoousios* applies properly to material substances such as men, who are so related by participation and origination; *homoiousios* on the other hand applies to spiritual substances such as angels, each of which is distinguished from the other according to their own distinct *ousia*; it is the second category which is more appropriately applied to the persons of the Godhead.” See Jeffrey N. Steenson, “Basil of Ancyra on the Meaning of *Homoousios*,” in *Arianism*, ed. Robert C. Gregg (Cambridge, MA: The Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, Ltd., 1985), pp. 272-273. Despite the difference between Homoiousians and Homoousians, Steenson does not think that it is right to exaggerate their difference, since these two terms were outcomes made out in order to refute a common opponent of earlier or radical Arianism. Cf. Steenson, p. 267. Steenson’s view is not in agreement with a conventional view represented by J. F. Bethune-Baker, who insists as follows: “It was precisely to oppose this apparently Sabellian doctrine that ὁμοιούσιος was invented as a substitute. Its supporters believed the *nature* of the three ‘persons’ to be the same, divine; but ... there were three beings, whose underlying essences were ‘like’, but the essence was of higher quality or superior quantity in one than in another. That is to say, against a doctrine which, though it was Trinitarian, insisted on the oneness of the Divine Being which was in the Three, there was set up a doctrine which however disguised was essentially polytheistic.” See J. F. Bethune-Baker, *The Meaning of Homoousios in the ‘Constantinopolitan’ Creed*, pp. 30-31. R.P.C. Hanson’s view is closer to Steenson’s. Hanson states, “the tradition of Trinitarian theology which was destined ultimately to prevail already existed in at least rudimentary form in the minds of Basil of Ancyra and his associates.” Hanson takes an example of the influence that the Homoiousians gave on the Cappadocians, quoting from the *Letter of George of Laodicea*, which is assumed to have been written by

Cappadocian fathers (i.e., Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa). A solution of the Cappadocians over the issue of *homoousios* was found in the formula, “*mia ousia, treis hypostases*.” The most distinguished contribution of the Cappadocian theologians toward settling the dispute about the Trinity was their clear distinction between *hypostasis* and *ousia*.¹⁵

For example, Basil clarified the relation between these two terms, using an Aristotelian distinction (i.e., the relation between general and particular, *koinon* and *idion*). Yet, for Basil, the Godhead as the general category does not have an independent reality apart from the three persons. With an expression, *tropos hyparxeos*, thus, Basil

George of Laodicea, or by Basil of Ancyra and George jointly. This letter reveals the homoiousian theology clearly enough to say that it is “an Homoiousian Manifesto.” For instance, a clear distinction was made about the distinct existence of all three persons of the Trinity in the *Letter of George*: “Nobody should be disturbed by the word *hypostases*, because the Easterners . . . use *hypostases* to express the subsisting and existing proprieties of the persons. Each person, including the Holy Spirit, can be described as ‘subsisting’ (ὕφεστωσ) in such a way that in speaking of three *hypostases* they do not mean three ultimate principles or three gods.” See R. P. C. Hanson, pp. 368-371. Secondly, the theology of *Homoian Arianism* is easily confused with Neo-Arianism, but they are two distinct schools of Arianism. Homoian Arianism was influenced by Eusebius of Caesarea and Arius, and was led by Akakius of Caesarea. On the origin of the Son, the Homoian Arianism taught that the Son “was created from the Father’s will, not his nature.” For them, “everything concerned with Christ’s origin and mission was done at the will and command of the Father.” This thought enabled them to “protect God the Father from suffering,” and to say that God the Son suffered.” To the eye of pro-Nicenes, thus, the Homoian Arianism looked “like a doctrine of two gods, one higher, one lower.” As regards the Spirit, the subordinationism was obvious. For their teaching was that “the Father generated the Son unchangeably and impassibly by his will; the Son by his power alone without effort or weariness made the Spirit.” See R.P.C. Hanson, pp. 565, 569, 579-597. Lastly, the teaching of Neo-Arianism was from that of Aetius and of Eunomius. The doctrine of Eunomius, who was a major opponent of the Cappadocians, was wholly based on the proposition that “if it is conceded that God is ingenerate, then he cannot beget that which is generate: *agennetos* cannot produce *gennetos*.” The application of this proposition to the origin of the Son thus led him to draw a conclusion that the Son was created, not begotten.” This does not mean that Eunomius denied the superiority of the Son to all creatures. What he denied is that the superiority of the Son over all creatures was given from the fact that the Son was begotten from the Father’s *ousia*. For Eunomius, the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father “implies the unacceptable conclusion that there are two Ingenerates.” Just as ingenerateness describes the essence of the Father, so generatedness is the essence of the Son. Thus, “the *ousia* of the Son cannot but be different from the Father’s.” Yet Eunomius argued that the denial of the consubstantiality of the Father and the Son “does not preclude the Father and the Son both being called God, just as a dog and a fish can both be called animals, though they have quite different natures.” See R.P.C. Hanson, pp. 621-626, 633.

¹⁵ Basil Studer, p. 142. Anthony Meredith summarizes the Cappadocian theology as “an attempt to interpret the central term *homoousios* in such a way as to insist on the full deity of the Son and of his eternal distinction from the Father.” Anthony Meredith, *The Cappadocians* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1995), p. 103.

described each person as “a union of the general divine nature and an individual characteristic.”¹⁶

Sharing much with Basil, Gregory of Nazianzus tried to show how the three members of the Trinity are consubstantial, yet not three gods. In his five *Theological Orations*, Gregory of Nazianzus’ chief strategy to defend the divine unity was to insist that “the source of the divine unity is the *monarchy* of the Father as the source of order and being.”¹⁷ Yet, the Father’s being the causality or source of the Son has no relevance to the *ousia* of the Father. Unlike the Arians, who ascribed the Fatherhood to the divine essence or to the divine activity, Gregory argued that the Fatherhood means the idea of “relationship (*schesis*),” which is “neither an action nor a nature nor an attribute.”¹⁸

In *Letter 38*, which is now attributed to Gregory of Nyssa, but originally to Basil, Gregory of Nyssa took, like Basil, “the relation between *hypostasis* and *ousia* as the same

¹⁶ Anthony Meredith, *The Cappadocians*, p. 105. In the same page, Meredith proves his point by quoting from Basil, *Letter 236*: “... The distinction between *ousia* and *hypostasis* is the same as that between the general and particular; as, for example, between the animal and the particular man. Wherefore in the case of the Godhead we confess one essence (or substance), so as not to give a variant definition of existence, but we confess as particular *hypostasis* in order that our conception of Father, Son and Holy Spirit may be without confusion and clear. If we have no distinct perception of the separate characteristics of fatherhood, sonship and sanctification, but form one conception from the general idea of existence, we cannot possibly have a sound account of our faith.” According to Hanson, Basil’s idea of relation of *ousia* to *hypostasis* can be compared to that of “living being” to a particular man. Then, it means that Basil suggested that “the three are each particular examples of a ‘generic’ Godhead.” This understanding of divine nature in a generic sense suggests the *homoiousian* feature in Basil. See R. P. C. Hanson, p. 692.

¹⁷ Anthony Meredith, *The Cappadocians*, p. 106. It is noteworthy that Gregory of Nazianzus had no intention at all to affirm the superiority of the Father over the Son or the Spirit in nature when he favored the monarchy of the Father as the source of order and being. In regard to nature, the persons of the Trinity have in common “equal dignity of nature,” “agreement of will,” “identity of action,” and “convergence towards unity of those who derive from it.” See R. P. C. Hanson, p. 711.

¹⁸ Anthony Meredith, p. 108. Hanson make this point against the arguments between Gregory and Eunomians: “‘Father’, say the Eunomians, denotes either a substance (*ousia*) or an activity (*energia*); if a substance, then the Father is of a different *ousia* (*heterousios*) from the Son; if an activity, then the Fatherly activity makes the Son, and the thing made cannot be of the same *ousia* as the maker. Gregory answers that the name ‘Father’ denotes neither essence nor activity but relationship ... though he suggests that somehow (he does not explain how) this relationship includes both being and activity.” Can the answer of Gregory be

as that between the particular, and the universal or generic.”¹⁹ Granted that the analogy of universal to particular may be unsatisfactory, the point that Gregory wanted to make was that there should be no confusion between the notions of nature or essence and person in God. In Gregory’s argument, “God is not God because he is Father nor the Son because he is the Son, but because both possess the *ousia* of Godhead. Each person (*prosopon*) is ... called God because they share this *ousia*.”²⁰ Yet might not this argument lead to tritheism? Gregory of Nyssa was so well aware of this challenge as to make two noticeable, distinct arguments. In his works, *Ad Graecos (ex communibus notionibus)* and *Letter 38*, according to G. C. Stead, Gregory attempted to show in philosophical style that there is no bar in confessing both three divine hypostases and the single divine substance. For *hypostasis* refers to individuals, whereas *ousia* refers to the common nature they share. In other essays, *Ad Ablabium quod non sint tres Dii* and *Ad Eustathium de sancta trinitate*, on the other hand, Gregory finds the unity of God in the unity of action, taking the word *Theos* as indicating the divine activity.²¹ Anthony Meredith summarizes Gregory of Nyssa’s effort to counter the charge of tritheism in three ways. The first way is to parallel the unity of divine nature and that of human nature, for “God” is “strictly not a class word at all,” like the word “man.” For Gregory, “God is neither a common noun nor a particular one but transcends both.” Secondly, the fact that “one action proceeds

logical? Hanson adds two opposing opinions: “illogical” for E.P. Meijering and “satisfied” for F. Trisoglio. See R. P. C. Hanson, p. 712.

¹⁹ According to Hanson, Most scholars agree upon Gregory of Nyssa’s authorship of *Letter 38*, despite the objection from recent editors like Courtonne and Deferrari. See R. P. C. Hanson, p. 723.

²⁰ R. P. C. Hanson, pp. 724-725.

²¹ G. Christopher Stead, “Why Not Three Gods?: The Logic of Gregory of Nyssa’s Trinitarian Doctrine,” in *Studien zu Gregor von Nyssa und der Christlichen Spätantike*, ed. Hubertus R. Drobner and Christoph Klock (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1990), pp. 149-150.

from the three members of the Trinity” makes it evident that “the Trinity is the single source of that action.” In Gregory’s thought, this shows that the Trinity is not three Gods, but one God, for “where there is only one action, there is only one agent.” In the third way, finally, Gregory counters the charge of tritheism by relating the three members of the Trinity together by means of internal relationships. In other words, in Meredith’s interpretation, Gregory used the casual relationship among the three persons to show not only the distinction among them, but also how they relate with each other (i.e., the unity of them).²²

As we see above, all the Cappadocians applied the relation of the particular to the general to that of *hypostasis* to *ousia*, using the analogy of three human individuals who share the common nature of humanity. Among modern scholars, in connection with such a use of analogy, there has been a controversy over whether the Cappadocians’ account of the Trinity assumed a ‘generic’ interpretation of the divine substance.²³ Besides, the

²² Anthony Meredith, p. 109.

²³ One group which consists of A. Harnack, R. Seeberg, J. N. D. Kelly, B. Studer, and G. C. Stead argue for the Cappadocians’ generic interpretation of the divine substance. Cf. Adolph Harnack, *History of Dogma*, vol. iv, pp. 84-85; Reinhold Seeberg, *Text-Book of the History of Doctrines*, vol. 1, *History of Doctrines in the Ancient Church*, pp. 232-233; J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, p. 267; Basil Studer, *Trinity and Incarnation*, p. 144. J. N. D. Kelly adds F. Loofs and J. Gummerus to this group in *Early Christian Doctrines*, p. 254; G. C. Stead, “Why Not Three Gods?” p. 161. Another group, including J. F. Bethune-Baker and G. L. Prestige, supports a view to affirm that the Cappadocians’ notion of *homoousios* is the same as Athanasius’ in a sense of a numerical identity. Cf. J. F. Bethune-Baker, *The Meaning of Homoousios in the ‘Constantinopolitan’ Creed*, Texts and Studies, ed. J. Armitage Robinson, vol. vii, pp. 49-59; G. L. *God In Patristic Thought*, pp. 229-232. Bethune-Baker’s argument is based on his observation that Gregory of Nyssa “made a clear and consistent distinction between ‘nature’ (i.e., φύσις) and ‘being’ (i.e., οὐσία).” In his thought, then, the *homoousios* should be understood as identical being, rather than as generic nature. According to Anthony Meredith, however, Bethune-Baker failed to reflect the fact that in *Contra Eunomium I* Gregory of Nyssa used the two words “without any perceptible difference of meaning.” See Anthony Meredith, “The Divine Simplicity: *Contra Eunomium I*. 223-241,” in *El ‘Contra Eunomium I’ en La Produccion Literaria de Gregorio de Nisa*, ed. Lucas F. Mateo-Seco and Juan L. Bastero (Pamplona, Spain: Ediciones universidad de Navarra, S.A., 1988), p. 343. The third, final view represented by R. P. C. Hanson gives us a caution not to reduce the Cappadocians’ notion of *homoousios* to that in a generic sense and at the same time not to identify their idea of divine substance with that of Athanasius. Cf. R. P. C. Hanson, p. 737. Hanson states: “We should conclude that while none of the three

controversy over how the Cappadocians interpreted divine consubstantiality is directly connected with the issue of the doctrinal continuity between the creed of Nicaea (325) and the creed of Constantinople (381).²⁴ These controversies are so complicated and

held a doctrine of identity of substance as strict as that of Athanasius none of them believed in a thinly disguised form of the *homoiousios*.”

²⁴ For example, according to Harnack, the Council of Constantinople (381) unqualifiedly confirmed the Nicene Creed, so far as its term, *homoousios*, was concerned. But its meaning of *homoousios* was understood in a *homoiousian* sense under the influence of Meletius, the Cappadocians, and Cyril of Jerusalem. Harnack insisted that as a consequence “*the community of substance in the sense of equality or likeness of substance, not in that of unity of substance, was from this time the orthodox doctrine in the East,*” and that “*the so-called Creed of Constantinople can in fact be taken simply as a formula of union between orthodox, Semi-Arians, and Pneumatomachians.*” For Harnack, the Creed of Constantinople is *Neo-Orthodox* which was different from the but gained the status of the orthodoxy. The main ground for Harnack’s argument is the missing of “*that is, from the substance of the Father*” of the in the creed of Constantinople. In Harnack’s thought, it was caused because the term *homoousios* without *from the substance of the Father* was actually equal to *homoiousios from the substance* and might be interpreted even as *homoios according to substance*. See A. Harnack, p. 97, 98, 99. Yet a counter-argument against Harnack was developed by J. F. Bethune-Baker who argues that “Homo-ousios by itself is sufficient and decisive” and “the mere absence of ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας is without dogmatic significance.” See J. F. Bethune-Baker, *The Meaning of Homoousios in the ‘Constantinopolitan’ Creed*, Texts and Studies, ed. J. Armitage Robinson, vol. vii, p. 49. For a detail, see pp. 49-59. As Hanson summarizes well, Bethune-Baker disputes Harnack by showing that “Basil and the other Cappadocians used ‘nature’ (*physis*) to mean ‘sum of characteristics or attributes,’ which could be shared in a ‘generic’ sense, but that *ousia* for them meant real substantive being, which could not be repeated.” See R. P. C. Hanson, p. 697. But Hanson criticizes Bethune-Baker for failing to sufficiently consider Basil’s unrare usages of *physis* as synonym for *ousia*. See p. 698. In Bethune-Baker’s thought, it would not make sense if the church fathers, “after so long a controversy, at last agreeing to reject homoiousios in favor of the Nicene homoousios, strained out the term and swallowed the sense.” See J. F. Bethune-Baker, *Early History of Christian doctrine*, p. 194. For Bethune-Baker, thus, there is no difference between the Nicene and the Constantinopolitan Creed in interpreting *homoousios* in a sense of numerical identity of substance, like Athanasius does. In J. N. D. Kelly, we see another way of objecting to Harnack, which is directly opposite to the way of Bethune-Baker. Kelly argues that Harnack is wrong not because the Cappadocians had no difference from the Nicene fathers in interpreting *homoousios* in a sense of numerical identity of substance, but because Harnack wrongly applied the designation of ‘Neo-Nicenes’ to the Cappadocians. First of all, Kelly does not argue that the original Nicene teaching was that “Father and Son are numerically one in substance.” Rather, in his thought, it taught that “they share the same nature.” Accordingly, Kelly insists that we acknowledge the continuity of the concept of *homoousios* in a generic sense between the Nicene creed and the Constantinopolitan creed. But Kelly does not mean by this argument that there is any real antithesis between generic and numerical oneness. For him, “there is ... no real antithesis between generic and numerical oneness, so long as the Son’s essential deity is acknowledged, for Godhead ... is *ex hypothesi* simple and indivisible.” See J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, p. 254, 267. Finally, C. Stead needs to be distinguished from J. N. D. Kelly in that Stead does not interpret *Homoousios* of the Nicene Creed in a generic sense as strongly as Kelly. According to Stead, the claim that the Cappadocians abandoned the pure Nicene position, introducing a “neo-Nicene” orthodoxy, was wrongly derived from the mistaken view that “Nicaea declared for the ‘numerical unity’ of substance in the three persons.” C. Stead, *Philosophy in Christian Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994; reprint, 1995, 1996, 1998), p. 183. The only certain answer that we may have to the question, “What was *homoousios* supposed to mean in the Nicene Creed?” is that *homoousios* “declared that Christ was fully divine and coeval with the Father; but it laid no particular emphasis on divine unity.” C. Stead, *Philosophy in Christian Antiquity*, p. 169. In his

deeply rooted in the different readings of patristic texts and theology that it is far beyond the scope and capability of the dissertation to make an overall analysis and to settle those controversies. Yet one certain fact about the development of the doctrine of the Trinity throughout the fourth century is a familiar story, that is to say, that Arianism which denied the full divinity of the Son and the Spirit was finally rejected. J. N. D. Kelly gives us a concise summary of the councils of 325 and 381.

Throughout the fourth century a fateful intellectual debate continued, with Nicaea and Constantinople as focal points and their two creeds, N and C, as the public tokens of the great shift in theological emphasis that was taking place. The subject of the debate was the understanding of God and the conceptual devices by which the cardinal features of the Christian revelation were to be accommodated in it. From the external point of view the debate appeared to be a struggle between the orthodox tradition of the full divinity of Christ on the one hand and the manifold forms of Arianism on the other; and so it tends to be represented in histories both of the development of doctrine and of the Church. But deeper issues were also at stake. At Nicaea a small, determined minority succeeded in getting the *homoousion* inserted in the creed, and for generations this was the bone of contention between the fiercely warring theological parties. At Constantinople the doctrine of the consubstantiality of the Son was finally vindicated, and the *homoousion* was extended, in guarded language in the creed but openly in the

reading of Athanasius' use of *homoousios*, Stead refutes "the romantic (or dogmatic?) misreading, which represents him as leading an advance towards an unrestricted view of the unity of the persons, and as upholding their 'numerical identity of substance' ..." C. Stead, *Divine Substance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 266. In regard to the Cappadocians' understanding of *homoousios*, Stead seems to admit that they gave an interpretation of *homoousios* in a generic sense, when he writes that the Cappadocians' formulation, where "Father, Son and Spirit were ... compared to three individuals having the same nature or species, all equally divine," gave "a comparatively weak expression of the divine unity." C. Stead, *Philosophy in Christian Antiquity*, p. 162. Stead concludes however that "the Cappadocians were faithful to the intentions of Nicaea," since "their genuine concern" was "to uphold the divine unity." C. Stead, *Philosophy in Christian Antiquity*, p. 183. For a detail study of Stead's critique of the theory of "neo-Nicene party," see Stead's essay, "The Significance of the Homoousios," in *Studia Patristica III*, ed. F. L. Cross, *Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur 78* (Berlin, 1961; reprinted, in *Substance and Illusion in the Christian Fathers*, London: Variorum Reprints, 1985). In this matter, R. P. C. Hanson seems to be with Stead, even though Hanson opposes any attempt to read the Cappadocians' *homoousios* exclusively either in a generic sense or in a sense of numerical identity of substance. In Hanson's idea, both the Nicene Creed and the Constantinopolitan Creed were consistent in accepting *homoousios* in order to confirm the co-equal divinity of Father and Son and to refute Arianism. See R. P. C. Hanson, pp. 735-737, 817-820.

council's public teaching, to the Holy Spirit. Arianism was therefore finally crushed in the great church, although it continued, usually in moderate forms, to retain the allegiance of millions among the barbarians outside or in the frontier provinces of the empire. All this is a familiar story.²⁵

The teachings against tritheism that we learn from the two ancient councils against Arius and Neo-Arianism are thus: (1) that the three divine persons should not be seen as having different degrees of divinity from each other; (2) that "person" should not be confused with "essence"; (3) that the three consubstantial divine persons should not be misunderstood as three gods; (4) that the unity of the three divine persons should not be seen as merely activity.

2.2. Contra John Philoponus: The Council of Constantinople III (680)

The first appearance of tritheism in the history of the church is mostly related to Monophysitism's implications for the doctrine of the Trinity. For example, J. Leipoldt, indicating John Philoponus and Johannes Askusnages, states that "tritheism arose and developed within Monophysitism."²⁶ As a Monophysite, John Philoponus assumed that "each 'hypostasis' must have a 'nature' of its own, and *vice versa*."²⁷ On the basis of his

²⁵ J. N. D. Kelly, "The Nicene Creed: a Turning Point," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 36 (1983), p. 38.

²⁶ J. Leipoldt, "Tritheistic Controversy," in *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, p. 24.

²⁷ Ibid. For a reference to the study of John Philoponus as Monophysite, see T. Hermann's article, "Johannes Philoponus als Monophysit," in *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche* 29 (1930), pp. 209-264. As J. Tixeront states, Monophysites such as Eutychian Monophysites and Severian Monophysites did not teach one definite doctrine. But they had in common the postulate that "there is no nature without person, ... just as there is no person without nature." See J. Tixeront, *History of Dogmas* vol. III, p. 106. For example, Tixeront points out Eutychian Monophysitism and Severian Monophysitism as two chief schools of Monophysitism. See J. Tixeront, *History of Dogmas* vol. III, pp. 106-123. The postulate was the foundational rationale for the Monophysites to resist Dyophysites. For they fear that "if there are two natures, there are also necessarily two persons; but if there are two persons, there are two Christs." See John Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought* (Washington: Corpus Books, 1969), p. 25. The employment of "two natures" of the confession of the

assumption that nature exists with its connatural hypostasis, Philoponus taught that “Christ could have but one nature, unless two hypostases were to be assumed.”²⁸

When Philoponus applied the Monophysite assumption to the doctrine of the Trinity, he was charged with tritheism by orthodox thinkers of that time. Philoponus applied it to the doctrine of the Trinity in the same way that he did in the doctrine of Christology: Since there are three hypostases in the Trinity, there should be three natures. How John Philoponus arrived at the tritheist conclusion through his Monophysitism was vividly revealed by Leontius of Byzantium’s summary description of Philoponus’ teaching and the Church’s counter-argument:

Philoponus: If the church teaches the two natures in Christ, the church necessarily acknowledged also that there are two persons in him.

The Church: If nature and hypostasis are one, one individual is necessarily confessed. But if nature and hypostasis are distinct, why should we say that even if we say two natures, there are two hypostases?

Philoponus: Of course, nature and hypostasis are one and the same.

The Church: If nature and hypostasis are one and the same, do we say that there are three natures in the Trinity? For we confess the three hypostases in the Trinity.

Philoponus: Yes. Why don’t we let it be allowed to confess the three natures in

Council of Chalcedon (451) meant for the Monophysites two concrete and distinct beings, two Christs. In addition, the erroneous danger of “two Christs” that the Monophysites saw in “two natures” of Chalcedon was unavoidable for the Monophysites because they identified the three words, *physis*, *hypostasis*, and *prosopon* in the same sense. Cf. J. Tixeront, *History of Dogmas* vol. III, p. 113.

²⁸ Philip Meyer, “Johnnes Philoponos,” in *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, p. 197. Cf. J. R. O’Donnell, “John Philoponus,” in *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, p. 1066. O’Donnell says that for Monophysites, “nature, hypostasis, substance, essence, and individual are in reality one and the same thing. Consequently, in Christ there is only one nature, a composite nature.” Interestingly, the two opposite views, Nestorianism and Monophysitism, lay in the same assumption that the relation between nature and person is “identical.” I. A. Dorner succinctly shows this point: “Where the controversy was conducted scientifically, the question as to the relation between nature and person was constantly brought under discussion. The Nestorians and the Monophysites expressed themselves in the same way regarding it, and raised the same objections to the definitions and ontological propositions laid down by the teachers of the Church, maintaining that the nature cannot be impersonal, and that where there is a φύσις, there must also be an ὑπόστασις. From this it followed, according to the Nestorians, that because there are two natures in Christ, there must also be two independent hypostases; although somehow united to form the one Christ. As the Monophysites, however, absolutely repudiated the duality of persons, they repudiated also the duality of natures, which seemed to them to involve the duality of persons.” See I. A. Dorner, *History of the Development of the Doctrine of the Person of Christ*, vol. I, trans. by D. W. Simon, Clark’s Foreign Theological Library, vol. X (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1872-1882), p. 148.

the Trinity? For Aristotle says that the individuals possess particular natures, μερικαὶ οὐσίαι, and one sole common nature (οὐσία). Thus there are three particular natures and one common nature in the Trinity.²⁹

For Philoponus, the Monophysite argument that nature and hypostasis are one and the same entails that since it is confessed that there are three hypostases in the Trinity, there are three natures in the Trinity. In Philoponus' thought, the idea of three natures in the Trinity could be justified because it can be said according to the Aristotelian distinction between particular nature and common nature that there are three particular natures and one common nature in the Trinity. Philoponus, thus, asserts that "just as undefined and undifferentiated 'Man' is common to us, so the undefined, adorable Trinity is what is called the common Godhead."³⁰ Aristotelian philosophy provided Philoponus with a logical support to his idea of the Trinity.³¹

²⁹ J. M. Schönfelder, *Die Kirchengeschichte des Johannes von Ephesus* (München: J. J. Lentner, 1862), p. 295. Also, Gustave Bardy, "Jean Philopon," in *Dictionnaire de théologie Catholique*, col. 838. For a right understanding of the quote above, it is to be noted that for Philoponus "essence" or "substance" (*ousia*) and "nature" (*physis*) are synonymous. Gustave Bardy, p. 838. Cf. J. R. O'Donnell's remark in n. 28.

³⁰ R. Y. Ebied, A. Van Roey and L. R. Wickham, *Peter of Callinicum: Anti-Tritheist Dossier* (Leuven: Oriental Lovaniensia Analecta, 1981), p. 33.

³¹ After introducing Philoponus' explanation of his doctrine of the Trinity as we see from the quote of n. 29, Schönfelder draws a conclusion that "nach dieser Erzählung, die durch die obige Deduktion des Philoponus selbst bestätigt wird, wäre der Ausgangspunkt für den Tritheismus im Monophysismus gelegen!" Also, "So hätten wir ... die Annahme dreier Naturen in der göttlichen Dreieinigkeit, die ihm gerade den Namen des Vaters der Tritheiten er, in logisch richtiger Entwicklung der Monophysiten Lehre gefunden. ... Aristoteles, der durch ihn [=Philoponus] vom Neuen zu Ehren gebracht wurde, ihm dazu [=Tritheiten] die Veranlassung geworden, durch seine Lehre von den Individuen und der gemeinsamen Natur." See J. M. Schönfelder, p. 295, 296. Gustave Bardy too writes: "Il [=Jean Philopon] about it que la nature n'existe pas en dehors des individus, il conclut que dans le Christ l'humanité n'est pas une personne, puisqu'elle n'a jamais existé d'une manière indépendante et que par suite elle n'est pas davantage une nature: il n'y a donc dans le Christ d'autre nature que la nature divine; et Jean rejoint ainsi les monophysites. D'autre part, puisqu'il y a en Dieu trois personnes, il y a aussi trois natures divines; et l'on arrive par là au trithéisme." "Ainsi le monophysisme se trouve confirmé par la philosophie aristotélicienne; et les partisans du concile de Chalcédoine sont conduits à une contradiction: Tous ceux qui reconnaissent une seule hypostase et deux natures sont en désaccord avec eux-mêmes et avec la vérité." Gustave Bardy, p. 833, 838.

The two elements of Monophysitism and Aristotelian philosophy provided Philoponus with the two theses charged with tritheism: “(1) There are in the Trinity three substances or natures, not one; (2) the unity of nature we affirm in God can only be a purely intellectual unity, an abstraction.”³²

With regard to the first thesis, Philoponus understood the terms “substance” (οὐσία) and “nature” (φύσις) – both are, for Philoponus, synonymous – in two different senses. The first is the common (κοινή) nature or substance, “meaning what the individuals of the same species have in common.” And the second is the *individual* substance or nature (ἡ ἰδικωτάτη φύσις), which has “a special role to play in Tritheism.”³³ Philoponus’ understanding of the relation between the common and the particular essence may be interpreted as meaning as follows: “the common nature or substance is unique for each species but each individual of this species possesses his own nature or substance in such wise that we can say that the species necessarily comprise a plurality of natures or substances.”³⁴ When applying this understanding to the Trinity, for Philoponus, it was logical to conclude that there are three natures, since there are three divine persons. This conclusion brought Philoponus virtually to tritheism.³⁵

In the Trinity, the idea of the distinction between particular and common nature as such might not be problematic. But the case was different with Philoponus, since he identified nature with hypostasis. If there are three natures because hypostasis and nature

³² R. Y. Ebied, A. Van Roey and L. R. Wickham, p. 28.

³³ R. Y. Ebied, A. Van Roey and L. R. Wickham, p. 26.

³⁴ R. Y. Ebied, A. Van Roey and L. R. Wickham, p. 28.

³⁵ R. S. Franks, *The Doctrine of the Trinity* (London: Gerald Duckworth and Co. Ltd., 1958), p. 119.

are one and the same, then, the common nature that does not have its own hypostasis is merely reduced to a nominal notion. The second thesis shows that this is the way of Philoponus' having developed his idea of the Trinity. With regard to the second thesis, Philoponus argued: the essence or nature which is "common to all the individuals of a genus (the *koinon*—original) never exists by itself alone, but solely in an individual. Consequently, the essence can be conceived as independent, solely in thought; actually, it never exists by itself, independently."³⁶ In other words, the common nature, for Philoponus, "has no reality of its own alongside any of the existents, but is either nothing at all ... or only subsists as (formed) by our mind from particular things."³⁷ Thus, the three natures are in reality distinguished by their individual peculiarities, whereas the one divine nature as the common or generic idea has no real existence, and is distinguished from each of the persons solely in thought.³⁸

John Philoponus was opposed as a tritheist by Anastasius of Antioch (559-590),³⁹ and was reprimanded at the Council of Constantinople III (680).⁴⁰ In Act Eleven, the Council, whose primary goal was to condemn Monothelism, dealt with the doctrine of the Trinity, condemning and excommunicating trinitarian heresies, including Arianism

³⁶ I. A. Dorner, p. 148.

³⁷ R. Y. Ebied, A. Van Roey and L. R. Wickham, p. 26.

³⁸ I. A. Dorner, p. 416.

³⁹ Basil Studer, *Trinity and Incarnation*, p. 237. Cf. Hans-Georg Beck, *Kirchen und Theologische Literatur im Byzantinischen Reich*, vol. 12 (München: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1959).

⁴⁰ J. R. O'Donnell, p. 1066.

and Sabellianism.⁴¹ Against Philoponus, the Council asked, “Where is the unity, O the craziest, if the unity is carried away into three essences, is expanded into three natures, is multiplied into three deities?”⁴² The council confirmed that the Trinity should not be counted in essence, nature or deity, as Arians or new tritheists did.⁴³ Finally, the Council condemned Philoponus, together with Conon of Tarsus and Eugenius of Seleucia, for tritheism.⁴⁴

In conclusion, John Philoponus’ tritheism was a logical deduction of Monophysitism that stuck to the premises, actually shared with Nestorians, that nature and hypostasis go together, and furthermore that they are one and the same.⁴⁵ Also, it was a “rationalistic approach which seeks to explain the divine by concepts and principles derived from the created order.”⁴⁶ In brief, the criticism that the orthodox made against Philoponus is that so long as person is identified with nature, the idea of three divine persons as three concrete, particular natures, necessitates tritheism, since the three natures

⁴¹ For a detailed study of the condemnation of Monothelitism at the Council, refer to J. Bois’ essay, “Constantinople (III Concile De),” in *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*, cols. 1259-1273.

⁴² “Vel ubi unitas, o furiosissimi, si in tres essentias ipsa unitas efferetur, & in tres naturas dilatabitur, & in tres deitates multiplicabitur?” J. D. Mansi, ed., *Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova et Amplissima Collectio*, vol. 11 (Graz-Austria: Akademische Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt, 1960), p. 467.

⁴³ “Numeratur ergo beata Trinitas non essentiis, nec naturis, nec diversis deitatibus, ... absit, sicut insaniunt Ariani, & sicut novae tritheiae, id est, ter deitatis ... essentias tres, & naturas tres, & tres dominationes, & tres similiter vaniloquentes deitates ...” *Ibid.*, p. 470.

⁴⁴ “Johannes Grammaticus, cognomento Philoponus, id est, studiosus, imo Matæoponus, id est, irritus laborator, Conon quoque, & Eugenius: hi tres, tritheiae, id est, triplicis deitatis, ter maledicti propugnatores.” *Ibid.*, p. 502.

⁴⁵ All the various controversies of the Trinity and the Christology were related to the lack of clear distinction and definition of person and nature. Through condemning Apollinarianism, Nestorianism, Eutychism, Monophysitism, and Monothelitism, the Orthodoxy confirmed that nature or essence should be distinct from hypostasis or prosopon in the doctrine of the Trinity, which had already suggested and affirmed in the Council of Constantinople (381), as mentioned in the preceding section, 2.1.

⁴⁶ R. Y. Ebied, A. Van Roey and L. R. Wickham, p. 33.

of three persons are real and substantial, while the common nature is merely nominal because it lacks its connatural hypostasis.

The teachings against tritheism that may be obtained from the study of the case of Philoponus are thus (1) that person should not be identified with nature in God; (2) that the three divine persons should not be understood as three particular natures, since there is only one nature in God; (3) that the common nature of the Trinity should be interpreted as substantial, not as conceptual.

2.3. Contra Roscelin of Compiègne: The Council of Soissons (1092)

In the late 11th century and the early 12th century, there was a controversy over tritheism, which looked similar to that occasioned by John Philoponus in the 6th century. It was sparked by Roscelin of Compiègne who was the teacher of Peter Abelard. According to Roscelin, the doctrine of the Trinity should be understood as confessing that there are three substances or things. Otherwise, in Roscelin's thought, the doctrine of the Trinity would fall into a dilemma of a historical heresy, Sabellianism.

"In order to study some aspects of Roscelin's thought," it might be better to refer to "posterior witnesses like Otto of Freising and John of Salisbury," or "contemporaries like Anselm and Abelard."⁴⁷ No work of Roscelin's own but a letter addressed to Abelard⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Jean Jolivet, "Trois Variations médiévales sur L'Universal et L'Individu: Roscelin, Abélard, Gilbert de la Porrée," in *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* 97 (1992), p. 112.

⁴⁸ The text of those letter addressed to Abelard was first edited by J. A. Schmeller in the *Abhandlungen der philosophisch-philologischen Klasse der Königlich Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* Bd. 5. 3 (Münich, 1849), pp. 187-210. It was re-published by Jos. Reiners in the *Der Nominalismus in der Frühscholastik* (Münster: Aschendorffschen Buchhandlung, 1910), pp. 62-79, and by François Picavet in the *Roscelin Philosophe et théologien* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1911), pp. 129-139.

has come down to us.⁴⁹ Thus, “Roscelin’s dialectic and theology are known more through his critics than through his own words.”⁵⁰

According to a certain John in his letter to Anselm, Roscelin argued: “If the three persons are only one thing – and are not three beings, each one [existing] separately in itself (as do three angels or three souls) and yet [existing] in such way that they are wholly the same in will and in power – then the Father and the Holy Spirit were incarnate with the Son.”⁵¹ If John’s witness is true, then Roscelin argued for three theses: (1) Each person of the Triune God should be unique and single being. (2) The unity of three persons lies in the equality and oneness in will and in power. (3) Otherwise, through the confusion of three persons, the incarnation of the Son would have caused the incarnation of the Father and the Spirit.⁵²

This analysis is confirmed in Roscelin’s letter to Abelard. In this letter, Roscelin argued that those who signify the one single thing through the three titles are actually

⁴⁹ Eike-Henner W. Kluge, “Roscelin and the Medieval Problem of Universals,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 16 (1976), p. 405. Constant J. Mews states that “the only document so far confidently attributed to Roscelin is a long and angry letter to Abaelard, castigating his ungrateful pupil for a variety of offences, of which the most serious was to minimise the differences between the three persons of the Trinity,” in his article “Nominalism and Theology before Abelard: New Light on Roscelin of Compiègne,” *Vivarium* 30 (1992), p. 7.

⁵⁰ Constant J. Mews, p. 6.

⁵¹ M.-M. Gorce, “Roscelin ou Roscellin,” *Dictionnaire de théologie Catholique*: col., 2913. The quotation directly comes from Anselm’s *Epistola de Incarnatione Verbi*. See Jasper Hopkins and Herbert Richardson, eds., *Anselm of Canterbury* vol. 3 (Toronto and New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1976), p. 14.

⁵² Cf. Barthélemy Hauréau, *Histoire de La Philosophie scolastique* (Paris: Durand Pedone-Lauriel, 1872), pp. 262-263: “En conséquence Roscelin dit qu’il faut voir dans la Trinité ou trois Dieux séparés, distincts, individuels, comme existent trois anges, trois âmes; ou plutôt un seul Dieu, que l’on peut désigner sous trois noms, à cause de la diversité de ses attributs, mais au sein duquel il faut bien se garder d’établir des distinctions de personnes. Rejeter ses conclusions et soutenir qu’il y a réellement trois personnes divines, c’est, suivant lui, prétendre que le Père et le Saint-Esprit se sont incarnés comme le Fils.” Also see François Picavet, *Roscelin Philosophie et Théologien* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1911), p. 47: “C’est pour éviter

confusing the divine persons and saying that the Son is the Father and the Father is the Son, for each title in itself designates one unique and single thing. “In his argument,” Etienne Gilson states, “therefore, the Trinity is composed of three distinct substances, granting that they may have only one power and one will in themselves.”⁵³

With all his emphasis on three distinct substances of the Trinity, Roscelin tried to avoid Arian error. To be sure, Roscelin argued for the differences of three divine substances, for the substance of the Father who generated the Son is different from the substance of the Son who was generated. However, unlike Arius, Roscelin did not introduce any notion of unequal differences within the substance of the Holy Trinity in separating the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit through the degrees of divinity.⁵⁴ For Roscelin, “Within the Trinity, there is nothing anterior or posterior, nor greater or lesser, but the three persons, within their harmony, are coeternal and entirely equal.”⁵⁵

For a support, Roscelin appealed to Athanasius, who, in Roscelin’s thought, did not reject all kinds of separation of divine substances. When Athanasius said that the three divine persons are coequal, Roscelin explained, Athanasius meant that there are three equal beings, for nothing is equal to himself. According to François Picavet, Roscelin believed that Athanasius supports him as follows:

When he (i.e., Athanasius) speaks of one substance, not in the sense of a singular substance, but one substance in form and equality, he demonstrates this view clearly when he says, “a unique divinity, an equal glory, a co-eternal majesty.” ... We showed that, in the case of the separation of the substance, he

d’admettre que le Père et le Saint-Esprit ont été incarnés avec le Fils qu’il suppose que les trois personnes sont trois choses en soi, identiques toutefois par la volonté et par la puissance.”

⁵³ Étienne Gilson, *La Philosophie au moyen Age, des Origines patristiques à la fin du XIVe Siècle* (Paris: Payot, 1944), p. 240.

⁵⁴ François Picavet, *Roscelin Philosophie et Théologien* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1911), p. 73.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

did not mean all separation, but only that of Arius, namely the separation by division of degrees. In the same way, when he says, “there are not three eternal beings, but only one eternal being,” we have to ask ourselves carefully if he eliminates multiple instances of eternity in all forms, or only in a certain way. Indeed, if he denies completely that one can speak of eternal beings, he contradicts himself, since he called the three persons of the Trinity eternal beings, by calling them co-eternal. For if they are co-eternal, they are also eternal: therefore would there not be three eternal beings, since these three persons are eternal?⁵⁶

For Roscelin, the three eternal beings are one because they have the equal divinity in common: “The Trinity is one, because of the community of majesty, not because of the unity of majesty; for what is unique is not common in any case, and what is common cannot be unique.”⁵⁷ Roscelin found the ground for the unity of the Trinity in nothing else but the one common, equal divinity, which, in Roscelin’s thought, necessarily presupposes the plurality of the three eternal beings. For Roscelin, the solitude of the unity is not attributed to the unity of the divine substance, but that of resemblance and equality.⁵⁸

What bothered Roscelin was the issue of incarnation. Unless the three distinct and unique eternal beings, things, or substances are affirmed, in his belief, there would be no

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 73: “Or qu’il parle d’une substance une, mais non au singulier, qu’il parle d’une substance une par la ressemblance et l’égalité, il le démontre d’une façon manifeste, quand il dit, - *Une divinité unique, une gloire égale, une majesté coéternelle* ... Et de même que nous avons montrée, quand il s’agissait de la séparation de la substance, il n’a pas entendu par la toute séparation, mais cette seule séparation d’Arius, à savoir la séparation par la division des degrés, de même, il faut, avec le plus grand soin, nous demander quand il dit, - *Il n’y a pas trois éternels, mais un seul éternel*, - il faut nous demander, dis-je, s’il écarte la multiplicité de l’éternité en toutes façons, ou seulement d’une certaine manière. Si, en effet, il nie absolument qu’on puisse parler d’éternels, il se contredit lui-même, lui qui a appelé les trois personnes, personnes éternelles, en les disant coéternelles. Car si elles sont coéternelles, elles sont aussi éternelles: comment donc n’y aurait-il pas trois éternels, si ces trois personnes sont éternelles?” I am entirely indebted to Dr. Karin Maag, Director of Henry Meeter Center, for translation.

⁵⁷ Ibid., pp. 73-74: “La Trinité est une, à cause de la communauté de majesté, non à cause de l’unité de majesté; car ce qui est unique, n’est en aucune façon commun, et ce qui est commun ne peut être unique.”

⁵⁸ Ibid., pp. 74-75: “Ainsi nous semblons être d’un avis différent sur l’unité de la substance divine, toi lui attribuant la solitude de l’unité, ... moi, au contraire, armé que je suis des pensées des divines Ecritures, défendant l’unité de ressemblance et d’égalité.”

other way but to conclude that the Father was incarnated with the Son together.⁵⁹ In Anselm's *Epistola de Incarnatione Verbi*, Roscelin was quoted as saying: "If the Son was incarnate, and if the Son is not a different thing from the Father but is numerically one and the same thing as the Father, then it must be the case that the Father also was incarnate. For it is impossible that a thing which is numerically one and the same both be and not be, at the same time, incarnate in the same man."⁶⁰ Roscelin thus asserted that, in order to avoid the confusion of persons through incarnation, it needed to be emphasized that the three persons are three different substances (as primary substances in Aristotelian sense – even though Roscelin himself does not make use of the distinction between primary and secondary substance).⁶¹

Traditionally, Roscelin's doctrine of the Trinity was criticized as tritheist because of its assertion of the three different substances (primary) of the Trinity. At the Council of Soissons in 1092, which was convened by Reinaud, Archbishop of Reims, Roscelin was condemned, or at least rebuked, regarding his teaching of tritheism.⁶² Roscelin responded to the condemnation of the council, vainly arguing that his teaching on the Trinity had

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 68: "Que savons-nous du théologien? Nous le voyons préoccupé surtout, par la question que signale Jean à Anselme, de la Trinité et de l'Incarnation. Ce qui lui appartient à coup sûr, dans tout ce qui suit, sous forme de dilemme: ou l'on peut dire que les trois personnes de la Trinité sont trois choses en soi, identiques par la puissance et la volonté; ou l'on doit dire qu'elles sont seulement une chose. En ce dernier cas, on sera obligé d'admettre que le Père et le Saint-Esprit ont été incarnés avec le Fils."

⁶⁰ Anselm of Canterbury, "*Epistola de Incarnatione Verbi*," in *Anselm of Canterbury* vol. 3, eds. and trans. Jasper Hopkins and Herbert Richardson (Toronto and New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1976), p. 26.

⁶¹ Étienne Gilson, *La Philosophie au moyen Age, des Origines patristiques à la fin du XIVe Siècle*, p. 240: "Sa [=Roscelin] véritable innovation consiste à avoir nommé, selon l'usage grec, du nom de substance, ce que les Latins nommaient personne. 'ar personne, nous ne signifions rien d'autre que la substance, bien que, par une sorte d'habitude de langage, on triple la personne sans tripler la substance.'"

⁶² Cf. Barthélemy Hauréau, *Histoire de La Philosophie scolastique*, pp. 249-250.

never been denied even by St. Anselm.⁶³ At the council, Roscelin was forced to revoke his teaching on the Trinity. He did so not because he acknowledged his error, but because he feared being massacred by the people of Reims. After departing Reims, thus, Roscelin resumed teaching his doctrine on the Trinity, which made Anselm feel obliged to deal with him once and for all. Thus, Anselm wrote *Epistola de Incarnatione Verbi* to resume criticism against Roscelin that he had discontinued when Roscelin recanted at the Council of Soissons in 1092.⁶⁴

Roscelin's claim rejected by Anselm is as follows: "If the three things are only one thing – and are not three things, each one [existing] separately in itself (as do three angels or three souls) and yet [existing] in such way that they are wholly the same in will and in power – then the Father and the Holy Spirit were incarnate with the Son."⁶⁵ In

⁶³ Ibid., pp. 263-264.

⁶⁴ Jasper Hopkins, *A Companion to the Study of St. Anselm* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1972), p. 100.

⁶⁵ From *De Incarnatione Verbi*, in *Anselm of Canterbury* vol. 3, Jasper Hopkins and Herbert Richardson eds. (Toronto and New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1976), p. 14. For the Latin text, see *Epistolae de incarnatione verbi prior recensio* in *S. Anselmi Opera Omnia* vol. 1, ed. Franciscus Salesius Schmitt (Edinburgh: Apud Thomam Nelson et Filios, 1946), p. 285. Latin text: "Si tres personæ sunt una tantum res, et non sunt tres res unaquæque per se, sicut tres angeli aut tres animæ, ita tamen ut voluntate et potentia omnino sint idem: ergo pater et spiritus sanctus cum filio incarnatus est." The same content is rephrased, in Anselm's letter to Fulco, Bishop of Beauvais, like this: "In God, either the three persons are three things – [existing] in separation from one another (as do three angels) and yet [existing] in such way that there is one will and power – or else the Father and the Holy Spirit was incarnate. Moreover, [the three persons] could truly be called three gods if custom allowed it." In Latin, "Roscelinus clericus dicit in Deo tres personas, esse tres res ab invicem separatas: sicut sunt tres angeli: ita tamen ut una sit voluntas & potestas: aut Patrem & Spiritum sanctum esse incarnatum; & tres Deos vere posse dici, si usus admitteret." An English translation of Anselm's *Letter to Fulco, Bishop of Beauvais*, is found in Jasper Hopkins and Herbert Richardson eds., *Anselm of Canterbury* vol. 3, p. 4. For a Latin text, see *Sacrorum Conciliorum, Nova et Amplissima Collectio*, vol. 20 (Graz: Akademische Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt, 1960-61), col. 741. Yet, it is generally acknowledged that Anselm did not know Roscelin from an original source. See *A Companion to the Study of St. Anselm*, p. 100.

Anselm's understanding, Roscelin "wants to confess that there are three gods, or else he does not understand what he is saying."⁶⁶

Since the discussion concerning the unity of substance or the plurality of persons holds true for each of the three divine persons, Anselm opposed Roscelin, first dealing with the matter of Roscelin's understanding of "three persons as three things" through focusing his thought on the Father and the Son. Anselm asks what Roscelin means by "two things." If Roscelin means by "two things" "two distinguishing properties," then there is no problem with him at all, "because no Christian confesses that with respect to these two distinguishing properties the Father and the Son are one thing."⁶⁷ But in Anselm's analysis, "this is not the manner in which he understands the two persons to be two things." For Roscelin certainly claims that the Father and the Son are two things, not in the sense that their relations, or their distinguishing properties are two things, but in the sense that their substance is two things, when he specifies "[each one existing] separately in itself" and "as do three angels or three souls."⁶⁸ If each divine person exists separately in itself as do three angels or three souls, noted Anselm, then the three divine persons "exist as substantially plural," since "we predicate 'angel' and 'soul' substantially, not relationally."⁶⁹ Furthermore, when Roscelin added "in such way that they are wholly the same in will and in power," he presupposed "the kind of plurality and separation which a

⁶⁶ "Certe aut vult confiteri tres deos, aut non intelligit quod dicit." *De Incarnatione Verbi*, in Jasper Hopkins and Herbert Richardson eds., *Anselm of Canterbury* vol. 3, p. 14. For Latin, see *Epistolae de Incarnatione Verbi prior Recensio* in *S. Anselmi Opera Omnia* vol. 1, p. 285.

⁶⁷ *De Incarnatione Verbi*, p. 15.

⁶⁸ *De Incarnatione Verbi*, p. 16.

⁶⁹ *A Companion to the Study of St. Anselm*, p. 102.

plurality of angels or of souls has.”⁷⁰ Therefore, Anselm concluded as follows: “... if he at all means to claim that the three persons, insofar as each is God, are not one thing but are three things, each one independent, as are three angels, then it is quite clear that he is setting up three gods.”⁷¹

In order to validate his conclusion, Anselm himself raised a counter-argument that Roscelin might make against his criticism that Roscelin is a tritheist. Roscelin’s possible counter-argument supposed by Anselm is “that I say ‘three things’ does not compel me to admit three gods, because these three things are together one God.” Anselm refuted such a possible counter-argument in two ways. First, the notion of one God as three things would necessarily bring out a consequence that no one of these three things considered by itself would be God, nor God would be a simple nature but would be a nature composed of parts. Secondly, if God is something composite, then something would be greater than God.⁷² In brief, for Anselm, “the ontological argument itself defeats Roscelin’s possible response.”⁷³

With regard to Roscelin’s claim that either the Father and the Holy Spirit were incarnate with the Son or else these three persons are three separate things, Anselm’s attempt to refute it was made in three ways. First, Anselm pointed out that such a claim is meaningless because the mere assumption of the plurality of gods itself does not guarantee the separation without which, in Roscelin’s thought, the incarnation of the Son

⁷⁰ *De Incarnatione Verbi*, p. 17.

⁷¹ *De Incarnatione Verbi*, p. 20.

⁷² *De Incarnatione Verbi*, pp. 20-21.

⁷³ *A Companion to the Study of St. Anselm*, p. 102.

alone would not be possible. In Anselm's thought, the being of God as well as the power of God is present always and everywhere. As the Father as God exists always and everywhere, so the Son as God exists always and everywhere. In other words, the Son is present, wherever the Father is present.⁷⁴ Thus, if the Son is incarnate, the Father and the Holy Spirit must also be incarnate.

Secondly, Anselm disproved Roscelin's claim of the plurality of gods itself, pointing out that "no one denies that God is the Supreme Good." For there is only one Supreme Good, since "the Supreme Good is that which so excels other goods that it has neither an equal nor a superior."⁷⁵

Thirdly, Anselm tried to affirm that "although this one and only God is three persons ... it is not necessary ... for the other persons to be incarnate when the Son is incarnate; on the contrary, it is impossible." Anselm assumed two possible arguments of Roscelin's in this matter. The one possible argument of Roscelin's is this: "If the Son was incarnate, and if the Son is not a different thing from the Father but is numerically one and the same thing as the Father, then it must be the case that the Father also was incarnate. For it is impossible that a thing which is numerically one and the same both be and not be, at the same time, incarnate in the same man." Anselm refuted this argument with an emphasis on the personal distinction between the Father and the Son: "If the Son was incarnate and if the Son is not numerically one and the same person as the Father, but is another person, then it does not follow that, necessarily, the Father also was incarnate.

⁷⁴ *De Incarnatione Verbi*, pp. 24-25.

⁷⁵ *De Incarnatione Verbi*, p. 25.

For it is possible that one person be incarnate in a given man and at the same time another person not be incarnate in this man.”⁷⁶

The other possible argument of Roscelin’s may be: “If God the Son was incarnate and if God who is the Son is not other than, but is numerically one and the same as, God who is the Father, then even though the Father and the Son are different persons, the necessity that the Father also be incarnate with the Son because of the unity of deity seems to outweigh the possibility that because of the diversity of persons the Father was not incarnate at the same time.” Anselm saw Roscelin’s misunderstanding of the relation between divine nature and divine persons, particularly in regard to the incarnation of the Son. Anselm finally rejected Roscelin’s erroneous tritheism, through correcting his Christological error to think that “this incarnation so accords with the unity of nature that the Son cannot be incarnate apart from the Father,” and not to understand that “the incarnation so accords with the unity of person that the Father cannot be incarnate with the Son.” In Anselm’s thought, Roscelin would not have made such an argument if he had understood that in His incarnation the Son “assumed a human nature [*homo*] into a unity with His person, rather than into a unity with His nature.”⁷⁷

What Anselm affirmed against Roscelin’s tritheist error is the right understanding of the relation between substance and person in the Trinity and in the Incarnation, which is the way to avoid a tritheist error. Eventually, Anselm stayed in faithful continuity with the tradition of the ancient church councils in dealing with trinitarian or Christological controversies in the first seven centuries, which had confirmed that what assumed a

⁷⁶ *De Incarnatione Verbi*, pp. 25-26.

⁷⁷ *De Incarnatione Verbi*, pp. 26-27.

human nature is not the divine nature that is one among the three divine persons, but the second divine person who is distinct from the other two divine persons.

In short, in Anselm's thought, Roscelin did not understand that the relational distinction between the divine persons removes any possibility that the Father was incarnate with the Son. For Anselm, the relational distinction between the divine persons cannot be compromised by the fact that they are one in the substance of deity. Anselm argues thus that Roscelin did not understand that since the distinction between the divine persons is explained as relational, not as substantial, it would cause a tritheist controversy to argue that they should be substantially distinct unless the Father should be incarnate with the Son. In other words, Roscelin broke the theological grammar that does not employ a term of substance (whether it is primary or secondary)⁷⁸ but hypostasis or person (relationally, not substantially, distinct) in order to discern the personal distinctions among divine persons. Therefore, Roscelin's argument that divine persons exist as three things or substances (primary), each one existing separately as do three angels or three souls, was regarded as tritheism to claim three gods.

Truly, there are some disagreements among scholars in determining what Roscelin really argued for. Some doubt that the traditional understanding of Roscelin's doctrine of the Trinity, as shown in Anselm's criticism and condemned at the Council of Soissons (1092), exactly reflects Roscelin's thought.⁷⁹ Yet it is beyond the scope of the

⁷⁸ For a detail, see n. 12 in p. 35 of the dissertation.

⁷⁹ A controversy of Roscelin is on whether his idea is a reflection of nominalism, that is to say, whether Roscelin takes the oneness of the Trinity as merely nominal. A major voice to oppose the traditional understanding of Roscelin as tritheist comes from François Picavet. Picavet states that, in order to tie his theology to his philosophy, people gave Roscelin a title of nominalism that he never mentioned, and that above all Roscelin entirely submitted himself to the judgment of the Church. See François Picavet, *Roscelin, Philosophie et Théologien*, p. 75, 80: "Surtout il veut rester orthodoxe et, en tout, se soumet au jugement de l'Eglise." "Mais, dit-on encore, la théologie de Roscelin est une conséquence nécessaire de

dissertation to make a historical theory about this matter. The point here is to figure out what Roscelin's tritheism allegedly is.

The historical teachings against tritheism that may be obtained from the study of the opposition to Roscelin are summarized as two points. (1) In an ancient grammar, divine persons are relationally, not substantially, distinct. (2) Their relational distinctions are not compromised by their unity in substance. Since the ancient theological grammar

son nominalisme. ... Et l'on peut voir déjà que, pour lier la théologie de Roscelin à sa philosophie, on lui a donné un nominalisme qu'il n'a jamais eu, un trithéisme dont S. Anselme est le véritable créateur et qu'il s'est toujours défendu d'admettre." Picavet argues that Roscelin never transposed nominalism into theology, nor said that the Trinity is only a word, *flatus vocis*. In Picavet's analysis, Roscelin just raised a question on the doctrine of the Trinity which was caused through his faithfulness to Aristotelian categories with the principle of contradiction rather than to the platonian categories with the principle of perfection, and tried to defend the Christian faith through his own responding to the question. Yet the common misunderstanding of the connection of Roscelin with nominalism and tritheism as its consequence spread because Abelard baselessly found faults with Roscelin. See *Ibid.*, p. 47: "Roscelin, si l'on s'en rapporte à la lettre à Abélard, comme aux textes de S. Anselme et d'Hérimann, n'a pas transporté le nominalisme en théologie; il n'a pas dit que la Trinité n'est qu'un mot, *flatus vocis*. ... Ce qui explique l'embarras qu'éprouve Roscelin à propos de l'Incarnation et de la Trinité, c'est que les catégories aristotéliennes, avec le principe de contradiction, sont les règles normatives de sa pensée, c'est qu'il les applique au monde intelligible et spécialement aux mystères de l'Incarnation et de la Trinité, au lieu d'y employer les catégories plotiniennes et le principe de perfection." And *ibid.*, p. 79: "Mais, d'un autre côté, nous ne trouvons rien dans la lettre de Roscelin qui autorise à affirmer que, pour lui, la Trinité n'est qu'un mot, *flatus vocis*. ... Mais Anselme ne dit pas que Roscelin tire sa doctrine trinitaire de son nominalisme; il ne dit pas même que Roscelin est un hérétique de la dialectique. Il se borne à demander s'il doit être rangé parmi eux et déclare qu'il ne sait de lui que deux choses: Roscelin a soulevé, sur la Trinité, la question qui lui a été transmise par Jean et il veut que les chrétiens défendent leur foi." Most recently, Constant J. Mews argued that what Roscelin actually tried to say was not that the three divine persons are "three gods," but "three things, in order to avoid concluding that the Father became incarnate with the Son." See Constant J. Mews, "Nominalism and Theology before Abelard: New Light on Roscelin of Compiègne," n. 10, pp. 6-7. Mews first acknowledges that the traditional "legend" to take Roscelin as "nominalist 'hero and rebel'" "has shown no sign of abating, notwithstanding of François Picavet's dissection of the legend." But he agrees with Picavet in saying that "there is no evidence that Roscelin denied the reality of universal substances as Anselm claimed." Constant J. Mews, p. 5, 30. On the other hand, the contemporary views to defend the traditional view are still held by some modern scholars. For example, in an article on Roscelin, M.-M Gore states that the connection of the two doctrines of nominalism and tritheism is evident and was witnessed by Anselm and Abelard. See M.-M. Gorce, "Roscelin ou Roscellin," *Dictionnaire de théologie Catholique*: col., 2914: "Les deux doctrines, philosophie et théologie, nominalisme et trithéisme, ou bien au contraire réalisme et monothéisme absolu étaient manifestement liées. ... Or, la liaison des doctrines non seulement est réelle, mais Anselme et Abélard l'ont remarquée." Recently, Eike-Henner W. Kluge is a strong buttress for the traditional view. Having reconstructed Roscelin's nominalism as cogent, Kluge definitely concludes that the theological implicates of Roscelin's nominalism (e.g., "the three persons of the Trinity must be distinct substances," "the relations among the Trinity do not exist.") would have rendered Roscelin's position "theologically unacceptable in any case, and worthy of condemnation." See Eike-Henner W. Kluge, "Roscelin and the Medieval Problem of Universals," p. 412. In this article, Kluge provides a good summary of Roscelin's these on the issue of universals, which is quoted in chapter 1, n. 37, pp. 15-16 of this dissertation.

employs the concept of relation rather than substance to discern the distinctions between divine persons, the only one substance in divine persons is acknowledged. An argument that the divine persons are distinct because they are different substances (primary) was taken as tritheist, for such an argument breaks the ancient theological grammar in which the concept of substance (even if it is primary substance) is not used in order to discern the distinction between divine persons. The divine persons should not be understood as three substances or things, each one existing separately as do three angels or three souls.

2.4. Contra Gilbert of Poitiers: The Council of Rheims (1148)

Among the controversies over tritheism in history, the case of Gilbert of Poitiers⁸⁰ in the twelfth century shows the relationship between the doctrine of the Trinity and that of divine simplicity. According to Gilbert of Poitiers, divinity may be used as predicate in the ablative, but not in the nominative. This view aroused strong opposition, for it seemed to make a real distinction between *Deus* and *Divinitas*, which would detract from the absolute simplicity of God. Gilbert was accused by contemporaries of teaching, either three or even four gods, but not the Trinity.

The representative feature of Gilbert's teaching on the Trinity lies in his application the distinction between the *id quo est* and the *id quod est* to the doctrine of the Trinity.⁸¹ Gilbert employed this distinction in order to show how in the one God there are

⁸⁰ In regard to the historical study of various names of Gilbert, refer to Von Franz Pelster's article, "Gilbert de la Porrée, Gilbertus Porretanus oder Gilbertus Porreta?" in *Scholastik*, 1949, pp. 401-03. Also, Ralph M. McNerny introduces other language versions of Gilbert in his book: "Gilbert is often cited by the French and Latin versions of his name, which are, respectively, Gilbert de la Poree and Gilbertus Porretanus (or Gilbertus Pictaviensis)." See R. M. McNerny, *A History of Western Philosophy: Philosophy from St. Augustine to Ockham* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1970), p. 162.

three persons.⁸² Gilbert's introduction of a distinction between *Deus* and *Divinitas*, as well as a distinction between *persona* and *essentia/natura* to clarify the mystery of the Trinity, clearly meant "to distinguish in God, as in the Creation, between *id quod* and *id quo*."⁸³

The *id quod est*, meaning "that which something is," "stands for the object itself, taken as the self-contained whole, ... whereas *id quo est*, meaning 'that by which something is', refers to that which causes the object to *be* and is, in fact, its *esse*."⁸⁴ This distinction between *id quod est* and *id quo est*, which was originally Boethius', belongs to the ontological structure of the natural world.⁸⁵ With this distinction, Gilbert identified the distinction of the substance in creature into *subsistentia* and *subsistens*: *id quo est* is *subsistentia*; *id quod est* is *subsistens*.⁸⁶ For him, "'substantia' is not only used to stand for the subsistent thing itself ('subsistens' or 'id quod') but it also refers to the subsistent mode of being by which that thing is a subsistent (*subsistentia* or *id quo* or *esse*)."⁸⁷

⁸¹ N.M. Häring emphasizes the importance of *id quod* and *quo* in understanding Gilbert's theology by paralleling it to that of act and potency in Thomas Aquinas: "A thorough study of the *id quo* and *quod* with all its ramifications in Gilbert's writings is as vital as a proper understanding of act and potency in the works of St. Thomas." See, "The Case of Gilbert de la Porrée Bishop of Poitiers (1142-1154)," *Mediaeval Studies* 13 (1951), p. 8.

⁸² Michael E. Williams, *The Teaching of Gilbert of Porreta on the Trinity* (Romae: Apud Aedes Universitatis Gregoriana, 1951), p. 51.

⁸³ L.O. Nielsen, *Theology and Philosophy in the Twelfth Century: A Study of Gilbert Porreta's Thinking and the Theological Expositions of the Doctrine of the Incarnation during the Period 1130-1180* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1982), p. 142.

⁸⁴ L.M. De Rijk, "Semantics and Metaphysics in Gilbert of Poitiers: A Chapter of Twelfth Century Platonism (1)," *Vivarium* 26 (1988), p. 75. It is to be noted that Gilbert's word *esse* as a meaning of *id quo est* is not in the sense of "existence," but "essence."

⁸⁵ L.O. Nielsen, p. 47.

⁸⁶ Michael E. Williams, pp. 14-15.

⁸⁷ L.M. De Rijk, "Semantics and Metaphysics in Gilbert of Poitiers: A Chapter of Twelfth Century Platonism (1)," p. 80.

Employing a distinction between *id quod est* and *id quo est* in his teaching of the Trinity, Gilbert clarified erroneous applications of natural reason to theology. For example, Gilbert stated that “*the Arians and Sabellians take as their starting point the statement that ‘where the properties of different things differ in number, there also the subsistentiae will differ’; and also, the fact that ‘one subsistentia means one subsistens’.*”⁸⁸ According to natural rules, “things that have different properties, differential-substantial or accidental, also have different primary substantial forms.”⁸⁹ In the natural order, truly “the accidental properties of Plato and Cicero differ, and so the substantial properties also differ, in number.”⁹⁰ Thus, Plato and Cicero who have the same essence specifically are numerically different by their accidental differences. Arius applied these natural rules to the objects of theology, maintaining that since there is only one divine essence, “the Father alone is God,”⁹¹ also denying the divinity of the Son and the Holy Ghost. Otherwise, in Arius’ thought, the different properties of the three divine persons would lead to three different essences, which would finally destroy monotheism, since three different properties mean three different substances. Sabellius made the

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 43: Quales fuerunt Arriani et Sabelliani et multi alii qui naturalium proprias rationes theologicas communicaverunt et utrisque communes ab invicem contraxerunt. Est enim proprium naturalium quod “Sicut numero, diversorum proprietates diverse” et quod “una singularis subsistentia non nisi unum numero faciat subsistentem.” (*D Trin* I, 2, 6 prol.) Quoted from *Gisleberti Pictavensis Episcopi Expositio in Boecii Librum Primum de Trinitate* in N.M. Häring, *The Commentaries on Boethius by Gilbert of Poitiers* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1966). Henceforth, abbreviated as *D Trin*. Gilbert did not mean by this quoted sentence that Arius or Sabellius had already known a distinction of substance between subsistentia and subsistens. Yet with his own distinction, Gilbert clarified the use of the natural rules by them. The quote can be rephrased as follows: “The Arians and Sabellians take as their starting point the statement that ‘where the properties of different things differ in number, there also the substance in the sense of essence will differ’ and also, the fact that ‘one substance in the sense of essence means one substance in the sense of subject’.”

⁸⁹ L.O. Nielsen, p. 143.

⁹⁰ M.E. Williams, p. 43.

⁹¹ L.O. Nielsen, pp. 145-46.

mistake of supposing that since there is only one divine essence, there cannot be any distinction between the persons. In his thought, any different properties of different persons would bring forth different substances, which would contradict the oneness of God.

For Gilbert, the Arians and Sabellians “err because they forgot that substantia has two connotations, subsistentia and subsistens,” and because they misapplied, to theology, natural reason where “one subsistentia means one subsistens.”⁹² In the case of God, for Gilbert, one subsistens does not necessitate one subsistentia. For subsistens (*id quod*) and subsistentia (*id quo*) are “two different aspects of the object” and “in two different orders.”⁹³ *Id quod* belongs to the natural consideration; *id quo* to the theological consideration. From the viewpoint of natural consideration, there are three “quod est” when we say that the Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Ghost is God. In case of human beings, the three “quod est” of Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero, necessitate three “quod est.” However, this is not the case with divine persons. In case of God, the three “quod est” of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, are the only one “quod est,” for God is simple. Under the formality of theological consideration, we only consider the simplicity of divine essence which is not destroyed by the introduction of the three “quod est.”⁹⁴ Accordingly, Gilbert’s idea can be summarized as follows:

⁹² M.E. Williams, p. 43, 51.

⁹³ M.E. Williams, p. 64.

⁹⁴ Interestingly, Pannenberg writes that for Gilbert the unity of God can be known only by reason, while the trinity of divine persons is derived from a pure truth of faith. This is a diametrically different conclusion from historians according to whom Gilbert explains the unity of God by “theological consideration,” but the Trinity of God by “natural consideration.” Pannenberg takes Gilbert as a forerunner of scholasticism in the middle age in formulating “the normative structure of the doctrine of God to the extent that the doctrine of the unity precedes the treatment of the Trinity.” Pannenberg’s analysis of Gilbert

... The Trinity differs from creatures. We say Plato is a man, Cicero is a man, and Aristotle is a man – but our conclusion is that here we have three men. The reason for this is that in each of the above cases we predicate the same name “man,” but the thing signified or “res” is different in each case. Whereas in God, when we say the Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Ghost is God, we not only repeat the name “God” but also the thing signified; so that each of the three persons has the same numerical essence.⁹⁵

In creatures all things that are related to each other and mutually opposed to each other, in consequence of this, differ in subsistentia. Different subsistentes mean different subsistentiae. In God this is not so. The three persons have but one subsistentia that is simple. In no sense can we say that the essence of the Father is different from that of the Son. The persons differ from each other in properties, and differ adequately, but they have the same essence. The explanation of this fact is given by holding fast to the principle that God’s essence is simple.⁹⁶

For Gilbert, the doctrine of simplicity was the bottom line that cannot be encroached on and the theological consideration that cannot be infringed by the natural consideration of the three persons.

Gilbert did not accept the idea, assumed by Arians and Sabellians, that numerical distinction is not applicable to the trinitarian distinctions.⁹⁷ For Arians and Sabellians, there are no substantial properties in God, since, if any, it would destroy monotheism. Besides, there are certainly no accidental properties in God, while accidental properties may cause numerical distinction. For Arians and Sabellians, thus, numerical distinction is not applicable to God. However, Gilbert attempted to show the logical possibility of explaining numerical distinction not in terms of accidents and to deny that plural divine subsistentes necessitates plural divine subsistentiae.

on this point does not seem to be persuasive. For Pannenberg, see *Systematic Theology* vol. 1, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1991), p. 282.

⁹⁵ M.E. Williams, p. 59.

⁹⁶ M.E. Williams, p. 71.

⁹⁷ N.M. Häring, “The Case of Gilbert de la Porrée Bishop of Poitiers (1142-1154),” *Mediaeval Studies* 13 (1951), p. 25.

As Augustine and Boethius did, Gilbert stated that “the three persons differ only by relations which make Them ‘related’.”⁹⁸ For Gilbert, “the *locus rationis*, i.e. their place in the human mind, ... is not the category of substance, but that of relation.”⁹⁹ Yet, the category of relation did not seem to provide him with a way of avoiding the difficulty of the multiplication of the divine substance. For “in the created world the things that are associated by relations are already different by virtue of the properties according to which the things are interrelated.”¹⁰⁰ Gilbert’s way of avoiding the triplication of the divine substance is to describe the divine persons as *res extrinsecus affixae*.¹⁰¹ M.E. Williams gives us a clear meaning of this description as follows:

What exactly is the meaning of the phrase “*oppositione extrinsecus affixarum rerum?*” First of all, we must remember that the point of the argument is to show that the persons in God do not differ in essence. His concern is with the difference that exists between the persons. If the difference is not in essence then it must be non-essential, and must be extrinsic, ... [which] simply means that such a predicate in no way confers “*aliquid*.”¹⁰²

With a notion of “extrinsic relation,” Gilbert wants to confirm that “unlike natural persons, the [divine personal] difference cannot be due to a difference in essence, but must be solely due to the extrinsic predication of relation.” In nature, what makes natural persons different is “not these ‘extrinsic predicates’ but the essence itself,” since there

⁹⁸ Ibid., pp. 22. Häring adds his own comment here that “it was St. Augustine who had first pointed out that relation was the only category suitable to express or predicate the trinitarian persons,” and that “Boethius ... had taught that the trinitarian persons differ *sola relatione*, that They are not predicated *substantialiter*.” See p. 23.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 23.

¹⁰⁰ L.O. Nielsen, p. 151.

¹⁰¹ Gilbert states: “*theologicae personae ... extrinsecus affixarum rerum oppositione a se invicem aliae et probantur et sunt.*” See N.M. Häring, p. 22. Quoted from *D Trin I*, 5, 43.

¹⁰² M.E. Williams, p. 69.

must be “that which subsists, which actually supports accidents,” in other words, “aliquid” “already present before we start to predicate relation.” In theological persons, yet, what makes theological persons different is not “aliquid” but is “extrinsic” or “non-substantial.”¹⁰³

Finally, Gilbert meant by “the Father is God” (*Pater est Deus*) that the Father has the divine nature. For Gilbert, the predicate, God, refers to subsistentia (*qua est*), not subsistens (*quae est*). If God is interpreted as “the Father is subsistens,” it will be really tautology, which Gilbert took as unacceptable since “what is predicated is something more than the mere repetition of the subject.”¹⁰⁴ Nor did Gilbert interpret “the Father is God” to be “the Father is Divinity,” but, as described above, “the Father has divinity” or “the Father is divine.” If “the Father is Divinity” is accepted, Gilbert thought then that we have no way to explain how there can be three persons in the one God, since subsistens is identified with subsistentia, as Arians and Sabellians believed. For Gilbert, the use of nominative, Divinity, in this sentence, would imply that the same error of Arians and Sabellians is repeated because for them subsistens and subsistentia are one and identical. The application of the nominative case, *Divinitas*, might be misread into “Solus Pater est Deus” in the Arian sense. Rather, the application of the ablative case would give a right way of interpreting “Pater est Deus” as “Pater est solus Deus,” for “Deus” here refers to the “essentia qua est.”¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ M.E. Williams, pp. 68-70.

¹⁰⁴ M.E. Williams, p. 73.

¹⁰⁵ M.E. Williams, pp. 72-79. According to N.M. Häring, the issue over “nominative and ablative case” aroused when Gilbert wants to place God in the predicate, like “the Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God,” whereas he does not want God to be placed in the subject, like “God is the Father, God is the Son, God is the Holy Spirit.” For Gilbert, in the Trinity, “the sentence *pater est deus (divinitate)*

Gilbert's distinction between what makes God to be Father and what makes the Father to be God, between *id quod* and *id quo*, or Gilbert's denial of using the nominative case in such sentences as *Pater est deus*, aroused a tumult of condemnation that Gilbert taught a tritheism or that he denied the divine simplicity to such an extent that the Trinity was deformed into the quarterinity.

Gilbert was charged with tritheism at the Council of Rheims (1148).¹⁰⁶ The

rightly means that the Father is God by virtue of the divinity conceived, as it were, as a form corresponding to *humanitas*. But the sentence *deus est pater* is just as illogical as the statement *homo est Socrates*." See "A Treatise on the Trinity by Gilbert of Poitiers," *Recherches de Theologie Ancienne et Médiévale* 29 (1972), p. 18, 21.

¹⁰⁶ There seems no complete agreement on whether Gilbert was really condemned at the Council of Rheims (1148). Among scholars of the 12th century, Geoffrey of Auxerre presents the case against Gilbert, whereas Otto of Freising and John of Salisbury are more in his favor. St. Bernard was a chief opponent of Gilbert, and formulated a confession of faith in the Trinity as a reply to the errors of which Gilbert was accused. M.E. Williams, p. 81. According to St. Bernard and Geoffrey of Auxerre, for example, Gilbert's condemnation was pronounced at the Council, whereas neither Otto of Freising nor John of Salisbury mentioned any condemnation. L.O. Nielsen, *Theology and Philosophy in the Twelfth Century*, p. 33. L.O. Nielsen's estimation of historical sources for Gilbert's trial is worthy of being noted: "Our sources for the proceeding of Gilbert's trial derive mainly from three persons with widely differing standpoints. One of these is Geoffrey of Auxerre, Bernard's secretary, who was entirely committed to Bernard's cause. He wrote three documents on the trial, but his testimony must be accepted with some reservation, as his commitment and incredibly blinkered view do no justice whatever to Gilbert, for whom he felt deep revulsion. The second is Otto of Freising, whose familiarity with the case, unlike Geoffrey's, was not first-hand; he appears, however, to have had the *Curia* as his source, as it is highly probable that he passed through Rome on his return from the Second Crusade in A.D. 1149. While Otto of Freising's sympathy is entirely on Gilbert's side, although he does not for that reason impute any ignoble motives to Bernard, third source, John of Salisbury, appears more neutral, and seems to make every effort to sift the evidence." Chronologically, the source may be listed as follows. A.D. 1152-53: Geoffrey's *Scriptura*, of which the confession of faith alone derives from the Council of Reims; A.D. 1156-58: Otto of Freising's *Gesta* I, 49(48) – 63 (62); A.D. 1157-62: Geoffrey's *Libellus*; after 1164: John of Salisbury's *Historia Pontificalis*; after A.D. 1190: Geoffrey's *Epistola ad Albinum*." See L.O. Nielsen, *Theology and Philosophy in the Twelfth Century*, pp. 30-31. But this disagreement does not imply that there was no condemnation at all, but that "the Council had been concluded when Gilbert's case was resumed, and that it was dealt with at a consistory." Nielsen argues that even Geoffrey of Auxerre goes with Otto and John in stating the charges were made not in the council, but in the consistory. However, Häring turns our attention to the observation that the consistory was taken by Geoffrey as having the authority of the council. See L.O. Nielsen, p. 33; N.M. Häring, "Council and Consistory of Rheims (1148)," *Mediaeval Studies* 28 (1966), n. 8, p. 50. Beside, in his earlier article, Häring confirms that Geoffrey reported Pope's condemnation of the errors charged against Gilbert. See N.M. Häring, "The Case of Gilbert de la Porrée Bishop of Poitiers (1142-1154)," *Mediaeval Studies* 13 (1951), p. 1. Among modern scholars, one group argues that as we read in Marvin L. Colker's article, Gilbert's commentary on Boethius' tractate "brought Gilbert into trouble and was a center of contention at the Council." See Marvin L. Colker, "The Trial of Gilbert of Poitiers, 1148: A Previously Unknown Record," *Mediaeval Studies* 27 (1965), p. 165. This view is supported by F. Copleston. See Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, vol. 2, *Mediaeval Philosophy: Augustine to Scotus* (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1950), pp. 151-52. The other group, including R.L. Poole,

charges that Gilbert faced at Rheims¹⁰⁷ were as follows. First, in regard to “God” and “Divinity,” Gilbert taught that the divine nature that is said to be divinity is not God, but the form by means of which God is. This is the same manner in which humanity is not a human being, but the form by means of which a human being is.¹⁰⁸ Secondly, Gilbert denied the use of the divine persons as predicates. He stated: “When the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost are said to be one, they are understood to be [so] only by means of one divinity. [Yet] this should not be reversed in such a way that one God, or one substance, or one thing might be said to be the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.”¹⁰⁹ Thirdly, Gilbert distinguished the properties of the persons from the persons themselves, and from the essence. He stated: “The three persons could be three by means of three unities and distinct by three properties, which themselves are not persons, but are three

N.M. Häring, O.L. Nielsen, and David Knowles, argues, however, that it appears “hardly likely” that the Pope Eugenius III condemned Gilbert’s teaching as heretical. See L.O. Nielsen, pp. 37-38; N.M. Häring, “Notes on the Council and the Consistory of Rheims (1148), pp. 46-47; R.L. Poole, *Illustrations of the History of Medieval Thought and Learning* (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1920), p. 158; David Knowles, *The Evolution of Medieval Thought* (London and New York: Longman, 1988 2nd edition), p. 124.

¹⁰⁷ These are the four charges made at the consistory after the council was dismissed. These charges are quoted from L.O. Nielsen who reformulated them from N.M. Häring’s *Die Glaubensbekenntnis der Reimser Konsistoriums 1148*. Nielsen implies that the four charges are seen in Geoffrey of Auxerre. See L.O. Nielsen, pp. 33-34. Original texts are given in the following footnotes with my translation in the text. According to N.M. Häring, these three charges concerning the Trinity are directly confirmed by Otto of Freising. See N.M. Häring, “A Treatise on the Trinity by Gilbert of Poitiers,” p. 18. Cf. n. 38, p. 17 of this dissertation.

¹⁰⁸ “Quod divina natura, que divinitas dicitur, Deus non sit, sed forma, qua Deus est, quemadmodum humanitas homo non est, sed forma, qua est homo.”

¹⁰⁹ “Quod cum Pater et Filius et Spiritus Sanctus unum esse dicuntur, nonnisi una divinitae esse intelligantur, nec converti possit, ut Deus unus vel una substantia vel unum aliquid Pater et Filius et Spiritus Sanctus esse dicatur.”

eternal things and different in number from each other and from divine substance.”¹¹⁰

Finally, Gilbert asserted that divine nature might not be incarnated.¹¹¹

Geoffrey of Auxerre criticized Gilbert’s teaching in the three following respects. First, Gilbert made “a distinction of some sort between God and divinity,” which “is verified in reality,” and made God depend on the form of divinity for his being.¹¹² Secondly, Gilbert explained that whereas “in the Trinity the ‘quo est’ is one,” “the ‘quod est’ is three.” This meant that the same form or nature is found in “three singular numerable things, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.” Gilbert’s explanation seemed absurd to Geoffrey because Gilbert seemed to make the unity of form of three things in cause only, as three branches that have a single root, or three bodies that have one head. In Geoffrey’s thought, thus, Gilbert wrongly denied that “there is one ‘aliquid’ which is the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost,” or that we could say “Unus Deus est Pater et Filius et Spiritus Sanctus.” Gilbert misinterpreted “Ego et Pater unum sumus,” as “Ego et Pater uno sumus.”¹¹³ Thirdly, Gilbert made a distinction between the properties and the persons, claiming that the properties are eternal things differing from each other and from

¹¹⁰ “Quod tres persone tribus unitatibus sint tria et distincte proprietatibus tribus, que non sunt ipse persone, sed sunt tres res eterne et ab invicem et a divina substantia numero differentes.”

¹¹¹ “Quod divina natura non sit incarnata.”

¹¹² Some of proof-texts for Geoffrey’s interpretation of Gilbert are like this. “Initium malorum hoc erat. Forma ponebatur in Deo, qua Deus esset, et quae non esset Deus; ut humanitas hominis forma est, non quae sit, sed qua sit homo.” “Pater veritas, id est verus: item Filius veritas, id est verus: Spiritus Sanctus, id est verus; et collectim Pater, Filius et Spiritus Sanctus non tres veritates, sed sunt una singulariter et simpliciter veritas, id est unus verus.” “Qui homo est, ut Plato vel Cicero vel Trypho, vel qui Deus est ut Pater, vel Filius, vel Spiritus Sanctus; quod dicitur illorum quilibet esse homo, et istorum quilibet esse Deus, refertur ad substantiam, non quae est, sed qua est.” See M.E. Williams, pp. 82-90.

¹¹³ Some of Geoffrey’s proof-texts for his reading of Gilbert are: “Una est essentia, sed qua sunt, non quae sunt.” “Neque enim est unum aliquid, quod est Pater sit, et Filius et Spiritus Sanctus. ‘Alioquin et Filius’ (Gilbertus) inquit ‘Pater esset, et Pater Filius, et Spiritus eorum uterque.’” M.E. Williams, pp. 92-97.

the divine essence in number. Consequently, Gilbert argued for a quarternity, not a trinity, since he claimed that “the divine essence is one unity, and each of the persons has its own unity, four eternal unities in all.”¹¹⁴

In the background of this criticism against Gilbert, St. Bernard submitted a profession of faith to the consistory that was held to deal with Gilbert after the council. According to N.M. Häring, “the profession of faith was conceived as an answer to the four *capitula*.”¹¹⁵ The four *capitula* of “the Profession of Faith” are as follows.¹¹⁶

1. We believe and confess that God is the simple nature of divinity, and that it cannot be denied in any Catholic sense that God is divinity, and divinity is God. Moreover, if it is said that God is wise by wisdom, great by magnitude, eternal by eternity, one by oneness, God by divinity, and other such things, we believe that He is wise only by that wisdom which is God Himself; that He is great only by that magnitude which is God Himself; that He is eternal only by that eternity which is God Himself; that He is one only by the oneness which is God Himself; that He is God only by that divinity which He is Himself; that is, that He is wise, great, eternal, one God of Himself.¹¹⁷
2. When we speak of three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we confess that they are one God, one divine substance. And contrariwise, when we speak of

¹¹⁴ One of Geoffrey’s proof-texts is: “Quoniam paternitas, et filiatio et connexio diversa sunt, oportet unitates quoque illis adsunt, a se invicem esse diversas. Et quia, quamvis substantiae substantia alia, vel accidens adsit, accidenti tamen non potest adesse substantia, unitates quae adsunt paternitati, et filiationi, et connexioni nequaquam poterunt esse substantiae ... Propterea unitates, quae proprietatibus adsunt, substantias esse non posse, quod accidenti non potest adesse substantia.” M.E. Williams, pp. 97-102.

¹¹⁵ N.M. Häring, “Council and Consistory of Rheims (1148),” p. 50. The word *capitula* was used by Geoffrey of Auxerre to designate the charges as well as the profession of faith. See L.O. Nielsen, n. 111, p. 33.

¹¹⁶ English translation comes from Henry Denzinger’s *The Sources of Catholic Dogma*, translated by Roy J. Deferrari (St. Louis, MO: B. Herder Book Co., 1957), pp. 152-53. For Latin text, see Henry Denzinger’s *Enchiridion Symbolorum* (Barcinone: Herder, 1955), pp. 181-82.

¹¹⁷ “Credimus et confitemur simplicem naturam divinitatis esse Deum, nec aliquo sensu catholico posse negari, quin divinitas sit Deus et Deus divinitas. Si vero dicitur: Deum sapientia sapientem, magnitudine magnum, aeternitate aeternum, unitate unum, divinitate Deum esse, et alia huiusmodi: credimus nonnisi ea sapientia, quae est ipse Deus, sapientem esse; nonnisi ea magnitudine, quae est ipse Deus, magnum esse; nonnisi ea aeternitate, quae est ipse Deus, aeternum esse; nonnisi ea unitate, quae est ipse Deus, unum esse; nonnisi ea divinitate, quae est ipse Deus, unum esse; nonnisi ea divinitate Deum, quae est ipse: id est, seipso sapientem, magnum, aeternum, unum Deum.” *Enchiridion Symbolorum* (1955), no. 389, pp. 181-82.

one God, one divine substance, we confess that the one God himself, the one divine substance are three persons.¹¹⁸

3. We believe (and we confess) that only God the Father and Son and Holy Spirit are eternal, and not by any means other things, whether they be called relations or peculiarities or singularities or onenesses, and that other such things belong to God, which are from eternity, which are not God.¹¹⁹
4. We believe (and confess) that divinity itself, whether you call it divine substance or nature, is incarnate only in the Son.¹²⁰

The gist of those criticisms of Gilbert is basically summarized as the criticism against Gilbert's distinction in God between *id quod* and *id quo*. For opponents of Gilbert, including St. Bernard, God is the simple nature of divinity, and vice versa. Also, the three divine persons are God, and vice versa. For them, *id quod* and *id quo* in God are one and identical, not distinct.

The charges made against Gilbert thus can be merged into the one point that Gilbert impedes the divine simplicity in his teaching of the Trinity. David Knowles provides a description of the conflict between Gilbert and St. Bernard as follows:

His [Gilbert's] conflict with St. Bernard arose from an application of his metaphysical doctrines to the Trinity. While allowing, with the constant tradition of the Fathers and the Church, that God was an entirely 'simple' Being, he nevertheless held that the three persons were one God only by reason of the 'form' of divinity common to all, while on the other hand, just as 'humanity' is not the individual man, though it constitutes him as such, so the divine essence, though constituting each person God, is not itself God. It was in opposition to this that Bernard made his celebrated declaration: 'Let it be written with iron upon

¹¹⁸ "Cum de tribus personis loquimur, Patre, Filio et Spiritu Sancto, ipsas unum Deum, unam divinam substantiam esse fatemur. Et e converso cum de uno Deo, una divina substantia loquimur, ipsum unum Deum, unam divinam substantiam esse tres personas confitemur." *Enchiridion Symbolorum* (1955), no. 390, p. 182.

¹¹⁹ "Credimus (et confitemur) solum Deum Patrem et Filium et Spiritum Sanctum aeternum esse, nec aliquas omnino res, sive relationes, sive proprietates, sive singularitates vel unitates dicantur, et huiusmodi alia, adesse Deo, quae sint ab aeterno, quae non sint Deus." *Enchiridion Symbolorum* (1955), no. 391, p. 182.

¹²⁰ "Credimus (et confitemur) ipsam divinitatem, sive substantiam divinam sive naturam dicas, incarnatam esse, sed in Filio." *Enchiridion Symbolorum* (1955), no. 392, p. 182.

adamant, let it be carved upon flint, that the divine essence, form, nature, goodness, wisdom, virtue and power are each truly God.’¹²¹

For Knowles, Gilbert’s incident gave an “example of uncertainty of method in the dialectical explanation of theological truth.” He states that Gilbert might have failed “to distinguish between logic and metaphysics, and also between physical and transcendental reality.”¹²² Knowles rightly states that St. Bernard’s concern about Gilbert was focused on divine simplicity.

Truly, it is not unanimously acknowledged that Gilbert made a real distinction in God between *id quod* and *id quo*.¹²³ However, to the eyes of Gilbert’s opponents, including St. Bernard, Gilbert taught that compromises the divine simplicity by making a real, ontological distinction between divine nature and divine persons, between divine personal properties and divine persons, and between divine personal properties and divine nature.

¹²¹ David Knowles, *The Evolution of Medieval Thought* (London and New York: Longman, second edition 1988), p. 122.

¹²² *Ibid.*, p. 123.

¹²³ For example, Nielsen emphasizes that we must not believe that Gilbert’s distinction between *id quod* and *id quo*, “precisely when speaking here of essence as one, is confirmed as real, since Gilbert did not believe that “God can be known in the same way as creatures can be perceived, because there is no form in Him capable of fixation by human reason.” Rather, he separated “the question of God’s ontological constitution from the question of man’s talking of God.” Nielsen concludes: “Gilbert turned his attention not so much to the actual nature of the distinction between nature and person as to its correct application, in order to prevent the concepts of God’s unity and God’s trinity being played off one against the other, for the purpose of confirming either His unity alone or His Trinity alone.” See L.O. Nielsen, p. 142, 158, 159, and 163. M.E. Williams too denies the validity of the presumption that Gilbert’s distinction is grounded in reality. “The question of real distinction or not” was not considered by Gilbert. His main concern was “to show how there can be three persons in one God, and to illustrate how nature and person are not identical in every respect.” For this purpose, Gilbert distinguished *id quod* belonging to natural consideration from *id quo* belonging to theological consideration. For Gilbert, *Id quod* explains why there are three in God from the natural consideration, while *id quo* which is simple from the theological consideration shows why the oneness of God is not destroyed by the three *quod est*. In other words, Gilbert’s answer to the question about how to reconcile the two statements “God is one” and “God is three” was that “Unity is predicated substantially, and the Personal Properties relatively.” And Gilbert explained “the unity, the substantial predication, by ‘theology,’ and the trinity or relative predication by ‘natural’ reasons.” In Williams’ conclusion, Gilbert’s adversaries’ presumption is unacceptable that Gilbert verified the distinctions in reality. See M.E. Williams, p. 127, 129.

In sum, what may be noted from studying the rejection of Gilbert's alleged tritheism is that there should not be any ontological or real distinction whatever in God.

2.5. Contra Joachim of Fiore: The Council of Lateran IV (1215)

Joachim of Fiore's case is one of the most representative examples that the church has officially condemned as tritheist in the history of church councils.¹²⁴ Joachim of Fiore's doctrine of the Trinity gives us a clue about how the unity of the Trinity needs to be apprehended in order to avoid being accused of tritheism. For Joachim states that the three divine persons are one in the same manner that the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and Levi are called one people, which would certainly call into question the doctrine of divine simplicity.

Opposing Arianism, Sabellianism and Peter Lombard's view, Joachim formulated his own theory of the Trinity.¹²⁵ If any theory is to be orthodox, in Joachim's thought, it should confess that "God is one God without confusion of persons and three persons without division of substance."¹²⁶ Joachim understood the unity of the Trinity to reside in the simple divine nature, and did not think that the distinctions among the three persons contradicts this simple nature.¹²⁷ For Joachim, it is crucial to maintain the unity of the

¹²⁴ Though Joachim is generally acknowledged as condemned as a tritheist, it is interesting to note that "none of Joachim's extant works has ever been formally condemned by the Church," and rather, appears orthodox. See M.W. Bloomfield, "Joachim of Fiore: A Critical Survey of His Canon, Teachings, Sources, Biography and Influence," *Traditio* 13 (1957), p. 257.

¹²⁵ Delno C. West and Sandra Zimdars-Swartz, *Joachim of Fiore: a Study in Spiritual Perception and History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), pp. 55-56.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

Trinity because in his thought Arianism, Sabellianism, and Peter Lombard threatened the unity of the Trinity.

Affirming the ineffable unity of the Trinity, Joachim argued that the simple substance of God so equally applies to the Father, Son, and Spirit that such works as the Incarnation and sending of the Holy Spirit, and such qualities as wisdom, love, and goodness, are equally shared by the three persons. Despite this sharing of the three persons through their unity, for Joachim, the three persons are distinct because of their characteristic properties. “For example, it is the property (*proprium*) of the Father to be a father, that of the Son to be a son, and that of the Spirit to be a spirit. Temporality is a property of the Son and of the Holy Spirit as these persons are sent into the world, the Son in human flesh, the Spirit in the forms of a dove and tongues of fire.”¹²⁸ In brief, Joachim’s point in his idea of the works or qualities shared by the three persons is that the dynamism represented by the attributes unbegotten, begotten, and proceeding, that is to say, the properties of paternity, sonship, and spiration, do not sunder the one divine substance, and that “the works of the Incarnation and of the sending of the Holy Spirit are works of the whole Trinity.”¹²⁹

With this understanding of the unity of the Trinity, Joachim rejected Arianism, Sabellianism, and Peter Lombard’s view as heresies. The general mistake of heretics, he asserts, is that “they do not understand that one can only contemplate heavenly things through lesser, humbler ones.” Employing the image of a tree, Joachim tried to illustrate the errors of those heretics. First, the error of Arius is that “the divine substance may be

¹²⁸ Ibid., p. 54.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

divided into three, as the olive, myrtle, and palm are all trees but are of three different natures.” The Arians defined the Trinity as “three persons, each distinct in essence and majesty.” Secondly, the error of the Sabellians is that they “would liken the Trinity to three olive trees, the same in nature but having three distinct bodies.” For “God is,” in their thought, “one (*unus*) and is Father, Son and Holy Spirit by his own wish (*pro velle suo*).” Thirdly, the error of Peter Lombard is that he “would liken the Trinity to one tree, of which the root is the divine substance and the branches are the three persons.” Joachim asserted that Peter Lombard’s teaching would “introduce a quaternity rather than the Trinity, making the divine substance a ‘fourth something’ (*quartum aliquid*) separable from the three persons.”¹³⁰

Despite his persistent affirmation of the unity of the Trinity against those three opposing views, Joachim was condemned as tritheist in the Council of Lateran IV (1215). According to M. W. Bloomfield, Joachim’s teaching of the Trinity that is observed in his commentary on Psalm, *Psalterium decem chordarum*, “seems perfectly orthodox and do not correspond to the statement of his views as expressed in the articles of the Lateran Council.”¹³¹ Bloomfield’s solution to this is that Joachim’s lost tractate, *De essentia seu unitate Trinitatis* which is his early work if not the first one, probably contained the

¹³⁰ Ibid., p. 55. The summary of Joachim’s criticism against Lombard by Delno C. West and Sandra Zimdars-Swartz shows no difference with Herbert Grundmann’s. According to the latter, Joachim placed Peter Lombard as a third beside Sabellius and Arius: “abolita primo impietate Sabellii, qui personas negavit, secundo pravitate Arrii, qui unitatem scidit, tertio blasphemia Petri, qui unitatem a trinitate dividens quaternitatem inducit.” For Joachim, Lombard’s idea that the common substance or nature with no personal property of each person would lead to a quaternity rather than the Trinity: “O quam perverse modis omnibus emendavit utrumque, qui dixit unam substantiam esse quandam summam rem communem tribus personis ... tamquam si non esset Deus trinitas, sed quaternitas.” See H. Grundmann, *Neue Forschungen über Joachim von Fiore* (Marburg: Simons Verlag, 1950), p. 73.

¹³¹ Morton W. Bloomfield., p. 263. *Psalterium decem chordarum* with *Concordia novi et veteris Testamenti* and *Expositio in Apocalypsim* is one of Joachim’s basic works that are approved as authentic by scholarly authorities. Ibid., p. 251.

problematic doctrine condemned by the council.¹³² Our concern here is limited to the attempt to figure out what was condemned by the council through analyzing two from among the seventy constitutions issued by the council.¹³³

The two constitutions related to the doctrine of the Trinity were designed to defend Peter Lombard from Joachim's attacks. The second constitution of the Lateran Council IV begins by stating that "we therefore condemn and reprove that small book or treatise which abbot Joachim published against master Peter Lombard concerning the unity or essence of the Trinity, in which he calls Peter Lombard a heretic and a madman."¹³⁴ More concretely, Joachim charged Peter Lombard with Sabellianism and Arianism.¹³⁵ For, in Joachim's thought, Lombard over-emphasized the unity of God at the expense of His threeness. Too much emphasis on the one supreme reality apart from the three divine persons would lead to dilute the distinction between them.¹³⁶

In Joachim's thought, there does not exist any reality that is the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, no matter what it may be – neither an essence nor a substance

¹³² Ibid., p. 263.

¹³³ The two related constitutions are the first two of all those: (1) *De fide catholica*, (2) *De errore abbatis Ioachim*. The whole texts of the seventy constitutions and their English translation are accessible in Norman P. Tanner, ed., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* vol. I (London and Washington DC: Sheed & Ward and Georgetown University Press, 1990), pp. 230-271.

¹³⁴ Constitution 2 *De errore abbatis Ioachim* in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, p. 231: "Damnamus ergo et reprobamus libellum sive tractatum, quem abbas Ioachim edidit contra magistrum Petrum Lombardum de unitate seu essentia Trinitatis, appellans ipsum haeticum et insanum, ..." Yet Joachim's polemic against Peter Lombard had not been spread any more since its condemnation by the Lateran Council. See H. Grundmann, p. 74.

¹³⁵ M.W. Bloomfield, pp. 263-64.

¹³⁶ The ground of Joachim's charge was that Lombard said in his *Sentences*, "for there is a certain supreme reality which is the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and it neither begets nor is begotten nor does it proceed." See Constitution 2 *De errore abbatis Ioachim* in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, p. 231: "Quoniam quaedam summa res est Pater et Filius et Spiritus sanctus, et illa non est generans neque genia nec procedens."

nor a nature. Certainly, he conceded that the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are one essence, one substance, and one nature. But the essence, the substance, or the nature that the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit is, does not exist as a reality. Otherwise, the doctrine of the Trinity would be reduced to that of the Quarterntity, which was what Joachim feared.¹³⁷

Therefore, Joachim tried to explain the unity of God in such a way that he did not need to appeal to any reality of essence apart from the three persons. Joachim's idea was as follows:

He (i.e., Joachim) professes, however, that such a unity is not true and proper but rather collective and analogous, in the way that many persons are said to be one people and many faithful one church, according to that saying: *Of the multitude of believers there was one heart and one mind,*¹³⁸ and *Whoever adheres to God is one spirit*¹³⁹ with him; again *He who plants and he who waters are one,*¹⁴⁰ and all of us *are one body in Christ*¹⁴¹; and again in the book of Kings, *My people and your people are one.*¹⁴²

¹³⁷ Constituion 2 *De errore abbatis Ioachim in Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, p. 231: "unde asserit [=Joachim], quod ille non tam Trinitatem quam quaternitatem adstruebat in Deo, videlicet tres personas et illam communem essentiam quasi quartam, manifeste protestans, quod nulla res est quae sit Pater et Filius et Spiritus sanctus, nec est essentia nec substantia nec natura, quamvis concedat quod Pater et Filius et Spiritus sanctus sunt una essentia, una substantia, unaque natura."

¹³⁸ Ac 4, 32

¹³⁹ I Cor 6, 17

¹⁴⁰ I Cor 3, 8

¹⁴¹ Rm. 12, 5

¹⁴² 4 Kg. 22, 5. Constituion 2 *De errore abbatis Ioachim in Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, p. 231: "verum unitatem huiusmodi non veram et propriam, sed quasi collectivam et similitudinariam esse fatetur, quemadmodum dicuntur multi homines unus populus, et multi fideles una ecclesia, iuxta illud: *Multitudinis credentium erat cor unum et anima una*, et *Qui adhaeret Deo unus spiritus est cum illo*; item *Qui plantat et qui rigat unus sunt*, et omnes *unum corpus sumus in Christo*; rursus in libro Regum: *Populus meus et populus tuus unum sunt.*"

Joachim's idea to confirm the unity of the triune God without presupposing any reality of essence apart from the three divine persons is to take the divine unity not as true and substantial, but as collective and analogous.

Yet Joachim's idea raised the concern that it revealed that he was a tritheist.¹⁴³ The constitution of the Lateran Council IV corroborated its judgment of Joachim's tritheism by adding an example of his use of a quote from the Bible. Joachim employed Jn. 17:22, 23 and Jn. 5:7, 8 to show the unity between the Father and the Son is like the unity that we see among the things on earth. First, Joachim argued that just as the unity of the faithful is "not one in the sense of a single reality which is common to all," so the unity of the three persons are not. The three persons are one only in the same sense as the sense that "they [i.e., the faithful] form one church through the unity of the catholic faith, and finally one kingdom through a union of indissoluble charity."¹⁴⁴ Secondly, he added that the three heavenly witnesses, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, are one in the sense that the three earthly witnesses, the Spirit, the water, and the blood, are one.¹⁴⁵ In

¹⁴³ Interestingly, H. Grundmann connects Joachim's idea of the collective or analogous unity of the divine persons with the ancient different approaches between Greek and Latin traditions. According to Grundmann, Joachim here followed the Greek tradition rather than the Latin tradition since Augustine. Joachim is quoted as saying: "Si non prius intelligimus esse tres, quomodo tres ipsos simul possumus intelligere unum?" See H. Grundmann, p. 76. The same point was stated in Paul Fournier, *Études sur Joachim de Flore et ses Doctrines* (Paris: Librairie Alphonse Picard & Fils, 1909), pp. 14-16.

¹⁴⁴ Constituion 2 *De errore abbatis Ioachim* in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, p. 231: "Ad hanc autem sententiam adstruendam, illud potissimum verbum inducit, quod Christus de fidelibus inquit in evangelio: Volo, Pater, *ut sint unum* in nobis, *sicut et nos unus sumus, ut sint consummati in unum*. Non enim, ut ait, fideles Christi sunt unum, id est una quaedam res quae communis sit omnibus, hic modo sunt unum, id est una ecclesia propter catholicae fidei unitatem et tandem unum regnum propter unionem indissolubilis caritatis."

¹⁴⁵ Constituion 2 *De errore abbatis Ioachim* in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, pp. 231-232: "Quemadmodum in canonica Ioannis epistola legitur: *Quia tres sunt, qui testimonium dant in coelo, Pater et Verbum et Spiritus sanctus, et hi tres unum sunt*; statimque subiungit: *Et tres sunt, qui testimonium dant in terra, spiritus, aqua et sanguis, et tres unum sunt, sicut in codicibus quibusdam invenitur.*"

his conclusion, the three heavenly witnesses are one in the true and proper sense, but in the collective and analogous, like the three earthly witnesses are.

Against Joachim's attack on Peter Lombard, the Lateran Council defended Lombard, professing that it is a sacred and universal doctrine to believe that "there exists a certain supreme reality, incomprehensible and ineffable, which truly is the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, the three persons together and each one of them separately."¹⁴⁶ The council rejected Joachim's argument that to acknowledge such a reality apart from personhood would lead to a quarternity rather than the Trinity. The constitution states as follows:

Therefore in God there is only a Trinity, not a quarternity, since each of the three persons is that reality – that is to say substance, essence or divine nature – which alone is the principle of all things, besides which no other principle can be found. This reality neither begets nor is begotten nor proceeds; the Father begets, the Son is begotten and the Holy Spirit proceeds. Thus there is a distinction of persons but a unity of nature. Although therefore the Father is one person, the Son another person and the Holy Spirit another person, they are not different realities, but rather that which is the Father is the Son and the Holy Spirit, altogether the same; thus according to the orthodox and catholic faith they are believed to be consubstantial.¹⁴⁷

The gist of the constitution is that Joachim did not understand the distinction between substance and person in God. The substantial oneness and the personal threeness cannot

¹⁴⁶ Constituion 2 *De errore abbatis Ioachim* in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, p. 232: "Nos autem, sacro et universali concilio approbante, credimus et confitemur cum Petro, quod una quaedam summa res est, incomprehensibilis quidem et ineffabilis, quae veraciter est Pater et Filius et Spiritus sanctus, tres simul personae ac sigillatim quaelibet earundem, ..."

¹⁴⁷ Constituion 2 *De errore abbatis Ioachim* in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, p. 232: "et ideo in Deo Trinitas est solummodo non quaternitas, quia quaelibet trium personarum est illa res, videlicet substantia, essentia sive natura divina, quae sola est universorum principium, praeter quod aliud inveniri non potest, et illa res non est generans neque genita nec procedens, sed est Pater qui generat, Filius qui gignitur et Spiritus sanctus qui procedit, ut distinctiones sint in personis et unitas in natura. Licet igitur alius sit Pater, alius Filius, alius Spiritus sanctus, non tamen aliud, sed id quod est Pater, est Filius et Spiritus sanctus, idem omnino, ut secundum orthodoxam et catholicam fidem consubstantiales esse credantur."

be added into four different realities, for the two notions of substance and person are different in category. This is exactly what Thomas Aquinas said:

Abbot Joachim fell into error when he maintained that, as we say ‘God begot God,’ we can say as well, ‘Essence begot essence’; his thought was that because of the divine simplicity, God is not anything other than the divine essence. But he was mistaken, because ... for the true meaning of language we need to take into account not merely what is signified but also the mode of signifying. Now even though as to the reality signified God and godhead are the same, the two words do not have the same mode of signifying.¹⁴⁸

In brief, Joachim’s error was that he did not follow the theological grammar that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are one in terms of substance, and three in terms of person. Though they are the same reality, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are distinct.

So the constitution interpreted Jesus’ prayer, “they may be one in us just as we are one,” in a different way than Joachim did. According to the constitution, Joachim interpreted this prayer as meaning: “Christ’s faithful are not one in the sense of a single reality which is common to all. They are one only in this sense, that they form one church through the unity of the catholic faith, and finally one kingdom through a union of indissoluble charity.” But in the constitution’s interpretation, the word “one” here means “for the faithful a union of love in grace,” but “for the divine persons a unity of identity in nature.” In short, Joachim mistakenly interpreted the analogical relation between creator and creature as the identical reality.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁸ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia. 39, 5, from Blackfriars’ edition (1976). “Dicendum quod circa hoc erravit Abbas Joachim, asserens quod sicut dicitur, ‘Deus genuit Deum,’ ita potest dici quod essentia genuit essentiam, considerans quod propter divinam simplicitatem non est aliud Deus quam divina essentia. Sed in hoc deceptus fuit, quia ad veritatem locutionum non solum oportet considerare res significatas sed etiam modum significandi, ut dictum est. Licet autem secundum rem sit idem Deus quod deitas, non tamen est idem modus significandi utrobique.” Cf. Herbert Grundmann, *Neue Forschungen über Joachim von Fiore*, p. 68, and M.W. Bloomfield, p. 256.

¹⁴⁹ Constituion 2 *De errore abbatis Joachim* in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, p. 231, 232: “Cum ergo Veritas pro fidelibus suis ad Patrem orat: volo, inquires, ut ipsi *sint unum in nobis, sicut et nos*

Finally, the constitution declared that whoever defends or approves Joachim's doctrine of the Trinity is a heretic.¹⁵⁰ The pivot of the constitution's charge against Joachim is the doctrine of divine simplicity.¹⁵¹ According to the constitution, the doctrine of divine simplicity teaches that the one supreme reality is the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, and implies that the substantial oneness and the personal threeness cannot be added into four different realities to make a Quarternity. For, in God who is simple, the two notions of substance and person are different in category. Joachim's worry about a Quarternity was groundless. Joachim vitiated the doctrine of divine simplicity, when he denied taking the unity of the triune God as a true and proper reality, for fear that otherwise it should end in a Quarternity. Such a view of Joachim's that the unity of the three Persons are not true and proper but collective and analogous, therefore, was not taken as acceptable, for it straightforwardly does harm to the divine simplicity.

unum sumus, hoc nomen, *unum*, pro fidelibus quidem accipitur, ut intelligatur unio caritatis in gratia, pro personis vero divinis, ut attendatur identitatis in natura unitas, quemadmodum Veritas alibi ait: *Estote perfecti sicut et Pater verster coelestis perfectus est*, ac si diceret manifestius: *Estote perfecti* perfectione gratiae, *sicut Pater veter coelestis perfectus est* perfectione naturae, utrage videlicet suo modo, quia inter creatorem et creaturam non potest tanta similitudo notari, quin inter eos maior sit dissimilitudo notanda." To clarify this error of Joachim's, the council took an example from the Bible: "You must be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect." The constitution emphasized that this sentence ought to be read as saying that "You must be perfect in the perfection of grace, just as your Father is perfect in the perfection that is his by nature, each in his own way." Joachim made a mistake to fail to see the difference between "in the perfection of grace" and "in the perfection that is his by nature."

¹⁵⁰ Constituion 2 *De errore abbatis Ioachim* in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, p. 232: "Si quis igitur sententiam sive doctrinam praefati Ioachim in hac parte defendere vel approbare praesumpserit, tamquam haereticus ab omnibus confutetur."

¹⁵¹ The profession of the council on the Trinity clearly shows its emphasis on the divine simplicity. See Constitution 1 *De fide catholica* in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, p. 230: "Firmiter credimus et simpliciter confitemur, quod unus solus est verus Deus, aeternus et immensus, omnipotens, incommutabilis, incomprehensibilis et ineffabilis, Pater et Filius et Spiritus sanctus, tres quidem personae sed una essentia, substantia seu natura simplex omnino. ... Haec sancta Trinitas secundum communem essentiam individua et secundum personales proprietates discreta ..."

In conclusion, we here find an important clue to determine tritheism. That clue is that the unity of the Trinity is true and proper, not collective or analogous; otherwise, it would end in a Quarternity.¹⁵²

2.6. Summary

Chapter Two intended to clarify the theological position of the councils of the church when they condemned various tritheist positions. As has been observed, there may be controversy over whether the condemned views by the council or orthodox theologians at that time truly reflected the teachings of those who were condemned. It would be far beyond the scope of the dissertation to deal with that matter. The focus of this chapter is only on the task of clarifying what the councils regarded as theological positions of those condemned and in what aspects the councils condemned them. What the dissertation aims at in this chapter is to get the historical understanding of tritheism, in order to examine it and contribute to determining what tritheism is, which will be done in the following chapter. It should be noted that some elements historically charged with tritheism may be theologically innocent and not indicative of a tritheist position, when they are considered in the context of different theological traditions.

¹⁵² E. Jordan, "Joachim de Flore," *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique* vol. 8, col. 1432: "En somme il [=Joachim] compromettait l'unité divine. Il aboutissait à une espèce de trithéisme." Also see Paul Fournier, *Études sur Joachim de Flore et ses Doctrines*, p. 16: "Visiblement il est l'écho de ceux des théologiens de son temps qui disent: *Unitas est collectio trium personarum*. Ainsi il a sacrifié à l'idée de pluralité le dogme fondamental de l'unité divine; sans s'en apercevoir, il est tombé dans le trithéisme." Fournier states that Joachim's effort to avoid the error of Sabellianism led him to a tritheism: "En réalité, pour éviter le prétendu sabellianisme dont le fantôme hantait ses rêves, Joachim se jeta dans le trithéisme, tout au moins aussi dangereux pour l'enseignement chrétien, si bien que son traité contre Lombard mérita d'être solennellement condamné par Innocent III au quatrième concile de Latran, treize ans après la mort de l'abbé de Flore." *Ibid.*, p. 34. The same idea is found in R. Seeberg's *Text-Book of the History of Doctrines* vol. II, trans. Charles E. Hay (Pasadena: Wipf & Stock Publishers, reprinted in 1997), pp. 108-09. According to Seeberg, the condemnation of Joachim implies that "the church of the Middle Ages thus explicitly adopted the Augustinian doctrine concerning God."

The study of the responses of the councils of the church to various tritheist positions leaves us several criteria by which the council discerned tritheism. First, the Arian error makes it clear that a theory of the Trinity should not assume any difference in the degree of divinity among the three divine persons, who are consubstantial with one another. A theory of the Trinity should not impair the perfect equality and identity of divinity among the three divine persons; otherwise, it would be Arian.

Secondly, the criticism of the Council of Constantinople III (680) against the error of John Philoponus is cautious not to say in the discourse on the Trinity that a species has its own common substance or natures while each individual of the species possesses its own particular substance in such a wise that a species comprises a plurality of natures or substances. In addition, the case of Philoponus warns us not to say that since the particular essence only exists by itself, the common essence has no reality of its own and is conceived only in thought. For otherwise, the Trinity would be understood as the three particular persons who have their own particular natures with one common nature that is merely nominal. This means that unlike Philoponus, the threeness of the Trinity should not be interpreted in terms of the natural postulate that “there is no nature without person, just as there is no person without nature.” In theology, there is no numerical correspondence between nature and person in God, since God is one and simple. Since God’s simple nature is real, the common nature shared by the three divine persons should not be taken as a mere intellectual abstraction. We are informed, thus, that according to the response of the council of the church to Philoponus, tritheism may include a view that takes the three persons as the three individual essences in a real way, but the common essence of the three Persons as merely intellectually abstract, or nominal.

Thirdly, in its criticism against Roscelin of Compiègne, the Council of Soissons (1092) intended to say that the identical unity of divine substance should not be understood as defeating the uniqueness of each divine person. For the different names of the three persons do not mean that they are different divine substances or things, but that they are distinct in terms of relation, not of substance. According to the council's criticism against Roscelin, the categorical distinction between oneness and threeness in the Trinity defeats any argument that if the Son is not a different thing from the Father but numerically one and the same thing as the Father, then it must be the case that the Father also was incarnate with the Son. In other words, the doctrine of the Trinity goes against the argument that it is impossible that a thing that is numerically one and the same both be and not be at the same time incarnate in the same man. Such an argument would be valid in the natural case where "nature always goes with person, and vice versa." But this is not the case with the Trinity, where God is so simple that the three persons are substantially identical, but relationally distinct. Therefore, if the Trinity is one, not because of the substantial unity of Divinity, but because of the community of Divinity shared by the three persons, then the plurality of the three persons designated as unique and single Beings will be reduced to tritheism, with all the emphasis on their equality of Divinity. For the unity of the Trinity should be attributed to the unity of the divine substance, not to the unity of resemblance and equality. The council of the church that condemned Roscelin rejected the idea that the three persons are three different Beings or substances who are equal in dignity. In short, the tritheism alleged against Roscelin includes a view that assumes the equality in the degree of divine will and power but at the same time the separateness and uniqueness of the three persons in such a degree to say

that the Trinity is composed of three distinct substances each one of which exists separately in itself as three angels or three souls.

Fourthly, the concern of the Council of Rheims (1148) about Gilbert of Poitiers confirms that the distinction between essence and persons in the Trinity should not be taken as ontologically real, for God is simple. Unlike a discourse on the natural things, the two statements “God is one” and “God is three” should not be understood in the one and same dimension, for in the Trinity the divine unity is predicated substantially while the personal properties relatively. God’s unity should not be infringed by God’s trinity. Otherwise, God’s oneness and God’s threeness are played off one against the other, with a result that Sabellianism or tritheism would prevail. According to the response of the council against Gilbert, thus, tritheism includes a theory to apply logic to transcendental metaphysics in a realistic way, or to make a real, ontological distinction in the discourse on the essence and persons of the Trinity, for such a theory would impede the divine simplicity that must not be encroached on in the Trinity.

Finally, the accusation of Joachim of Fiore in the Council of Lateran IV (1215) affirms that the unity of the Trinity should not be collective and analogous as non-substantial, but true and proper as substantial. This means that the simple divine essence that is the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, the three persons together and each one of them separately, is substantially real. A theory that denies the substantial reality to the unity of the Trinity and gives the non-substantial collectivity to it would be reduced to tritheism. For such a theory draws that conclusion from its presupposition that the three persons are three different realities. In that theory, if the unity of God is substantial, then we would have four different realities, for the one substantial reality and the three

personal realities would be added into four different realities. But this idea comes from its failure in understanding that the substantial oneness and the personal threeness cannot be added up into four realities, since the essence and persons are distinct and different in category. According to the council's criticism against Joachim, in brief, tritheism includes a theory that takes the three persons as three different realities, and the unity of the Trinity as non-substantial, moral collective community, not as substantial, homogeneous reality, for it does harm to the divine simplicity.

In sum, the decisions of the councils against the various historical versions of tritheism identifies two shared errors: (1) holding that the three persons necessitate the three natures, and vice versa, (although Gilbert does not hold this), and (2) violating divine simplicity.

In conclusion, as for a historical understanding of tritheism, the dissertation claims that whatever theory was historically charged with tritheism by the councils of the church meets at least one of the following conditions: (1) It affirms a difference in the degree of divinity among the three divine persons, or (2) takes the three divine persons as the three different substances in a real way, reducing the consubstantiality of divine persons to merely intellectually abstract, nominal, or (3) affirms the separateness and uniqueness of the three persons (though they are equally divine) in such a wise that each of them exists separately in itself as three angels or three souls, or (4) makes a real, ontological distinction between divine nature and divine person, or (5) takes the unity of the Trinity as a collective community of three different divine realities, not as the homogeneity of the divine substance.

CHAPTER 3

THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF TRITHEISM

Some theologians assert that historically speaking, there was no objective position charged of tritheism. For example, Jürgen Moltmann writes as follows:

In the discussions about trinitarian theology, the charge of tritheism has no objective foundation, because there has never been a Christian theologian who maintained a doctrine of three gods. It is an ancient, first Arian and then Islamic, charged levelled at orthodox Christianity. Later it became a charge directed by the Western church at the theology of the Eastern church.¹

Moltmann's claim might be true when we limit ourselves to the trinitarian controversies of the fourth century. However, the historical study of the church councils against tritheism tells us another story.² As we see in the cases of John Philoponus, Roscelin of Compiègne, Gilbert of Poitiers, and Joachim of Fiore, the church councils have had persistent objective criteria to discern tritheism: (1) the distinction between nature and person; (2) the conceptual distinction between nature and person; (3) the denial of three different natures; (4) the substantial unity of the three divine persons.

In dealing with tritheists, the church councils have consistently confirmed that three divine persons do not necessitate three divine natures, as one divine nature does not entail one divine person. In the created realm, nature always exists with its connatural hypostasis. However, this is not the case with God, for God's nature is simple. It has been crucial in the doctrine of the Trinity to avoid the confusion of nature and person. In the Latin church, where Gilbert belonged, the doctrine of divine simplicity does not allow

¹ Jürgen Moltmann, *Experiences in Theology: Ways and Forms of Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), n. 30, p. 382.

² In particular, the charge of tritheism against John Philoponus was made by an ecumenical council before the split of Latin and Eastern church. Moreover, it is in Greek theological tradition that a

any ontological distinction whatever in God. Gilbert's alleged view of making an ontological distinction between nature and person was condemned as impairing the doctrine of divine simplicity in the Council of Rheims (1148). In the church councils' creeds where tritheists were condemned, the simple nature of God has been always confessed as substantially real. The divine nature should not be understood as conceptual. Since divine nature is simple in God, the unity of the three persons is one and substantially real. It is understandable thus that the doctrine of divine simplicity is the background of our efforts to discern tritheism.

This chapter intends to seek a theological determination of tritheism through discussing the validity of the four criteria above and deepening the theological understanding of those criteria. The issues of this chapter are four. First, what is the orthodox distinction between essence and person? Secondly, in which sense may there be the distinction between essence and person, whether real or conceptual? Thirdly, is the notion of three different natures possible? Fourthly, what does the doctrine of substantial unity imply?

While doing this task, the traditional difference in understanding the doctrine of divine simplicity between Latin and Greek theology will be considered. Indeed, it is beyond the scope and capability of the dissertation to reflect both theologies to a full extent. The study of this chapter will be mainly limited to Augustine and Aquinas for a reference to Latin theology, and to Cappadocian fathers and Gregory Palamas for Greek theology. When the dissertation mentions "Latin theology, or tradition," or "Greek theology, or tradition" for the sake of convenience, it mainly refers to Augustine or

polemical against Philoponus was developed. Thus, Moltmann's claim is least convincing that tritheism was later directed by Western church at the theology of Eastern church.

Aquinas, or to Cappadocian fathers or Gregory Palamas, admitting that each theology is not so monolithic as each term suggests. In addition to traditional differences in understanding divine simplicity, this chapter will consider a difference of theological grammar of formulating the doctrine of the Trinity between patristic or middle age and modern age. For example, the expression of three personal essences is not acceptable according to an ancient grammar; it is acceptable according to a modern grammar.

Considering both the difference in the traditional understandings of divine simplicity between Latin and Greek theology and the difference in the grammar of theology between patristic or middle ages and modern age, this chapter claims that the definition of tritheism may vary according to theological positions (i.e., two traditional theologies and a modern approach), and shows a definition of tritheism that is made out of the commonality among those theological positions. In making its claims, the dissertation assumes that the medieval councils of the Latin church such as the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) may not have the same authority as the first seven ecumenical councils. This means that the dissertation does not see any methodological problem in making a theological analysis and criticism of the official pronouncements of medieval councils.

3.1. Distinction between Essence and Person in the Trinity

In dealing with a tritheist controversy, it is essential to confirm what relation there is supposed to be between essence and person in the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity. It can not be an overstatement to say that the whole history of the tritheist controversies has been involved in clarifying the relation between essence and person. Historically

speaking, the effort to figure out the relation between essence and person began with the emphasis on the distinction between them.

Against Arianism, the council of Nicaea (325) confirmed the divinity of the Son with the term, *homoousios*. Yet the problem remained how to understand the relation between the plurality and unity of God in relation to the true deity of the Son which was confirmed through *homoousios* by the Nicene Creed. The Cappadocian fathers in the council of Constantinople (381) settled down the controversy on that issue by making a distinction between *ousia* and *hypostasis*.

The teaching of the Trinity by the two councils of Nicaea (325) and Constantinople (381) got more specified through christological controversy on whether the unity of Christ is sought in nature, or in person. The council of Chalcedon (451) resolved that issue by concluding that the unity of Christ is not to be sought in the sphere of natures, but of person. This conclusion confirmed again that the distinction between nature and person should not be confused. When John Philoponus held to Monophysitism, based on the postulate that nature always goes with person, he misunderstood the orthodox teaching of the distinction between nature and person. He argued that the three divine persons of the Trinity necessitate the three individual divine natures and their one common nature does not exist in itself, but only through mind. Against Philoponus, the council of Constantinople III (680) confirmed again that divine nature or essence should be distinct from divine hypostasis, and that each divine hypostasis does not necessarily entail its own particular divine nature, and that consequently, the common nature should not be nominal.

In the Middle Ages, when Roscelin of Compiègne argued for the Trinity as the three different substances or things (*rei*), he feared that the identical unity of substance of the Trinity should obliterate the uniqueness of each person. Against Roscelin, the council of Soissons (1092) concluded that the uniqueness of each person should not be taken in terms of substance, and that the three divine persons should not be apprehended as existing as substantially plural.

When Joachim of Fiore argued that the unity of the three divine persons is collective and analogous as non-substantial rather than true and proper as substantial, he feared that the substantial unity should result in quarternity. Against Joachim, the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) confirmed again that the one substance and the three persons cannot be added into four different realities, for the notion of divine substance and that of divine person respectively belongs to different categories. The history of the church councils' responses to various tritheist positions tells us that to figure out how each of them takes the distinction between divine nature and divine substance is the crucial basis to draw a criterion to discern whether it is tritheist.

What is the orthodox distinction between nature and person, then? The distinction between nature/essence and person³ was first made by the Cappadocians.⁴ In *Letter 38*,

³ For the Cappadocians, divine nature and divine essence are found interchangeably used. For a detail, refer to Archbishop Basil (Krivocheine), "Simplicity of the Divine Nature and the Distinctions in God, According to St. Gregory of Nyssa," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 21(1977), p. 82.

⁴ E. R. Hardy describes the task that the Cappadocians faced like this: "to preserve the central idea of Athanasius that man's salvation depends upon the full deity of the Son, and yet to avoid the pitfall of Sabellianism. Athanasius, while escaping this danger, had never devised a satisfactory way of speaking of the distinctions of person in the Godhead. It was this that the Cappadocians accomplished." Edward R. Hardy, "Introduction to Gregory of Nyssa," in *Christology of the Later Fathers*, edited by Edward R. Hardy (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954), p. 241.

the author, who is now considered to be Gregory of Nyssa,⁵ clarified the importance of this distinction as follows.

Many persons, in their study of the sacred dogmas, failing to distinguish between what is common in the essence or substance, and the meaning of the hypostases, arrive at the same notions, and think that it makes no difference whether οὐσία or hypostasis be spoken of. The result is that some of those who accept statements on these subjects without any enquiry, are pleased to speak of “one hypostasis,” just as they do of one “essence” or “substance”; while on the other hand those who accept three hypostases are under the idea that they are bound in accordance with this confusion, to assert also, by numerical analogy, three essences or substances.⁶

One of the Cappadocians’ ways to explain the relation between divine nature and divine person was to use a distinction between “general” and “particular.” For example, Basil wrote, “The distinction between οὐσία and ὑπόστασις is the same as that between the general and the particular; as, for instance, between the animal and the particular man.”⁷ In *Letter 38*, Gregory of Nyssa proposed his exposition of the distinction between divine nature in general and divine person in particular, employing a human case. He stated:

Of all nouns the sense of some, which are predicated of subjects plural and numerically various, is more general; as for instance *man*. When we so say, we employ the noun to indicate the common nature, and do not confine our meaning to any one man in particular who is known by that name. Peter, for instance is no more *man*, than Andrew, John, or James. The predicate therefore being common, and extending to all the individuals ranked under the same name, requires some note of distinction whereby we may understand not man in general, but Peter or John in particular. Of some nouns on the other hand the denotation is more

⁵ Traditionally, St. Basil used to be known as the author of *Letter 38*. According to Lucian Turcescu, yet, the attribution of the authorship of the 38th Letter to Gregory of Nyssa is accepted by most students of the Cappadocians. For a detailed references to the scholarship on this attribution, see Lucian Turcescu, “The Concept of Divine Persons in Gregory of Nyssa’s *To His Brother Peter, on the Difference Between Ousia and Hypostasis*,” *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 42 (1997): pp. 63-64, n. 2, 3, 4, 5.

⁶ Gregory of Nyssa, *Letter 38.1*, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, Co., reprinted 1989), p. 137.

⁷ St. Basil the Great, *Letter 236.6*, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, Co., reprinted 1989), p. 278.

limited; ... as for instance, Paul or Timothy. For, in a word, of this kind there is no extension to what is common in the nature. ... My statement, then, is this. That which is spoken of in a special and peculiar manner is indicated by the name of the hypostasis. Suppose we say "a man." The indefinite meaning of the word strikes a certain vague sense upon the ears. The nature is indicated, but what subsists and is specially and peculiarly indicated by the name is not made plain.⁸

This proposition of the distinction between divine nature in general and divine person in particular, being connected with the analogy of three men, was often susceptible of tritheist interpretation. In actuality, Eunomius employed the analogy of three men to demonstrate the three graded divine entities. In *against Eunomius*, Gregory of Nyssa clarified that the analogy of three men must be employed to show that even though God is one, the three persons should not be confounded in the characteristics of their respective personal instances. He writes:

Not everything that has the same word for its being will similarly fit the application of the word in a particular instance, *hypostasis*. Peter, James and John were the same as each other in the word for their being, since each of them is a man, but in the characteristics of each particular instance, *hypostasis*, they were not the same as each other. If therefore he was arguing that one should not mix up the individual entities, *hypostases* and apply the three titles to one person, his argument would according to the Apostle's testimony be faithful and worthy of all acceptance. But since that is not his object, nor is he saying this in order to distinguish the hypostases from each other by their individuating notes, but is arguing that the substantive being itself is alien to the other, or rather to itself, and for this reason he names several beings, on the ground that each has alienation from the others as an individuating mark; - that is why I say that his argument is unprincipled and headless, deducing the blasphemy by logical steps from no agreed premise.⁹

Here, Gregory of Nyssa confirmed that the three-person analogy has the object that we should not mix up the individual hypostatic entities, nor apply the three names to the one subject. The three-person analogy was not employed to support the three substances or

⁸ Gregory of Nyssa, *Letter 38.2-3*.

⁹ Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Eunomius I*, trans. Stuart G. Hall, in *El "Contra Eunomium I" en La Produccion Literaria de Gregorio de Nisa*, eds. Lucas F. Mateo-Seco and Juan L. Bastero (Pamplona,

gods, but to oppose Sabellianism and to elucidate only that the three divine persons are distinct, with all their substantial oneness.

Yet the problem of the tritheist interpretation of the three-person analogy was acutely pointed out by Ablabius. For example, Ablabius' argument was summarized by Gregory of Nyssa, as follows:

The argument which you [i.e., Ablabius] state is something like this: Peter, James, and John, being in one human nature, are called three men: ... If, then, in the above case, custom admits this, ... how is it that in the case of our statements of the mysteries of the Faith, though confessing the Three persons, and acknowledging no difference of nature between them, we are in some sense at variance with our confession, when we say that the Godhead of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost is one, and yet forbid men to say 'there are three Gods'?"¹⁰

In dealing with this question, Gregory of Nyssa acknowledges that Ablabius' question was not groundless, for his question came from the custom in which "many men" is affirmed. For Gregory, however, such a custom was erroneous, for the human nature is one, absolutely indivisible, even though it appears in plurality. In Gregory of Nyssa's thought, such an erroneous custom might be permissible in the case of human beings, for

Spain: Ediciones Universidad de Navarra, 1988), p. 68. Cf. *Against Eunomius I.19*, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* vol. 5, p. 56.

¹⁰ Gregory of Nyssa, *Letter to Ablabius* "On 'Not Three Gods'," *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, Co., reprinted 1994), p. 331. In her criticism against the so-called social trinitarian employment of three men analogy in Gregory of Nyssa, Sarah Coakley argues that it is Ablabius who started with the three men analogy, not Gregory who recommends it. Gregory puts his emphasis on the unity rather than on the 'threeness'. Yet she seems to read too much into Gregory's letter to Ablabius. Probably, Gregory of Nyssa wrote that letter in order to defend himself from a tritheist suspicion of that analogy of three men, which might be raised by Ablabius. As we see in Gregory's *Against Eunomius*, Gregory did not refuse to use the analogy of three men itself, but made it clear that the analogy of three men was to defend the three distinctive personal entities with all their substantial oneness. Yet, she wrongly goes so far as to say that this analogy did not concern Gregory, but was only his given challenge. See Sarah Coakley, "'Persons' in the 'Social' Doctrine of the Trinity: A Critique of Current Analytic Discussion," in *The Trinity: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Trinity*, eds. Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, and Gerald O'Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 123-144.

it does not bring up serious harmful results. In the case of divine nature, however, it is no longer free from the danger of making one God plural.¹¹

Besides, since the divine nature is “unnamable and unspeakable,” Gregory argues, “by any of the terms we use the Divine nature itself is not signified.” Thus, the Godhead that people think refers to divine nature does not express what divine nature is in itself, but is “significant of operation, and not of nature.” But this term “Godhead” as reference to operation, not to nature, is still bound to a suspicion of tritheist interpretation, for “one would speak of ‘three philosophers’ or ‘orators,’ or any other name derived from a business when those who take part in the same business are more than one.” Gregory gets out of this kind of suspicion by replying that the divine case is foundationally different from the human case. He argues, “in the case of the Divine nature we do not similarly learn that the Father does anything by Himself in which the Son does not work conjointly, or again that the Son has any special operation apart from the Holy Spirit.” Since “the Holy Trinity fulfills every operation ... not by separate action according to the number of the persons, but so that there is one motion and disposition of the good will which is communicated from the Father through the Son to the Spirit,” Gregory concludes, “neither we can call those who exercise this Divine and superintending power and operation towards ourselves and all creation, conjointly and inseparably, by their mutual action, three Gods.”¹² Thus, Gregory of Nyssa makes it clear that the three distinct divine persons whom he intended to confirm through the three-person analogy are one in nature,

¹¹ Gregory of Nyssa, *Letter to Ablabius* “On ‘Not Three Gods,’ p. 332. In another letter, *Ad Graecos*, Gregor of Nyssa admits that the bad habit of the plural use of the word like “three men” is found even in the Scriptures. But he adds that such a use of the Scriptures is only “catachrestically,” not “literally.” Quoted from Cornelius Plantinga Jr., “Gregory of Nyssa and the Social Analogy of the Trinity,” *The Thomist* 50 (1986), p. 335.

¹² Gregory of Nyssa, *Letter to Ablabius* “On ‘Not Three Gods,’” pp. 333-335.

because the divine nature is indivisible and inseparable, and because they conjointly and inseparably work in everything.

How do not the three distinct characteristics of the three divine persons lead to three divine substances? First, Gregory of Nyssa sets a hermeneutical limitation on the three-person analogy. In employing an analogy to explain the distinction between ousia and hypostasis, he was so cautious as to give readers a warning not to take an analogy as literal:

Yet receive what I say as at best a token and reflection of the truth; not as the actual truth itself. For it is not possible that there should be complete correspondence between what is seen in the tokens and the objects in reference to which the use of tokens is adopted. Why then do I say that an analogy of the separate and the conjoined is found in objects perceptible to the senses? ... My argument ... teaches us, even by the aid of the visible creation, not to feel distressed at points of doctrine whenever we meet with questions difficult of solution, and when at the thought of accepting what is proposed to us, our brains begin to reel.¹³

For Gregory of Nyssa, the use of analogy is merely to help us apprehend the mystery of divine being in a certain point, so that we may not so fall into confusion as to fail to discern between the truth and the falsehood. It would be wrong to draw from the analogy an interpretation that is not intended by the analogy. As Edward R. Hardy puts it succinctly, it was the horror of Sabellianism that motivated the Cappadocians to suggest the analogy of three men in order to emphasize the distinction in the Godhead.¹⁴ So anyone who accuses the three-person analogy of leading to three divine essences would wrongly read it.

¹³ Gregory of Nyssa, *Letter 38.5*.

¹⁴ Edward R. Hardy, "Introduction to Gregory of Nyssa," in *Christology of the Later Fathers*, p. 241.

In the *Letter to Ablabius*, next, Gregory of Nyssa eventually touches this question, employing the idea of causal relationship. He clarifies that the three divine persons are distinguished with regard to their cause. For example, the Father is “the Cause,” and the Son is “of the Cause.”¹⁵ However, Gregory does not open any possibility that these words of causal relationship denote divine nature. For Gregory, those words indicate “difference in manner of existence,” τὴν κατὰ τὸ εἶναι διαφορὰν, not nature, φύσιν.¹⁶ The same idea is found in Gregory of Nazianzus who states that Father is “not a name either of an essence or of an action,” but “the name of the Relation in which the Father stands to the Son, and the Son to the Father.”¹⁷ Why not three Gods? The answer of the Cappadocian fathers is that the three distinctive hypostatic characteristics are a causal relationship that does not denote divine nature. The gist of the Cappadocian fathers’ contribution to the trinitarian controversy is to confirm that in God there are the three divine persons of one nature, not one person. They did it through suggesting that the three distinctive characteristics of divine persons do not entail the plurality of divine nature, since the causal relationships of divine persons are not in the realm of nature. As a result, it was clarified that divine nature and divine persons should not be confused.

The idea of taking the distinct characteristics of the three divine persons as relationship is confirmed in Augustine and Thomas Aquinas’ theologies. For example,

¹⁵ According to Karl Holl, Gregory of Nyssa describes the causal relationship as ἀγεννῶσία, γέννησις, and ἐκπόρευσις for the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit respectively, rather than the terms “fatherhood” (πατρότης) and “sonship” (υἰότης) for the first two divine persons, respectively. Karl Holl, *Amphilochius von Ikonium in seinem Verhältnis zu den grossen Kappadoziern* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1904), p. 211. Quoted from Lucan Turcescu, “The Concept of Divine Persons in Gregory of Nyssa’s *To His Brother Peter, on the Difference Between Ousia and Hypostasis*,” p. 77.

¹⁶ Gregory of Nyssa, *Letter to Ablabius* “On ‘Not Three Gods,’” p. 336; *GNO* III/I, p. 56.

¹⁷ Gregory of Nazianzus, *Theological Oration 29.16.*, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* vol. 7, p. 307.

Augustine, against Arians who assert that everything is predicated of God by way of substance since nothing is predicated of him by way of accidents, argues that although nothing is accidentally predicated of God, it does not follow that everything is substantially predicated of him, because some things are said with reference to something else, like Father with reference to Son and Son in relation to Father. Augustine states as follows:

They (i.e., the Arians) seem chiefly to set forth that whatsoever is said or understood of God, is said not according to accident, but according to substance: and therefore, to be unbegotten belongs to the Father according to the substance, and to be begotten belongs to the Son according to the substance; but to be unbegotten and to be begotten are different; therefore the substance of the Father and that of the Son are different. ... But in God nothing is said to be according to accident, because in Him nothing is changeable; and yet everything that is said, is not said according to substance. For it is said in relation to something, as the Father in relation to the Son and the Son in relation to the Father, which is not accident. ... Wherefore, although to be the Father and to be the Son is different, yet their substance is not different; because they are so called, not according to substance, but according to relation, which relation, however, is not accident, because it is not changeable.¹⁸

The observation that Augustine rejects Arian substantial plurality of God by explaining the divine plurality in terms of causal relationship, as Cappadocian fathers do, seems to make it possible to say that the thought of the Cappadocian fathers was “taken over by St. Augustine and introduced into Latin theology.”¹⁹ Velecky confidently argues that the statement just quoted above from Augustine, which is repeated later by Thomas Aquinas, indicates the theological harmony between Eastern and Western theology. In the Council of Toledo (675), he sees a good illustration of the universal acknowledgement of the distinction of the three divine persons in terms of relation: “In the relative names of

¹⁸ Augustine, *On the Trinity* 5. 3.4; 5.5.6, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, reprinted 1993), pp. 88-89.

persons the Father is (seen as) related to the Son, the Son to the Father, the Holy Spirit to both; although three persons are named, yet by faith we hold to the unity of their nature or substance.”²⁰

In Thomas Aquinas, too, the divine plurality is expressed as relations. Aquinas believes that there are real relations in God, and confirms that these relations are not distinct with reference to the divine nature, but by the relative opposition between them.

He states:

“Father” is named from fatherhood and “son” from sonship. If then fatherhood and sonship are not real relations in God, it follows that God is not Father or Son in reality but only because our minds conceive him so, which is the Sabellian heresy.

[Therefore] there must be real distinction in God, not indeed when we consider the absolute reality of his nature, where there is sheer unity and simplicity, but when we think of him in terms of relation.²¹

For Aquinas, without question, there are genuine relations in the Trinity, and further, those relations should be real. Otherwise, we would fall into the Sabellian error. For Aquinas, relation is enough to set divine persons apart from each other, while the divine persons are not distinct in the divine nature, or such absolute terms as infiniteness, creative power, providence and the like. The concept of relation is “the only possible principle of distinctness in God.”²²

¹⁹ Ceslaus Velecky, “Appendix 6: Divine Relations,” in *Summa Theologiae* vol. 6 (London: Blackfriars in conjunction with Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1963), p. 141.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 142. The Latin text is: “In relativis vero personarum nominibus Pater ad Filium, Filius ad Patrem, Spiritus Sanctus ad utrosque refertur: quae cum relative tres personae dicantur, una tamen natura vel substantia creditur.” For more information of the statement of the Council of Toledo (675), refer to Henricus Denzinger, ed., *Enchiridion Symbolorum* (Rome: Herder, 1976), nos. 525-532 (old nos. 275-281). Quoted from *Denz.* 278.

²¹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1a. 28, 1 and 4.

²² Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1a. 40, 2.

In the light of the study of several church councils and major theologians of the Greek and Latin Churches, it would be safely asserted that the divine persons in the Trinity do not necessarily entail divine natures, and that the notion of three divine natures should be rejected since divine plurality should not be understood in the realm of nature or substance but in the distinctive causal relationship of divine persons.

However, it still remains to describe what relationship there is supposed to be between divine nature and divine persons. If the divine persons are discerned not by nature but by relationship and are one nature, then, what ontological status does each divine person hold? Are the divine persons different realities or entities from the divine nature, or are they merely conceptually distinct from each other? An answer to these questions directly applies to the second issue about whether the criticism of the Council of Rheims alleged against Gilbert of Poitiers is still valid in determining a tritheist.

3.2. Distinction between Essence and Person, Real or Conceptual?

The Council of Rheims (1148) condemned Gilbert of Poitiers because he was alleged to deny divine simplicity. Gilbert refused to use *divinitas* as subject in the nominative, accepting it only as predicate in the ablative. For Gilbert, it may be said that God is divinity, but not that divinity is God. For the opponents of Gilbert, however, *Deus* and *Divinitas* are one and identical, for God is simple. According to them, Gilbert made a distinction between subsistens (i.e., *id quod*, that which something is) and subsistentia (i.e., *id quo*, that by which something is), and verified it in reality. In effect, it is not unanimously acknowledged that Gilbert meant to make a distinction in God between *id quod* and *id quo* as ontologically real. Yet the council's condemnation of tritheism

alleged against Gilbert reveals that whatever theory encroaches the doctrine of divine simplicity is not acceptable as a sound theory of the Trinity.

However, it can be hardly said that to distinguish *Deus* and *divinitatis*, or divine essence, *id quo* and divine person, *id quod*, in an ontological sense violates divine simplicity. For the distinction between essence and person in God may be validly taken as conceptual or real, in accordance with different traditions of the doctrine of divine simplicity. It is beyond the scope of the dissertation to develop a discussion on the doctrine of divine simplicity in detail, though. Generally speaking, Latin tradition tends to be stronger than Greek tradition in their understanding of divine simplicity.²³ In Latin tradition, no real distinction between essence and person in God is allowed. In Greek tradition, that distinction is understood in reality.

For example, Augustine's theology teaches that in God there is no distinction, variation, disproportion or inequality apart from the interrelation between divine persons. In other words, for Augustine, whatever God is must be taken as identical with God Himself.²⁴ Augustine states as follows:

²³ As mentioned earlier in the introduction of Chapter Three, "Latin theology or tradition," or "Greek theology or tradition" is employed for the sake of convenience, not to imply that each theology is as monolithic as each term suggests. Without a special note, it may refer to Augustine or Aquinas, or to the Cappadocians or Gregory Palamas.

²⁴ Narve Strand provides a concise explanation of Augustine's divine simplicity as follows: "The first aspect of Divine simplicity, ... I choose to call the existential aspect: the Augustinian God is Existence, or Being Itself (*Ipsum Esse*), something which is co-extensive not only with being simple, but also with being immutable (*immutabilis/incommutabilis*), self-identical (*idipsum*), and permanent (*manens*). Consequently, to exist is intrinsic to God (*habens in se ut sit*), for He is Himself the cause of His existing (*ipse sibi causa existendi est*); He immutably exists and continues to do so in and through Himself (*perseipsum est; in se manens; permanendo in se*). The second aspect of Divine simplicity, I opt to call the attributive aspect: being absolutely one, no parts or qualities can be found in God. Since He is not a composite being, one must refrain from conceiving Him as a substance which is the underlying subject of a multitude of distinct attributes. Rather, that which God is (*quae deus est*) is truly (*uere*) and properly (*proprie*) designated as 'essence' (*essentia*)." See Narve Strand, "Augustine on Predestination and Divine Simplicity: the Problem of Compatibility," *Studia Patristica* 38 (2001), pp. 290-291.

This Trinity is one God: it is simple even though it is a Trinity. ... It is called simple because it is what it has, except insofar as one person is spoken of in relation to another. ... The nature of the Trinity is called simple, because it has not anything that it can lose, and because it is not something different from what it has. ... According to this, therefore, those things which are fundamentally and truly divine are called simple, because in them quality and substance are one and the same, and because they are divine, or wise, or blessed without participation in anything which is not themselves.²⁵

For Augustine, God is so simple that He does not possess qualities through participation, nor lose anything because He is what He has. God is not a composite being.²⁶ Since God is what He has, for Augustine, divine persons and divine attributes are identical. For example, Augustine writes that “since God is not great by partaking of greatness, but He is great by Himself being great, because He Himself is His own greatness.”²⁷ This implies that “Augustine does have a strong simplicity theory according to which, in God, persons and divine attributes are identical, as are persons and the sum of attributes, the divine essence.”²⁸ Therefore, it is noted that while Augustine acknowledges the distinction between divine persons in terms of relation, he claims that each divine person and all of them are identical with the divine essence.

Thomas Aquinas’ teaching of divine simplicity is in agreement with Augustine in

²⁵ Augustine, *The City of God against the Pagans*, XI, 10, edited and translated by R.W. Dyson (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 462-464.

²⁶ According to Lewis Ayres, Augustine offers two arguments for the simplicity of God. “First, things that are not simple are corruptible and changeable because qualities are susceptible to loss: God is not so. Second, things that are not simple possess their qualities through participation: but God possesses, or better, *is* nothing through participation, and thus God can most fittingly be described as simple.” Lewis Ayres, “The Fundamental Grammar of Augustine’s Trinitarian Theology,” in *Augustine and His Critics*, eds. Robert Dodaro and George Lawless (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 67.

²⁷ Augustine, *On the Trinity* 5.10.11, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, Co., reprinted 1993), p. 93.

²⁸ Cornelius Plantinga Jr., “Social Trinity and Tritheism,” in *Trinity, Incarnation and Atonement: Philosophical & Theological Essays*, Ronald J. Feenstra and Cornelius Plantinga Jr. eds. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), p. 32.

that it denies the distinction between divine nature and divine person in reality. Aquinas claims that God is to be identified with His own essence or nature, for God is not composed of matter and form. In other words, it is only in created things composed of matter and form that the nature or essence differs from the supposit.²⁹ Since God is not composed of matter and form, Aquinas claims that in God person (i.e., supposit) and nature are not different realities. After explaining how fatherhood and sonship are real relations in God that are not merely conceptual, Aquinas states in this regard as follows:

Thus it is manifest that a real relation in God is in reality identical with nature and differs only in our mind's understanding, inasmuch as relation implies a reference to the correlative term, which is not implied by the term 'nature'. Therefore it is clear that in God relation and nature are existentially not two things but one and the same ... Nothing in God can be attributed to him in any other way than as being identical with him, since he is absolutely simple.³⁰

For Aquinas, divine persons as subsisting relations in divine nature are really distinct from one another, but they are not different realities with essence. When compared to divine essence, divine persons do not differ really, but only conceptually.³¹

²⁹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia. 3. 3.

³⁰ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia. 28. 2 and ad 1 (London: Blackfriars, 1963), p. 31. Quoted from Cornelius Plantinga Jr., "Social Trinity and Tritheism," p. 40. Then, can the divine persons each of whom is identical with divine essence be really distinct between themselves, not merely conceptually? To this question, Aquinas confirms the real distinction between divine persons, saying that "If we hold by what the Catholic Faith teaches, we must say that there are real relations in God. For it teaches that there are in God three persons of one nature. Every number is the consequence of some kind of distinctness ... this distinctness cannot be merely logical." See *De potentia* VIII, I. Quoted from *Summa Theologiae* Blackfriars' edition, vol. 6, n. b in p. 24. For Aquinas' explanation of how they are really distinct though each of them is identical with essence, see *Summa Theologiae*, Ia. 28. 1. Aquinas' idea of the real distinctions between divine persons is repeatedly seen in his other statement refuting Sabellianism: "By reason of the truth that 'God is one,' or that 'the Father is in the Son and the Son in the Father,' one does not hold that the Father and the Son are one in supposit; there can be a unity of two who are distinct in supposit." *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 4. 5. 11, trans. Charles J. O'Neil (New York: Image Books, 1957), p. 51.

³¹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* Ia. 39, 1.

In the Middle Ages, such a strong understanding of divine simplicity as we see in Augustine and Aquinas was confessed in some creeds of Latin church. In the beginning of the 13th century, for example, the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) clearly confessed:

There is one highest, incomprehensible and ineffable thing [or reality (*res*)] which is truly Father, Son and Holy Spirit, at the same time three persons and each one singly a person; and therefore in God there is only Trinity, not quaternity. For each of the three persons is that thing, that is, that divine substance, essence or nature.³²

Like the Council of Rheims (1148), the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) confirmed the ontological identity between essence and person because God is simple. Considering the period (1225-74) when Aquinas lived, it can be said that the major tradition of Latin church or theology at least between the 12th and 13th centuries, or from the time of Augustine on, even if too much generalized, had confessed the strong divine simplicity that denies the ontological distinction between divine essence and divine person. As Cornelius Plantinga Jr. states, in this tradition, “tritheism might plausibly be said to be any trinitarian view that distinguishes the persons from each other while refusing to affirm their simultaneous identity with the one divine essence or thing.”³³ If the strong divine simplicity is unanimously accepted, then, the second criterion (i.e., the conceptual distinction between nature and person) that we studied in Chapter Two and summarized in the introduction of Chapter Three might gain the validity as an objective ground on which to discern tritheism.

However, we need to note that there is a different understanding of divine simplicity than the strong doctrine of divine simplicity even in Latin theology. In the

³² Denzinger. 804, in Rahner, ed., *Teaching of the Catholic Church*, p. 98. Quoted from Cornelius Plantinga Jr., “Social Trinity and Tritheism,” p. 38.

³³ Cornelius Plantinga Jr., “Social Trinity and Tritheism,” p. 39.

second half of the 13th century, for example, Duns Scotus taught the doctrine of divine simplicity in which God is “far less simple than Aquinas’s God.”³⁴ According to Richard Cross, Scotus denies that there is only a conceptual distinction between divine essence and divine person, because the ontological identity of the Father with God, and of the Son with God, would entail that the Father is not distinct from the Son. Scotus’ idea to solve the problem of the unity of the divine essence and the plurality of the divine suppositis is to “appeal to a formal distinction between each divine person and the divine essence.”³⁵ Scotus believes that there is another distinction, that is, formal distinction, which stands between a real distinction and a merely rational or conceptual distinction. According to Cross, Dun Scotus’ definition of a formal distinction is described as follows:

Roughly two realities – two aspects of one thing – are formally distinct if and only if they are both really identical and susceptible of definition independently of each other. Scotus’ criterion for real identity is real inseparability ... More precisely, two objects *x* and *y* are inseparable if and only if, both, it is not possible for *x* to exist without *y*, and it is not possible for *y* to exist without *x*.³⁶

Scotus first confesses that each divine person is really identical with divine essence, and then adds that divine person and divine essence are also capable of receiving a definition independently of each other. Scotus claims thus that each divine person is formally distinct from divine essence. Also, since the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit do not exist without the others, each of them is really identical with one another. At the same

³⁴ Richard Cross, *Duns Scotus* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 29. In the same page, Cross explains the difference of two accounts of divine simplicity: “Aquinas and Scotus both agree that God is simple in the sense of (i) lacking spatial parts, (ii) lacking temporal parts, (iii) lacking composition from form and matter, and (iv) lacking accidental modifications. But there are two ways in which Scotus disagrees with Aquinas. According to Aquinas, God is (v) identical with his attributes, and (vi) such that his attributes are all identical with each other. Scotus does not believe God to be simple in either of these ways.”

³⁵ Richard Cross. p. 69.

³⁶ Richard Cross, p. 149.

time, each of them is susceptible of a different definition from the others. If each of them exists without the others, they are really distinct and separable. But since each of them does not exist with the others and is defined in a different way from the others, each of them is formally distinct.³⁷

Keeping this formal distinction in mind, Scotus claims that God the Father possesses two entities in His divine essence, “a communicable entity and an incommunicable entity.” Without a communicable entity, “God the Father could not communicate,” and without an incommunicable entity, “He would not be a positive, real supposite.” For Scotus, both entities are “really existent” in the sense that their existences are “prior to the act of a considering intellect.” In other words, both entities would be present “even though a considering intellect would be totally lacking.”³⁸ In Scotus’ thought, it is impossible that there is only a conceptual distinction between both entities. If there is no distinction at all between both entities before the act of the intellect, the incommunicable entity would be communicated to all three divine persons. For incommunicable entities are a sort of divine essence that is “of its very nature communicable to several persons.” But it is impossible. Maurice J. Grajewski states Scotus’ view as follows:

To those that claim that there is no distinction whatsoever in God prior to the operation of the intellect, Scotus replies that in that case the Father does not possess any positive entity which He does not communicate to the Son, and therefore necessarily communicates not only His essence but also His paternity.³⁹

³⁷ Cf. Richard Cross, p. 69.

³⁸ Maurice J. Grajewski, *The Formal Distinction of Duns Scotus* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1944), p. 193.

³⁹ Maurice J. Grajewski, p. 193.

In the notion of a formal distinction, Scotus has found a way out of the difficulty of the problem that there should not be a certain really existent distinction in God, but a merely conceptual distinction. Scotus finally claims that divine person and divine essence are really identical (i.e., inseparable), but formally distinct from each other.

Will the second criterion of discerning tritheism (i.e., the conceptual distinction between nature and person) still be valid in Dun Scotus' theology? Our answer is plainly negative. In Scotus' thought, if there is no other distinction besides a conceptual distinction between essence and person, then, an anti-trinitarian argument would occur because the denial of any distinction between essence and person prior to the act of considering intellect would bring up the potential denial of distinction among divine persons. For, as Cross states, "the identity of the Father with God, and of the Son with God, *prima facie* entails that the Father is identical with the Son."⁴⁰ Scotus claims thus that there should be a certain distinction before the operation of the intellect, which is a formal distinction.

If Scotus' formal distinction is distinguished from a conceptual distinction, then how about a real, ontological distinction between essence and person?⁴¹ If Scotus' formal distinction is merely nominally distinct from "real distinction," then, he might be interpreted as affirming the ontological distinction between essence and person. Scotus

⁴⁰ Richard Cross, p. 69.

⁴¹ According to Grajewski, the contention has been made repeatedly that Scotus' formal distinction is in effect merely nominally distinct from real distinction. Grajewski helps us with his concise comparison between two distinctions as following. "(a) The real distinction obtains between two things (*res*); the formal distinction is found only between formalities or realities (*formalitates et realitates*). (b) The termini of the real distinction are actually separated or separable; the formal distinction exists between entities that are inseparable even by divine power. (c) Each of the termini in the real distinction has its proper existence; the termini of the formal distinction are said to be not '*res sed rei*,' i.e., capable of existing only when conjoined to their subject. (d) In the real distinction there is a simple non-identity (*non-identitas simpliciter*) between the termini; only a *secundum quid* non-identity obtains between the

himself unequivocally denies the identity of the formal distinction with the real distinction. In effect, Scotus' formal distinction is not between two things separable, but between two things really identical; thus, it does not vitiate divine simplicity.⁴² If so, in Scotus' theology, a theory that distinguishes the persons from each other while refusing to affirm their ontological identity with the one divine essence or thing might be said to be tritheist. Yet, a theory that distinguishes the persons from each other while refusing to affirm that they only conceptually differ from essence might not be necessarily tritheist. In short, the second criterion (i.e., the conceptual distinction between nature and person) loses the validity as an objective ground on which to discern tritheism.

When we move into the Greek tradition, we observe an entirely different conclusion from that which we get in Augustine and Aquinas. In Greek theology, the doctrine of divine simplicity as the simplicity of divine nature makes a distinction between essence, energy, and person.

In Greek theology, such a distinction between essence, energy and person is unavoidable. Greek theology develops itself in the antimony between cataphatic (affirmative) and apophatic (negative) theology.⁴³ In His own nature, God is the unknowable, yet He is God who reveals Himself as personal, as living. That is, "God Who is the hidden God, beyond all that reveals Him, is also He that reveals Himself."⁴⁴

distinguenda of the formal distinction. (e) A true real distinction destroys simplicity; the formal distinction is compatible with simplicity." Maurice J. Grajewski, pp. 100-101.

⁴² Cf. p. 109

⁴³ George C. Papademetriou, *Introduction to Saint Gregory Palamas* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1973), p. 28.

⁴⁴ Vladimir Lossky, *Orthodox Theology: An Introduction*, trans. Ian and Ihita Kesarcodi-Watson (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1989), p. 32.

According to Vladimir Lossky, the antinomy between the cataphatic and apophatic theologies has a real foundation in God, and discloses a mysterious distinction in God's being, which is the distinction between divine essence and divine operations or energies.⁴⁵ In Greek theology, it is in His essence that God is present to Himself, while it is in His energies that He is "present to His creation" and "makes His reality present to the creation without communicating His 'essence.'"⁴⁶ Meyendorff teaches us that the initial and most decisive motivation to form this distinction, as we clearly see in Gregory Palamas, is a concern "to affirm the possibility and, indeed, the reality of *communion with God Himself*."⁴⁷ In other words, Greek Patristic tradition makes a distinction between unknowable essence and revealed energies of God, "as the reality of God which exists outside the essence (τὰ περὶ τὴν οὐσίαν),"⁴⁸ in order to understand how God

⁴⁵ Vladimir Lossky, *In the Image and Likeness of God* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), p. 53. The distinction between essence and energies in God is the best known part of Gregory Palamas' thought. See John Meyendorff, *A Study of Gregory Palamas*, p. 202. Edmund Hussey describes Gregory Palamas as "the doctor of the uncreated energies." See his article, "The Persons – Energy Structure in the Theology of St. Gregory Palamas," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 18 (1974), p. 22. However, he is not its original author. According to Lossky, the distinction between essence and energies is suggested in the works of Basil and Gregory of Nyssa and is underscored by a number of Greek fathers. For example, St. Basil writes: "If the energies descend to us, the essence remains absolutely inaccessible." Gregory of Nyssa sums up this point, stating that "The invisible by nature becomes visible by the energies, contemplated in certain things around Him." In other place, he writes, "When [the human soul] reaches up to the knowledge of what surpass us, it understands the miracles of His energy, but for the present, it cannot advance beyond through mere curiosity. It marvels and venerates Him who is known only through what He is doing (δι' ὧν ἐνεργεῖ)." John Damascene more explicitly makes the distinction, describing "essence, or nature properly so-called (οὐσιὰ, φύσις) as "unknowable, absolutely inaccessible," and divine energies as "that which can be known about God." See Vladimir Lossky, *In the Image and Likeness of God*, p. 41, 54. In particular, refer to Basil Krivocheine, "Simplicity of the Divine Nature and the Distinctions in God, according to St. Gregory of Nyssa," pp. 100-101, for quotes from Gregory of Nyssa.

⁴⁶ Maximos Aghiorgoussis, "Christian Existentialism of the Greek Fathers: Persons, Essence, and Energies in God," *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 23 (1978), p. 17.

⁴⁷ John Meyendorff, "The Holy Trinity in Palamite Theology," in *Trinitarian Theology East and West* (Brookline, Mass.: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1977), p. 30.

⁴⁸ Maximos Aghiorgoussis, "Christian Existentialism of the Greek Fathers: Persons, Essence, and Energies in God," pp. 16-17. The reason and motivation of the distinction between essence and energies is well explained in regard to the Greek doctrine of deification, too. When Greek theology considers "partakers of the divine nature (θεῖα κοινῶναι φύσεως)," or the union with God, it reaches the logical

whose ontological separation from created beings prohibits us from getting access to His essence can be experienced as a presence to us.

The relationship among the three distinctions, essence, energies and persons, ultimately leads to the personalism of Greek theology that is generally contrasted with the essentialism of Latin theology. On the one hand, the God who is unknowable and incommunicable in His essence manifests and communicates Himself in divine energies or operations, which are forces proper to and inseparable from His essence. As Meyendorff states, “the divine and unknowable essence, if it did not possess an energy distinct from itself, would be totally non-existent and would only have been a product of imagination,” in the sense that the divine energies are the eternal overflowing and manifestations of the unknowable divine essence.⁴⁹ In one word, there is no essence without energies.⁵⁰

necessity of this distinction. Lossky explains as follows: “What is the nature of the relationship by which we are able to enter into union with the Holy Trinity? If we were able at a given moment to be united to the very essence of God and to participate in it even in the very least degree, we should not at the moment be what we are, we should be God by nature. God would then no longer be Trinity, but ‘μυριοπρόστατος’, ‘of myriads of hypostases’; for He would have as many hypostases as there would be persons participating in His essence. God, therefore, is and remains inaccessible to us in His essence. But can we then say that it is with one of the three divine *persons* that we enter into union? This would be the hypostatic union proper to the Son alone, in whom God becomes man without ceasing to be the second person of the Trinity. Even though we share the same human nature as Christ and receive in Him the name of sons of God, we do not ourselves become the divine hypostasis of the Son by the fact of the Incarnation. We are unable, therefore, to participate in either the essence or the hypostases of the Holy Trinity. Nevertheless the divine promise cannot be an illusion: we *are* called to participate in the divine nature. We are therefore compelled to recognize in God an ineffable distinction, other than that between His essence and His persons, according to which He is, under different aspects, both totally inaccessible and at the same time accessible. This distinction is that between the essence of God, or His nature, properly co-called, which is inaccessible, unknowable and incommunicable; and the energies or divine operations, forces proper to and inseparable from God’s essence, in which He goes forth from Himself, manifests, communicates, and gives Himself.” See Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, pp. 69-70.

⁴⁹ John Meyendorff, *A Study of Gregory Palamas*, p. 216.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

The energies, on the other hand, do not exist outside the divine hypostases and have no hypostases of their own. They are real but have their personal existence not in themselves, but in divine persons. In other words, they exist only by being possessed, used, and manifested by divine persons, or “enhypostasized” in the divine hypostases in the sense that the term *enhypostatos* denotes “both the permanent and stable reality as well as the dependence.”⁵¹ In Edmund Hussey’s summary, “the uncreated energy, then, cannot manifest itself; nor can it be manifested by the divine essence, although it is indeed ‘essential’ energy; it can only be manifested by a person.”⁵² If the energies without which there is no possibility of the manifestations of the unknowable divine essence can only be manifested by divine persons, it can be understood that if we do not have a notion of the persons in God, we have no way of getting access to God. As Meyendorff states, “it is only because God is personal that His existence is not limited to the [unknowable and incommunicable] essence but is really present in creation through His energies, or acts.”⁵³ In Greek theology, “the nature is inconceivable apart from the persons or as anterior to the three persons, even in the logical order.”⁵⁴ The essence-persons-energies structure, thus, leads us to see the strong personalism-feature in the

⁵¹ Edmund Hussey, “The Persons – Energy Structure in the Theology of St. Gregory Palamas,” p. 25.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ John Meyendorff, “The Holy Trinity in Palamite Theology,” p. 33.

⁵⁴ Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, pp. 56-57. Lossky is, yet, cautious not to go so far as to argue that the supremacy over the common essence is attributed to the three persons, and vice versa. For where one speaks of the persons, one should speak at the same time of the nature, and vice versa. According to André de Halleux, the orthodox theologians attribute to the Cappadocians Greek personalist theology apart from the language of the essence. Halleux argues in his article, however, that the personalism of the Cappadocian fathers do not exclude at all the essentialism nor oppose the language of essence. See his article, “Personnalisme ou essentialisme trinitaire chez les Pères cappadociens?: Une mauvaise Controverse,” *Revue théologique de Louvain* 17 (1986), p. 130, 152.

notion of God of Greek theology rather than the essentialist theology as we see in Latin theology.

As regards the divine simplicity, Greek structure of the essence-persons-energies does not look safe to some Western theologians, who criticize it for destroying the doctrine of divine simplicity.⁵⁵ To the eyes of Greek theologians, yet, the real distinction between essence, persons and energies does not impede the doctrine of the divine simplicity at all. According to Basil Krivocheine, while Gregory of Nyssa affirms the distinctions between the divine essence and the hypostaseis, between the divine nature and that which is contemplated “around it” (i.e. the energies), he understands and explains these distinctions in God – not merely subjective, but corresponding in fact to a reality in God – “in such a way as not to do violence to the simplicity of the divine nature.”⁵⁶ For Gregory of Nyssa, the divine simplicity does not necessarily imply “an absence of all distinction or ontological difference in God.”⁵⁷ In other words, the

⁵⁵ Among them, D. Pétau, M. Jugie, E. Candal, S. Guichardan, and recently *Istina* theologians such as J. Ph. Houdret, J. M. Garrigues, J. S. Nadal, and M. T. Le Guillou can be mentioned. The major criticism made by them, in particular by the *Istina* theologians is in Meyendorff’s summary that the Gregory Palamas’ real distinction between essence, person and energy is not proper to Greek tradition, but to his own idea, and that the thomistic position is more consistent with Greek fathers like Maximus the Confessor than the palamite theology. Against these arguments of the *Istina* theologians, in particular, J. P. Houdret, Georges Barrois responds, “There is little doubt that this doctrine, especially as it is formulated by St. Gregory of Nyssa, is ‘susceptible of an interpretation properly Palamite’ – an understatement! It is rather surprising that Houdret, by a sudden about-face, esteems that the doctrine of the Cappadocians on the divine names – another problem, that of semantics - runs counter the Palamite thesis ‘of the *real distinction*, in God,’ of the essence and energies.” For detailed references for them, see H. D. Hunter, “Palamas, Gregory,” *New Catholic Encyclopedia* X, pp. 872-74; Maximos Aghiorgoussis, “Christian Existentialism of the Greek Fathers: Persons, Essence, and Energies in God,” pp. 25-26, n. 35; John Meyendorff, “The Holy Trinity in Palamite Theology,” p. 26; Georges Barrios, “Palamism Revisited,” *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 19 (1975), p. 215.

⁵⁶ Basil Krivocheine, “Simplicity of the Divine Nature and the Distinctions in God, According to St. Gregory of Nyssa,” *St. Vladimir’s Theology Quarterly* 21 (1977), p. 90. I am heavily indebted to this article for understanding of Gregory of Nyssa’s view on divine simplicity.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 93. Basil’s interpretation of the divine simplicity is supported by Valdimir Lossky, who states that “Simplicity does not mean uniformity or absence of distinction – otherwise Christianity would not be the religion of the Holy Trinity.” See Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, p. 78.

medieval Latin doctrine of divine simplicity, understood as absence of distinction, is alien to the thought of Gregory of Nyssa.⁵⁸ Basil Krivocheine concludes thus that the divine simplicity of Gregory of Nyssa cannot be understood as “the simplicity of God,” since he “seldom refers to God as being simple.” “Rather, it is His nature or His essence which is simple.”⁵⁹ In sum, the divine simplicity, for Gregory of Nyssa, is not the simplicity of “God” in the sense that every real distinction or ontological difference in God is denied. Rather, for him, the divine simplicity is the simplicity of “divine nature” which is one, simple, uniform, uncomposed, and is at the same time the simplicity that is consistent with real, although antinomic, distinctions between nature and hypostaseis, between nature and energies. Gregory’s belief in the distinctions that are discernable in God makes it necessary to take divine simplicity as the simplicity of divine nature rather than the simplicity of God.

The answer is then evident about the validity of the second criterion of discerning tritheism (i.e., the conceptual distinction between nature and person). The ontological distinction that Greek theology makes between essence, energies and person makes it clear that in Greek theology the conceptual distinction between nature and person is not valid as a criterion of discerning tritheism. In other words, in Greek theology, whatever theory that distinguishes the persons from each other while refusing to affirm their ontological identity with the one divine essence or thing might not be necessarily tritheist.

In conclusion, the three different versions of divine simplicity that we have examined give largely two different answers to the question, in which sense there may be the distinction between nature and person in God, whether real or conceptual? As for a

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 104.

⁵⁹ Archbishop Basil Krivocheine, “Simplicity of the Divine Nature and the Distinction in God, According to St. Gregory of Nyssa,” *St. Vladimir’s Theology Quarterly* 21 (1977), p. 76.

real distinction, on the one hand, the two versions of Latin theology (i.e., Augustine and Aquinas' and Dun Scotus') oppose it; Greek theology supports it. As for a conceptual distinction, on the other hand, Augustine and Aquinas' version supports it; Scotus' and Greek versions oppose it. The observation of diverse theological views in both Latin and Greek tradition concludes that the conceptual distinction or ontological identity between divine essence and divine person is not a criterion of discerning tritheism.

3.3. Three Divine Essences and Three Personal Essences

This section examines the validity of the denial of three individual natures as a criterion for discerning tritheism. The historical study of the responses of church councils to various tritheists persistently confirms that according to patristic and medieval theologies, only one substance or essence is acknowledged in the triune God. For example, Philoponus' claim that there are in the Trinity three substances or natures, not one, is condemned as tritheism. The error that the council believed to be found in Roscelin of Compiègne is little different from Philoponus', for Roscelin was understood to claim that three divine persons are three substances, each one existing in itself.

The criterion of tritheism that three different natures are denied in the Trinity can be exactly related to a question, how do we explain the personal, relational, or individual properties that exist between the three divine persons? The answer to this question may be different according to different grammars of theology. In ancient theologies, personal properties are not understood as essential or substantial. Yet in a modern theology, as we see in Cornelius Plantinga Jr., personal properties are named as personal essences.

First, among ancient theologians, for example, the Cappadocian fathers definitely rejects the idea that the personal property of Father might be explained as substance.

Gregory of Nazianzus explains his rejection as follows:

“Father,” say the Eunomians, denotes either a substance (*ousia*) or an activity (*energeia*); if a substance, then the Father is of a different *ousia* (*heterousios*) from the Son; if an activity, then the Fatherly activity makes the Son, and the thing made cannot be of the same *ousia* as the maker. Gregory answers that the name ‘Father’ denotes neither essence nor activity but relationship (σχέσις) ... It is noteworthy that Gregory on several occasions insists that the Father is the cause of Son (though a timeless cause), and tries to make this view consistent with traditional pro-Nicene doctrine by stating that this causality does not apply to the *ousia* of the Father.⁶⁰

Gregory of Nazianzus’ choice to explain what is the personal property of Father is not the category of substance, but that of relationship. For Gregory of Nazianzus, “relationship” is a distinct category from “substance.”

In the *Letter to Ablabius*, Gregory of Nyssa clarifies that the causal relationship between divine persons should not be understood as denoting divine nature. For example, the Father is “the Cause,” and the Son is “of the Cause.” Gregory of Nyssa does not open the possibility that those words of causal relationship denote the divine nature. He states:

But in speaking of “cause,” and “of the cause,” we do not by these words denote nature (for no one would give the same definition of “cause” and of “nature”), but we indicate the difference in manner of existence. For when we say that one is “caused,” and that the other is “without cause,” we do not divide the nature by the word “cause,” but only indicate the fact that the Son does not exist without generation, nor the Father by generation.⁶¹

Gregory of Nyssa argues here that personal properties of causal relationship do not indicate nature, but difference in manner of existence. Gregory of Nyssa never allows the

⁶⁰ R.P.C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy 318-381* (Edinburgh, UK: T&T Clark, 1988), pp. 712-713.

⁶¹ Gregory of Nyssa, *Letter to Ablabius “On ‘Not Three Gods’,” Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, reprinted 1994), p. 336.

possibility of understanding the three distinctive hypostatic characteristics as being grounded at the level of essence or nature of the persons.

We need to be reminded of Augustine's argument against Arians. For Augustine, the error of Arians is that in their claim, the personal property of the Father (i.e., being unbegotten) denotes the substance of the Father and likewise, the personal property of the Son (i.e., being begotten) is none other than the substance of the Son. Arians argue that nothing in God is accidentally predicated of God, since nothing in God is accidental. For Arians, thus, the Father and the Son are substantially different. Yet Augustine rejects them, arguing that not everything in God is substantially predicated of God, while it is true that nothing in God is accidental. The reason is:

Some things are said with reference to something else, like Father with reference to Son and Son with reference to Father; this is not said modification-wise, because the one is always Father and the other always Son ... Therefore, although being Father is different from being Son, there is no difference of substance, because they are not called these things substance-wise but relationship-wise; and yet this relationship is not a modification, because it is not changeable.⁶²

Like two Gregories, it is noted that Augustine persistently refuses to ground personal, individual, relational properties of the divine persons at the level of essence or substance, though he clearly knows that those properties are neither accidental nor changeable. In his thought, personal, individual, relational properties should be understood as relational subsistents, not substances.

Why do not ancient theologians understand the distinct characteristics of the divine persons as personal or individual substances? It is because they all believe in the divine simplicity. As examined in 3.2, the doctrines of divine simplicity between Greek

⁶² Augustine, *On the Trinity* 5.6, in *The Trinity*, edited by John E Rotelle and translated by Edmund Hill (Brooklyn, NY: New City Press, 1991), p. 192.

and Latin theology are not one and the same. Latin divine simplicity may be described as the simplicity of God; Greek as the simplicity of divine nature. In Latin theology (in particular, of Augustine and Aquinas), divine nature and divine person are conceptually distinct; in Greek theology (e.g., of Gregory of Nyssa), they are really distinct. But in spite of their different understanding of divine simplicity, both Greek and Latin theology are one and the same in believing that divine nature is simple. In short, both Greek and Latin theology set a theological grammar in dealing with the matter of the relation between nature and person: Though the differences of personal or relational properties are permanent, not accidental, and unchangeable, those properties should not be understood to be substantial. Those properties are understood as subsistent, but not as substantial.

If personal properties are understood to be substantial, at least two errors occur both in Greek and Latin theology. One error is that a subordination theory tends to arise. As we see in 2.1, Arianism is a historical example of this tendency. While claiming that personal property of the Father (i.e., being unbegotten) denotes the substance of the Father, Arians degrade the divinity of the Son. For the substance of the Son is inferior to that of the Father, since the personal property of the Son (i.e., being begotten) is less divine than the personal property of the Father (i.e., being unbegotten). The orthodoxy that was established through a long period of controversy with Arians confirms two points against Arianism. One is the formula that the Son is of the same essence, *homoousios* with the Father. The other is the confirmation of the distinction between essence and person. The first was sanctioned in the Council of Nicaea (325); the second in the Council of Constantinople (381).

The other error that both Greek and Latin theology fear when personal properties are understood to be grounded at the level of substance, is the plurality of divine natures that results from the division of one simple nature. The division of one simple nature might be explained as follows. In both Greek and Latin theology, the divine persons are really distinct from each other. If personal properties are grounded at a level of substance, then personal natures are really distinct from each other. Further, if personal properties are nature, personal natures cannot be identical with the common nature. They should be distinct in reality, since personal natures are incommunicable while common nature is communicable among the divine persons. If personal natures and the common nature are one and identical in reality, personal natures are communicated with the common nature. This is a contradiction, since personal natures are incommunicable. Then, four really distinct natures are supposed: three personal natures and one common nature. Yet according to the ancient grammar of theology, this is a violation of divine simplicity. For despite their different understandings of divine simplicity, Gregory of Nyssa, Augustine and Aquinas are one and the same in believing that there is no division in the one simple nature of God. It is acknowledged as mentioned in 3.2 that Gregory of Nyssa makes real distinctions between essence and persons and energies. Yet Gregory of Nyssa does not reveal any clue to show that he acknowledges in his teaching of divine simplicity that there might be some divisions (e.g., three personal natures and one common divine nature) in the one simple nature of God. Like Augustine and Aquinas, Gregory of Nyssa believes that there is no division in the one simple nature of God.⁶³

⁶³ As mentioned in 3.2, Duns Scotus teaches a doctrine of divine simplicity that is distinguished from Aquinas' in no less than two respects. (1) there is a formal distinction between divine essence and divine person; (2) there are two entities in divine essence, communicable and incommunicable. Duns Scotus believes that the formal distinction prevents incommunicable entities from being communicated

Such a division of divine nature would result in the plurality of divine natures. If personal properties are understood as substances, and if personal natures are really distinct from each other, then, the whole nature of the Father, which consists of His own personal nature (i.e., the personal nature of the Father that is really distinct from that of the Son) and the common nature, should be different from the whole nature of the Son, which consists of His own personal nature and the common nature.⁶⁴ If so, there would be three distinct divine natures (i.e., the sums of each personal nature and the common divine nature) in the triune God. Then, since there are three distinct divine natures in the triune God, it cannot be said then that there is only one simple nature in the triune God.

It might be argued that since the common divine nature that the Father and the Son shares is still one, there is still one divine nature in God, in spite of their different personal natures. However, such an argument is strange to both Greek and Latin theology in Patristic and Middle Ages. No theology knows any distinction or division (e.g., personal natures and common nature) whatsoever in the one simple nature of God.

According to the divine simplicity of ancient theologies, (though they are not exactly same in their understanding divine simplicity), the nature of the Father and the nature of

with communicable entities. In Scotus' theology, then, it is claimed that the three incommunicable personal entities and the one communicable common entities are in one divine reality. But it is another big task beyond the scope of the dissertation to discuss whether Scotus' formal distinction in effect makes it permissible that there are four division in divine nature.

⁶⁴ The same idea is clearly described by Christopher Hughes' explanation of what is denied by Thomas Aquinas: "Now, either the relational attribute of Paternity is included in the essence of the Father, and the relational attribute of Filiation is included in the essence of the Son, or neither attribute is included in the essence of either person. Suppose the former is true. If the Father and the Son are discernible with respect to Paternity, and with respect to Filiation, it cannot be that Paternity is both in the essence of the Father and in the essence of the Son, or that Filiation is both in the essence of the Son and in the essence of the Father. It follows that Paternity is in the essence of the Father, but not in the essence of the Son, while Filiation is in the essence of the Son, but not in the essence of the Father. In that case, the Father's essence must be distinct from the Son's, since they have different constituents." Christopher Hughes, *On a Complex Theory of a Simple God: An Investigation in Aquinas' Philosophical Theology* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1989), p. 216.

the Son and the nature of the Holy Spirit are all one and simple. In other words, the nature of the triune God is one and simple. They do not imagine that personal characteristics may be understood as natures or essences. They do not have even the concept of personal natures. For them, the concept of personal natures is not possible, for the nature of the triune God is one and simple. Greek and Latin theology have no way of analyzing the whole nature into the common divine nature and personal natures. For the divine simplicity denies any possibility of composition in the one simple nature of God. In Greek and Latin theology, it does matter whether the whole nature of the Father is one and the same with that of the Son. If personal properties are understood as substances or essences, then, the whole natures of divine persons are different from each other. The divine persons may be still one in divinity, but are different from each other in that the whole nature of each person is different from that of the others. The divine simplicity in both Greek and Latin theology repudiates the idea that there are the plural particular natures in the triune God.

How do we evaluate the validity of the denial of three individual natures as a criterion for discerning tritheism? If we answer this question according to the ancient grammar of patristic and medieval theology, a theory that affirms three individual, particular, personal natures in the Trinity is tritheist. Then, the criterion of tritheism that three distinct natures are denied in the Trinity can be said to be valid. The historical study of the responses of church councils to various tritheists persistently confirms that according to patristic and medieval theologies, only one substance or essence is acknowledged in the triune God.

However, according to a modern grammar of theology, the denial of three distinct, particular natures may not hold the validity as a criterion for discerning tritheism. A modern grammar holds a little different grammar from the ancient grammar of patristic and medieval theologies that affirm its validity. A modern grammar, unlike an ancient grammar, finds no problem in analyzing the nature of God into the common divine nature and personal natures. For example, Cornelius Plantinga Jr. suggests that each of the three divine persons possesses the generic divine essence and a personal essence. He clarifies the distinction as follows:

Each of Father, Son, and Spirit possesses ... the whole generic divine essence and a personal essence that distinguishes that person from the other two. Both kinds of essence unify. The generic essence assures that each person is fully divine. The personal essences relate each to the other two in unbroken, unbreakable love and loyalty.⁶⁵

For Plantinga, the generic divine essence is the full divinity, or the divine essence that distinguishes the three divine persons from any other ones or things, whereas personal essences are the three relational properties that make each of the three divine persons what he is in relation to the other two.

Plantinga explains the reason why he suggests that we understand relational property of each divine person in terms of essence. He writes as follows.

The Father has *essentially* the property of being permanently related to the Son in an ineffable closeness akin to a parent/child relation. The Son has *essentially* the property of being permanently related to the Father in an ineffable closeness akin to a child/parent relation. Let us say that the Spirit has *essentially* the property of being the Father and Son's loyal agent. They in turn have the complement of this property: it is *essential* to them to have the Spirit as their loyal agent.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Cornelius Plantinga Jr., "The Threeness/Oneness Problem of the Trinity," *Calvin Theological Journal* 23 (1988), p. 52.

⁶⁶ "The Threeness/Oneness Problem of the Trinity," p. 52. Italics are mine.

In Plantinga's thought, relational properties are not in any case accidental properties.

Each person is essentially related to the other two by these individual, relational, essential properties. Since the relational property of each divine person is permanent and unique to him, the relational property is named as personal essence.

Here, it is noted that Plantinga differs from Greek and Latin tradition in understanding what essence is. As mentioned before, an ancient grammar of theology is that though the differences of personal or relational properties are permanent, unchangeable, and not accidental, they are understood to be not substances or essences but subsistent relations. However, Plantinga explains that it is because the personal or relational property of each divine person is permanently unique to him that they are understood as essence. Although both ancient and modern theology commonly recognize that personal properties of divine persons are permanent and not accidental, they differ from each other in the issue whether personal characteristics are understood as substance. This clearly tells us that Plantinga employs a different grammar from a traditional one in dealing with the matter of the relation between nature and person.

Why Cornelius Plantinga Jr. suggests a distinction between personal essences and generic essence unlike ancient theologians can be answered when we realize that Cornelius Plantinga Jr. follows Alvin Plantinga in understanding the concept of essence.⁶⁷ Frederik Gerrit Immink provides a good summary of the notion of essence in Alvin Plantinga's logic as follows.

⁶⁷ One clue to show that Cornelius Plantinga Jr.'s grammar follows Alvin Plantinga's concept of essence is found where Cornelius Plantinga Jr. appeals to Alvin Plantinga in his criticism of the Latin doctrine of divine simplicity. See Cornelius Plantinga Jr., "The Threeness/Oneness Problem of the Trinity" in *Calvin Theological Journal* 23 (1988) and "Social Trinity and Tritheism," in *Trinity, Incarnation and Atonement: Philosophical and Theological Essays*.

Essences are quite fundamental in Plantinga's logic. How can we define them? An *essence* of an object x is a property that is essential to x , and essentially unique to x : that is, an essence is a property E that is exemplified in some possible world and is such that, in every possible world, for every x , if x has E the (a) x has E essentially and (b) in no world does anything distinct from x have E . Thus essences are a special kind of essential properties. It is not possible for them to be exemplified by more than one individual: they are *unique* properties. While other essential properties may be exemplified by many different individuals in the same world, essences are in no way common properties.⁶⁸

According to Alvin Plantinga's understanding of essence, each divine person may be said to have his own unique, individual essence. In his thought, every individual has some essential property that no other individuals could possibly exemplify. And individuals are individuated through these individual essences. When Cornelius Plantinga Jr. understands three relational properties or personal characteristics as personal essences, his understanding of essence is exactly the same as Alvin Plantinga's. As explained before, Cornelius Plantinga Jr. names personal characteristics as personal essences because each of personal characteristics is permanent and unique to each of the three divine persons and because each of divine persons is individuated through each of personal characteristics. Judging from the fact that Cornelius Plantinga Jr. holds the same understanding of essence as Alvin Plantinga, Cornelius Plantinga Jr. applies Alvin Plantinga's concept of essence as individuating essential properties to the doctrine of the Trinity. In short, Alvin Plantinga's concept of essence provides Cornelius Plantinga Jr. with a way of analyzing one simple divine nature into personal essences and generic essence without vitiating the simplicity of divine nature. For Cornelius Plantinga Jr., the

⁶⁸ Frederik Gerrit Immink, *Divine Simplicity* (Kampen: Kok, 1987), p. 50. One of the actual definitions of essence made by Plantinga is: " E is an essence if and only if there is a world W in which there exists an object x that (1) has E essentially, and (2) is such that there is no world W^* in which there exists an object distinct from x that has E ." See Alvin Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), p. 72. Cornelius Plantinga Jr.'s view about essence is closely to Alvin Plantinga. I am heavily indebted to F. G. Immink in understanding Alvin Plantinga. His clear analysis of Alvin

plurality of personal essences does not compromise the simplicity of divine nature, for the generic essence to denote divine nature is still one and simple.

This analysis obliges us to interpret Cornelius Plantinga Jr.'s proposal of personal essences and generic essence in the light of Alvin Plantinga's concept of essence. As Immink states, there is a difference (which helps us understand Cornelius Plantinga Jr.'s distinction between personal essences and generic essence) in their essentialism between Alvin Plantinga and Aristotle. Immink states:

With respect to the idea of essential properties we must distinguish two traditions. ... There is a ... difference between the Aristotelian tradition and modern modal logic, and this difference concerns the kind of properties that are essential. The Aristotelian essentialist holds that the individuals exemplify *common essences*. No property can be essential to an individual unless it is possible that the property be essential to some other individual as well. Such a modern essentialist as Plantinga, for instance, accepts the idea of an *individual essence*. Every individual has some essential property that no other individual could possibly exemplify. And individuals are individuated through these individual essences.⁶⁹

The point that we should note here is how Alvin Plantinga is contrasted to Aristotle about the meaning of essence. For Plantinga, essence is a kind of permanent property through which the individuating uniqueness of an individual is exemplified; for Aristotle, essence is a kind of permanent property that an individual shares with some other individuals.

This difference shows how to read Cornelius Plantinga Jr. Applying the concept of essence as individuating unique property to the Trinity, Cornelius Plantinga Jr. names personal characteristics as personal essences. He does so because each of personal properties distinguishes each of the three divine persons from the other persons and makes each of them what he is in relation to the other two. As for the generic essence, he

Plantinga on divine simplicity helps me recognize the conceptual connection between two Plantingas, which is not explicitly revealed in Cornelius Plantinga Jr.'s articles.

⁶⁹ Frederik Gerrit Immink, *Divine Simplicity* (Kampen: Kok, 1987), p. 39.

has the same concept of essence. When he names the common divinity of the three divine persons as generic essence, he does so because “divinity” is what distinguishes the three divine persons from any other ones or things. In other words, generic essence refers to individuating uniqueness of the triune God.

This analysis reveals that Cornelius Plantinga Jr. does not consider Aristotelian understanding of essence in his distinction between personal essences and generic essence. Suppose that the generic essence is the common essence in an Aristotelian sense. In other words, suppose that the generic essence is the common essence shared by all members of a genus who have different existents as individuals. Then, the notion of generic essence implies that God is a species within a genus, or an individual within a species. But this is not what Cornelius Plantinga Jr. intends to say. God cannot be in genus or in species. By generic essence, Plantinga says neither that three gods are in a genus, nor that three persons are in a genus of God. Rather, Plantinga says merely that each divine person is fully divine, which distinguishes three divine persons from all other things. By generic essence, in other words, Plantinga does not express a relation between individual and species, or between species and genus. As just mentioned, for Plantinga, generic essence is the unique property that individuates the triune God from all other things. This unique property (i.e., generic essence) is common to all three divine persons. This might cause an impression that generic essence implies the essence in an Aristotelian sense, for “generic” usually connotes “common to a genus.” If Plantinga suggests “generic essence” in an Aristotelian sense, then he employs two different senses of essence (i.e., Alvin Plantinga’s in personal essence and Aristotle’s in generic essence). However, this is least plausible. Then, why “generic”? Probably, Cornelius Plantinga Jr.

names the individuating unique property of the triune God as “generic” in order to contrast it to “personal essence.” In short, though “generic essence” connotes “commonality,” the point that Cornelius Plantinga Jr. makes by that is not that there are three gods in a certain genus or three divine persons in a genus of God, but merely that each divine person is fully divine and distinguished from all other things in the sense of full divinity.

Besides, suppose that the personal essences are understood in an Aristotelian sense. Then, the notion of personal essences implies that each divine person himself is a species which has no other member beside that person within it. For the essence in an Aristotelian sense presupposes that something belongs to a genus. This implies that if the notion of personal essences is understood in an Aristotelian sense, it will bring up tritheism. However, this kind of reading is a wrong interpretation of Cornelius Plantinga Jr.’s proposal of the distinction between personal essences and generic essence. By personal essence, Plantinga does not imply a common property, but a unique property of each divine person. For Plantinga, a personal essence is a personal or relational property by which an individuating uniqueness of each divine person is exemplified.

The analysis that has been made so far clearly tells us that Cornelius Plantinga Jr.’s proposal of a distinction between personal essences and generic essence does not hold any conceptual substance that is unorthodox. Cornelius Plantinga Jr. confirms that there is only one divine nature in the triune God. Cornelius Plantinga Jr.’s personal essence must not be confused with ancient heretic ideas that understand personal characteristics as substantial or essential in an ancient grammar. For example, Arians argue that there are three different divine natures because of three distinct personal or

relational characteristics. Yet, for Plantinga, the divine nature of God is only one.

Philoponus claims that the triune God is a species that has its own common substance while each individual of the species possesses its own particular substance. For Philoponus, the common substance has no reality of its own and is merely conceived in thought. Yet Plantinga reveals no hint whatsoever to imply that the generic essence is merely nominal.⁷⁰ Roscelin allegedly argues that in the triune God there are three distinct substances, each of them existing separately in itself as three angels or souls are.

However, Plantinga definitely denies that the three divine persons are individual and

⁷⁰ In actuality, Plantinga does not make any explicit statement about whether his generic essence is substantially real or nominally formed by human mind. However, the dissertation has a good clue to claim that it is real, not nominal. That clue is the same that helps us suggest how to read Plantinga in his own employment of the distinction between personal essences and generic essence. Cornelius Plantinga Jr. appeals to his brother Alvin Plantinga in order to criticize the doctrine of the divine simplicity that we see in Thomas Aquinas or in the Council of Lateran IV (1215). For example, Cornelius Plantinga Jr. states, "... it is unbiblical to claim that Father, Son, and Spirit are just the same thing as an essence (i.e., a set of properties), for then each would be just the same thing as an abstract object. Indeed, it is necessary false that *any* person, human or divine, is identical with some abstract object." ("The Threeness/Oneness Problem of the Trinity," *Calvin Theological Journal* 23 [1988], p. 48) It is to be noted that Cornelius Plantinga Jr.'s argument that each divine person cannot be the same thing as an abstract object is based on Alvin Plantinga's realism. Immink explains Alvin Plantinga's realism as follows: "Plantinga holds that a property is an *abstract entity*, and this abstract entity can be shared by many individuals. A property is neither a mere word or utterance, nor is it a mental act or thought, but it is an object 'sui generis'. Plantinga holds that properties, propositions, and the like cannot be considered as mental states of human beings, for then they would be dependent upon human beings. But even if there were no human beings at all, there still would be properties like in *being green*, *being red*, *being round*, etcetera. These entities exist in their own right and they must be distinguished from concrete things like trees, human beings, and the like. Plantinga distinguishes them by saying that they are *abstract entities*. ... Thus Plantinga is a realist with respect to properties." (Frederik Gerrit Immink, *Divine Simplicity*, p. 40) In this kind of realism of Alvin Plantinga's, it is absolutely clear that God cannot be the same thing as or identified with a property that is an abstract object. Accordingly, when Cornelius Plantinga Jr. criticizes the divine simplicity of the Fourth Lateran Council by appealing to Alvin Plantinga, we can safely conclude that Cornelius Plantinga Jr. is a realist like Alvin Plantinga. We have an implicit, yet good enough, clue that like Alvin Plantinga, Cornelius Plantinga Jr. opposes nominalistic, whether classic or post-Kantian, approaches. Then, we should conclude that generic essence, for Cornelius Plantinga Jr., is ontologically real and far from any nominalistic interpretation. In the Trinity, nominalistic theological works are not acceptable and charged with tritheist. When philosophical works of nominalism apply to the Trinity, the only way to avoid being charged with tritheist is fideism, as we see in late medieval nominalists such as William Occam, Robert Holcot, and Gregory of Rimini. For a study of the nominalist view of the Trinity, see Roland H. Bainton, "Michael Servetus and the Trinitarian Speculation of the Middle Ages," in *Autour de Michel Servet et de Sebastien Castellion*, edited by B. Becker (Haarlem: H.D. Tjeenk Willink & Zoon N. V., 1953), pp. 29-39.

separate, as angels or human beings are.⁷¹ In short, the conceptual substance of Plantinga's proposal is orthodox. For his proposal of a distinction between personal essences and generic essence is made according to a modern grammar, not to an ancient grammar, and faithfully confesses that the divine nature of the triune God is only one. What Plantinga attempts to do by his proposal is to bring into a relief one erroneous claim that that "in God each of Father, Son, and Spirit is a distinct person; yet they aren't three persons but one."⁷²

Is then the denial of three individual natures still valid as a criterion for discerning tritheism? According to Cornelius Plantinga Jr.'s modern grammar, the answer is that it is not necessarily true. If a theory that affirms three individual, particular, personal natures in the Trinity denies that there is only one divine nature in the triune God, it is tritheist. Otherwise, it is not tritheist. In other words, if a theory means according to Plantinga's grammar by three individual natures that each divine person *has* his proper personal property, it is not a tritheist, insofar as it confirms the one generic essence, that is, one divine nature. Yet if a theory says by three individual natures that each divine person *is* his proper personal property, it is tritheist. For it is in the ancient grammar, not in Plantinga's grammar that it is grammatically permissible to say that a divine person is his distinct personal property. Yet the ancient grammar rejects the idea of three distinct

⁷¹ For example, Plantinga states: "Each member is a person, a distinct person, but scarcely an *individual* or *separate* person. For in the divine life there is no isolation, no insulation, no secretiveness, no fear of being transparent to another. Hence there may be penetrating, inside knowledge of the other *as other*, but as co-other, loved other, fellow ... We ought not to picture the holy Trinity as a set of three miscellaneous divine persons each of whom an alliance to get on together and combine their loyalties and work. Not at all. The biblical materials rather suggest that besides the common or generic divinity each possesses, Father, Son, and Spirit bear a much closer relation to each other as well – a derivation or origin relation that amounts to a personal essence." See "The Threeness/Oneness Problem of the Trinity," pp. 50-51.

⁷² "The Threeness/Oneness Problem of the Trinity," p. 43.

natures as tritheism. Then, the criterion that the notion of the three distinct natures in the Trinity is tritheist is conditionally valid, according as it is said in the ancient grammar or in a modern grammar.

In sum, we have two conclusions. According to an ancient grammar, the concept of three different, individual, personal natures entails tritheism. According to a modern grammar, it does not necessarily. These two conclusions have one common element: a theory that confirms the one divine nature of God is not tritheist. We conclude therefore that the denial of three particular or personal natures as a criterion for discerning tritheism can be absorbed in the final criterion, that is to say, the substantial unity of the three divine persons.

3.4. The Substantial Unity of the Three Divine Persons

Now, let's take a final step to the fourth idea: the unity of the triune God is substantially real. The doctrine of divine simplicity in both Greek and Latin theology confirms that the one simple divine nature exists in reality. When it is said that there is only one divine substance in the triune God, it means that the divine nature of each divine person is one and the same in reality. It is thus denied that the unity of the divine persons is merely nominal, or that the divine persons are one by the unity of three individual wills, not by the unity of substance. In Latin theology, divine person is merely conceptually⁷³ distinct from divine nature; in Greek theology, divine person is ontologically distinct from divine nature. Yet, in both Latin and Greek theology, each of the divine persons is really distinct from each other. Otherwise, the Trinity is reduced to Sabellian modalism.

⁷³ As examined before, Duns Scotus teaches formal distinction between divine nature and divine person. See 3.2 of the dissertation.

The question is, then, how is the substantial unity expressed, while the real distinction between divine persons is not weakened? If any theory does not express the substantial unity, that is, the consubstantiality of the divine persons while making a real distinction between them, it would be tritheist.

The dissertation discusses two doctrines in connection with the substantial unity of the divine persons: (1) the doctrine of *opera trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa*; (2) the doctrine of perichoresis. Both doctrines confess that since divine persons act through the one and same divine nature, it would be impossible for one person to think, decide, and act in one way and another person to think, decide, and act in another way.⁷⁴ The doctrine of *opera trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa* has its focus on the relationship of the divine persons with us; the doctrine of perichoresis does on their existential relations with themselves. In both doctrines, the three really distinct divine persons are presupposed and confirmed.

The doctrine of opera trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa

Let's first examine how the doctrine of *opera trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa* is confessed and explained. In Latin theology, the consubstantiality of the Trinity is clearly reflected in the famous axiom that the works of the Trinity *ad extra* are one, *opera*

⁷⁴ The theological effort to get rid of any smack of individualism in the Trinity is steadfastly seen in the revision of the Boethian definition of a person as "an individual substance of a rational nature." Fearing that to apply that definition directly to God would bring up a tritheism, theologians such as Thomas Aquinas and Richard of St. Victor replaces "individual substance" with "incommunicable existence," or "incommunicable subsistence." See Aquinas, *Summan Theologiae*, 1a. 29. 3 and 4, and Richard of St. Victor, *De Trinitate* IV, 22. PL 196, 944-955. Aquinas states: "Some theologians [cf. Richard of St. Victor], however, say that the above-mentioned definition given by Boethius does not define 'person' in the sense we use when speaking of person in God. Hence Richard of St. Victor wishing to amend it said that 'person' used of God meant *the incommunicable existence of the divine nature.*" *ST*, 1a. 29. 3.

trinitatis ad extra indivisa sunt. Evidently, Augustine takes “the inseparable operation” of the Trinitarian persons as the fundamental axiom of the trinitarian theology that is inherited from tradition.⁷⁵ Lewis Ayres shows an example of Augustine’s doctrine of the inseparable operation of the three irreducible persons as follows:

The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are a Trinity inseparable; one God not three Gods. But yet so one God, as that the Son is not the Father, and the Father is not the Son, and the Holy Spirit is neither the Father nor the Son, but the Spirit of the Father and of the Son. This ineffable Divinity, abiding ever in itself, making all things new, creating, creating anew, sending, recalling, judging, delivering, this Trinity, I say, we know to be at once ineffable and inseparable.⁷⁶

Why is the working of the triune God one? Augustine’s answer might be found in the one divinity of the Trinity, as he writes that “the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is one Beginning or Principle, *principium*, in respect to the creature, as also one Creator and one God.”⁷⁷ If “the inseparable operation” of the divine persons is true, why does the Son become incarnate, not the Father or the Spirit? Ayres shows that Augustine clearly understands this question, quoting from Augustine that “it seem to follow [from the doctrine of the inseparability of the divine persons] that the whole Trinity became man, for, if the Son took on human nature and the Father and the Spirit did not, they no longer

⁷⁵ Lewis Ayres, “The Fundamental Grammar of Augustine’s Trinitarian Theology,” in *Augustine and His Critics*, eds. Robert Dodaro and George Lawless (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 55. Ayres introduces from Ambrose an example of the theological tradition that Augustine knew well and followed: “If then the peace of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is one, the grace one, the love one and the communion one, the working is certainly one, and where the working is one, certainly the power cannot be divided nor the substance separated ... And not only is the operation of the Father, Son and Spirit everywhere one but also there is one and the same will, calling and giving of commands.” Ambrose, *De Spiritu Sancto* 1.21.131; 2.10.101, quoted from Ayres, p. 56.

⁷⁶ Augustine, *Sermon* 52.2. Quoted from Lewis Ayres, “The Fundamental Grammar of Augustine’s Trinitarian Theology,” p. 60.

⁷⁷ Augustine, *On the Trinity* 5. 14. 15. in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* vol. III (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993 reprinted), p. 95. Also see *On the Trinity*, 5. 13. 14. According to William G. T. Shedd, the term “beginning,” *principium* in respect to the relation of the Trinity to the creature denotes “creative energy, whereby a new substance is originated from nothing.” This needs to be distinguished from *principium* in the sense of “modifying energy, whereby an existing uncreated substance is communicated by generation and spiration.” See *Ibid.*, n. 6, p. 95.

act jointly.”⁷⁸ Augustine’s answer to that question keeps the balance between the doctrine of appropriation and that of the inseparability of operation, saying:

The Son indeed and not the Father was born of the Virgin Mary; but this very birth of the Son, not of the Father, was the work both of the Father and the Son. The Father indeed suffered not, but the Son, yet the suffering of the Son was the work of the Father and the Son.⁷⁹

Augustine does not obscure the distinction of divine persons while explaining the inseparable operation of divine persons. On the one hand, God is three by person, not by essence. As we see above, for Augustine, it is the Son, not the Father, who was born of the Virgin Mary. This clearly shows that Augustine unconfusedly makes distinctions in terms of hypostasis. The three divine persons are irreducible by hypostaseis. On the other hand, God is one by essence, not by person. It is because they are one by essence that the operations of the Trinity are one. As Augustine writes above, the birth of the Son is not the work of the Son, but of the Trinity, because the work is done through the inseparable operation of the three persons who are one by essence.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Augustine, *ep.* 11.2: “... videtur esse consequens, ut hominem Trinitas tota susceperit; nam si Filius susceperit, Pater autem et Spiritus Sanctus non susceperunt, aliquid praeter inuicem faciunt.” Quoted from Lewis Ayres, “Remember That You Are Catholic’ (serm. 52.2): Augustine on the Unity of the Triune God,” p. 46. In another passage Ayres quotes from Augustine’s sermon on Christ’s baptism in the Jordan at Matt. 3:13ff, Augustine let himself open to a charge in terms of an imaginary interlocution: “But one may say to me: ‘Show the Trinity to be inseparable: remember that you are Catholic and that it is to Catholics that you are speaking.’” For in the text of Matt. 3:16-17, we are clearly presented with “a sort of separated Trinity,” *quasi separabilem Trinitatem*. See the same article, p. 56. Michel René Barnes makes the same argument with Ayres in his essay, “Rereading Augustine on the Trinity,” pp. 154-165.

⁷⁹ Augustine, *Sermon* 52.8: “Filius quidem, non Pater, natus est de virgine Maria; sed ipsam nativitatem Filii, non Patris, de virgine Maria, et Pater et Filius operatus est. Non est quidem passus Pater, sed Filius: passionem tamen Filii et Pater et Filius operatus est.” Quoted from Lewis Ayres, “Remember That You Are Catholic’ (serm. 52.2): Augustine on the Unity of the Triune God,” pp. 57-58. The same quotation is seen in idem, “The Fundamental Grammar of Augustine’s Trinitarian Theology,” p. 61.

⁸⁰ Catherine M. LaCugna provides a well summarized description: “it would be ... correct to appropriate creation to the Father, redemption to the Son, and divinization to the Spirit.” Yet it should be noted that “with respect to activities such as creating, redeeming, and divinizing, it would be correct according to Augustine’s theology to say that the Trinity creates, the Trinity redeems, the Trinity divinizes.” Catherine M. LaCugna, *God for Us* (SanFrancisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1973), p. 100.

The doctrine of *opera trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa* is not exclusive to Augustine's view. In Thomas Aquinas' thought, too, this doctrine is taken as the Catholic faith. Aquinas teaches, for example, that the God whom we address as our Father refers to the whole Trinity. For there is a difference between the adoptive son of God and God's Son by nature. Christ is a son *generated, not made*, while we are *adoptive* sons by the grace of God's power to adopt us as the sons of God. Aquinas writes as follows:

The first person of the Blessed Trinity is Father of Christ by natural generation and this is a personal characteristic of his; but he is our Father in virtue of a freely willed action, and this is something which is common to him, to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. And for this reason Christ is not a son of the whole Trinity as we are.⁸¹

"Being generated" is a personal characteristic of the Son, but the production of any effect in creatures is common to all three persons by reasons of their one nature. In this regard, Aquinas takes the inseparable operation of the Trinity without question, stating that "unity of nature results in unity of power and unity of action; this appears in our Lord's own words, *What thing soever the Father doth, the Son also doth in like manner.*"⁸²

As T. C. O'Brien states, we do not think that we are addressing the Trinity when we pray to *our Father*, as the Lord taught us to pray.⁸³ According to Thomas Aquinas, as we see just before, yet, the God whom we address as our Father refers to the whole

⁸¹ Thomas Aquinas, *ST*, 3a. 23. 2. ad 2.

⁸² Ibid. Aquinas' statement and his quote of Jn. 5:19 is exactly reflected in an axiom: "all names indicating an effect in creatures refer to the divine essence." In the background of Aquinas' thought, there is a conclusion of his that the Trinity can be known only from revelation. What we can know with certitude from the creature-source of our knowledge, is about the essential properties of God, but not about the personal properties of God. Cf. *ST* 1a. 39. 7. reply. We see John of Damascus use the same quote from Jn. 5:19 to explain the essential oneness between the Father and the Son. See *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith* 1. 8 in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* vol. IX (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989 reprinted), p. 9.

⁸³ T. C. O'Brien, "Appendix 1: Names Proper to the Divine Persons," in *Summa Theologiae* vol. 7 (London: Blackfriars in conjunction with Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1963), p. 246.

Trinity. Then, how can it be right that we think we pray to the Father (i.e., the first divine person)? Here we meet the doctrine of appropriation again. Aquinas states:

Accordingly, adoption, while it is common to the whole Trinity, is appropriated to the Father as its author, to the Son as its model, to the Holy Spirit as the person who imparts to us the likeness of this model.⁸⁴

The adoption of us is common to the whole Trinity. Yet it is by way of appropriation that we think we are adopted to the Father, and call the Father as our father. This tells us that the way that God the Father is Christ's father is different from the way that he is ours. God the Father is the father of Christ by natural generation; He is our father by appropriation when we are adopted to the whole Trinity. This does not deny that we become the brothers of Christ, having the same Father as he.

Aquinas' doctrine of appropriation that it is in accordance with our way of speaking about God that adoption is appropriated to the Father as its author is grounded on our epistemological limitation as well. Colman E. O'Neill summarizes this regard, stating,

The Father as he is in himself we cannot know properly in this life. He is *ad Filium* and *cum Filio ad Spiritum* – a subsisting relation to the Son and to the Spirit. Such a Father no one but the Son and the Spirit can know, and those into whose intellect the divine Word comes in the beatific vision.⁸⁵

Conclusively, Aquinas teaches us that though we tend to attribute the personal qualities of a father exclusively to the First person, God the Father, what we are talking about God while applying those personal qualities to God is in fact the divine nature that is common to the Trinity. Because of our sonship as being adopted and our epistemological

⁸⁴ *ST* 3a. 23. 3. ad 3. In *ST* 1a. 39. 7. reply, Aquinas explains “appropriation” as meaning “the making known of the divine persons by means of essential attributes.”

⁸⁵ Colman E. O'Neill, “Appendix 6: Adoptive Sonship,” in *Summa Theologiae* vol. 50 (London: Blackfriars in conjunction with Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1968), p. 256.

limitation, it is in proportion to our way of speaking about God, i.e., appropriation that we can call God the Father as our Father.⁸⁶

In regard to the doctrine of the inseparable operation of the trinitarian persons, Greek theology is not different from Latin theology. When Greek fathers dealt with a question about the offering of the sacrifice of Christ in the councils of 1156-1157 in Constantinople, that doctrine was confirmed. The question was “Was the sacrifice of Christ, in both its historical and its Eucharistic dimensions, offered to the Father alone, or to the Holy Trinity?”⁸⁷ The answers were divided into two groups of which each was represented by Soterichos Panteugenos or Nicholas of Methone. In Soterichos’ thought, an answer to choose “the Holy Trinity” rather than “the Father alone” would imply Nestorianism. For if Christ received the offering as one of the Trinity, there would be “two hypostases in Christ, as subjects of these two contradictory actions” – “offering” and “receiving.” But the councils accused Soterichos of confusing the conception of nature and hypostasis.⁸⁸ Meyendorff explains this controversy as follows:

⁸⁶ If the appropriation is a way of our speaking about God, isn’t it a mere playing with words? J. B. Endres argues that the doctrine of appropriation is an effect of God’s revelation and reflects the proper characteristic of each person. He writes: “It [=the appropriation] is one of the ways for God to reveal His inner self and the uniqueness of persons. Furthermore, in the proper characteristics of each person; that is, creation is associated with the Father as generator of the Word; the unity of the soul with God and of Christians with one another is associated with the Holy Spirit as bond of unity. That which is common to all, at least as one conceives it, has a greater likeness to what is proper to one person than to what is proper to another.” J. B. Endres, “Appropriation,” *New Catholic Encyclopedia* vol. 1, p. 709. In LaCugna’s thought, also, Latin theology needed the doctrine of appropriation to reflect the biblical witness to the proper role of each of the three persons, only when the inseparable operation of the Trinity is taken as the Catholic faith. She argues however that the theology should be based on the economy, and if so, there would be no need for the doctrine of appropriations. For the essential unity of economy and theology does not need the doctrine of *opera trinitatis ad extra indivisa sunt*. But LaCugna’s argument goes so far as to contradict Eastern theology as well as Latin theology, for neither theology agree to the denial of the inseparable operation of the three divine persons. Cf. Catherine M. LaCugna, *God for Us*, p. 100.

⁸⁷ John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, p. 187.

⁸⁸ John Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought* (Washington D.C.: Corpus Books, 1969), pp. 152-53.

Soterichos had justified his position, “the sacrifice is offered to the Father alone,” by asserting that the facts of offering and receiving respectively constituted hypostatical characteristics of the Son and the Father. In this principle, Nicholas of Methone discovered a major error: the confusion of the “hypostatic characters” of the persons of the Trinity with the energies or divine actions on the level of economy. For all the actions of God *ad extra* are actions in which the three persons participate, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; their participation remains, no doubt, personal, but the action remains essentially one.⁸⁹

By affirming that all the works or energies of the Trinity *ad extra* are one and the act of “receiving” constitutes economical characteristics rather than hypostatical, basically, the conclusion of the councils of Constantinople (1156-1157) that the sacrifice is offered to the Trinity shows no substantial difference with Augustine and Aquinas’ theologies in the doctrine of the inseparable operation of the Trinity. In Eastern theology, too, just like Augustine, the single hypostasis of the Logos alone “‘becomes flesh,’ but the Father and the Spirit participate in the economy of salvation,” since all the divine acts *ad extra* are a Trinitarian act.⁹⁰

Eventually, we see the doctrine of the inseparable operation of the Trinity sanctioned in the councils of the Eastern and the Western church. The Eastern councils of 1156-57 in Constantinople concluded that a confusion of the conceptions of nature/energy and hypostasis, or “a distribution of the actions or energies between the divine persons” avoidably results in a tritheism.⁹¹ Likewise, the Latin church articulated this doctrine in the Council of Florence in 1441 by declaring that “in God all is one,

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 153.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 154.

except where there is a relationship of opposition (*In Deo omnia sunt unum, ubi non obviat relationis oppositio*).⁹²

The doctrine of perichoresis

Next, the other doctrine that the dissertation wants to examine in order to make it clear how the substantial unity of the triune God is expressed is the doctrine of perichoresis. As Verna Harrison points out, Ps.-Cyril of Alexandria is known to scholars as the first to employ *perichoresis* to explain the concept of the mutual indwelling of the three divine persons.⁹³ Ps.-Cyril emphasizes that “the hypostases are identical in essence and differ only in their relations of origin,” and also corroborated his emphasis on the divine unity by adding that the trinitarian persons ““possess coinherence in each other’ (τὴν ἐν ἀλλήλαις περιχώρησιν ἔχουσαι), though without confusion or division.”⁹⁴

⁹² Catherine M. LaCugna, *God for Us*, n. 79, p. 108.

⁹³ Verna Harrison, “Perichoresis in the Greek Fathers,” *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 35 (1991), p. 53. Indeed, the idea of perichoresis is no doubt embedded in earlier patristic texts such as the Cappadocian fathers and St. Maximus the Confessor, but it was not fully developed until Ps.-Cyril. For an example to show the relation between Ps.-Cyril and earlier fathers, see John P. Egan, “Toward Trinitarian *Perichoresis*: Saint Gregory the Theologian, *Oration* 31.14,” *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 39 (1994), pp. 83-93. Egan introduces A. Theodorou’s description of the analogy of light in Gregory of Nazianzus’ trinitarian theology in which Theodorou interprets it as an implicit expression of perichoresis. “In this passage, the Saint’s faith is admirably expressed. The persons of the holy Trinity, who lovingly coinhere [ἐμπεριχωροῦντα] in one another are presented as three (natural) suns, mutually connected (each one is found within the others) whose light, common to all three, constitutes a single outpouring of blended light.” Egan quoted this from A. Theodorou, “Light as Image and Symbol in the Theology of Gregory of Nazianzos,” [in Greek] *Theologia* 47 (1976), pp. 253-54. See Egan, p. 84. In his later article, Egan confirms the anticipation of trinitarian perichoresis in Gregory Nazianzus’ trinitarian teaching. See “Primal Cause and Trinitarian Perichoresis in Gregory Nazianzen’s *Oration* 31.14,” in *Studia Patristica* 27 (1993), pp. 21-28. Daniel F. Stramara Jr. elucidates the implication of the trinitarian perichoresis in Gregory of Nyssa. Stramara argues that although Gregory of Nyssa does not employ the word perichoresis in his trinitarian theology, he makes use of two other terms – περιφέρω and ἀνακύκλισις – to depict the trinitarian feature of perichoresis. See Daniel F. Stramara, “Gregory of Nyssa’s Terminology for Trinitarian Perichoresis,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 52 (1998), pp. 257-263.

⁹⁴ Here is a quote of Ps.-Cyril. “Wherefore we do not speak of three Gods, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, but rather of one God, the holy Trinity, the Son and Spirit being referred to one cause, and not compounded or coalesced according to the *synaeresis* [contraction] of Sabellius. ... For, as we said, they are one not so as to be confounded but so as to cleave to one another and they possess coinherence

What Ps.-Cyril wants to stress by introducing the concept of the coinherence or interpenetration of divine persons is to reinforce his affirmation of their identity of essence.⁹⁵ Later, Ps.-Cyril's use of perichoresis in the trinitarian context was made a standard item and a regular component of the trinitarian thought by St. John Damascus.⁹⁶ According to Harrison, John Damascus conceives the perichoresis as one component of the two principal causes of divine unity, together with the identity of essence among the trinitarian persons.⁹⁷

In his book, *Byzantine Theology*, John Meyendorff explains that Byzantine theology confirms the use of the doctrine of perichoresis as a way to explain the perfect unity, or love of the three persons without any mingling or coalescence.⁹⁸ In Gregory Palamas' thought, for example, the doctrine of perichoresis is supported by the doctrine

[περιχώρησιν] in one another without any coalescence or confusion." For him, the idea of perichoresis is the answer to a problem of how the unity of God is explained without falling into the error of Sabellianism. Quoted from John P. Egan, "Toward Trinitarian *Perichoresis*: Saint Gregory the Theologian, *Oration* 31.14," p. 87.

⁹⁵ Verna Harrison, "Perichoresis in the Greek Fathers," p. 59. LaCugna's explanation about this point seems little convincing, rather arbitrary. She writes: "The idea of *perichoresis* emerged as a substitute for the earlier patristic notion that the unity of God belonged to the person of God the Father. When the doctrine of the Father's monarchy was attenuated by the Cappadocian doctrine of intradivine relations, the idea of *perichoresis* took its place. ... The model of *perichoresis* avoids the pitfalls of locating the divine unity either in the divine substance (Latin) or exclusively in the person of the Father (Greek), and locates unity instead in diversity, in a true *communion* of persons." But as we see in the text above, the concept of perichoresis was employed to buttress the substantial identity of the trinitarian persons. In Greek thought, besides, God the Father as the principle of the other divine persons is the solid ground of the equality of the trinitarian persons in divinity. Thus, the idea of perichoresis does not contradict at all the notion that the unity of God belonged to the person of God the Father. Cf. Catherine M. LaCugna, *God for Us*, p. 270.

⁹⁶ Leonardo Boff, *Trinity and Society* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), p. 135. In his *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith (De fide orthodoxa)*, John Damascus corporates a large excerpt of Ps.-Cyril's treatise on the Trinity paragraph – cf. n. 95 – without any change. See John Damascus, *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith in Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* vol. IX (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989 reprinted), p. 11.

⁹⁷ Verna Harrison, "Perichoresis in the Greek Fathers," pp. 60-61.

⁹⁸ John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, p. 186.

of the consubstantiality of the divine persons. Meyendorff states Palamas' idea as follows:

In the created world every personal act is of necessity particular to one sole acting hypostasis. ... It is not so with God: the three divine hypostases in fact possess *one sole energy*, and every divine act is of necessity the act of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, because of their consubstantiality. Therefore the common divine essence is the cause (αἰτία) of the energies, but these energies remain personal acts, for consubstantiality does not suppress the personal element in God, but establish a "copenetration (περιχώρησις)" between the hypostases which is manifest in just this common energy: "God is always like himself, for the three divine hypostases possess one another naturally, totally, eternally and indivisibly, but also without mixture or confusion, and they "copenetrate" each other in such a way that they only possess one energy."⁹⁹

Palamas makes it clear that the consubstantiality of the divine persons necessarily leads to the doctrine of the inseparable operation or energy of them, on the one hand, and lays the foundation for the doctrine of perichoresis, on the other hand, for the perichoresis is manifest in the common energy. In conclusion, the doctrine of perichoresis is an explicit way to express or reflect the divine unity in the Trinity.

In Latin tradition, the idea of perichoresis is widely acknowledged, although the term perichoresis seems not widely used.¹⁰⁰ The term perichoresis was translated into two words, *circuminsessio* and *circumincessio*. The former term, *circuminsessio* "stresses rather the passive, somewhat static aspect of the doctrine," whereas the latter,

⁹⁹ John Meyendorff, *A Study of Gregory Palamas*, pp. 215-217.

¹⁰⁰ According to Boff, Peter Lombard, Thomas Aquinas, Cajetan and the Salamanca School did not use the term perichoresis, while Bonaventure, Duns Scotus, William of Ockham took it up and deepened its meaning. But Boff does not seem to mean by this that those former theologians did not acknowledge the notion of perichoresis. Leonardo Boff, *Trinity and Society*, p. 135. In the dissertation, we will see Augustine and Aquinas for their implicit ideas of perichoresis since we have observed them as representative theologians of Latin theology.

circumincessio “looks at it from the dynamic angle of movement.”¹⁰¹ In Augustine, we see the same primal anticipation of the doctrine of perichoresis as we see in Gregory of Nyssa. Augustine states:

Those three [trinitarian persons], therefore, both seem to be mutually determined to each other, and are in themselves infinite. But here in corporeal things, one thing alone is not as much as three together, and two are something more than one; but in that highest Trinity one is as much as the three together, or are two anything more than one. And they are infinite in themselves. So both each are in each, and all in each, and each in all, and all in all, and all are one.¹⁰²

By stating clearly the mutual inclusivity, or coinherence of the divine persons, Augustine offers a definition of the doctrine of perichoresis: “each are in each, and all in each, and each in all, and all in all, and all are one.” Augustine’s anticipation of doctrine of perichoresis is seen more conspicuously in a comparison with Gregory of Nyssa’s implication. Daniel F. Stramara Jr. helps us in this point.

The Son’s dwelling in the Father and the Father in the Son substantiates the Son’s eternity ... The persons contain each other fully; “clearly, the One in his entirety, entirely in the Other; the Father not superabounding in the Son, nor the Son diminishing in the Father.” No one person is outside the other ... Each person is both contained and containing.¹⁰³

As seen above, both Gregory of Nyssa and Augustine show no difference in affirming the mutual indwelling of the trinitarian persons. For both of them, the doctrine of perichoresis is essential and necessary, since the triune God is simple, incorporeal, eternal and infinite.

¹⁰¹ *Circuminsessio* comes from *circum-in-sedere*, meaning “to sit around”; *circumincession* from *circum-incedere*, meaning “to move around.” See A. M. Bermejo, “Circumincession,” *New Catholic Encyclopedia* vol. 3, p. 880.

¹⁰² Augustine, *On the Trinity*, 6. 10. 12.

¹⁰³ Daniel F. Stramara Jr., “Gregory of Nyssa’s Terminology for Trinitarian Perichoresis,” pp. 258-259.

Like Augustine, Thomas Aquinas does not employ the term “perichoresis,” but explicitly teaches the idea of perichoresis. A. M. Bermejo even argues that Aquinas does not merely acknowledge the notion of perichoresis, but also “admirably synthesizing the two conceptions, Latin and Greek, explains circumincession by the unicity of the divine nature (Latin) as well as by the very origin of the persons (Greek).”¹⁰⁴ Aquinas explicates the idea of perichoresis as follows:

Any inquiry about Father and Son must look to essence, relation and origin. Each of these is reason for the presence of Father and Son in each other. As to essence, the Father is in the Son because the Father is his essence and he shares it with the Son without any change taking place in himself; therefore because the Father’s essence is in the Son, it follows that the Father is in the Son. Equally, the Son being his own essence, it follows that he is in the Father, in whom the same essence is present ... As to relation, obviously the meaning of the one as correlative involves the presence of the other. As to origin, it is evident that the procession of an intelligible word is not something outside but is within the one uttering it; and even that which is uttered in the word is contained in the word. The same sort of explanation applies to the Holy Spirit.¹⁰⁵

For Aquinas, the mutual inclusivity, indwelling, and coinherence of the divine persons is a necessary consequence of their consubstantiality in divinity and of their immanent relationship and modes of origin. Bermejo may be right thus in arguing that Aquinas synthesizes the two different explanations of Latin and Greek, though the two explanations do not substantially contradict each other, but are inseparably connected.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ A. M. Bermejo, “Circumincession,” *New Catholic Encyclopedia* vol. 3, p. 880.

¹⁰⁵ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1a. 42. 5. The biblical ground for his present article is Jn. 14:10, “I am in the Father and the Father in me,” which is the material biblical source for the doctrine of perichoresis.

¹⁰⁶ It may be controversial whether Latin or Greek tradition appeals to either of the unicity of the divine nature or of the origin of the divine persons for the doctrine of perichoresis, as Bermejo states. In actuality, the consubstantiality of divine persons cannot be separable from their immanent modes of origin.

The doctrine of perichoresis is eventually summed up in the council of Florence in 1441, which declares:

These three persons are one God, and not three gods, because the three have one substance, one essence, one nature, one divinity, one immensity, one eternity, where no opposition of relationship interferes. Because of this unity the Father is entire in the Son, entire in the Holy Spirit; the Son is entire in the Father, entire in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit is entire in the Father, entire in the Son.¹⁰⁷

In sum, the doctrine of perichoresis lays its basis in the unity of the divine nature and the reciprocity of the relational modes of origin among the three divine persons, in both Latin and Greek tradition.

3.5. Conclusion

Our effort to understand tritheism was made in two ways, historical and theological. The historical approach was made to gather theological reasons contained in various responses of the church council against tritheists so that the theological

¹⁰⁷ *Denz.* 703-704; *DS* 1330-1331: “Hae tres una personae sunt unus Deus, et non tres dii: quia trium est una substantia, una essentia, una natura, una divinitas, una immensitas una aeternitas, omniaque sunt unum, ubi non obviat relationis oppositio. Propter hanc unitatem Pater est totus in Filio, totus in Spiritu Sancto; Filius totus est in Patre, totus in Spiritu Sancto; Spiritus Sanctus totus est in Patre, totus in Filio.” Some scholars, such as Leonardo Boff, points up the Council of Toledo (675) as the earliest council to spell out the doctrine of perichoresis, taking note of a passage like this: “We must not, however, consider these three persons separable, since we believe that no one before the other, no one after the other, no one without the other ever existed or did anything. For, they are found inseparable both in that which they are, and in that which they do, because between the generating Father and the generated Son and the proceeding Holy Spirit we believe that there was no interval of time in which either the begetter at any time preceded the begotten, or the begotten was lacking to the begetter, or the proceeding Holy Spirit appeared after the Father or the Son. Therefore, for this reason we proclaim and believe that this Trinity is inseparable and unconfused. These three, therefore, are called persons, as our ancestors define, that they may be recognized, not that they may be separated. (Nec tamen tres istae personae separabiles aestimandae sunt, cum nulla ante aliam, nulla post aliam, nulla sine alia vel exstitisse, vel quidpiam operasse aliquando credatur. Inseparabiles enim inveniuntur et in eo quod sunt, et in eo quod faciunt: quia inter generantem Patrem et generatum Filium vel procedentem Spiritum Sanctum nullum fuisse credimus temporis intervallum, quo aut genitor genitum aliquando praecederet, aut genitus genitori deesset, aut procedens Spiritus Patre vel Filio posterior appareret. Ob hoc ergo inseparabilis et inconfusa haec Trinitas a nobis et praedicatur et creditur. Tres igitur personae istae dicuntur, iuxta quod maiores definiunt, ut agnoscantur, non ut separentur)” *Denz.* 281. *DS* 531. See also Leonardo Boff, *Trinity and Society*, p. 135; A. M. Bermejo, “Circumincission,” p. 880.

evaluation of them might be made. Five historical cases were taken, such as Arians, John Philoponus, Roscelin of Compiègne, Gilbert of Poitiers, and Joachim of Fiore. Except Gilbert, four of them suffered from the confusion of nature and person in the Trinity. They were obsessed by the premise that one nature entails one person and three persons the three natures. They failed to recognize that in God there is no numerical correspondence between nature and person, because divine nature is simple. They made out their own ways to overcome any problem that they saw in the problem of threeness and oneness of the Trinity. For example, Arians argued for differences in divinity among the three persons. John Philoponus took three divine persons as three individual substances. For him, three individual substances are real, but the consubstantiality of three persons is nominal. Roscelin of Compiègne assumed the equality of the three persons in divinity, but regarded them as three unique substances, each existing as separate, individual beings, as angel or soul does. Joachim of Fiore took three divine persons as three different realities, and their unity as collective community. The case of Gilbert was different from those above. Gilbert found no problem in understanding that in God nature not always exist with its connatural hypostasis, or that in God there is no necessity of numerical agreement between nature and person. He clearly distinguished divine essence and divine person in terms of category. Yet, his distinction was assumed to make a real, ontological distinction between divine essence and divine person.

The councils of the church that we have examined were observed to have condemned all of them as tritheists who failed in understanding the divine simplicity. In historical controversies on tritheism, the doctrine of divine simplicity confirmed four objective criteria to discern tritheism: (1) the distinction between nature and person; (2)

the conceptual distinction between nature and person; (3) the denial of three different natures; (4) the substantial unity of the three divine persons. Historically speaking, in sum, whatever theory denies one of those four points was regarded as tritheist.

In the theological discussion of tritheism, it is recognized that the theological reasons clarified in the historical research cannot be directly employed as unanimously agreed criteria of discerning tritheism. For theological traditions are not monolithic in their understanding of divine simplicity and consequently in their formulation of the Trinity. For example, for Augustine and Aquinas, divine nature and divine person are ontologically one in reality and conceptually distinct in a way of thinking in human mind; for the Cappadocian fathers and Gregory Palamas, they are ontologically distinct. Duns Scotus agrees with Aquinas that divine nature and divine persons are ontologically one in reality, but claims that there is more than conceptual distinction between divine nature and divine person, that is, formal distinction. Yet, all of them are one in believing (1) that the divine nature of the triune God is one and simple, and (2) that divine persons are really distinct from each other. Together with two common ideas (i.e., the simplicity of divine nature and the real distinction among divine persons), the analysis that there is no agreement in understanding the ontological relationship between divine nature and divine person among patristic and medieval ancient theologies reveals that the second point mentioned above (i.e., divine person is divine nature in ontological reality, and vice versa) is invalid as a criterion of discerning tritheism. According to the ancient grammar of patristic and medieval theologies, therefore, the historical orthodoxy confirms the following points against tritheism: (1) Since there is only one divine simple nature in the triune God, three different, particular, personal natures are denied. (2) The unity of the

three divine persons is substantially one and real. In historical condemnations of tritheism, the substantial unity implies that the unity of the three divine persons is neither the nominal unity in intellectual abstraction, nor the unity of collective community.

In addition to the variety of traditional theologies, theological discussion to examine the validity of historical understanding of tritheism and establish a definition of tritheism considers a modern proposal such as Cornelius Plantinga Jr.'s distinction between personal essences and generic essence. His proposal follows a modern grammar that is different from the ancient one that we see in patristic and medieval theologies. He applies Alvin Plantinga's concept of essence to the Trinity. In Alvin Plantinga's thought, every individual has some essential property that no other individual could possibly exemplify, and is individuated through this individual essence. Following Alvin Plantinga, Cornelius Plantinga Jr. develops his proposal: (1) so far as the relational property of each divine person is the property that no other divine persons could possibly exemplify, each relational property is essence; (2) so far as the common property of the three divine persons is the property that no other things could possibly exemplify, their common property is essence. Cornelius Plantinga Jr. calls relational properties as personal essences; the common property as generic essence. Cornelius Plantinga Jr.'s distinction between personal essences and generic essence must not be read in the light of the ancient grammar. In the ancient grammar, though the differences of personal or relational properties are permanent, unchangeable, and not accidental, those properties are understood to be not substances or essences but subsistent relations. However, Plantinga explains that it is because the personal or relational property of each divine person is permanently unique to him that they are understood as essence. Although both ancient

and modern theology commonly recognize that personal properties of divine persons are permanent and not accidental, they differs from each other in the issue whether personal characteristics are understood as substance. For the ancient grammar, the nature of God refers only to what the generic essence in Cornelius Plantinga Jr.'s proposal denotes, and has no concept of personal natures at all. The ancient grammar does not know a way of analyzing the nature of God into personal natures and divine nature. Yet, in Cornelius Plantinga Jr.'s proposal, Alvin Plantinga's concept of essence provides Cornelius Plantinga Jr. with a way of analyzing one simple divine nature into personal natures and generic nature without vitiating the simplicity of divine nature. For Cornelius Plantinga Jr., the plurality of personal essences does not compromise the simplicity of divine nature, for the generic essence to denote divine nature is still one and simple.

In sum, the difference that we see between an ancient grammar and a modern grammar in regard to the concept of divine essence gives us two conclusions. (1) According to an ancient grammar, the concept of three different, individual, personal natures entails tritheism. (2) According to a modern grammar, it does not necessarily. In effect, these two different conclusions can be summarized into one common element: a theory that confirms the one divine nature of God is not tritheist. Therefore, we have only one criterion to make the Trinity distinct from tritheism: the ontological or substantial unity of the three divine persons.

In the end, this chapter notes that two doctrines derive from the substantial unity of the triune God: (1) the doctrine of *opera trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa*; (2) the doctrine of perichoresis. Since both doctrines are grounded in the substantial unity of the triune God, conversely, they spell out it. Both doctrines presupposes that divine persons

are really, not conceptually, distinct from each other, and that the one and same nature is always and eternally enhypostatized in each of them. The one and same nature that is always and eternally enhypostatized makes the three really distinct divine persons work indivisible or inseparably *ad extra* and interpenetrate *ad intra* in each other, without any mingling or coalescence of distinct persons.

In regard to the understanding of tritheism, finally, the dissertation claims: whatever theory fails to confirm the substantial unity of the three divine persons (i.e., the doctrine that the substantial unity of the triune God is not nominal, but ontologically real; the doctrine of *opera trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa*; the doctrine of perichoresis), asserting the three distinct, particular natures in divinity or according to the three different personal characteristics, no matter what theological grammar that theory may follow.

CHAPTER 4

DIVINE PERSON AS CENTER OF CONSCIOUSNESS AND TRITHEISM

4.1. Divine Person as Center of Consciousness

As we have already studied in the former chapter, the common error that we see in the historical tritheists comes from the fact that most of them denied or weakened the substantial unity of the Trinity, since they failed in understanding the distinction between nature and person in a right way. The tritheists formulated their theories of the Trinity in agreement with the assumption that nature necessarily entails person, and vice versa, and as a consequence, their teachings encroached on the divine simplicity. In this section, the dissertation attempts to discuss whether the notion of divine person as conscious center of action necessarily leads to a danger of tritheism in the light of the understanding of tritheism as we have in the former chapter.¹

4.1.1. The Ontological Concept of Divine Person

In the historical development to define the concept of divine personhood, what we surely know are two things. The first one is that orthodoxy refutes the Sabellian effort to interpret divine person as mere name or appearance lacking ontological reality. The second one is that the idea of three divine persons as three substances or essences has never been acknowledged. For in the ancient grammar of patristic and medieval theologies, the three individual essences of the divine persons are regarded as tritheism

¹ In the dissertation, for the sake of convenience, Greek theology is assumed to refer to the theologies of the Cappadocians and Gregory Palamas; Latin theology to the theologies of Augustine and Aquinas.

since the ancient grammar has no way of analyzing the simple nature of God into personal natures and divine nature. Orthodoxy repeatedly confirmed a positive and distinct existence of each divine person as empirical object, while it repeatedly refuted the idea of grounding the plurality of divine person at the level of divine essence.

What are divine persons in an ontological sense, if they are neither mere names or manners of appearance, nor plural different essences? The theological terms of divine personhood frequently mentioned among modern scholarship concerning divine person are “modes or ways of being (τρόποι ὑπάρξεως)” and “subsisting entities (*esse subsistens*, or *subsistentias*).”

First, the term of τρόπος ὑπάρξεως, or “mode of being,” was first put forward by the Cappadocians, in particular, Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nyssa. For example, St. Basil used “modes of being” to denote that each divine person is distinct while they are closely intimated with one another in glory and divinity.² According to Basil Studer, St. Basil of Caesarea “defined” the hypostasis as “*tropos tes hyparxeos*, as the way in which *ousia* is received.”³ The Cappadocian fathers’ distinction of the divine persons through relationship, *schesis*, was later expressed as “mode of being.”⁴ Basil’s friend Amphilochius of Iconium expressed the same idea, stating that “the names Father, Son, and Holy Spirit do not represent *ousia* as such, but ‘a mode of hyparxis or

² St. Basil of Caesarea, *On the Holy Spirit* 46, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* vol. 8, 29; Gregory of Nyssa, *Ad Graecos*, in *GNO III/1*, p. 30. Quoted from Cornelius Plantinga Jr., “Gregory of Nyssa and the Social Analogy of the Trinity,” pp. 340-41; Also see Thomas F. Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God, On e Being Three Persons* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), p. 127, 157, 177.

³ Basil Studer, *Trinity and Incarnation* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1993), p. 143.

⁴ Basil Studer, *Trinity and Incarnation*, p. 147; T. F. Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994), p. 27.

relation.”⁵ For the Cappadocians and their friends like Amphilochius of Iconium and Didymus, the blind theologian of Alexandria, the term *τρόπος υπάρξεως* was coined to express the idea that the divine persons do not differ in ousia. Their answer to the question, in what do the divine persons differ? is that they differ not in ousia but in their mode of *hyparxis*, being or subsistence. That is to say, the terms *agenetos* and *gennetos* and *ekporeutos* do not refer to ousia, but to modes of *hyparxis*.⁶ Therefore, G. L. Prestige rightly argues that the term *τρόπος υπάρξεως* was employed to express the fact that the three particularities of the divine persons merely represent modes in which the divine substance is “transmitted and presented.”⁷ In other words, the *τρόποι υπάρξεως* expresses “the belief that in those Persons or hypostasis one and the same divine being is presented in distinct objective and permanent expressions, though with no variation in divine content.”⁸

The study of the patristic use of *τρόπος υπάρξεως* as “ways or modes of being” rather than ousia leads us to raise a question, “Does the term *τρόποι υπάρξεως* itself denote divine person, which is often expressed as *prosopon* or *hypostasis*?” Prestige gives us a negative answer to this question. According to him, the names or titles of the persons denote “modes of being or relation,” or “the distinguishing particularities of the hypostasis.” They are not “the actual hypostaseis.”⁹ Prestige clarifies that the church

⁵ Basil Studer, *Trinity and Incarnation*, p. 147; G. L. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought* (London: S.P.C.K, 1952), p. 246.

⁶ G. L. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought*, pp. 246-47.

⁷ G. L. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought*, p. 245.

⁸ G. L. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought*, 249.

⁹ G. L. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought*, p., 277. Also see H. A. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, vol. 1 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956), p. 342.

fathers did not confuse hypostasis with its properties or modes. In addition, H. A. Wolfson supports this view, stating, “Basil describes the property of each of the hypostases as its ‘peculiar property of existence’ (τρόποι ὑπάρξεως) or its ‘mode of existence’ (τρόποι ὑπάρξεως).”¹⁰ That is to say, the term *τρόποι ὑπάρξεως* refers to “property,” or “personal particularity,” not to “divine person” as such.

In this regard, Daniel F. Stramara makes a noteworthy interpretation of *τρόποι ὑπάρξεως*. First of all, he clears *τρόποι ὑπάρξεως* of a possible modalistic interpretation. Agreeing with Stuart G. Hall,¹¹ Stramara translates *τρόποι ὑπάρξεως* into “a manner of coming into existence,” not “a mode of existence or being.”¹² Stramara’s translation is not new. It was already recognized by Prestige, too. According to Prestige, whether the term *τρόποι ὑπάρξεως* really means ‘mode of existence’ or ‘mode of obtaining existence,’ the term *τρόποι ὑπάρξεως* was employed to cover the meaning of “mode of obtaining existence.”¹³ Stramara’s reason for favoring Hall’s translation is that “a manner of coming into existence” and “a mode of existence” are two distinct notions. He continues to explain as follows:

For example, clay can have the mode of existence as a ceramic pot. Now that the same pot could have at least two possible manners of coming into existence: 1) it was molded by hand on a wheel, or 2) it was cast in a mold. In this particular passage, Gregory is referring to the manner of coming into existence, rather than the present mode of existence.¹⁴

¹⁰ H. A. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, vol. 1, p. 340.

¹¹ To see Hall’s translation, refer to “Gregory Bishop of Nyssa: A Refutation of the First Book of the Two Published by Eunomius after the Decease of Holy Basil,” in *El “Contra Eunomium I” en La Produccion Literaria de Gregorio de Nisa*, edited by Lucas F. Mateo-Seco and Juan L. Bastero (Pamplona, Spain: Ediciones Universidad de Navarra, 1988), pp. 35-135. In particular, p. 66.

¹² Daniel Francis Stramara, “Unmasking the Meaning of Prosopon: Prosopa as Person in the Works of Gregory of Nyssa” (Ph.D. diss., Saint Louis University, 1996), p. 394.

¹³ G. L. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought*, p. 247.

Since *τρόπος υπάρξεως* means “a manner of coming into existence” for Gregory, clearly divine person as hypostasis or *prosopon* is distinct from *τρόπος υπάρξεως*.

The distinction between hypostasis and *τρόπος υπάρξεως* is verified through the fact that Gregory distinguishes the hypostases from their *ιδιώματα*, characteristics or particularities: “unoriginate, immediately caused, and mediately originate.”¹⁵ Stramara explains as follows:

The hypostases are not the same as the *ιδιώματα*, the characteristics themselves. The metaphysical relations of the hypostases residing (*ἐνυπάρχουσιν*) in a particular manner in the one οὐσία demarcate the specific *ιδιώματα* particular to each specific *ὑπόστασις*. Thus while the *ὑπόστασις* is not the *ιδιώματα* there is an intrinsic relation between each specific hypostasis and its proper characteristics. ... The *ιδιώματα* are attributes of a particular *ὑπόστασις*, but not the hypostasis, or object itself.¹⁶

The lesson regarding *τρόπος υπάρξεως* that we learn from Stramara’s study is that since *τρόπος υπάρξεως* is “manner of coming to existence,” the divine person is not the same as *τρόπος υπάρξεως* in that the divine person is a concrete individual objective entity.¹⁷

¹⁴ Daniel F. Stramara, p. 394. Further, Stramara does not acknowledge that Gregory of Nyssa accepted *τρόπος υπάρξεως* as a valid theological term. So he definitely opposes an attempt such as Edmund J. Fortman’s to ascribe the understanding of the three divine persons in terms of their “mode of existence” to Gregory of Nyssa. See Stramara, p. 395. Cf. Edmund J. Fortman, *The Triune God* (Philadelphia: Westminster press, 1972), p. 82.

¹⁵ Daniel F. Stramara, p. 352.

¹⁶ Daniel F. Stramara, p. 350.

¹⁷ Stramara here is supported by T. F. Torrance. Torrance writes, “Both the Gregories seem to have had second thought about this account of trinitarian relations between the three Persons which traced, not just the mode of existence, but the existence itself or the very being of the Son and of the Spirit to the *ὑπόστασις* rather than the οὐσία of the Father. Gregory Nyssen drew a distinction between existence and the manner of existence (*ἄλλος οὖν ὁ τοῦ τί ἐστι καὶ ἄλλος ὁ τοῦ πῶς ἐστι λόγος*).” See Thomas F. Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988), p. 318. Original source are quoted from Gregory Nyssa, *Non Tres Dei*, in *GNO III/1*, p. 56. The one thing we need to note here is that in Stramara’s reading, the divine person for Gregory of Nyssa does not remain a mere ontological object, but is a psychological subject who possesses personal and incommunicable characters as center of consciousness. Gregory of Nyssa employs a term “*prosopon*” to solidify the psychological aspect of divine person. With regard to two aspects, thus, Stramara argues that Edmund J. Fortman is “badly mistaken when he ... avers that Gregory of Nyssa ‘speak[s] of the three [persons] in terms of their ‘mode of existence’.” First,

Therefore, it would be wrong to define in an ontological sense the divine person as “mode of being,” though, admittedly, the term “modes of being” is far from referring to “names or manners of appearance.”

The other term to describe the divine person other than “mode of being” is “subsistent being.” If T. F. Torrance is right, Gregory of Nazianzus differs from the other Cappadocians, Basil and Gregory of Nyssa, in avoiding the application of

τρόποι ὑπάρξεως to divine person, *hypostasis*.¹⁸ Torrance states as follows:

Gregory Nazianzen declined to have anything to do with St. Basil’s and Amphilochius’ notion of *tropos hyparxeos* (mode of being or mode of existence) or with a generic notion of *ousia*. ... Of crucial significance is Gregory’s interpretative reference to the three divine Persons as *relations* or *scheseis* eternally and hypostatically subsisting in God ... He evidently avoided the expression ‘mode of existence’ as inadequate to express ‘hypostasis,’ for the Persons are not just modes of existence but substantial relations subsisting intrinsically in the eternal Being of God ...¹⁹

In Torrance’s reading, hypostasis is, for Gregory of Nazianzus, “subsistent being considered in its objective otherness (*ad alio*),” while ousia is “self-existent being considered in its internal relations (*in se*).”²⁰ Gregory of Nazianzus’ relational subsistent being is not a mere mode of being. Torrance states that “these relations subsisting

τρόπος ὑπάρξεως is not a divine person as concrete individual objects in an ontological sense, and secondly, divine person is a psychological subject beyond a mere ontological entity. Daniel F. Stramara, p. 395. Cf. Edmund J. Fortman, *The Triune God* (Philadelphia: the Westminster Press, 1972), pp. 82-83.

¹⁸ Whether Torrance is right in making Gregory of Nazianzus distinct from the other Cappadocians in regard to this point, is debatable. According to Ralph Del Colle, a number of patristic scholars do not see any significant difference among the three Cappadocians in taking the Father as the cause of the divine existence. See, for example, John P. Egan, “Primal Cause and Trinitarian Perichoresis in Gregory Nazianzen’s *Oration* 31.14,” *Studia Patristica* 27 (1991), pp. 21-28; E.P. Meijering, “The Doctrine of the Will and of the Trinity in the Orations of Gregory of Nazianzus,” *Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift* 27 (1973), pp. 224-234. Cf. Ralph Del Colle, “‘Person’ and ‘Being’ in John Zizioulas’ Trinitarian Theology: Conversations with Thomas Torrance and Thomas Aquinas,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 54 (2001), p. 77, n. 20.

¹⁹ Thomas F. Torrance, “The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity in Gregory Nazianzen and John Calvin,” in *Trinitarian Perspectives* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994), p. 27.

between them (i.e., the divine persons) are just as substantial as what they are unchangeably in themselves and by themselves.”²¹

Torrance interprets Gregory of Nazianzus’ notion of the divine person as “relational subsistent being” to be a substantive concept of “onto-relations.” The intrinsic interrelations that each divine person has toward the two other persons have the ontological value of substance, for “the relations between the divine persons belong to what they are as persons – they are constitutive onto-relations.”²² For Torrance, divine person is a hypostasis or subsistent being that has a substantial value for its intrinsic relationship. Torrance does not say that hypostasis is substance, but that hypostatic relations are substantive. His argument may be understood as saying that the hypostatic interrelations between divine persons need to be taken as being substantial because hypostatic interrelations “belong intrinsically to what Father, Son and Holy Spirit are coinherently in themselves and in their mutual objective relations with and for one another.”²³

Augustine and Thomas Aquinas do not seem different from Gregory of Nazianzus in that both of them take divine person as a subsistent being. In their thought, divine persons are often described as “subsistent relations.” It is well-known that, for Augustine, the question of what are referents of the “three” is little answerable because of the

²⁰ Ibid., p. 36.

²¹ Thomas F. Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God, One Being Three Persons* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), p. 157. Torrance’s reading of Gregory of Nazianzus here is directly opposite to K. Holl’s view. Holl asserts that “the concept of *hypostasis* in Gregory is weak; it approximates to a mere point of moment in the Godhead.” So Holl says that Gregory of Nazianzus prefers *prosopon* to *hypostasis*. See K. Holl, *Amphilochius von Ikonium* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1904), p. 177. Quoted from R.P.C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, p. 709.

²² Thomas F. Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God, One Being Three Persons*, p. 157.

poverty of the words of human language. The words such as hypostasis or person given as answers to the question, “What three?” do not answer that question precisely, and are given merely because otherwise we should remain silent.²⁴ Those referents have significance only in that they are means against the errors of the heretics.²⁵

Apart from any ordinary words of human language, the concept that Augustine uses to refer to divine persons is a relation that he attributes neither to an accidental category, nor to a substance.²⁶ The divine personal relations are not accidental, since they are not mutable but eternal. Nor are they substantial, since “there exists an irreducible opposition between substance and relation. Substance is *ad se*, relation is *ad alterum*.”²⁷

For Augustine, a divine person subsists in relation to another.²⁸ R.P.C. Hanson argues that Augustine regards the divine persons as “relations, real, subsistent relations.” Hanson interprets subsistent relations as “real relations which are subsistent in the divine Being.”²⁹ J.N.D. Kelly too states that “the Three,” for Augustine, “are relations, as real and eternal as the factors of begetting, being begotten and proceeding (or being

²³ Thomas F. Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God, One Being Three Persons*, p. 157.

²⁴ “Yet when you ask ‘Three what?’ human speech labors under a great dearth of words. So we say three persons, not in order to say that precisely, but in order not to be reduced to silence.” Augustine, *On the Trinity*, 5. 9. 10., translated by Edmund Hill (New York: New City Press, 1991), p. 196.

²⁵ “What are we left with then? Perhaps we just have to admit that these various usages were developed by the sheer necessity of saying something, when the fullest possible argument was called for against the traps or the errors of the heretics.” In the same place, Augustine describes “three” as three somewhats (*tria quaedam*). Augustine, *On the Trinity*, 7. 4. 9.

²⁶ “Although to be the Son is different, yet their substance is not different; because they are so called, not according to substance, but according to relation, which relation, however, is not accident, because it is not changeable.” Augustine, *On the Trinity*, 5. 5. 6 and 5. 11. 12.

²⁷ Bertrand de Margerie, *The Christian Trinity in History*, translated by Edmund J. Fortman (Petersham, MS: St. Bede’s Publications, 1982), p. 136.

²⁸ Augustine, *On the Trinity*, 7. 4. 9.

²⁹ Richard P. C. Hanson, *Studies in Christian Antiquity* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1985), p. 289.

bestowed) within the Godhead which give rise to them.” He continues, “Father, Son, and Spirit are thus relations in the sense that whatever each of Them is, He is in relation to one or both of the others.”³⁰

According to Meredith William Ury, Augustine’s idea of divine person as subsistent relation has no actual difference from the Cappadocian idea of substantial relationship in divine subsistent being.³¹ Ury explains that divine substance, for Augustine, is discerned as “the intimate, inscrutable loving co-inherence of three personal relations.”³² This understanding of divine substance in terms of divine personal interrelationship is organically connected with the idea that the definition of divine person must be qualified by the contexts of the interrelationship of divine persons. Ury’s quote from Augustine shows the intrinsic interrelationship among the divine persons as follows:

For it is said in relation to something, as the Father in relation to something, and the Son in relation to the Father, which is not accident; because both the one is always Father, and the other is always Son; yet not always meaning from the time when the Son was born, so that the Father ceases not to be the Father because the Son never ceases to be the Son, but because the Son was always born, and never began to be the Son.³³

Augustine makes it clear that the divine personal interrelationship is not accidental, but always and eternal, with the result that their mutual relationship is intrinsic to each divine

³⁰ J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1978 revised), p. 275.

³¹ Ury may agree that Augustine might not completely understand the treasures of the Cappadocians because of the lack of the proficiency in Greek, but argues that “the theological consensus, in spite of truncated communication, still produced fundamental similarities.” Meredith W. Ury, *The Role and Meaning of ‘Person’ in the Doctrine of the Trinity: An Historical Investigation of a Relational Definition* (Ph.D. diss., Drew University, 1990), p. 149.

³² Meredith W. Ury, p. 148.

³³ Augustine, *On the Trinity*, 5.5.6 in *NPNF* vol. 3, p. 89. Quoted from Ury, p. 151.

person. Ury affirms that relations between divine persons, for Augustine, is “substantial” since they are “not ancillary to divine personhood.”³⁴

Augustine’s idea of divine persons as relations seems commonly acknowledged as the origin of “subsistent relations” of Thomas Aquinas.³⁵ Let’s hear Aquinas’s explanation of divine person.

Distinction in God arises only through the relation of origin. However, a relation is in God not as an accidental entity in a subject, but it is the divine nature itself; therefore it is something subsisting just as the divine nature is. Consequently just as Godhead is God, so God’s fatherhood is God the Father who is a divine person. Hence ‘divine person’ signifies relation as something subsisting. That is, as substance which is a hypostasis subsisting in the divine nature, though what is subsisting in the divine nature is nothing other than the divine nature.³⁶

As we see above, Aquinas takes divine person as relational subsistent. At the same time, Aquinas confirms that divine person and relation and nature or essence³⁷ are all the same

³⁴ We need to be cautious to read Ury here. When he says that the intrinsic mutual relationship, for Augustine has a substantial value, we should be cautious not to think that Augustine take “subsistent relation” as essence. Rather, for Augustine, “relational subsistent being,” or “subsistent relations” should not be interpreted *per essentiam*, for it does not belong to an essential category. When Ury describe “subsistent beings” as “substantial” because they are not accidental to divine personhood, he reads into the fathers’ notion a modern contemporary logic that whatever is not accidental is essential. The fathers acknowledge that subsistent relations are not accidental, but never say that they are substances. The fathers just say that they are “subsistent” because they are not accidental. T.F. Torrance makes the same mistake as Ury does, when Torrance describes the intrinsic mutual relationship between divine persons as substantial. For a modern contemporary logic concerning essence, refer to 3.3 of this dissertation.

³⁵ For example, Richard P. C. Hanson, *Studies in Christian Antiquity*, p. 289; Meredith W. Ury, p. 159; Brian Davies, *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, p. 200. In particular, Davies states that the notion of relation as constituting distinction in the Trinity had become so traditional that such theologians as Boethius, Anselm, and Aquinas followed it.

³⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia. 29. 4.

³⁷ In his discussion on the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation, Aquinas does not put any difference between nature and essence. Cf. *Summa Theologiae*, 3a. 2. 1.

reality, because of divine simplicity.³⁸ Person or relation differs from essence only conceptually, not really,³⁹ and is identical with divine essence in the ontological reality.⁴⁰

If we read “relational subsistent being” of Augustine and Aquinas in the light of their strong divine simplicity, then, the divine person described as “relational subsistent being” can be ontologically defined as “nothing other than essence.” Moreover, within this doctrine of the identity of divine person and nature, the term, τρόπος υπάρξεως, which is mode of relation or distinguishing particularity of hypostasis, is identified with hypostasis in reality, and accordingly, is merely conceptually distinct from hypostasis.⁴¹

Yet, not all the views to take divine person as “subsistent being” identify “personal subsistent being” with essence or substance in ontological reality. If in God nature and supposit are distinguished from one another in reality, then a different result will come. For example, John D. Zizioulas⁴² states that “personal subsistent being” is ontologically, not conceptually, different from essence or nature. Zizioulas shows us a ground of his argument, referring to the Orthodox refutation of Eunomius who argued

³⁸ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia. 39. 1 and Ia. 40. 1.

³⁹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia. 39. 1.

⁴⁰ If divine person is identical with essence in ontological reality, then how can God be three persons? For an answer, first of all, Aquinas asserts that the trinitarian relationship is real, not conceptual or logical. Otherwise, it will fall into the Sabellian heresy. The reason why relations among divine persons are real is that those relations belong to the same order. In other words, Aquinas posits a real relation “whenever one thing takes its origin from another,” or a real relation on both sides “when they share something in common.” Aquinas explains as follows: “When something springs from a principle which has the same nature, then necessarily both that which issues and that from which it issues belong to the same order; and so must have real relationships with each other. Since processions in God are in the identical nature, ... the relations rising from the divine processions must be real relations.” See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia. 28. 1.

⁴¹ Otherwise, the divine simplicity would be impeded. For Aquinas, the nature and the supposit, in God, are “not distinct in reality, but only in our way of thinking about them.” *Summa Theologiae*, 3a. 2. 2.

⁴² We take John Zizioulas as a contemporary representative of Byzantine theology which is finally

that the Son is totally unlike the Father, since the unbegottenness of the Father is substantially different from the begottenness of the Son. In Zizioulas' understanding, the Orthodox rightly refuted Eunomius by making a sharp and fundamental distinction between substance and person in God. Zizioulas states: "By being a person the Father was to be distinguished from divine substance. ... When God is called Father or 'unbegotten' He is called so not with reference to His substance, but to personhood."⁴³ Zizioulas interprets the Orthodox fundamental distinction between substance and person as implying that the concept of person emerged as a distinct category in ontology.⁴⁴

Further, he finds the ontological primacy in personhood, rather than in essence or nature. Zizioulas takes the recognition of the person "as an ontological concept in the ultimate sense" as one of the most important contributions of the Cappadocian fathers on the Trinity. He writes, "as it emerges from the way personhood is understood by the Cappadocian Fathers with reference to God, the person is not a secondary but a primary and absolute notion in existence."⁴⁵ With this understanding, he argues that "among the Greek Fathers the unity of God, the one God, and the ontological 'principle' or 'cause' of the being and life of God does not consist in the one substance of God but in the *hypostasis*, that is, *the person of the Father*." That is to say, the person is not "an adjunct

substantialized by Gregory Palamas. For a reference to the ontological distinction between nature, energy, and person in God, see 2.2 of this dissertation.

⁴³ John Zizioulas, "The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity: The Significance of the Cappadocian Contribution," in *The Trinitarian Theology Today: Essays on Divine Being and Act*, ed. Christoph Schwöbel (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), p. 49.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

to a being.” It is not the substance, but the person that is “the constitutive element of beings” to makes entities able to be entities.⁴⁶

Now, we have got the two different answers to the question that we raised in regard to the ontological concept of divine person. One is found in Augustine and Aquinas. In this answer, divine person is identified with nature in ontological reality, and differs from nature only in our way of thinking. As examined in 3.3, this answer is a consequence of Latin doctrine of divine simplicity (e.g., Augustine and Aquinas' doctrines). The other answer comes from Greek theologians such as the Cappadocians and John D. Zizioulas. In this answer, personhood is fundamentally distinct from nature in reality, and is ontologically primary over the nature. In the former, there is one ontological dimension that is nature; in the latter, there are two ontological dimensions, that is, person and nature.

4.1.2. Divine Person and Center of Consciousness

This section considers whether divine persons can be understood as “conscious centers of action” (i.e., whether divine persons have both psychological and moral aspects of personality – consciousness and action). The discussion of this matter consists of two parts: (1) the irreducible uniqueness of divine persons; (2) Divine persons as “ontological subjects or supposit of divine essence” and/or “psychological person as center of consciousness and action.” The matter of “tritheism,” which some scholars argue the

⁴⁶ John D. Zizioulas, *Being As Communion* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997), pp. 39-40.

notion of “conscious center of action” carries over itself, will be dealt with in the next section as regards “one center or three centers of consciousness or action.”

No orthodox theological tradition in the East and the West blurs the irreducible uniqueness of divine persons. Historically, the theory that fails in emphasizing in a proper way the irreducibility of divine persons was condemned as Sabellianism. For example, the famous “three men” analogy of Gregory of Nyssa was employed to oppose Sabellianism, showing that the individual hypostatic entities should not be mixed up and be attributed to one subject.⁴⁷ Concerning the irreducible singularity of divine persons, Gregory of Nyssa states:

The particularity attributed to each of the hypostases plainly and unambiguously distinguishes one from another. Thus the Father is confessed to be uncreated and unbegotten, for he is neither begotten nor created. This uncreatedness therefore he has in common with the Son and the Holy Spirit. But he is both unbegotten and Father; this is *personal and incommunicable* and it is not perceived in either of the others. The Son is connected to the Father and the Spirit in uncreatedness, but has his individuation in being and being called Son and Only-begotten, which does not belong the God over all or of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit, who has a share with the Father and the Son in the uncreated nature, is again distinguished from them by recognizable features. His feature and mark is quite uniquely to be none of those things which reason envisaged as peculiar to the Father and the Son.⁴⁸

The doctrine of the incommunicable distinction of each divine person which is definitely clear, as we see in Gregory of Nyssa, is inherited and conspicuously substantiated in the theological structure of Greek theology that makes an ontological distinction between divine person and divine essence in reality. As mentioned in the previous section, 4.1.1, the distinction between substance and person implies in Greek theology that the concept

⁴⁷ Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Eunomius* I. 19, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* vol. 5, p. 56. Cf. 3.1 of this dissertation.

⁴⁸ Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium* I, trans. Stuart G. Hall in *El “Contra Eunomium I” en La Produccion Literaria de Gregorio de Nisa*, eds. Lucas F. Mateo-Seco and Juan L. Bastero (Pamplona, Spain: Ediciones Universidad de Navarra, 1988), pp. 75-76. Cf. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 5, p. 61. Italics mine.

of person emerged as a distinct category in ontology. This is summarized by Théodore de Régnon – and Régnon’s summary is acknowledged by orthodox theologians – as implying that Greek theology considers first the divine persons and finds the divine nature through them.⁴⁹ In other words, the ontological principle of God in Greek theology does not consist in the one substance of God, but in the hypostasis of the Father, who freely out of his love begets the Son and brings forth the Spirit.

The personalism to teach that the hypostasis of the Son and that of the Spirit come from the hypostasis of the Father, not from the divine essence, provides a reason why each divine person is irreducibly unique. In Greek personalism, the person, not the common essence, is the constitutive element of beings to make entities to be entities.⁵⁰ That is, the particular personal beings such as the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are ontologically primary, since the Father, the Son and the Spirit whose relationship is permanent and unbreakable are always together. “This results in a reality of communion in which each particular is affirmed as *unique* and irreplaceable by the others.”⁵¹ According to Vladimir Lossky, Sabellianism, which asserts that the three persons are the three successive modes of action, is based on the assumption that “God is an impersonal essence which manifests itself diversely to the universe.” This means to Lossky that “nature completely absorbs the persons.”⁵² Therefore, it is clearly understood that

⁴⁹ Théodore de Régnon, *Études de Théologie positive sur la Sainte Trinité*, I (Paris: Victor Retaux, 1892), p. 433.

⁵⁰ John D. Zizioulas, *Being As Communion*, pp. 39-40.

⁵¹ John D. Zizioulas, “On Being a Person: Towards an Ontology of Personhood,” p. 41.

⁵² Vladimir Lossky, *Orthodox Theology*, p. 37.

“personalism” in Greek theology refutes Sabellianism, confirming the irreducible uniqueness of each divine person.

In Latin theology too, which is constructed on the basis of the strong divine simplicity, each divine person is irreducible and incommunicable in personhood. For instance, Thomas Aquinas states:

... While in created beings relations have their reality in a subject as accidents, in God their reality is the divine essence itself. Hence in God essence and person are not different realities and yet there is real distinction among the persons. The reason: as shown already, person means a relation as subsisting in the divine nature. Such a relation, however, when compared to the essence does not differ really, but only conceptually; *when compared to its co-relation it is distinct really virtue of their oppositeness*. Therefore essence remains one and the persons are three.⁵³

In agreement to his understanding of divine simplicity, Aquinas tirelessly emphasizes that in God essence and person are not different realities. At the same time, he never yields to the argument that if essence and person are one identical reality, then there is no real distinction among the persons. Even though the distinction between essence and person is only conceptual, the three Persons who are identical with essence are really distinct from one another, not merely conceptually.⁵⁴ For otherwise, it would result in Sabellianism. Aquinas states: “If then fatherhood and sonship are not real relations in God, it follows that God is not Father or Son in reality but only because our minds conceive him so,

⁵³ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1a. 39, 1. Italics mine.

⁵⁴ Such scholars as Cornelius Plantinga Jr. doubt that Latin theology can be absolved from the charge that it reduced the distinction of divine persons into a mere logical or nominal distinction. Plantinga states: “In the *Summa Theologiae*, Thomas Aquinas offers an exceedingly subtle and often exquisitely difficult exploration of these matters. He seeks to explain, for instance, how fatherhood and sonship are real relations in God that there are really, and not just logically, distinct, but also how a real relation in God is in reality with nature and differs only in our mind’s understanding, inasmuch as relation implies a reference to the correlative term, which is not implied by the term ‘nature’ ... But how can three things (the divine relations) that are really distinct each bear an identity relation to the divine nature or essence, differing from it ‘only in our mind’s understanding’?” See Cornelius Plantinga Jr., “Social Trinity and Tritheism,” p. 40. For a more discussion on this, see 3.2 and 3.3 of this dissertation.

which is the Sabellian heresy.”⁵⁵ Surely, Aquinas denies any real distinction in God when we consider the absolute reality of His nature. But he confirms that there is a real distinction in God when we think of Him in terms of relation.⁵⁶

Another ground to elucidate the unique irreducibility of divine persons in Latin theology is the notion of divine person as “subsistent being.” According to Thomas Aquinas, “divine Person signifies relation as something subsisting.”⁵⁷ Aquinas writes that since a real relation in God is not an accidental entity in a subject, but the divine nature itself, relation is “something subsisting.” For all that exists in God is one with the divine nature. Since there are in God no accidental qualities, whatever is really attributed to God must be attributed to God as being identical with His being.⁵⁸ The meaning of “to subsist” in a medieval Latin sense is “existing by itself,” “being self-grounded.” One of the major connotations of “subsisting” is “uniqueness,” or “incommunicability.”⁵⁹ Therefore, each divine person as subsistent relation is unique and incommunicable in his personhood. In

⁵⁵ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1a. 28, 1.

⁵⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1a. 28. 4. Aquinas’ reply to such a question (i.e., Cornelius Plantinga Jr.’s question) as we see n. 54, “If divine Person differs from essence only conceptually, not really, how then do three Persons are really distinct?” is well summarized by Ceslaus Velecky: “Whenever one thing takes its origin from another, we must posit a real relation. A relation is real on both sides only when they share something in common; if they are completely different but one is dependent on the other, then the relation is non-mutual, real in the first but not in the second: thus creatures depend on God and so their relations to him are real, but he does not depend on them and so in him there are no real counter-relations. Since the processions of the divine Persons are within the divine nature, the relations arising are also real.” See Ceslaus Velecky, “Appendix 6: Divine Relations,” in *Summa Theologiae* vol. 6 (London: Blackfriars, 1963), p. 141. For a direct reference to Aquinas, see *Summa Theologiae*, 1a. 28. 1 in n. 30 of the previous section 3.2 of this dissertation.

⁵⁷ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1a. 29. 4.

⁵⁸ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1a. 3. 3; 3. 4; 3. 6.

⁵⁹ Ceslaus Velecky, “Appendix 7: Divine Persons,” in *Summa Theologiae* vol. 6 (London: Blackfriars, 1963), p. 147.

other words, the three divine persons cannot be confounded, nor confused, nor mixed up into one.⁶⁰

If each divine person is considered as irreducibly unique in terms of personhood, can we say that each person is “an ontological subject or supposit of divine essence” and/or “a psychological person as center of consciousness or action”? The instant answer from Aquinas will be definitely negative, if that question is asked in terms of ontology. Thomas Aquinas teaches that in God divine essence and divine persons are not really different, but differ in their way of signifying. For in God there is no reality in which something is outside the meaning of its essence or nature.⁶¹ In other words, the divine persons can be designated as supposits or hypostaseis only according to the creaturely mode of being, or after the way of created things, but not as if there really existed any real supposits or subjects.⁶² Aquinas’ idea that divine person is not a subject of divine essence in an ontological sense but in a way of signifying is sustained in his dealing with an opposing view on the doctrine of Incarnation. Aquinas’ opponent considers an objection that “the union of the incarnate Word was not brought about in a person,” since in God divine person is no other than divine nature. Aquinas’ reply is that even though in God there is no real, ontological distinction between nature and supposit, yet they differ

⁶⁰ How can the three distinct subsistent relations or persons be ontologically one? In other words, how can each of personal subsistent beings be identical with essence, while each of them is still a subsistent being? According to Velecky, God who is the source of subsisting for all beings is “unique and free from all limitation” and “knows no limits to his power to communicate his being.” Since God is free from all limitation, He is at once unique and can take the form of being shared completely three times over. In brief, for God, communicability and incommunicability appear as perfectly concomitant. See, Ceslaus Velecky, “Appendix 7: Divine Persons,” p. 148.

⁶¹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 3a. 2. 2. The fundamental reason why God is to be identified with his own essence or nature is that He is not composed of matter and form. Being essentially form, God does not draw His individuality from this or that matter, but is intrinsically individual and Himself subsists as Being. Therefore, God is identical with His own godhead. Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1a. 3. 3.

in our way of thinking about them, inasmuch as person signifies something subsisting.⁶³

In short, Aquinas' answer reminds us that there is another distinction between divine nature and persons, though there is no distinction between them in reality. That

distinction is in our way of thinking about them. Furthermore, the divine persons are subsistent relations that are really distinct among one another. For Aquinas, thus, it is wrong to say that the union of the Incarnate Word did not take place in the person.

Conclusively, the answer to the question above would be somewhat affirmative in terms of our way of signifying God, not in reality, though.⁶⁴

According to Aquinas, our way of signifying God is “analogical.” Divine things are named by our intellect, not “in accord with their proper mode of being,” – “for it is beyond its power to know them in that way” – but “in accord with the way of being found among creatures.”⁶⁵ By this, Aquinas first means that “it is impossible to predicate

⁶² Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1a. 39. 1.

⁶³ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 3a. 2. 2.

⁶⁴ Our conclusion that the doctrine of incarnation in Aquinas implies the affirmation of divine person as a supposit distinct from essence is supported by William R. O'Connor. In an article, O'Connor argues that for Aquinas person is an existential term, while nature is an essential term. And person and nature do not belong to the same order of reality. He states: “St. Thomas was mainly concerned to keep distinct what the Council of Chalcedon kept distinct: nature on the other hand and person or hypostasis on the other ... Nature for St. Thomas is an essential term; it is that which a definition reveals. Nature is not the subject that exists; it is rather the part or principle in a subject which determines it specifically to be this or that kind of being. person on the other hand is an existential term. It points to the individual subject which as a whole enjoys independent existence. If this subject does not possess a rational nature St. Thomas gives it the generic name of hypostasis or supposit. The term person is a name of dignity; it is reserved for subjects that possess substantial existence and which exist on the highest level, the level of intelligence and freedom. It is impossible to change nature into person by the mere addition of individuality. The attempt to do so manifests an essentialist mentality which is part of the legacy left by Platonism to generations of thinkers and writers even within the Church. Person, however, and nature are in different orders of reality; since person is the subject that exists, while nature is a principle of specification within an existing subject.” See “Chalcedon, St. Thomas Aquinas, and the Concept of Person,” *The American Ecclesiastical Review* 127 (1952), pp. 197-198.

⁶⁵ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 1a. 39. 2. Also 1a. 13. 1.

anything univocally of God and creatures.”⁶⁶ In case of the notion of “person,” it cannot be said that “person” is used univocally in both God and human being. Individuals of human beings are described as “supposits” since its nature is individualized by matter that stands as subject of specific nature, while God is intrinsically individualized since He is not composed of matter and form. Yet although theological words are not used in a univocal sense, Aquinas argues that they are not used in an equivocal sense, either, “for if this were so we could never argue from statement about creatures to statement about God.”⁶⁷ In case of the notion of “person,” again, it cannot be said that “person” is used equivocally in both God and human being. Otherwise, the term “divine person” has no meaning at all.

As we mention in the previous section, for Augustine, words such as hypostasis or person cannot be a precise answer to the question, “What three?” and is given merely because we need something to say against the traps or errors of the heretics. Augustine’s description of “person” is just “three what (*tria quædam*).”⁶⁸ What Augustine intends to say by saying “three what” is that the term “person” is the word that the church wants to keep in order to signify what we mean by the Trinity without falling into the errors of “Sabellian heresy.”⁶⁹ For Augustine, the term “person” is needed in the Trinity at least in order that it may not be said that there are not three somethings in the Trinity. As it were, Augustine’s “three what” reflects how difficult it is to confirm the plurality in the Trinity without making an ontological distinction between divine nature and person as its

⁶⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1a. 13. 5.

⁶⁷ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1a. 13. 5.

⁶⁸ Augustine, *On the Trinity*, 5. 9. 10 and 7. 4. 9.

⁶⁹ Augustine, *On the Trinity*, 7. 4. 9-7. 6. 11.

supposit. However, when we read Augustine in terms of Aquinas' notion of equivocal or univocal, the intent of Augustine here should not be interpreted to mean that he uses an expression, "three what" because he presumes the equivocality of "person," denying its univocality. Indeed, Augustine does not give "the analytic definition of the concept of 'person'."⁷⁰ Yet Augustine's understanding of divine person is very "personal." As Lewis Ayres rightly puts it, "all that Augustine accords to the human self as the shape of its active unity, and all that he accords to the human self as the means by which it may grow in knowledge and love of God ... : all this he also accords to *each* of the Trinitarian persons."⁷¹ In other words, Augustine ascribes *memoria*, *intelligentia*, and *voluntas* to each of the divine persons. For whatever in a human way of speaking may be regarded as suitable to God "fits both the whole Trinity which the one God is and each of the persons in the Trinity." Each divine person is living, sensible, rational, powerful, and just, which is the same with human beings, though imperfectly.⁷² Here, we observe an analogical use of the term "person" as a psychological person of consciousness or action, even in Augustine.

⁷⁰ Sheri Katz, "Person," in *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, edited by Allan D. Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), p. 648.

⁷¹ Lewis Ayres, "'Remember That You Are Catholic' (serm. 52.2): Augustine on the Unity of the Triune God," p. 74. Ayres' proof-text comes from Augustine, *On the Trinity*, 15. 7. 12: "From this we conclude that the Father is his own love, in the same manner as he is his own understanding and his own memory ... And because the Son also is wisdom begotten from wisdom, as neither the Father nor the Holy Spirit understands for him, but he himself understands for himself, so neither does the Father remember for him, nor does the Holy Spirit love for Him, but he remembers for himself and loves for himself. For he himself is also his own memory, his own understanding, and his own love; but that he is so, comes to him from that Father of whom he was born. The Holy Spirit, too, because he is wisdom proceeding from wisdom ... has these three things, and so has them that he himself is these three things. But that he is so, comes to him from him whom he proceeds."

⁷² Augustine, *On the Trinity*, 15. 5. 7.

More clearly, we see such an employment of the term “person” in an analogical sense from Thomas Aquinas. Revising Boethius’ definition of “person is individual substance of rational nature,” Aquinas describes “person” as “what subsists in an intellectual nature.” Aquinas states as follows:

‘Person’ means that which is most perfect in the whole of nature, namely what subsists in rational nature. Now since every kind of perfection should be attributed to God, because his nature contains every perfection, it is fitting that the word ‘person’ should be used of God; nevertheless it is not used in exactly the same sense of God as of creatures but in a higher sense, as are other words by which we name creatures, as was explained elsewhere when we discussed the naming of God.⁷³

Aquinas makes it clear that “person” is not used equivocally of God, men, and angels, though it is not used in exactly same sense of God as of human being. The general meaning of the term, “person,” is the same in all cases of God, men and angels, which is “what subsists in its own right in an intellectual nature.”

Now our observations of Aquinas may be summarized as follows: (1) “Person” in God may not be interpreted as a supposit of divine essence in such an ontological way that we see in human beings, but in our way of speaking about God, which is analogical; (2) The divine persons as supposits that we see through our way of speaking about them are apprehended as “person” in a psychological or moral sense, since God, men and angels share the general meaning of “person” of “what subsists in its own right in an intellectual nature.” Though the exact meaning of “person” may not be the same with all

⁷³ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1a. 29. 3. Also *De Potentia* IX, 3 ad 1 and *I Sent.* 23. I. 4. In this quote, the locus where Aquinas discussed the naming of God refers to the article on the doctrine of analogy in *ST*, 1a. 13. 3-5.

cases, “person” equally used of God, men and angels has in common three elements, namely, “intellectual nature,” “individual thing,” and “subsisting.”⁷⁴

These two observations lead us to reach a conclusion: It is in a psychological or moral sense, not in an ontological sense, that for Aquinas, each of the divine persons can be said to be a supposit or subject of intellectuality, love, justice, freedom, and whatever is referred to in divine essence. In his explanation of the personal element of “intellectual nature,” Ceslaus Velecky supports our conclusion as follows:

Since the definition is applied to both human and divine persons it follows that its meaning is analogical ... ‘Nature’ is used in the sense of ‘essence’ or what is defined by the definition, conceived not so much as a source of activities, but rather as giving the fundamental character to the reality in question. This character here is intellectuality. We should not understand this merely as something noetic or mental but rather as ‘having knowledge and love’. Such knowledge is not described in terms of discursive and syllogistic processes but of intimate penetration into the meaning of a reality. From such understanding springs an affective appreciation as well. And since discernment and love can be both directed and withheld, we must also bring in the idea of freedom. St. Thomas has this in mind when he points out that ‘persons have control over what they do, and, unlike other things, they are not merely acted upon but act on their own initiative’. Hence also the importance of the phrase which occurs in the same article [i.e., *ST*, 1a. 29. 1], *actiones autem in singularibus sunt*. It is individuals who act, and ‘person’ refers to the ultimate center of activity and responsibility; it is the last subject attribution. So the theology of the Trinity stresses the idea of ‘person,’ for the divine Persons are the agents in the creation of the world and in the re-creation of man. Each Person acts precisely as person though together with the other two, and the whole created universe bears their traces.⁷⁵

According to Velecky, divine persons, for Aquinas, may be called as person in an analogical sense. “Divine person” has intellectuality and affective appreciation, and is

⁷⁴ Ceslaus Velecky, “Appendix 7: Divine Persons,” p. 146. Aquinas explains the difference between God and human being in using “person”: “We can say that God has a rational nature if reason be taken to imply, not the process of thought, but in a general sense an intelligent nature. God cannot be called an ‘individual’ in the sense that this implies matter which is the principle of individuation, but only in the sense of incommunicability. Finally, ‘substance’ can be applied to God inasmuch as it refers to self-grounded existence.” See *Summa Theologiae*, 1a. 29. rep. 4.

⁷⁵ Ceslaus Velecky, “Appendix 7: Divine Persons,” pp. 146-147.

recognized to be a center of activity and responsibility because of his freedom. In short, for Aquinas, divine person is analogically apprehended as “subject of intellectuality, love, justice and freedom,” or “ultimate center, having knowledge and love, of activity and responsibility.”

In the light of our understanding of Aquinas, it can be safely said that divine person can be taken as “a psychological person in a modern sense,” i.e., “a conscious center of action,” although it may not be a subject of divine essence in terms of ontological reality. For Aquinas, indeed, the doctrine of the real identity between divine essence and divine person leads us to conclude that there is the only one reality of God in an ontological sense. Yet Aquinas also is interpreted to imply that the three divine persons are analogically apprehended as “persons” in a psychological or moral sense.

In Greek theology, the notion of divine person as both ontological supposit of divine essence and psychological person as center of action and consciousness” is more directly and clearly observed than in Latin theology. We can take Gregory Palamas for an example. John Meyendorff explains as follows:

... Palamas is in the tradition of the great Cappadocians in conceiving the divine hypostases as ‘supports’ of the divine Being, ‘in which’ the essence is manifest, and not only as internal relations or hypostatic characters identical with that essence: “The hypostatic characters are not the hypostasis, but they are characteristics of the hypostasis.” If the hypostasis were only manifestations of the essence, the Son and the Holy Spirit would not be hypostases, for the Father, considered as the source of the essence, would be the Sole divine hypostasis. So, when for instance one speaks of the Son as the Power of the Wisdom of the Father, it is necessary to bear in mind that he is the ‘autohypostasized Wisdom,’ for, in another sense, he is not Wisdom, but possesses the same wisdom and the same power as the Father and the Spirit, since wisdom and power are operations or energies of the divine Being.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ John Meyendorff, *A Study of Gregory Palamas*, pp. 214-215.

According to Meyendorff, the tradition in which the divine hypostases are conceived as “supports,” or “supposits” of the divine Being, in which the essence is manifested, and not as “hypostatic characters identical with that essence,” comes from the Cappadocians and is confirmed by Gregory Palamas. In Palamas’ thought, the personalism of Greek theology does not allow the idea that divine persons are distinct from divine essence only in our way of conception, but not in reality. For such an idea yields to the essentialism of Greek philosophers: “the essence of God would produce itself.” In addition, divine person is “personal” in a psychological or moral sense, since divine person is “support” who possesses wisdom, power, and whatever is attributed to divine essence.

In the same way, John Zizioulas takes the particular, personal beings of Father, Son and Spirit as “bearers of the totality of nature.”⁷⁷ Unlike Thomas Aquinas’ idea,⁷⁸ Zizioulas makes a real distinction between nature and its supposit in an ontological sense. In dealing with his own idea of “hypostasis of ecclesial existence,”⁷⁹ Zizioulas appeals to the doctrine of “two natures, one person” in Incarnation, where he confirms the person as

⁷⁷ John D. Zizioulas, “On Being a Person: Towards an Ontology of Personhood,” in *Persons, Divine and Human*, eds. Christoph Schwöbel and Colin E. Gunton (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991), p. 41.

⁷⁸ “If ... there is a reality in which nothing is outside of the meaning of its essence or nature, and such is so with God, then the nature and the supposit are not distinct in reality, but only in our way of thinking about them. One and the same reality is then termed a nature as meaning an essence, and a supposit as meaning something subsisting.” See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 3a. 2. 2.

⁷⁹ Zizioulas assumes the two modes of existence in man. One may be called the hypostasis of biological existence; the other the hypostasis of ecclesial existence. The hypostasis of biological existence is constituted by a man’s conception and birth. Constitutionally the hypostasis of biological existence is inevitably bound to what is called the ontological necessity, such as the natural instinct, and suffers from individualism of hypostases. The hypostasis of ecclesial existence is, on the other hand, constituted by the new birth of man, by baptism. The hypostasis of ecclesial existence enjoys the absolute ontological freedom that is free from the ontological necessity. In other words, the hypostasis of ecclesial existence does not subsist in death and individualism, but subsists in life and love. Zizioulas points out Jesus as the person who realized in history the very reality of the person of ecclesial existence. With regard to this point, Zizioulas puts an stress on the ontological distinction of person from nature and finds the theological ground for it in the patristic theology on the doctrine of Incarnation. See John D. Zizioulas, *Being As Communion*, pp. 49-65.

a supposit of nature and the ontological primacy of the personhood over the nature. He states as follows:

Chalcedon ... made an important *ontological* statement in speaking of the hypostasis of the Son as the only personal identity of Christ ... The 'Who' of Christ is the Son. In Him the two natures give their qualities to the identity without making the identity depend in the primary ontological sense, on these qualities, i.e. in the sense in which our identities ultimately depend – and thus are unable to make the particular 'I' ontologically decisive. The natural qualities are not extrinsic to the identity – the question 'Who am I?' does not aim at excluding natural qualities from the identity of 'I' – but by being 'enhypostatized' these qualities become dependent on the hypostasis for their being; the hypostasis is not dependent on them. Thus the cause of being is the particular, not the general.⁸⁰

For Zizioulas, Cyril of Alexandria's idea of "the hypostatic union of the two natures," which was finally authorized as orthodox, gives a foundational ground on which to argue that the person is a supposit or bearer of the nature and is ontologically distinct from the nature. Zizioulas believes that Cyril's doctrine implies the two ideas: (1) that the person of Christ is one and identified with the hypostasis of the Son of the Trinity, and (2) that each of the two natures is enhypostatized in the hypostasis of the Son. Those ideas cannot dispense with the ontologically distinct existence of hypostasis from nature. Surely, Zizioulas does not mean by this argument that hypostasis pre-exists chronologically or logically prior to nature. They coincide with each other, but are distinct in ontological reality.⁸¹ Besides, Zizioulas emphasizes that divine persons as bearers of divine nature exist in absolute ontological freedom that is free from any ontological necessity of nature. The Father as a person existing in absolute freedom freely wills to "beget" the Son and "bring forth" the Spirit. Thus, the exercise of the freedom of the Father results in the love

⁸⁰ John D. Zizioulas, "On Being a Person: Towards an Ontology of Personhood," p. 43.

⁸¹ John D. Zizioulas, "The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity: The Significance of the Cappadocian Contribution," pp. 46-48; idem, *Being As Communion*, pp. 54-55.

of “communion.” In an ontological manner, the consequence of the exercise of the freedom of God signifies that God as love subsists as the Trinity.⁸²

Can divine person be taken then as a center of freedom or love? First of all, Zizioulas does not agree to the idea that personhood can be defined in terms of “qualities or capacities of any kind: biological, social or moral.” While “personhood is about hypostasis” (i.e. personhood claims *uniqueness* in the absolute sense of the term), qualities or capacities such as “consciousness of the ‘self’ and its psychological experiences” merely represent something “shared by more than one being and do not point to absolute uniqueness.” The notion of personhood can be given as an answer not to the question “What?” but “Who?” For Zizioulas, qualities are important for personal identity, but they become “ontologically personal only through the hypostasis to which they belong.”⁸³ In other words, person cannot be identified with essence; essence is enhypostatized in person. If we describe it in Gregory Palamas’ way, person is “autohypostasized Essence.” So long as “center” or “subject” points to “uniqueness,” thus, for Zizioulas, divine person who ontologically exists in freedom and love can be taken as “center or subject of consciousness and action.”

We can see the views of Gregory Palamas and John Zizioulas merely reflecting Greek tradition. According to J. A. McGuckin, for example, Cyril of Alexandria’s understanding of the notion of divine personhood is interpreted as “signifying dynamic spiritual subjectivity and consciousness that stands as the direct and unmediated initiator of actions, words, and intentions which describe its personhood but do not constitute it.”⁸⁴

⁸² John D. Zizioulas, *Being As Communion*, p. 43, 44, 46.

⁸³ John D. Zizioulas, “On Being a Person: Towards an Ontology of Personhood,” p. 45.

Besides, in the light of Daniel F. Stramara's interpretation, Gregory Palamas and John Zizioulas stand in the same line with Gregory of Nyssa in taking divine persons as "psychological person as center of consciousness."

Above all, Stramara emphasizes that for Gregory of Nyssa God is "not one divine essence in three static ontological objectifications, but three dynamic persons who are one divine nature of love, a nature which is essentially communicative and reciprocal."⁸⁵

Stramara pays attention to Gregory of Nyssa's use of *prosopon* in addition to *hypostasis* to denote divine person. In Stramara's analysis, Gregory of Nyssa employs *hypostasis* when trying to explain the Trinity in terms of theological metaphysics, while he retains the more dynamic term, *prosopon*, "belonging to the category of psychological experience." For Gregory is primarily concerned with "the psychological experience of God as person," at the same time maintaining "a theologically orthodox metaphysics."⁸⁶

Stramara explains as follows:

According to Gregory's theology of the Holy Trinity, *ὑπόστασις* and *πρόσωπον* are not absolutely univocal. The *ἰδιότης*, the personal relational quality, is strictly proper to the *πρόσωπον*. The psychological dimension encompasses the

⁸⁴ McGuckin traces back to the controversy between Cyril of Alexandria and Nestorius the modern tendency to understand subjectivity predominantly in a psychological terms. McGuckin writes: "What seems to be at issue ... is that he [=Nestorius] approaches the concept of subjectivity largely in semantic terms, as the grammatical subject of reference in discourse, whereas Cyril tended to understand the subject primarily as the initiator of actions, especially the spiritually dynamic action of redemptive restoration of communion. It was this latter sense of spiritual subjectivity that was destined to win the day in Christian philosophy. From this period in Late Antiquity, even down to our own age which understands subjectivity predominantly in psychological terms, the emergence of the concept of 'the person' was to have incalculable importance for the European consciousness, and it was to emerge in Cyril's sense: as signifying dynamic spiritual subjectivity and consciousness that stands as the direct and unmediated initiator of actions, words, and intentions which describe its personhood but do not constitute it." See John J. A. McGuckin, *St. Cyril of Alexandria: The Christological Controversy* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994), p. 159.

⁸⁵ Daniel F. Stramara, "Unmasking the Meaning of *Prosopon*: *Prosopa* As Person in the Works of Gregory of Nyssa," p. 427.

⁸⁶ Daniel F. Stramara, "Unmasking the Meaning of *Prosopon*: *Prosopa* As Person in the Works of Gregory of Nyssa," p. 330.

ὑπόστασις which contains ἰδιώματα; the ὑπόστασις in turn is situated within the one οὐσία. The ἰδιώματα are metaphysical characteristics (given the Trinitarian context); unoriginate, immediately caused, and mediately originate. The ἰδιότητες are interpersonal relations (given the Trinitarian context): unbegottenness, begottenness, procession. Analyzed from a metaphysical standpoint, the ἰδιώματα, the specific properties of the ὑπόστασις, act as the basis for the ἰδιότητες, the specific relationships on the personal level of πρόσωπον. From one perspective, the personal relationships are dependent upon the metaphysical relations, yet in another sense, the personal relationships properly transcend and encompass the causal relations.⁸⁷

For Gregory, πρόσωπον featured as interpersonal relations is an “individualization” or “a final realization of the potentiality” of φύσις that is none other than the divine nature possessing psychological qualities such as pity, mercy, and humility.⁸⁸ Apart from ὑπόστασις, divine person as πρόσωπον is “more than just a metaphysical reality,” and “the individual expression of relationality in its psychological and personal dimension.”⁸⁹ Stramara summarizes hence that “the Divine Persons are distinguished ontologically by their causal relations and personally/psychologically by their relationships.”⁹⁰

⁸⁷ For his argument, Stramara’s quote from Gregory of Nyssa is from *Contra Eunomium* 3. 5: “The appellations of Peter and Paul, and, generally speaking of men, are different, while the essence of all is one: wherefore, in most respects we are mutually identical, and differ one from another only in those special properties (ἰδιώμασι) which are observed in individuals: and hence also appellations are not indicative of essence, but of the properties (ἰδιότητος) which mark (χαρακτηρίζουσιν) the particular individual.” Though both ἰδιώμασι and ἰδιότητες are translated as “properties,” in Stramara’s opinion, they are not the same. The former connotes “physical traits,” while the latter indicates “psychological qualities” which characterize divine persons as unique individuals. Daniel F. Stramara, “Unmasking the Meaning of Prosopon: Prosopa As Person in the Works of Gregory of Nyssa,” pp. 351-352.

⁸⁸ Daniel F. Stramara, “Unmasking the Meaning of Prosopon: Prosopa As Person in the Works of Gregory of Nyssa,” p. 355, 356.

⁸⁹ Daniel F. Stramara, “Unmasking the Meaning of Prosopon: Prosopa As Person in the Works of Gregory of Nyssa,” p. 360/

⁹⁰ Daniel F. Stramara, “Unmasking the Meaning of Prosopon: Prosopa As Person in the Works of Gregory of Nyssa,” p. 370. Stramara expands Gregory of Nyssa’s idea into the whole idea of the Cappadocians: “In his argument with Eunomius, Basil previously contended that the Spirit possesses ‘an authentically independent and self-governing authority.’ Such a reality is only proper to Divine persons. Thus the three persons are not notional distinctions. That is why the Cappadocians are comfortable in employing metaphysical terminology in order to express the hypostatic reality proper to each person. Nonetheless, such qualities as will, freedom, loving relationships, and personal incommunicability

In Gregory of Nyssa's theory, then, the notion of divine person consists of two aspects, metaphysical object and psychological subject. The divine person who is at once a metaphysical object distinct from essence in reality and a psychological subject belonging to the dimension of relational and psychological experience entails and strongly supports the notion of divine person as "center of consciousness." First of all, since the divine persons are in an inter-personal, communal, relationship, "each is necessarily aware of his respective self and the other two." Indeed, God's self-knowledge or consciousness is not like that of humans. Gregory of Nyssa states:

The Persons of the Divinity are not separated from one another, not either by time or by place, not by will or by practice, not by activity or by passion, not by anything of this sort, such as is observed with regard to human beings.⁹¹

In other words, God's self-consciousness is absolutely immediate, since there is no process of intellection, no temporal disruption in God's knowledge. The absolute immediacy of God's self-consciousness is said to be entailed by the perfect infinity of the divine nature that is the ground on which to deny any separation among the divine persons. Apart from the immediacy of God's self-knowledge, yet each divine person's awareness of his respective self and the other two are inhered in the communal relationship in the divine nature – "this is the metaphysical ground of the perichoretic consciousness functioning among the persons of the Holy Trinity."⁹²

transcend strictly ontological categories; they pertain to the province of psychological personality." See, p. 377.

⁹¹ Gregory of Nyssa, *Ad Graecos*, in *Gregorii Nysseni Opera*, vol. III. 1, p. 25. Quoted from Daniel F. Stramara, "Unmasking the Meaning of Prosopon: Prosopa As Person in the Works of Gregory of Nyssa," p. 409.

⁹² Daniel F. Stramara, "Unmasking the Meaning of Prosopon: Prosopa As Person in the Works of Gregory of Nyssa," p. 410, 416.

In Stramara's analysis of Gregory of Nyssa, the inter-relational self-knowledge between the three persons directly leads to the self-consciousness of each person as "I." For example, Stramara argues that in his midrash on John 17:21, Gregory conceives of the Son as "possessing a true and eternal I-center,"⁹³ and in his catechism, of the Holy Spirit as "possessing his own proper I-center from which he relates to the other two persons as Thou's."⁹⁴ The feature of the inter-relational self-knowledge between the three persons provides not only the I-center of each person, but also its inherent other-orientation, as well. For the Father, the Son and the Spirit are constituted by their inter-relationship.⁹⁵

⁹³ Gregory's midrash on John 17:21 belongs to his treatise on First Corinthians 15:28, "When (the Father) Will Subject All Things to (the Son), Then (the Son) Himself Will Be Subjected to Him (the Father) Who Subjects All Things to Him (the Son)": "Let us look at the words following those quoted above from the Gospel: 'That they may be one as we are one. You in me and I in them, because I and you are one, in order that they may be perfectly one' [Jn 17:21-23]. I think that there is no need for exegesis of these words which agree with what we have already explained above, for the text itself clearly sets forth the teaching on unity. 'In order that they may be one as we are one.' For it cannot be otherwise – 'that all may be one as we are one' – unless the disciples, being separated from everything dividing them from each other, are united together 'as we are one,' that 'they might be one, as we are one.' How can it be that 'I am in them?' For 'I alone cannot be in them unless you also are in them, since both I and you are one. Thus, they might be perfectly one, having been perfected in us, for we are one.'" See Brother Casimir's article with the same title as Gregory's above, *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 28 (1983): 22.

⁹⁴ Stramara's quote from Gregory's *Oratio catechetica magna* is: "But we conceive of it [the Holy Spirit] as an essential power, regarded as self-centered in its own proper person, yet equally incapable of being separated from God in whom it is, or from the Word of God whom it accompanies, as from melting into nothingness; but as being, after the likeness of God's Word, existing as a person (καθ' ὑπόστασιν οὐσαν), able to will (προαιρετικήν = free-willed), self-moved, efficient, ever choosing the good, and for its every purpose having its power concurrent with its will." Gregory of Nyssa, *Oratio catechetica magna* 2; *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* vol. 5, p. 477. Quoted from Daniel F. Stramara, "Unmasking the Meaning of Prosopon: Prosope as Person in the Works of Gregory of Nyssa," p. 432.

⁹⁵ Stramara states: "One can safely conclude that Gregory would clarify his own position by stating that the Father alone is properly an I-Thou, while both the Only-begotten and Holy Spirit are Thou's. Constituted in being by the Father, the Spirit and Son properly are independent Thou's in interdependent relationship with the Father, possessing their own respective self-identity; i.e., an I-center which is innately prosopic, reflexively directed towards the Father, hence experiencing him as the primary Thou. The Holy Spirit and Only-begotten experience each other as a secondary Thou, since their respective principle of origin lies in the Father alone. Thus the Spirit is 'regarded as self-centered in its own proper person, yet equally incapable of being separated from God in whom it is, or from the Word of God whom it accompanies.' The I-center of each person is inherently other-oriented." Daniel F. Stramara, "Unmasking the Meaning of Prosopon: Prosope as Person in the Works of Gregory of Nyssa," p. 427.

Identifying the I-center of each person with a center of consciousness, Stramara concludes that “Gregory of Nyssa believes in three Πρόσωπα each possessing his own proper and respective intentionality and free will or conscious purpose.”⁹⁶ In a more detailed way, Stramara defines “divine person” as follows: “A divine person is a unique incommunicable individual possessing a center of consciousness, exercising free will, intentionality and conscious purpose, one who by means of self-consciousness, being both subject and object to himself, is fully and immediately self-actualized in his relationship with himself as well as with the other two persons of the Holy Trinity.”⁹⁷ In

⁹⁶ Stramara’s proof-texts for his own conclusion that each person consciously and freely exercises will, intentionality and resolute purpose regarding his own existence and relationships are like these. First, the Father exercises both an intentionality and a resolute will with regard to his generating the Son: “We should like to persuade those who say that the Father first willed (βεβουλευσθι = intended) and so proceed to become a Father, and on this ground assert posteriority in existence as regards the Word, by whatever illustrations may make it possible, to turn to the orthodox view. Neither does this immediate conjunction exclude the ‘willing (βουλησιν = intentionality)’ of the Father, in the sense that He had a Son without choice (ἀπροαιρέτως = without free will or conscious purpose), by some necessity of His Nature, nor does the ‘willing (βουλησις)’ separate the Son from the Father, coming in between them as a kind of interval: so that we neither reject from our doctrine the ‘willing ((βουλησις)’ of the Begetter directed to the Son, as being, so to say, forced out by the conjunction of the Son’s oneness with the Father, nor do we by any means break that inseparable connection, when ‘willing ((βουλησις)’ is regarded as involved in generation.” *Contra Eunomium* 3. 6, in *Gregorii Nysseni Opera*, vol. II, p. 191; *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* vol. 5, p. 202. Quoted from Daniel F. Stramara, pp. 438-439. Secondly, the Son possesses self-consciousness concerning his true and proper identity, freely willing to be who he is: “But God, being One Good, in a single and uncompounded nature, looks ever the same way, and is never changed by the impulse of choice (προαιρέσεως = conscious purpose), but always wishes (βουλεται = intends) what He is, and is, assuredly what He wishes: so that He is in both respects properly and truly called Son of God, since His nature contains the good, and His choice (προαιρέσεως = resulte purpose) also is never severed from that which is most excellent.” *Contra Eunomium* 3. 1, in *Gregorii Nysseni Opera*, vol. II, p. 45; *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* vol. 5, p. 149. Quoted from Daniel F. Stramara, p. 440. Thirdly, the Holy Spirit exercises the comparable faculty of intentionality and conscious purpose which the Father and Son respectively posses: “In every deed and thought, whether in this world, or beyond this world, whether in time, or in eternity, the Holy Spirit is to be apprehended as joined to the Father and Son, and is wanting in no wish (βουλήματος = intentionality) or energy, or anything else that is implied in a devout conception of Supreme Goodness; and, therefore, that, except for the distinction of order and Person, no variation in any point is to be apprehended.” *Adversus Macedonianos*, in *Gregorii Nysseni Opera*, vol. III. 1, p. 100; *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* vol. 5, p. 320. Quoted from Daniel F. Stramara, p. 441.

⁹⁷ Daniel F. Stramara, “Unmasking the Meaning of Prosopon: Prosopa As Person in the Works of Gregory of Nyssa,” p. 472. This conclusion leads Stramara to whole-heartedly agree to Cornelius Plantinga Jr.’s interpretation of Gregory of Nyssa that “Gregory does not use the phrase ‘center of consciousness,’ but he does consistently depict Father, Son, and Spirit as distinct actors, knowers, willers, and lovers – what we would call centers of consciousness whether Gregory did or not.” Stramara’s quote from Cornelius

conclusion, Stramara's study of Gregory of Nyssa shows that Gregory is one of the theological root-sources of Greek tradition in which the divine persons are taken not merely as ontological supposita of divine nature but also as psychological and moral subjects as conscious centers of action.⁹⁸

From the study we have made so far, a conclusion can be reached that the psychologically functional notion of divine person as "center of consciousness" is acknowledged in both Latin theology and Greek theology. In Latin tradition, the understanding of divine persons as "center of consciousness" in terms of ontology is rejected since there is only one reality of God in an ontological sense, while in Greek tradition, it is beyond all question. No tradition takes the term "person" in a univocal sense when it is used in both God and human being. Yet both traditions apprehend three divine persons as three subjects who have psychological and moral aspects. We can safely conclude that the divine persons are "center of consciousness" in a psychological sense, though not in an ontological sense.

Plantinga Jr. is from "Gregory of Nyssa and the Social Analogy of the Trinity," *The Thomist* 50 (1986): 352. See Stramara, p. 444.

⁹⁸ Obviously, the conclusion of Daniel F. Stramara is the opposite of what Sarah Coakley claims to read from Gregory of Nyssa. Coakley may be right to raise a question, "Does Gregory of Nyssa intend 'persons' in the Godhead to have individualized wills, thoughts, and intentions, as human persons do?" But she seems to be too much obsessed by the thought that no theological term including "person" can be used in a univocal way of God and a human being, and goes so far as to deny divine persons any overtones of "personality," let alone "consciousness" or "self-consciousness." No hint or connotation of individualism should be allowed in the notion of divine person, as Coakley says well. But such a concern about individualism does not entail the conclusion that to the 'persons' is allowed "only the minimally distinctive features of their different internal causal relations." She does not seem to recognize that in the Trinity, the three divine persons as "center of consciousness" do not necessarily bring up three consciousnesses. Her claim that Gregory's trinitarianism "more easily shelter" under Latin approach to deal with how one God can be three divine persons than under the Eastern approach to say how three persons can be one god, is too big to justify. See Sarah Coakley, "'Persons' in the 'Social' Doctrine of the Trinity: A Critique of Current Analytic Discussion," in *The Trinity: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Trinity*, eds. Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, and Gerald O'Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 123-144.

4.1.3. Tritheism and Divine Person as Center of Consciousness

The modern controversy on tritheism focuses in most cases itself on the notion of divine person as “center of consciousness.” To some theologians, such as Karl Barth and Karl Rahner, there is only one spiritual center of activity, subjectivity, and liberty, in God. For the one divine nature of the Trinity brings forth the only one consciousness in God, and three consciousnesses imply three divine natures.⁹⁹ They argue thus that the Christian God is one person in a modern sense of center of consciousness, and that the idea of the three centers of consciousness is necessarily tritheist. For in their thought, three centers of consciousness necessitate three consciousnesses.

However, there are two assumptions in their claim that three centers of consciousness entail tritheism. One is that three centers of consciousness necessitate three consciousnesses. The other is that three consciousnesses bring forth three divine natures. This section will deal with these two assumptions, and will conclude whether the notion of divine person as centers of consciousness necessitates tritheism.

First, does the notion of divine persons as three centers of consciousness entail three consciousnesses? Cornelius Plantinga Jr. claims that the three consciousnesses in the Trinity are unavoidable if each divine person is self-conscious. For example, Plantinga thinks that Bernard Lonergan’s view according to Joseph Bracken’s interpretation is incoherent. According to Joseph Bracken, Lonergan holds “both that there is only one real consciousness in the divine life and also that the three persons are

⁹⁹ Karl Barth, *CD IV/1*, p. 205; Karl Rahner, *The Trinity*, pp. 106-109. A detailed discuss about Barth is given in 4.2.3-2.4 of this dissertation.

each self-conscious and other-conscious.”¹⁰⁰ Against this description of Lonergan’s view, Plantinga argues that “if the Father were truly self-conscious, he would have to have a partly different consciousness from that of Son and Spirit.” For, otherwise, the Father could not know “the truth of the proposition, *I am the Father*”; the Son could not know “the truth of the proposition, *I am the Son*.” In Plantinga’s thought, “it could not be the case that Father, Son, and Spirit each had precisely the same consciousness while each was moreover distinctly self-conscious.”¹⁰¹

Plantinga’s argument for the three consciousnesses due to each divine person’s distinct self-consciousness is supported by Gregory of Nyssa. According to Daniel F. Stramara, first, Gregory of Nyssa thinks that each divine person conceives of his identity in reciprocal relationship with the other persons. Stramara states as follows:

If by center of consciousness one means a mode of apprehending the other Persons, then according to Gregory of Nyssa there are three (centers of consciousness). Each Person experiences his respective relationship with other two in a manner unique to himself. The Son alone enjoys the experience of filiation; correspondingly, the Father alone enjoys paternity. The Spirit alone enjoys the experience of effluence; correspondingly, the Father alone enjoys fontality. The Son alone enjoys the experience of conductivity with regard to the Spirit; and correspondingly, the Spirit alone enjoys resting within the Son.¹⁰²

For Gregory of Nyssa, each divine person possesses and enjoys a distinct self-identity concerning his true and proper identity and relationship with the others.

As observed in 4.1.2, also, Gregory of Nyssa clearly confirms each divine person’s self-consciousness of himself as “I-center” in a reciprocal relationship with the

¹⁰⁰ Cornelius Plantinga Jr., “Social Trinity and Tritheism,” p. 42.

¹⁰¹ Cornelius Plantinga Jr., “Social Trinity and Tritheism,” p. 43.

¹⁰² Daniel F. Stramara, “Unmasking the Meaning of Prosopon: Prosopon As Person in the Works of Gregory of Nyssa,” pp. 436-437.

other persons. Again, here is Stramara's explanation:

According to Rahner, the Father alone is "I" and the Son and Spirit are only "Thou's." While Gregory of Nyssa did not address such an issue, one can safely conclude that Gregory would clarify his own position by stating that the Father alone is properly an I-Thou, while both the Only-begotten and Holy Spirit are Thou-I's. Constituted in being by the Father, the Spirit and Son properly are independent Thou's in interdependent relationship with the Father, possessing their own respective self-identity; i.e., an I-center which is innately prosopic, reflexively directed towards the Father, hence experiencing him as the primary Thou.¹⁰³

According to Gregory of Nyssa, each divine person is "I-center," the Father being primarily "I" and secondly "Thou" while Son and Spirit are primarily "Thou" and secondly "I." This implies the same as what Plantinga implies in his argument that the Father alone knows the truth of the proposition, "I am the Father," and the Son alone knows the truth of the proposition, "I am the Son." Each divine person has a distinct consciousness of his own identity.

In short, Gregory of Nyssa and Cornelius Plantinga Jr. are one in arguing that insofar as there are three centers of consciousness in the Trinity, there are three consciousnesses due to each divine person's self-consciousness.¹⁰⁴ This shows that Barth and Rahner are not wrong in assuming that the notion of three centers of consciousness entails three consciousnesses.

If there are three partly different consciousnesses in the Trinity because each divine person has a distinct self-consciousness, then, does it entail tritheism? In other words, does the idea of three consciousnesses necessarily imply three divine natures? The

¹⁰³ Daniel F. Stramara, p. 427.

¹⁰⁴ Stramara confirms the agreement between Gregory and Plantinga in this regard through supporting Plantinga's reading of Gregory of Nyssa: "Thus Plantinga concludes, Gregory 'does not use the phrase center of consciousness, but he does consistently depict Father, Son, and Spirit as distinct actors, knowers, willers, and lovers – what we would call centers of consciousness whether Gregory did or not.' I whole-heartedly agree." Daniel F. Stramara, p. 444.

answer is negative. Edmund Majewski's interpretation of Bernard Lonergan helps us show that it is not necessarily true that three consciousnesses imply three divine natures, insofar as those three consciousnesses are due to three distinct self-consciousnesses.

While claiming that each divine person is a conscious subject, Lonergan confirms at the same time that there is only one real consciousness. He states that "although it is entirely true that there are three divine conscious subjects, it in no way follows that there are really three distinct consciousnesses."¹⁰⁵ Above all, Lonergan believes that there is only one divine consciousness in the Trinity. He fears that otherwise, the danger of tritheism should occur. Majewski explains Lonergan's concern as follows: "If one maintains that there are three distinct consciousnesses in the Trinity, then one is moving towards tritheism, because each person would be a totally distinct being with a consciousness independent of the other two persons."¹⁰⁶

Yet Lonergan never gives up the notion of divine person as a conscious subject. In order to understand how Lonergan keeps three conscious subjects in one divine consciousness, we need to note that Lonergan makes a distinction between "essential act common to all three persons" and "notional acts" (i.e., acts of personal relations). By way of this distinction, Lonergan explains why each divine person is a conscious subject. When divine consciousness is considered on the basis of essential acts such as understanding, knowing, and loving, "none of the persons has a distinct consciousness of

¹⁰⁵ Edmund Majewski, "A Trinitarian Theology of Person: Three Models, Rahner, Bracken, and Lonergan" (Ph.D. diss., Pontificiae Universitatis Gregoriana, 1992), p. 96.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

the other two persons ... (for) all three persons possess in the same manner through the essential act the same divine consciousness.”¹⁰⁷

However, on the basis of notional acts, each divine person is a subject conscious of himself and of the other two persons. Lonergan states as follows:

Therefore, one must conclude that the single divine consciousness which is being considered on the basis of the notional acts is possessed by the three in three different manners. This is, of course, necessary, if indeed the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are each conscious of themselves and of the other two; for the different subjects cannot be conscious of the different subjects through a single consciousness unless the same consciousness is differently possessed by the different subjects.¹⁰⁸

Here, it is to be noted that while three persons possess the one divine consciousness *in the same manner* through essential acts, they possess the same divine consciousness *in different manners* through notional acts. In Lonergan’s thought, the notional acts of divine persons necessitate the difference of the manners in which three persons possess one divine consciousness, and confirms that divine persons are conscious subjects. For the personal relationship in notional acts cannot be conceived unless each divine person is “consciously aware of himself and the persons to whom he is referred.”¹⁰⁹ In short, for Lonergan, the three divine persons share “a single consciousness” and are “*individually* conscious only through that one consciousness.”¹¹⁰

Although Lonergan clearly insists that each divine person is conscious of himself (i.e., self-conscious) and the others, he avoids stating that there are three consciousnesses.

¹⁰⁷ Edmund Majewski, p. 93.

¹⁰⁸ Bernard Lonergan, *De Deo Trino II. Pars Systematica* (Romae: Aedis Universitatis Gregoriana, 1964), p. 191. Quoted from Edmund Majewski, p. 95.

¹⁰⁹ Edmund Majewski, p. 94.

¹¹⁰ Edmund Majewski, p. 101.

For Lonergan fears that the notion of three consciousnesses vitiate the divine simplicity, which in his belief implies that there is only one single consciousness in God. For Lonergan, God is divine essence conceived as *ipsum intelligere*. In other words, God is “the pure and infinite act of understanding” because there is “no distinction between his existence and his understanding due to the divine simplicity.”¹¹¹ Since in his belief, the doctrine of divine simplicity teaches that the same absolute divine reality is present in the persons and the essence, both of which are ontologically one, Lonergan firmly insists that there is only one divine reality in God, while divine persons are really distinct between themselves. Likewise, he argues that there is only one single consciousness in God, while divine persons are distinctly or individually conscious.

Here, such a question as we have observed in Plantinga’s argument (i.e., it is hard to see how Lonergan’s idea is consistent) can be raised. If there is only one single consciousness in God, in other words, if being and knowing and consciousness all are identical within God, how can each divine person is individually conscious of himself and of the others? Or how can divine persons have reciprocal relationships with each other? Majewski makes an analysis of Lonergan that may help us deal with these questions. According to Majewski, there are in effect two types of consciousness in God. He states as follows:

... Lonergan distinguishes between the consciousness common to the divine nature and the consciousness proper to the distinct persons who relate to each other. There are two types of consciousness. Hence, one might affirm that the

¹¹¹ Edmund Majewski, p. 66. Lonergan’s understanding of divine simplicity is exactly the same as Aquinas’. For example, Majewski describes Lonergan’s as follows: “The essence and each real divine relation (i.e., person) are not really distinct from each other but are only rationally so, since the absolute aspect of God (the divine substance) and the relative aspect of God (the three subsistent relations) are only rationally distinct but really identical. These relations are no less real than the divine essence, since the same absolute divine reality is present in the relations and the essence.” See Edmund Majewski, p. 77.

Son, insofar as he is conscious of the Father as another and distinct “I” relates to him notionally as a “Thou.” He does not speak his “Thou” in the identical manner as the Father does; however, he does relate or respond to the Father as a “Thou” in his own unique way. Both the essential and the personal dimensions of the Trinity must be affirmed.¹¹²

In Majewski’s analysis, Lonergan can be understood as actually claiming that according to the divine nature, there is only one single consciousness common to the divine persons; according to personal relations, there are three distinct consciousnesses, each being proper to each divine person.

Majewski’s analysis of two types of consciousness in Lonergan helps us clarify the issue at present (i.e., whether three consciousnesses entail tritheism). When a theory argues that three consciousnesses entail tritheism, we need to examine in what sense it mentions three consciousnesses. If it considers three consciousnesses on the basis of the essential dimension, it is tritheist; if it considers three consciousnesses on the basis of the personal dimension, it is not tritheist. This implies two things: (1) There is no division, distinction, separation of consciousness in the essential acts *ad extra* of the three divine persons. (2) There are three distinct consciousnesses in the notional acts within interpersonal relations of the three divine persons.

For Lonergan, the two types of consciousness are not really distinct, but merely rationally, because of divine simplicity. Accordingly, Lonergan claims that there is only one single divine consciousness despite three distinct personal subjects. However, for those who do not take such an understanding of divine simplicity as Lonergan does, in particular, for those who do not follow Lonergan’s thought that each divine person is the one and the same pure act of understanding in reality, the three distinct consciousnesses

¹¹² Edmund Majewski, p. 107.

in notional acts are not identical with the one single consciousness in essential acts. In other words, for them, it can be safely said that there are three distinct consciousnesses because each divine person has a distinct, unique self-consciousness within an internal relationship of divine life, though their consciousness on the basis of essential realm is one *ad extra*. Insofar as a theory confirms that there is only one single consciousness in the essential acts of divine persons *ad extra*, that theory has nothing to do with tritheism when it claims that there are three consciousnesses due to each divine person's self-consciousness.

In what sense does Plantinga employ "consciousness" when he claims that each divine person has a partly different consciousness from that of the others, if he is truly self-conscious? The answer is clearly "consciousness" in personal realm. For the ground to which Plantinga appeals to reject the singularity of consciousness in the three divine persons is nothing other than each divine person's distinct self-consciousness. For example, Plantinga writes:

Suppose there is only one consciousness in the divine life, only one flow of thought and perception . . . The trouble is that, on this scheme, what the Father could not know is the truth of the proposition, *I am the Father*. And what the Son could not know is the truth of the proposition, *I am the Son*. For, if the Father knew the truth of the proposition *I am the Father*, he would know something different from what is known by the Son and Spirit – who could not know the truth of that proposition. In other words, if the Father were truly self-conscious, he would have to have a partly different consciousness from that of Son and Spirit.¹¹³

When Plantinga opposes that there is one single consciousness in the divine life, he cannot be understood as meaning by his opposition that there are more than one consciousnesses in the essential realm. What he intends to claim is that the one single consciousness in the essential realm should not be understood as denying the notion of

¹¹³ Cornelius Plantinga Jr., "Social Trinity and Tritheism," pp. 42-43.

divine person as center of consciousness. If the one single consciousness in the essential realm is understood in such a way, then it means that each divine person does not have a distinct consciousness of himself and the others. But it is not the case. For it cannot be the case that the Father does not know the truth of the proposition, *I am the Father*, which is known as *He is the Father*, not as *I am the Father*, to the Son and the Spirit. Since the Father evidently has his own self-consciousness that is distinct from those of the Son and the Spirit, it cannot be the case that the one consciousness in the essential realm denies the notion of divine person as center of consciousness. This is the point that Plantinga intends to make. In short, Plantinga's claim (i.e., it could not be the case that Father, Son, and Spirit each had precisely the same consciousness while each was moreover distinctly self-conscious) is not to argue for the three consciousnesses on the basis of three different divine natures, but to confirm that each divine person is not a mere mode of being but a center of consciousness which has his own self-consciousness. This clearly reveals that Plantinga's claim is not tritheist.

From the study so far, we have three conclusions: (1) Insofar as three centers of consciousness are not based on three divine natures, they do not entail three consciousnesses in the essential dimension *ad extra*. (2) When three centers of consciousness are based on one divine nature, they entail only one consciousness in the essential dimension *ad extra*, and at the same time entail three consciousnesses within interpersonal relations in the divine life. (3) Insofar as a trinitarian theory claims that there are three consciousnesses because each divine person is self-conscious (i.e., in the notional acts or within interpersonal relations), it has nothing to do with three divine natures, or tritheism. All these conclusions mean that the notion of divine person as

center of consciousness does not necessitate tritheism. In order to adjudicate whether a trinitarian theory that claims the notion of divine person as center of consciousness necessitates tritheism, accordingly, we need to examine whether that theory confirms three divine natures or one divine nature. In short, if a theory that argues for three centers of consciousness confirms the substantial unity of the triune God (i.e., the doctrine that the unity of the triune God is real, not nominal, the doctrine of *opera trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa*, the doctrine of perichoresis), it is not tritheist.

4.2. Two Theologians on Divine Person as Center of Consciousness

One of the conclusions we have made so far is that the notion of divine person as center of consciousness as such has nothing to do with tritheism, insofar as it confirms the one divine nature of the triune God. This section attempts to deal with two different views made by two theologians: William Sherlock and Karl Barth. Examining these two figures on the topic of divine person as center of consciousness is helpful for the following reasons. Sherlock is the first who applies the modern notion of center of consciousness to the Trinity. He argues that the notion of divine person as “self-conscious Being” has nothing to do with tritheism, and that there are three divine Minds, Spirits, or Self-consciousnesses in the Trinity. Sherlock does not think that his idea exemplifies tritheism. The dissertation will analyze how Sherlock gets to the conclusion of “three divine Minds,” and examine why he has no fear of tritheism with that conclusion. Karl Barth, on the other hand, is a chief figure to oppose the notion that there are three divine persons as centers of consciousness in the Trinity. It will not be an exaggeration to say that Barth is the modern source and authority to oppose the notion of the divine person as

center of consciousness. For Barth, the Christian God is One personal subject; any theory positing three divine conscious subjects is tritheism. The dissertation intends in the debate with Barth to show and criticize why he mistakenly argues for one personal God. The dissertation hopes this section will corroborate our conclusion that the idea of the divine Person as personal, conscious subject does not necessitate three divine natures and has nothing to do with tritheism.¹¹⁴

4.2.1. William Sherlock and Three Thinking Substances or Minds

Against the Socinians, who were the outstanding Anti-Trinitarians in the continent and in England in the 17th century, William Sherlock attempted to vindicate the doctrine of the Trinity, writing several treatises, such as *A Vindication of the Doctrine of the Holy and Ever Blessed Trinity and the Incarnation of the Son of God* (1690), *A Modest Examination of the Authority and Reason of the Late Decree of the Vice-Chancellor of Oxford and some Heads of Colleges concerning the Heresy of Three Distinct Infinite Persons in the Holy and Ever-blessed Trinity* (1695), and *The Present State of the Socinian Controversy and the Doctrine of the Catholick Fathers concerning a Trinity in Unity* (1698). Yet Sherlock was strongly attacked by the orthodox side, because he presented the three divine persons as the three distinct substances or natures, and also as three Self-consciousnesses or infinite Minds.

Let me offer an analysis of Sherlock's arguments for three self-consciousnesses or infinite minds. To begin with, Sherlock seems to faithfully inherit the Latin tradition,

¹¹⁴ In order to see the importance that Sherlock and Barth take in the history of controversy centering around the notion of divine person as center of consciousness in more detail, see 1.1 of the dissertation, esp. pp. 18-21.

arguing that “a Divine Person is nothing but the Divine Nature and Essence; for the perfect absolute Simplicity of God admits of no imaginable Composition, not so much as of Nature and *suppositum*, or that which is the subject of all Natural Powers, as it is in Created Beings.”¹¹⁵ He accepts the Latin doctrine of absolute simplicity of divine nature as true and universal doctrine of the Catholic Fathers and Schools. Therefore, in his thought, a Divine Person cannot but be the Divine Nature, Essence, and Substance; otherwise, “there must be a Composition in the Divine Nature, something superadded to it, to make it a Person.”¹¹⁶

For Sherlock, next, each distinct Person, who is complete and perfect God, has a real substance of his own, proper to himself.¹¹⁷ For the Father is not the Son, or the Holy Spirit, nor the Son the Father, or the Holy Spirit. He states as follows:

They are certainly Three, for the Father is not the Son, nor the Holy Ghost, nor the Son the Father, or the Holy Ghost, and each of the Three is perfect God, and therefore an Infinite Mind, an Infinite Spirit, and the most Perfect Essence and Substance: And that Substance which is the Person of the Son, is not that Substance which is the Person of the Father, no more than the Person of the Son is the Person of the Father, or an unbegotten is a begotten Nature and Substance; and therefore in opposition to *Sabellius*, they asserted Three Substantial Persons, τρία ὑπόστατα, Three Hypostases, or Personal Substances, as *Hypostasis* signifies; *tria in substantia*, *tres substantiae*, *tres res*, τρία πράγματα and yet at the same time did assert, that there is but One Divine Nature and Substance, which indivisibly and inseparably, though distinctly, subsists in all Three.¹¹⁸

Sherlock argues for these two points: On the one hand, each of the three divine persons is a perfect God, an infinite mind, an infinite spirit, and the most perfect essence and

¹¹⁵ William Sherlock, *The Present State of the Socinian Controversy and the Doctrine of the Catholick Fathers concerning a Trinity in Unity* (London: 1698), p. 255. Henceforth, abbreviated as *PSC*.

¹¹⁶ *PSC*, p. 272.

¹¹⁷ *PSC*, p. 136.

¹¹⁸ *PSC*, p. 198.

substance. On the other hand, there are three substantial Persons, three substances, or three things in the Trinity, because the substance which is the Person of the Father, i.e., an unbegotten nature and substance, is different from the substance which is the Person of the Son, i.e., a begotten nature and substance.

Here, Sherlock recognizes that there is a seeming contradiction between his statements: (1) there is only one divine substance in the Trinity because divine person is nothing but divine nature because of the absolute simplicity of divine nature; (2) there are three distinct, infinite, intelligent, substantial Persons, or three Substances or Minds in the Trinity because divine Persons who are substances or essences are incommunicable. How can it be possible that in the Trinity one divine Nature and three Substances exist at the same time? In quoting a part of Boethius' famous definition of person by *individua substantia*, Sherlock describes that question as follows:

In *Boetius's* Definition of a Person by *individua substantia*, the Schools, as far as I have observed, universally understand *incommunicabilis substantia*, an incommunicable Substance; and therefore, as I observed before, though they assert the Divine Essence to be *singularis*, yet it is *singularis communicabilis*, a communicable Singular; but a Person is *substantia individua*, or *singularis incommunicabilis*, a singular incommunicable Substance. Now this started a great Difficulty; How the Essence and Substance of the Father, which is but One, can be both communicable and incommunicable. The Person of the Father, which is his Divine Essence, is incommunicable, and yet the Father communicates his own Divine Nature and Essence to the Son and Holy Spirit, without communicating his Person.¹¹⁹

The problem that Sherlock faces here comes out of his own idea that each divine person is nothing but substance in an ontological sense, without making a clear distinction between three incommunicable substances and one communicable Substance. In fact,

¹¹⁹ *PSC*, p. 274.

Sherlock is clearly aware that the use of substantive terms in the plural number is prohibited because its plural use results in the plural natures. He himself states:

... The Schools forbid the use of Abstract or Substantive Terms in the Plural Number, when we speak of the Divine Persons, but allow of Plural Adjectives, because Substantives signify absolutely, and multiply Natures, as well as Persons or *Suppositums*, but Adjectives may signify relatively, and multiply Persons without multiplying Natures; as Three Eternals, Three Omnipotents, Three Infinites, in a Substantive sense, signify Three Eternal, Omnipotent, Infinite, Natures, as well as Persons; but Three, who are Eternal, Omnipotent, Infinite, signify a Trinity of Eternal, Omnipotent, Infinite, Persons, but do not necessarily signify a Trinity of Natures, since these Three may subsist in the same Eternal, Omnipotent, Infinite Nature, and each of them have this Eternal Infinite Nature, and all the same.¹²⁰

For Sherlock, yet, the mere prohibition of the use of the plural substantive terms does not provide any help in seeking an answer to the problem, how the three divine persons who are nothing but the one divine Nature are three incommunicable distinct substances. Here, Sherlock reminds us that Greek Orthodoxy insists on taking the term, “divine Relations” to describe the incommunicability of divine persons, rather than the use of the plural substantive terms, such as “three Substances.”

In connection with the doctrine of divine relations, Sherlock suggests a distinction of his own between an absolute substance and relative substances. He does not see any problem in this distinction because in his thought the orthodox schools allow every divine relation to be the divine essence, substance, an incommunicable subsistence and substance, and allow us to use “Three Relative Beings, (Three Relative) Subsistencies, or (Three Relative) Substances,” though they reject “Three Substances.” By an absolute Substance, he means one whole individual nature that is complete in itself and subsists by itself without have any internal, or necessary union to any other being of the same kind.

¹²⁰ *PSC*, p. 277.

By relative Substances, he means substances such as internal subsisting relations in the same absolute substance.¹²¹ Sherlock does not fear at all a tritheism in making use of this distinction. The three absolute substances would be tritheism since “three absolute Substances are always distinctly and separately Three, and can never be any otherwise than specifically One.” But the three relative Substances would not be a tritheism since “relative Substances may be essentially One in the same One Individual Nature.”¹²² He writes as follows:

Now it is evident ... that every complete absolute Substance, how many so ever they are, multiplies the Individuals of the same kind; Three absolute Human Substances are Three Men, and Three Absolute Divine Substances would for the same reason be Three Gods; but it is otherwise as to Relative Substances, which are subsisting Personal Relations in the same One individual Nature; and it is demonstrable, that the Relations of the same One individual Nature and Substance, can't multiply Natures and Substances, for then they would not be Relations in the same individual Substance, but would be Absolute, not Relative Substances.¹²³

Doesn't Sherlock's “relative Substances” make the same mistake as John Philoponus does in his “particular substances”?¹²⁴ In suggesting a distinction between absolute substance and relative substances, Sherlock is cautious not to be misunderstood to make the same error as John Philoponus did. To begin with, Sherlock shows his support to a historical condemnation of tritheism upon Philoponus, stating that “... *Philoponus*, and others, who asserted τρεις μερικὰς οὐσίας, Three particular Natures and Essences, or Substances in the Godhead, were charged with Tritheism.”¹²⁵ However,

¹²¹ *PSC*, p. 287, 288.

¹²² *PSC*, p. 289.

¹²³ *PSC*, p. 288.

¹²⁴ Cf. for John Philoponus in detail, see 2.2 of the dissertation.

¹²⁵ *PSC*, p. 293.

Sherlock argues that the case is not the same with his idea, three relative substances. The reason is

That those who rejected the μερικὰς οὐσίας, and charged it with Tritheism, did not thereby understand particular, personal, relative, Subsistencies or Substances, but complete, absolute, particular Natures and Substances; not Three Real, Substantial, Subsisting Relations in One Individual Nature, as a Mind, its Internal, Essential, Word, and Spirit, as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are Three; but Three absolute particular Natures, as Three Men, each of whom has a complete, absolute, personal Nature of his own, are Three.¹²⁶

In Sherlock's interpretation, the reason why Philoponus was charged with tritheism is that his particular substances were understood not as relative substances, but as absolute substances. In the eyes of those who charged Philoponus with tritheism, his particular substances were taken as asserting three individual natures and essences. Sherlock argues, however, that they did not deny "relative, Personal Subsistencies or Substances," when they condemned Philoponus for his individual natures and essences.¹²⁷

According to Sherlock, the difference between his relative substances and Philoponus' particular substances comes from the fact that each of them draws his idea from different notions of the unity of divine Nature. For example, Philoponus, who himself was a Monophysite, stuck to the principle that it is impossible that there should be "a Nature without a Personality of its own," for nature and person are the same. Just as Monophysites insisted that there could not but be one nature in Christ who is only one person, so Philoponus argued that there are three particular substances in the Trinity who are the three persons. Sherlock maintains that the three particular substances of Philoponus are nothing but the three absolute, individual, natures, which result in a

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ PSC, p. 294.

tritheism.¹²⁸ For it is, then, the specific unity of divine nature that is the unity of divine essence in Philoponus' particular essences.

Sherlock repeatedly emphasizes that the specific unity of Nature should not be accepted as an idea to explain the unity of the three relative substances or personal substances. Sherlock means by the specific unity of nature the unity that we see in the case of humanity, in other words, when "man is a common name for all men, because humanity is a common nature, which is alike in *Peter*, and *John*, and *James*, and all the men in the world."¹²⁹ In his thought, the specific unity of the divine nature cannot but result in a tritheism. For the notion of the specific unity of nature is "only the work of the mind." In Sherlock's belief, "there is no such one common human nature actually existing in all Mankind; but every man is a man by himself, and has a particular human nature, as he has a Soul and Body of his own, which is not the Soul and Body of any other man in the world."¹³⁰

In contrast to the nominal unity of the humanity existing in men, however, Sherlock strongly argues that the divine unity is real. He states, "the same one divine Nature, without the least diversity or separation, actually and distinctly subsisting in Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, which being perfectly the same is but One, and really and substantially subsisting in Three is a common Nature, which is equally and perfectly in them all."¹³¹ It can be understood, thus, that Sherlock's strong belief in the reality of the same one common divine nature in the three divine persons leaves no room for

¹²⁸ *PSC*, p. 295, 343.

¹²⁹ *PSC*, p. 172.

¹³⁰ *PSC*, pp. 180-181.

¹³¹ *PSC*, p. 181.

Philoponus' particular substances when they are interpreted in a sense of absolute, individual substances. If particular substances are taken as those in a sense of absolute substances, then, the unity of nature is to be interpreted as the unity in a mere nominal, logical, and notional sense. In Sherlock's argument, the one divine nature cannot be a mere specific nature that we see in the case of humanity, if it actually and substantially subsists in three distinct divine persons. The one divine nature should be one really (i.e., not nominally) subsisting nature that is absolute.

Unlike Philoponus, it is in the unity of the absolute, individual nature, not in the specific unity of nature, that Sherlock locates three relative substances. Sherlock means, by locating them in the one absolute, individual, nature, that the concept of relative substances comes from the explicit recognition that divine persons are not three individuals such as human persons. For in his thought the three divine Persons have "not three individual Divine Natures, but the same One Divine Nature common to them all, originally in the Father, and communicated whole and entire to the Son by an Eternal Generation, and from Father and Son to the Holy Spirit by an Eternal Procession."¹³²

According to Sherlock, the unity of the absolute, individual nature does not contradict the real, not nominal, doctrine of Trinity confirmed by the Church Fathers which in Sherlock's thought, asserts "three real, distinct, subsisting, substantial, intelligent Persons ... each of which is ... True and Perfect God."¹³³ The unity of God that is implied in the real Trinity is "not the unity of a single Person, so as to exclude all other Persons from the name and nature of God, but a Unity of nature and principle." For

¹³² *PSC*, p. 199.

¹³³ *PSC*, p. 326.

the real doctrine of the Trinity rejects the idea of one personal God, affirming the three real, distinct, subsisting persons, while it refutes three different divinities, or three principles of divinity, affirming “one Self-originated Being, who communicates his own Nature, without division and separation to his Eternal Son, and by and with his Son to his Eternal Spirit.”¹³⁴ For Sherlock, in brief, the unity of the real Trinity is not the unity of Singularity, but the unity of one absolute divine Nature that is “eternal, Self-originated Divinity, with its eternal, essential processions or productions.”¹³⁵

With the unity of one absolute divine nature, Sherlock maintains that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are not three absolute divine substances, but are “three singulars of one individual nature, communicated whole and entire from Father to Son, and from Father and Son to the Holy Ghost.”¹³⁶ Just as the Father (i.e., one self-originated Being) is an eternal, living, subsisting Person, argues Sherlock, so the other persons to whom the one absolute nature is communicated through eternal processions are certainly eternal, living, subsisting persons.¹³⁷ Being confident that according to the Bible, the one God does not signify one single divine person, but the one self-originated God with his only begotten Son and eternal Spirit, Sherlock concludes that the God as one single divine person cannot go with the real Trinity.¹³⁸

¹³⁴ *PSC*, p. 47.

¹³⁵ *PSC*, p. 361.

¹³⁶ *PSC*, p. 29.

¹³⁷ *PSC*, p. 362.

¹³⁸ *PSC*, p. 39.

The unity of one absolute divine nature enables Sherlock to suggest, without fearing being charged with tritheism, an idea of “relative substances” as his own answer to a question: How is it possible that the one common subsisting nature, which is really, actually, indivisibly one and common, does really, substantially, and distinctly subsist in three distinct divine persons? How do we then understand the idea of “relative substances in the one absolute substance or nature”? Sherlock admits that the unity of the real Trinity is beyond our natural experiences.

*The singularity of the Divine Essence and Substance in the Sabellian Notion of One Substance, the Nicene Fathers universally rejected, as irreconcilable with a real distinction of Persons, which destroys the Faith of a Real Trinity. A mere specific Unity of Nature and Substance, which is a mere Logical Notion, falls short of the Natural and Essential Unity of the Godhead; and yet we have no word to serve as a middle Term between the Unity of singularity, and a Specific Unity of Nature. For there is no such Unity as this in Created Nature, and therefore no name for it; and yet the Unity of the Divine Nature in a Trinity of Persons, is neither of these, but bears some resemblance and Analogy of both.*¹³⁹

Indeed, the unity of nature in the real Trinity is so beyond our natural experiences that we have no name to describe it. Yet, Sherlock does not think that in nature, there is no resemblance or analogy whatsoever of the unity of divine Nature in the real Trinity. He expresses a strong desire to know the unity of nature in the real Trinity, in other words, “why Three Persons, each of which is True and Perfect God, though one be unbegotten, another begotten, and a third proceeds, be not as much Three Gods, as Three that are unbegotten, are Three Gods.”¹⁴⁰ For Sherlock, it is far from a contradiction to say that “three Persons who have nothing in themselves but what each of them have, without the

¹³⁹ *PSC*, p. 195.

¹⁴⁰ *PSC*, p. 205.

least conceivable Variation, are in Nature but one and the same.”¹⁴¹ For he observes several examples, though explicitly not perfect, in created nature to justify the sameness and identity of divine Nature in the real distinction of the three divine Persons.

... If there be any Images of this in Nature, there is no reason to call this a Contradiction in the Faith of the Trinity. Let me then ask this plain Question: When Five hundred Men hear the same Man speak, do they all hear one and the same Voice, or Five hundred Voices? It will, I think, be granted, that it is but one and the same Voice which they all hear, and yet it is heard five hundred times, and is distinctly in five hundred Ears: The Voice is essentially one and the same in all, and yet no man dares deny that the Voice in *Peter's* Ear is another from that Voice which is in *John's* Ear; and therefore is Another and Another, but not Another Thing: And were a Voice Essence and Substance, there would be One Nature, Essence, and Substance, in a Plurality of *Hypostases*.¹⁴²

In Sherlock's thought, this kind of illustration may not be perfect, but such things show us that the sameness and identity of divine Nature in the real Trinity is far from a contradiction. He conclusively states as follows:

Now though we should grant it unconceivable, how Three distinct Persons should have One numerical Essence, that the Essence of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost should be numerically the same, and yet their Persons distinct; for it is not easy to distinguish the Essence or Substance from the Person, and therefore not easy to tell, how there should be but One Substance and Three Persons, yet it is no Absurdity or Contradiction to say, that Three real substantial Persons should subsist in One undivided Substance, and then there is no necessity either *to confound the Persons, or divide the Substance*.¹⁴³

Once he claims it to be really far from absurdity or contradiction that three real substantial persons subsist in the sameness and identity of divine undivided Substance, Sherlock attempts to give an intelligible solution of all the difficulties and seeming contradiction in the doctrine of the Trinity. His solution begins with the identity between

¹⁴¹ *PSC*, p. 227.

¹⁴² *PSC*, p. 228.

¹⁴³ William Sherlock, *A Vindication of the Doctrine of the Holy and Ever Blessed Trinity and the Incarnation of the Son of God* (London: 1690), pp. 46-47. Henceforth, abbreviated as *VDTI*.

persons and minds, for since a divine person is an intelligent being, it would be heresy and nonsense to teach that three distinct persons are not three distinct minds.¹⁴⁴ In his thought, “it would be very strange that we should own Three Persons, each of which Persons is truly and properly God, and not own Three infinite Minds; as if anything could be a God, but an infinite Mind.”¹⁴⁵

Sherlock’s other reason why we should begin with the identity between Persons and Minds is his own conviction that “the naked essences of things are not the object of our Knowledge.” He argues that it is ridiculous to talk about what the essence and substance of a spirit is, when we distinguish it from understanding and will, which we call the powers and faculties of a spirit. For we do not know the essence and substance of a spirit in a naked state any more than we do, “what the naked essence and substance of matter is, stripped of all its qualities and accidents.”¹⁴⁶ He adds:

And therefore as we frame the notion of bodies from their external and sensible qualities, so we must frame the notion of a spirit from its intellectual powers, of will, and understanding, etc. and when we dispute about the distinction or union of spirits, we must not dispute how their substances, which we know nothing of, can be distinguished or united, but how two Minds considered as intellectual Beings, are distinguished and united.¹⁴⁷

Sherlock argues that if we take three divine persons as infinite minds, it is plain to understand the mystery of the doctrine of the Trinity. For the great difficulty of conceiving the Trinity of persons in one infinite and undivided essence or substance stems from the material concept that we mistakenly have about divine essence or

¹⁴⁴ *VDTI*, p. 66.

¹⁴⁵ *VDTI*, p. 67.

¹⁴⁶ *VDTI*, p. 73.

¹⁴⁷ *VDTI*, p. 74.

substance.¹⁴⁸ For instance, Sherlock explains the distinction and unity between the three distinct divine Persons according to the notion of divine person as an infinite mind as follows.

They (i.e., some vain and arrogant pretenders, i.e., unitarians or socinians) puzzle and confound themselves with some gross and corporeal ideas of essence and substance, and how three divine Persons can subsist distinct in the same numerical substance, but would they but consider the three divine Persons, as three infinite Minds, distinguished from each other by a self-consciousness of their own, and essentially united by a mutual consciousness to each other, which is the only way of distinguishing and uniting Minds and Spirits, and then a Trinity in Unity is a very plain and intelligible notion.¹⁴⁹

First, Sherlock explains the distinction between three divine persons by means of “self-consciousness,” because “each divine Person has a self-consciousness of its own, and knows and feels itself . . . as distinct from the other divine Persons.” The idea that the three divine persons are distinguished from each other by “self-consciousness” clarifies the reason why the divine persons should not be confounded.¹⁵⁰

Next, Sherlock explains the unity of the three real substantial substances by means of “mutual consciousness,” stating that “as the self-consciousness of every person to itself makes them distinct persons, so the mutual consciousness of all three divine persons to each other makes them all but one infinite God: as far as consciousness reaches, so far the unity of a spirit extends, for we know no other unity of a mind or spirit, but consciousness.”¹⁵¹ In Sherlock’s description, the unity of divine nature in the Trinity is “the essential unity, which is between Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, who are

¹⁴⁸ *VDTI*, p. 68, 73.

¹⁴⁹ *VDTI*, p. 73.

¹⁵⁰ *VDTI*, p. 67.

¹⁵¹ *VDTI*, p. 68.

essentially united by a mutual consciousness to whatever is in each other, and do by an internal sensation ... feel each other, as they do themselves.” Thus, the idea that the three substantial persons are united into one by “mutual consciousness” elucidates the reason why the divine persons should not be divided.¹⁵²

For Sherlock, in brief, his own exposition in terms of his assumption that “consciousness is the unity of a spirit,” is the only way to understand the unity and distinction of the Trinity. Sherlock summarily states that “self-consciousness is the unity of a Person, and by the same reason mutual consciousness is a natural union of three distinct self-conscious Persons in the unity of the same nature.”¹⁵³ Yet Sherlock’s attempt to explain the mystery of the Trinity by the notion of divine person as mind (i.e., thinking substance), was not acknowledged as faultless by his protestant orthodox contemporaries.

4.2.2. Criticism of William Sherlock

William Sherlock’s new attempt to provide a rational clue to understand the mystery of the Trinity was rejected not merely by Socinians, but also by the 17th protestant orthodox doctors. The major problem that the orthodox scholars charged on Sherlock was that his notion of the three divine persons as “the Three Distinct Infinite Minds” would be tritheist. John Hunt describes contemporary hostile responses to Sherlock’s new notions, by stating that “the whole world was against Sherlock, from the Catholic Church to the Oxford doctors, from the schoolmen to Dr. South.”¹⁵⁴ Robert South, who described

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ *PSC*, p. 318.

¹⁵⁴ John Hunt, *Religious Thought in England* (London: Strahan & Co., Publishers, 1871), p. 221.

Sherlock's Trinity as a "Cartesian Trinity,"¹⁵⁵ "called to his aid the heads of the University of Oxford against the heresies of Dr. Sherlock."¹⁵⁶ As a consequence, Sherlock's notion of three infinite Minds was judged as a false teaching, contrary to the doctrine of the Catholic church and of the Anglican church.¹⁵⁷

Now, let's evaluate Sherlock's idea that the three distinct Infinite Minds are distinct by self-consciousness of each of them, and they are united by their mutual consciousness. The dissertation claims that Sherlock's description of divine persons as minds (i.e., thinking substances) might cause a suspicion of tritheism. Except that description, yet, Sherlock is not a tritheist in many respects. For example, Sherlock explicitly and repeatedly reveals his awareness that both doctrines of inseparable work or operations *ad extra* and perichoresis are essential in the doctrine of the Trinity. Sherlock states that "the numerical unity ... of the divine essence resolves into those two principles, the unity and identity, of power and energie, and that which they call the περιχώρησις, or circumincession, or in being of the three Divine Persons in each other, which preserves the distinction of Persons, but makes the Divine Essence numerically

¹⁵⁵ Jan Rohls, "Subjekt, Trinität und Persönlichkeit Gottes," in *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 30 (1988), p. 53. Also, refer to Robert South, *Tritheism charged upon Dr. Sherlock's New Notion of the Trinity* (London: 1695), p. 15.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ "Dominus Vice-Cancellarius & Præfecti Collegiorum & Aularum, in generali suo Conventu iam congregati, Judicant, Declarant, & Decernunt, prædicta Verba esse *Falsa, Impia, & Heretica*; Dissona & Contraria Doctrinæ Ecclesiæ Catholicæ, & speciatim Doctrinæ Ecclesiæ Anglicanæ, publice receptæ." Quoted from William Sherlock, *A Modest Examination of the Authority and Reasons of the Late Decree of the Vice-Chancellor of Oxford and Some Heads of Colleges and Halls; concerning The Heresy of Three Distinct Infinite Minds in the Holy and Ever-blessed Trinity* (London: 1696), p. 4. Interestingly, however, John Wallis states flatly that the so-called decree of Oxford is merely a title of Sherlock's own and his name was not specified in the so-called decree of Oxford while one sermon which was preached at Oxford by another person was condemned. See John Wallis, *An Answer to Dr. Sherlock's examination of the Oxford decree in a letter from a member of that university to his friend in London* (London: 1696), p. 2.

One.”¹⁵⁸ With regard to the doctrine of inseparable work or operation *ad extra*, in Sherlock’s thought, the Fathers are right in the explanation that the operation of the Trinity *ad extra* is but one, since if there are two distinct and divided operations, there must be two divided natures.

Yet Sherlock complains that the Fathers do not give any account of how those doctrines come to be. Sherlock’s account of the doctrine of inseparable work or operation *ad extra* is “mutual consciousness.” For “if all three Persons be conscious to each other, ... there can be ... but One and the same motion and Will of the Deity.” For Sherlock, it is plain that the three persons cannot have “one single motion of Will in one single and undivided Act” without having mutual consciousness.¹⁵⁹

The case is the same with the doctrine of perichoresis. Sherlock definitely agrees with the Fathers to the doctrine of perichoresis of the mutual in-being of the divine persons in each other. But he thinks that the Fathers do not know how to explain what the perichoretical union is. He states as follows:

Had they (i.e., the Fathers) contemplated God as a pure Mind, it had been easy to explain this *Perichoresis*, or In-dwelling of the Divine Persons in each other: for there is, and can be no other Union of Minds but consciousness, and by a mutual consciousness they are intimate to each other is.¹⁶⁰

Here, Sherlock intends to give an intelligible explication of that doctrine. His explanation is to remind us that the divine Persons are Minds.

¹⁵⁸ *VDTI*, pp. 123-124.

¹⁵⁹ *VDTI*, pp. 124.-125. Cf. Sherlock's statement: “The Fathers then and I agree in this, that the Unity of the Divine Nature and Essence consists in the singularity of Operation; I only add, how this Energy and Operation is, and must be one, by a mutual consciousness, and if this be a reasonable and intelligible account, I hope it is no fault.”

¹⁶⁰ *VDTI*, pp. 125-126.

For Sherlock, furthermore, the mutual consciousness by which the divine persons are united is not merely one numerical substance, but also one undivided substance. For the mutual consciousness does not provide any other possibility than the essential union between divine persons in one undivided substance.¹⁶¹ In other words,

The same numerical Essence is whole and entire in each Divine Person, but in a different manner, ... all three Persons are in each other, and therefore numerically One ... That is, there are Three infinite Minds, which are distinguished from each other by the relations of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, ... which are their different Modes of subsisting; but each of these infinite Minds has the other Two in himself, by an intimate and mutual consciousness, and that makes all Three Persons numerically One Divine Essence, or One God; for when the whole Trinity is in each distinct Person, each Person is the same One numerical God, and all of them but One God.¹⁶²

In brief, for Sherlock, the only way to give an intelligible account of the difficulty of conceiving the Trinity of divine persons in one infinite and undivided substance is to recognize the identity between divine persons and minds. The notion of divine persons as minds makes it easy to understand why each person is distinct by explaining their distinction in terms of self-consciousness, and to understand why three distinct Persons are one by explaining their oneness in terms of mutual consciousness. From there, Sherlock argues further that such an understanding helps us to understand why the three divine persons are one in their operation *ad extra*, and why they perichoretically in-dwell in each other, by explaining that their mutual consciousness is the ground of both doctrines. Sherlock is strongly confident that he succeeds in explaining and justifying these doctrines by his own idea that was not recognized by the Fathers.¹⁶³ From the

¹⁶¹ *VDTI*, p. 46, 55, 57.

¹⁶² *VDTI*, p. 84.

¹⁶³ *VDTI*, p. 138.

analysis above, the dissertation concludes that Sherlock has nothing to do with tritheism in so far as those two criteria (i.e., the doctrine of *opera trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa* and the doctrine of perichoresis) are concerned.

As was mentioned before, Sherlock believes that the doctrine of divine simplicity teaches us that a divine Person cannot but be divine nature, essence, or substance, and thus that there are three divine substances due to their distinct modes of subsistence, or relationship. Since Sherlock is well aware that the church fathers prohibit the use of substantive terms in the plural number, he makes a distinction between one absolute substance and three relative substances. Three absolute substances would be tritheism; three relative substances would not. Sherlock does not fear any possible charge of tritheism. For he does not understand relative substances in the context of the specific unity as we see in the case of human beings. Sherlock locates three relative substances in the unity of the absolute, undivided, nature, where the one absolute nature is communicated, through eternal processions, from Father both to Son and to Spirit.

The general structure of Sherlock's theology of Trinity certainly has no problem. Sherlock is right in saying that since there is no difference between person and nature in God, at least in the doctrine of divine simplicity that Sherlock takes as valid (which is the same as that of Thomas Aquinas), divine Person is divine substance in an ontological sense. Sherlock is right also in saying that each divine Person is distinct by "self-consciousness," and is united into one by "mutual consciousness." For the divine Persons are intelligent beings who have intellectual powers of will and understanding.

However, Sherlock's idea that divine persons are three thinking substances or three distinct infinite minds might look tritheist.¹⁶⁴ First, a suspicion of tritheism against Sherlock might be mostly caused by his idea's inconsistency in a theological grammar. Sherlock assumes the divine simplicity that is the same as that of Thomas Aquinas. Referring to the doctrine of divine simplicity, on the one hand, Sherlock defines divine person as substance in an ontological sense. Sherlock neglects on the other hand that the doctrine of divine simplicity prohibits personal relations from being considered as different substances. Finally, Sherlock makes out a distinction between relative substances and absolute substance. Sherlock's distinction of two kinds of substance is inconsistent with the divine simplicity he assumes. According to such an understanding

¹⁶⁴ Among Sherlock's contemporaries, for example, Robert South, a chief adversary against Sherlock, argues that while the three minds, or spirits of Sherlock's must be three distinct substances, no authority in the church acknowledges three persons as three substances. If we should take three distinct substances as valid, South argues, there would be two distinct types of substances: "communicable" and "incommunicable." Yet in South's thought, the substance cannot be at once "communicable" and "incommunicable." If it is, it is self-contradictory. In South's interpretation, the Athanasian creed confesses that there is only one infinite mind: "The *Father* is an *Infinite Mind*, the *Son* is an *Infinite Mind*, and the *Holy Ghost* is an *Infinite Mind*; and yet they are not *Three Infinite Minds*, but one *Infinite Mind*." Accordingly, South claims that Sherlock's idea of three distinct substances or three minds should be rejected. Robert South, *Animadversions upon Dr. Sherlock's Book Entitled A Vindication of the Holy and Blessed Trinity, etc.* (London: 1693), pp. 116-131. Against Sherlock's misuse of "three Substances, Minds, or Spirits," John Wallis, another contemporary of Sherlock's, demonstrates that Sherlock's appealing to the authority of St. Hillary is groundless. "If St. Hillary has sometimes called them *tres substantias*; he may know, that *Substantia* was at that time an ambiguous term, and taken sometimes as the *Latin* word for *Hypostasis*, and sometimes for *Ousia*. For which reason the *Latines* were, for some time, shy of admitting the term *Hypostasis*, lest it should be thought to imply the same with *Substantia*, in the same sense with *Ousia*. And he might have understood from his own Citation ... that, by *Substance*, is there meant *Subsistence*. *Tres Substantias esse dixerunt; Subsistentium Personas, per Substantias, edocentes*. That is, (by his own translation) *They said there were three Substances; meaning thereby, three Subsisting Persons*. But when as now (for some ages) it is agreed (for prevention of Ambiguity) in the one sense, to say *Substance*, and in the other *Subsistence*; it is not now the same to call them *three substances* (in contradistinction to three *subsistences*) as then it was, while the word was used Ambiguously in both senses." See John Wallis, *An Answer to Dr. Sherlock's Examination of the Oxford Decree in a Letter form a Member of that University to his Friend in London* (London: 1696), pp. 15-16. Roland N. Stromberg describes both Sherlock and South as "distinguished elder scholars and theologians of the Established Church." Stromberg suggests an contemporary Orthodox view as follows, appealing to Daniel Waterland's definition: "Each divine person is an individual, intelligent agent; but as subsisting in one undivided substance, they are all together in that respect but one undivided intelligent agent." See Roland N. Stromberg, *Religious Liberalism in Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), n. 2, pp. 36-37.

of divine simplicity, personal relations should not be taken as substances. For the divine persons that personal relations refer to is ontologically nothing but divine substance, though the personal distinctions are considered as real. In such a divine simplicity, in short, there is a distinction between essential realm (i.e., divine person are ontologically identical with divine essence) and notional realm (i.e., divine persons are really distinct) that cannot interfere with each other. In essential realm, there is only one reality; in notional realm, the divine plurality exists. Since substance belongs to essential realm, the plural of concept like three substances is not permissible. According to the doctrine of divine simplicity, notional distinctions do not cause plural substances. Nevertheless, Sherlock neglects the incommunicability of these two realms, describing three persons as three substances due to their notional distinctions. This is a breaking of the theological grammar set by a doctrine of divine simplicity. Sherlock's idea has a problem that it is not consistent with divine simplicity.

Furthermore, it is not clear whether in Sherlock's idea three divine persons need to be described as three relative substances that cause a suspicion of tritheism in a grammar of divine simplicity. In effect, relative substance is nothing but a mode of absolute substance. Here is the reason. For Sherlock, divine persons are relative substances for two reasons: (1) divine persons are ontologically substances; (2) divine persons are relationally distinct from each other. That is to say, on the one hand, each divine person is absolute substance since divine person and divine essence is one and identical in ontological reality. But on the other hand, the absolute substance of each divine person is relationally distinct. Sherlock names a relationally distinct absolute substance as a relational substance. In other words, for Sherlock, a relational substance is

a relational mode of absolute substance. For Sherlock, then, divine person can be described as a mode of substance. Since the notion of divine person as a mode of divine substance is permissible in such divine simplicity as Aquinas', then, it can be asked whether Sherlock needs to employ the notion of plural substances which might cause a tritheist controversy. And our answer is negative.

One of Sherlock's chief goals in distinguishing between relative substances and absolute substance is to seek a way of understanding the unity and distinction of the Trinity, or of harmonizing the communicability of the divine nature and the incommunicability of the divine persons. Sherlock's suggestion comes from the idea that the substance of each person is nothing but mind or thinking substance, and that each divine person as a thinking substance or mind has a consciousness. In Sherlock's thought, "incommunicability" can be understood as referring to a "self-consciousness" of each person; "communicability" as referring to a "mutual consciousness." Though there is no difference between self-consciousness and mutual consciousness in that both of them are consciousness, it can be said that "self-consciousness" makes the triune God distinct and "mutual consciousness" makes the triune God one and identical. On the basis of this explanation, Sherlock defines three divine persons as three self-consciousnesses or thinking substances or minds. Sherlock claims that his suggestion is the only way to understand the unity and distinction of the Trinity.

The inconsistency of Sherlock's idea with his assumption of divine simplicity is clearly observed when it is contrasted to Lonergan's idea. As examined in 4.1.3, Lonergan also thinks that in God there is only one single consciousness, and that each divine person is distinct from the others in his self-consciousness. Like Sherlock,

Lonergan accepts the doctrine of divine simplicity that teaches that the same absolute divine reality is present in the persons and the essence, both of which are ontologically one. But unlike Sherlock, Lonergan avoids saying that there are three self-consciousnesses in God. For he fears that the notion of three self-consciousnesses contradicts the one absolute divine reality, finally resulting in tritheism. According to Majewski's analysis of Lonergan, it can be said that Lonergan may be understood as actually affirming three self-consciousnesses due to personal relations (i.e., in the notional realm), while he denies that there are three consciousnesses according to the divine nature. If Majewski is right, Lonergan is understood to say that divine persons have three self-consciousnesses. However, Lonergan never affirms that divine persons are three self-consciousnesses. This is the crucial difference between Sherlock and Lonergan. For Sherlock, divine persons are three self-consciousnesses, while for Lonergan, divine persons are three subjects of consciousness. Furthermore, for Sherlock, three divine persons are three substances or minds, while for Lonergan, three divine persons are one substance or mind. Lonergan avoids using the plural substances because according to the doctrine of divine simplicity, notional distinctions do not cause plural substances. In brief, Sherlock's idea is not consistent with the doctrine of divine simplicity, whereas Lonergan suggests a trinitarian idea more faithful to that doctrine.

How about reading Sherlock in the light of a modern grammar of theology as we see in Cornelius Plantinga Jr.? At glance, Sherlock's distinction might look like Plantinga's suggestion of personal essences and generic essence. If Sherlock meant by absolute substance what Plantinga refers to generic essence and by relative substances to personal essences, he could be understood as employing a theological grammar that is

similar to that of Plantinga, though not explicitly. But Sherlock's distinction is not the same as that of Plantinga. Whereas, for Plantinga, personal essences refer to personal distinct properties (i.e., not divine persons as such), relative substances, for Sherlock, refer to divine person. In other words, for Plantinga, divine person is not divine substance in an ontological sense; for Sherlock, divine person is identical with divine substance. In effect, Sherlock's relative substances are what Plantinga opposes. For Sherlock means by relative substances that divine person is a mode of divine substance, whereas Plantinga opposes that divine persons are mere modes of being by his emphasis on divine persons as centers of consciousness that are distinct by personal essences.

In conclusion, Sherlock might look tritheist because he describes three divine persons as three substances or minds, though the divine simplicity prohibits the plural use of divine substance. Sherlock's problem is that his idea is not consistent with the doctrine of divine simplicity that he assumes to formulate his idea. Sherlock's idea does not fit a modern idea such as Plantinga's, either. Yet Sherlock undoubtedly confirms the substantial unity which is the decisive criterion of discerning tritheism (i.e., the doctrine that the unity of the triune God is real, not nominal, the doctrine of *opera trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa*, and the doctrine of perichoresis). Therefore, Sherlock's idea substantially has no problem of tritheism, but is formally or descriptively inconsistent with its assumption of divine simplicity.

4.2.3. Karl Barth and One Person God

For Barth, the doctrine of the Trinity is not dismissed to a mere appendix to the whole dogmatics of the Christianity. He places it in the "prolegomena" to dogmatics, making it

a controlling doctrine of his whole dogmatics.¹⁶⁵ John Thompson states, “He (i.e., Barth) set the Trinity at the forefront of his dogmatics, showing how it should permeate church life and theological thinking, in fact the whole form and content of what we say and do in the world.”¹⁶⁶ T. F. Torrance also writes:

In our day, however, the relegation of the doctrine of the Trinity to the periphery of the Church’s life and thought is being radically challenged and to a large extent changed, owing very largely to the epoch-making work of Karl Barth who, on the basis of God’s incarnate self-revelation, reintegrated the doctrine of the Triunity of God with the evangelical message of his saving and redeeming activity in Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, thereby restoring express knowledge of the Holy Trinity to its place in the centre of the Church’s faith and worship not unlike the place given to it in the great Nicene theology and liturgy of the Early Church. Karl Barth developed his doctrine of the Trinity within the evangelical frame of thought brought about by the concentration of the Reformation on the Gospel of saving grace and of God’s redemptive activity embodied in Jesus Christ, which had the effect of clarifying the understanding of the historic Faith and of setting Christian theology back upon its proper soteriological basis in line with the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed.¹⁶⁷

As Torrance’s statement implies, Barth’s effort to relegate the doctrine of the Trinity to the center of the theology and worship of the church is more than a theological reconsideration. Rather, it is a resolution to reformulate the whole dogmatics for the church in a way he understands the revelation of the Bible.

¹⁶⁵ It may be said that both Schleiermacher and Barth have the same cognition that the doctrine of the Trinity has a special status that makes them to include the doctrine of the Trinity within the framework of the dogmatic *loci*. For Schleiermacher, however, the doctrine of the Trinity was placed in the epilogomena, and for Barth, prolegomena. Cf. Christoph Schwöbel, “Introduction: The Renaissance of Trinitarian Theology: Reasons, Problems and Tasks,” in *Trinitarian Theology Today* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), p. 1; Robert Francis Streetman, “Friedrich Schleiermacher’s Doctrine of the Trinity and Its Significance for Theology Today,” *The Drew Gateway* 46 (1975-76), pp. 118-119, for an argument that Schleiermacher is a serious trinitarian theologian, not a mere Sabellian monotheist; Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson, ed., *A Map of Twentieth-Century Theology: Readings from Karl Barth to Radical Pluralism* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), p. 180; Timothy F. Lull, “The Trinity in Recent Theological Literature,” *Word & World* 2 (1982), p. 62.

¹⁶⁶ John Thompson, “Modern Trinitarian Perspectives,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 44 (1991), p. 352.

¹⁶⁷ T.F. Torrance, *The Christian God* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), p.9.

It is by means of his understanding of the witness of the Bible that Barth justifies his effort to restore the doctrine of the Trinity to the heart of the Christian theology and worship. The doctrine of the Trinity is, for Schleiermacher, not necessarily entailed because it is not “an immediate utterance concerning the Christian self-consciousness, but only a combination of several such utterances.”¹⁶⁸ Yet the doctrine of the Trinity is, for Barth, “identical with the Biblical witness to revelation.”¹⁶⁹ It is “not a doctrine of the second rank, rationally fashioned to defend what has been revealed, ... but is itself the very structure of revelation.”¹⁷⁰ Barth does not mean by this, however, that the statement of the Trinity of God is “directly identical with the statement about revelation, or with revelation itself.”¹⁷¹ For the doctrine of the Trinity is an analysis of the statement of revelation. According to Barth, the doctrine of the Trinity is the interpretation of revelation, and revelation is “the root of the doctrine of the Trinity.”¹⁷²

For Barth, the revelation which is attested as the root or ground of the doctrine of the Trinity by Scripture is stated as “God reveals Himself as the Lord.”¹⁷³ In this statement Barth sums up his understanding of “the form and content of the biblical revelation.”¹⁷⁴ In his analysis of this statement, Barth finds the ternary of Revealer as

¹⁶⁸ Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, tr. By H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Stewart (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994 reprinted), p. 738.

¹⁶⁹ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics I/1*, p. 383. Henceforth, it is abbreviated *CD*.

¹⁷⁰ William J. Hill, *The Three-Personed God: The Trinity as a Mystery of Salvation* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1982), p. 115.

¹⁷¹ *CD*, I/1, p. 308.

¹⁷² *CD*, I/1, pp. 304-33.

¹⁷³ *CD*, I/1, p.306.

¹⁷⁴ *CD*, I/1, p. 314.

revealing subject, Revelation as revealing act, and Revealedness as revealing effect.¹⁷⁵

Barth states:

... God reveals Himself as the Lord and according to the Scripture this signifies for the concept of revelation that God Himself in unimpaired unity yet also in unimpaired distinction is Revealer, Revelation, and Revealedness.¹⁷⁶

Barth's trinitarian analysis of the statement of revelation might seem to imply that "Barth did not develop his doctrine of the Trinity primarily from ... the historical relationship of Jesus to the Father, but he argues from the inner logic of the concept of revelation in which subject, predicate and object, or Revealer, Revelation and Revealedness, have to be differentiated."¹⁷⁷ Barth's doctrine of the Trinity might seem "a matter of the self-objectification of God in his revelation."¹⁷⁸

For Barth, however, this ternary of Revealer, Revelation, and Revealedness is not a mere abstract concept without having any real value of existence. It corresponds to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit. Barth states:

God in His incomprehensibility and God in the act of His revelation is not the formula of an abstract metaphysics of God, the world, or religion which is supposed to obtain at all times and in all places. It is rather the record of an event that has taken place once and for all, i.e., in a more or less exact and specific time and place.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁵ *CD, I/1*, pp. 295, 340.

¹⁷⁶ *CD, I/1*, p. 295.

¹⁷⁷ Timothy Bradshaw, "Karl Barth on the Trinity: A Family Resemblance," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 39 (1986), p. 157.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ *CD, I/1*, p. 325.

In Barth's thought, "revelation in the Bible means the self-unveiling, imparted to men, of the God who by nature cannot be unveiled to men."¹⁸⁰ The self-unveiling of God is given "in the form of the record of a history or a series of histories."¹⁸¹ The biblically attested Revelation is a historical event.

For Barth, where did the historical event of the revelation recorded by the Bible happen? It has happened in the event of incarnation in that the "objective reality" of God's revelation for us is Jesus Christ.

According to Holy Scripture God's revelation takes place in the fact that God's Word became a man and that this man has become God's Word. The incarnation of the eternal Word, Jesus Christ, is God's revelation. In the reality of this event God proves that He is free to be our God.¹⁸²

In addition to the objective reality of revelation, Barth mentions "the subjective reality of revelation" as an answer to the question of "to what extent there is in the occurrence of revelation a revealed state of God for man, and to what extent a human receptivity for God's revelation." For Barth, to make it possible for God to be known by his children in his church is the work of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the subjective reality of revelation is the Holy Spirit.

According to Holy Scripture God's revelation occurs in our enlightenment by the Holy Spirit of God to a knowledge of His Word. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit is God's revelation. In the reality of this event consists our freedom to be the children of God and to know and love praise Him in His revelation.¹⁸³

¹⁸⁰ *CD, I/1*, p. 315.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸² *CD, I/2*, p. 1.

¹⁸³ *CD, I/2*, p. 203.

The subjective reality of revelation consists in the fact that we have our being through Christ and in the Church, that we are the recipients of the divine testimonies, and, as the real recipients of them, the children of God. But the fact that we have this being is the work of the Holy Spirit. Therefore the Holy Spirit is the subjective reality of revelation.¹⁸⁴

For Barth, just as the incarnation is a historical event of revelation to reveal Jesus Christ as the objective reality of God's revelation for us, so the event of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is a historical event of revelation to reveal the Holy Spirit as the subjective reality of God's revelation in us.

Concerning the Father, Barth states as follows:

It (i.e., The Bible) names and describes Him (i.e., Revealer) as Elohim ..., Yahweh ..., El Shaddai ..., the Lord and Protector of Israel, the Creator of heaven and earth, the Ruler of the world and its history, the Holy and the Merciful and in the New Testament as the Lord of the coming kingdom, the Father in heaven, the Father of Jesus Christ, the Redeemer, the Spirit, love, etc.¹⁸⁵

For Barth, Revealer (i.e., the God whom the Bible attests as self-revealing) is the Father. The Father reveals himself both as the Father alone and as the Father of Jesus Christ, the Sender of Spirit. The historical events to reveal the Father are found in connection with all the events of revelation in the whole Bible.

Evidently, for Barth, the revealer corresponds to God the Father. In relation to the question, "Who is the self-revealing God?" however, he does not simply state that the self-revealing God is the Father. Barth thinks that the question, "Who is the self-revealing God?" cannot be separated in any way from the two questions: "How does it come about that this God reveals Himself?" and "What does this event do to the man to whom it happens?" For Barth, this means that "if we really want to understand revelation in terms

¹⁸⁴ *CD, I/2*, p. 242.

¹⁸⁵ *CD, I/1*, p. 297.

of its subject, i.e., God,” then we have to realize that “this subject, God, the Revealer, is identical with His act in revelation and also identical with its effect.”¹⁸⁶ Barth thus claims that the answer to the question of the Subject in revelation “developed into a threefold knowledge of the God who is Himself the Revealer, Himself the act of His revelation, and Himself His revealedness, in the doctrine of Father, Son and Holy Spirit in their oneness and threeness, threeness and oneness.”¹⁸⁷ For Barth, the answer to the question, “Who is the self-revealing God?” is the Triune God.¹⁸⁸

Now we need to turn our concern to the problem of the oneness and threeness in the Trinity. As mentioned so far, Barth begins the doctrine of the Trinity with the statement “God reveals Himself as the Lord” in order to analyze “revelation as attested by Scripture.” Finally, he gives his own understanding of the Trinity as follows:

Generally and provisionally we mean by the doctrine of the Trinity the proposition that He whom the Christian Church calls God and proclaims as God, the God who has revealed Himself according to the witness of Scripture, is *the same in unimpaired unity and yet also the same thrice in different ways in unimpaired distinction*. Or, in the phraseology of the Church’s dogma of the Trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in the biblical witness to revelation are *the one God in the unity of their essence*, and the one God in the biblical witness to revelation is *the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in the distinction of His persons*.¹⁸⁹

Barth’s idea about the unity of the triune God as we see above might look usual, but are reflections of Barth’s own interpretation of the Trinity that God the Revealer is identical with His act in revelation and also identical with its effect. When Barth states above that God is the same in unimpaired unity and yet also the same thrice in different ways in

¹⁸⁶ CD, I/1, p. 296.

¹⁸⁷ CD, I/2, p. 203.

¹⁸⁸ CD, I/1, p. 303.

¹⁸⁹ CD, I/1, pp. 307-08. My Italics.

unimpaired distinction, the point that Barth wants to make is that the triunity of God does not mean three gods, but “the one God in threefold repetition.”

The triunity of God does not mean threefold deity either in the sense of a plurality of Gods or in the sense of the existence of a plurality of individuals or parts within the one Godhead. ... The name of Father, Son and Spirit means that God is the one God in threefold repetition, and this in such a way that the repetition itself is grounded in His Godhead, so that it implies no alteration in His Godhead, and yet in such a way also that He is the one God only in this repetition, so that His one Godhead stands or falls with the fact that He is God in this repetition, but for that very reason He is the one God in each repetition.¹⁹⁰

Appealing to St. Anselm, Barth summarizes his idea of “the one God in threefold repetition” as the doctrine of the repetition of eternity in eternity (i.e., *repetitio aeternitatis in aeternitate*). For Barth, the “three persons” as terms referring to Father, Son and Spirit are three repetitions of eternity in eternity (i.e., *tres repetitiones aeternitatis in aeternitate*), while this doctrine teaches also the oneness of God in each repetition. As Barth reads St. Anselm, the eternity that is thrice repeated in eternity is none other than the one and same eternity (i.e., *non est nisi una et eadem aeternitas*).¹⁹¹

On the basis of his doctrine of the Trinity as the doctrine of *repetitio aeternitatis in aeternitate*, Barth raised the key issue in the modern trinitarian controversy: whether

¹⁹⁰ CD, I/1, p. 350.

¹⁹¹ CD, I/1, p. 350, 353. Interestingly, Zdenek Trtik suggests a different interpretation of *repetitio aeternitatis in aeternitate* from Barth's. While Barth makes use of it to support his idea of one personal God in each repetition, Trtik applies it to his own attempt to explain how the three distinct subjects are unseparable and in inter-relationship of “I-Thou.” For Trtik, the teaching of *repetitio aeternitatis in aeternitate* does not deny, but rather confirm the notion of God as the three distinct subjects: “Der biblische Monotheismus schafft den heidnischen Polytheismus durch die Erkenntnis ab, dass Gott als absolutes Subjekt nur einer sein könne. Die Vielgötterei bedeutet gegenseitige Beschränkung der Götter, so dass deren Absolutheit d.h. Gottheit ausgeschlossen ist. Doch erst die Erkenntnis, dass ein Subjekt nur in den Ich-Du-Beziehungen existiere, entdeckt, dass die Trinität keine Absurdität, sondern die ontischen Ordnung der Existenz Gottes sei. Da nur ein absolutes Subjekt existiere kann, aber seine Existenz allein in den Ich-Du-Beziehungen zu ebenso absoluten Subjekten möglich ist, müssen die drei absoluten Ichs Vater, Sohn und heiliger Geist verschiedene Existenzweisen des einen, nichtgegenständlichen und deshalb

the “person” referring to Father, Son and Spirit bears a direct relation to “personality” as it is called today. For Barth, “‘person’ as used in the church doctrine of the Trinity bears no direct relation to personality. Barth argues that “personality” as used in the nineteenth-century “added to the ancient and medieval use of ‘person’ the notion of self-consciousness.”¹⁹² Yet the Trinity should be “of three divine ‘I’s,” but “thrice of the one divine I.”¹⁹³ For the personality of God in a modern sense belongs to “the one unique essence of God which the doctrine of the Trinity does not seek to triple but rather to recognize in its simplicity.”¹⁹⁴ For Barth, thus, “the one ‘personality’ of God, the one active and speaking divine Ego, is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Otherwise we should obviously have to speak of three gods.”¹⁹⁵ The Trinity does not mean that there are three personalities in God. This would be the worst and most extreme expression of tritheism.”¹⁹⁶

Therefore, Barth discarded the term “person” in his doctrine of the Trinity. In Barth’s argument, the classical trinitarian term, “person” is to denote the distinctiveness of the threefold repetition of God. Barth thus replaces “person” by “modes of being,” since in his thought “person” in modern times connotes “subject” or “personality” which

unteilbaren absoluten Ichs sein (*repetitio aeternitatis in aeternitate*.)” See Zdenek Trtík, “Die Trinität als ewiges Subjet,” *Theologische Zeitschrift* 37 (1981): 37.

¹⁹² William J. Hill, *The Three-Personed God: The Trinity As a Mystery of Salvation*, p. 117.

¹⁹³ *CD*, I/1, pp. 401-3.

¹⁹⁴ *CD*, I/1, p. 350.

¹⁹⁵ *CD*, IV/1, p.205.

¹⁹⁶ *CD*, I/1, p. 359.

was not originally intended at the time of the formation of the doctrine of the Trinity.¹⁹⁷ Since so-called “personality” of God belongs to the essence of God that cannot be triple but only simple, there can be only one personality of God in the triune God. Barth dispenses with the term, “person,” in his explanation of the Trinity that “the God who reveals Himself according to Scripture is one in three distinctive modes of being sustained in their mutual relations: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.”¹⁹⁸ Here, for Barth, each person of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is divine essence in a distinct mode of being, and there is only one personal subject in the triune God.

Therefore, for Barth, “to call what is meant ‘person’ is simply a *necessitas* or *consuetudo loquendi*.”¹⁹⁹ Quoting from Augustine, Barth claims that the expression *tres personae* is used “not in order to say that the three in God are precisely *personae* but in order to say with the help of the term *personae* that there are three in God – and even the number 3 here cannot express more than the negation that Father, Son and Spirit as such are not 1.”²⁰⁰ Barth’s alternative to “person” is “mode of being, *Seinsweise*,” which Barth asserts is the literal translation of the concept *tropos hyparxeos* or *modus entitativus*.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁷ *CD, I/1*, p. 361.

¹⁹⁸ *CD, I/1*, p. 348.

¹⁹⁹ *CD, I/1*, p. 355.

²⁰⁰ *CD, I/1*, p. 356.

²⁰¹ *CD, I/1*, p. 359. According to Colin Gunton, Barth’s use of *tropos hyparxeos* for an alternative to “person” in a modern sense fails to recognize that *tropos hyparxeos* is “a way of referring to the way in which the persons are who they particularly are. Thus Barth’s proposal “not only makes it impossible to redeem the concept of person from its modern individualistic usage, but also replicates the Western tendency to make the Trinity redundant by depriving the persons of distinctive forms of agency.” In other words, Barth confuses the person as a particular being with the particular way in which the person remains or is. See Colin Gunton, *The One, The Three and The Many* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 191, n. 11.

Employing the term *Seinsweise*, Barth intends to say that the Trinity is a Trinity, not of personal subjects, but of modes of being.²⁰² He explains:

The statement that God is One in three ways of being, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, means, therefore, that the one God, i.e. the one Lord, the one personal God, is what He is not just in one mode but ... in the mode of the Father, in the mode of the Son, and in the mode of the Holy Ghost.²⁰³

Yet does not the concept of “mode of being” in Barth stir up a suspicion of the modalist fallacy because it lacks such psychological functions as self-reflection, self-determining, or self-consciousness? For Barth, such a question is wrongly raised. For in his understanding, the problem of modalism has nothing to do with such psychological function as self-consciousness. Rather, modalism is a heretic claim that the God who is revealed to us is not the true God, but mere manifestation of real God. Barth argues that Sabellian modalism amounts to the idea of “three mere manifestations behind which stood a hidden fourth.”²⁰⁴ The trinitarian “persons” of modalism are, Barth claims, thus “manifestations behind which God’s one true being is concealed as something other and higher, so that one may well ask whether revelation can be believed if in the background there is always the thought that we are not dealing with God as He is but only with a God

²⁰² According to Wolfhart Pannenberg, Barth took up the proposal of Isaac August Dorner in his idea of “mode of being.” Pannenberg writes: “... Isaac August Dorner, the most important champion of an essential Trinity in Protestant theology during the second half of the 19th century, made the significant proposal that we should speak of the three modes of being of the one God, not the three persons.” Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, tr. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), p. 295.

²⁰³ *CD, I/1*, p. 359.

²⁰⁴ *CD, I/1*, p. 355.

as He appears to us.”²⁰⁵ In modalism, the revelation of God, that is, His being as Father, Son and Spirit, according to Barth, is “an economy which is foreign to His essence.”²⁰⁶

In contrast to modalism, Barth asserts that when he is dealing with His revelation, he is dealing with God Himself and not with an entity distinct from Him.²⁰⁷ For “when we ask about God, we can only ask about the One who reveals Himself.”²⁰⁸ The threeness, for Barth, is not merely economical nor transient, but ontological or essential: “(the) threeness must be regarded as irremovable, and the distinctiveness of the three modes of being must be regarded as ineffaceable,” for “the threeness is grounded in the one essence of the revealed God.”²⁰⁹ For Barth, the *tropos apokalypseus* is identical with *tropos hyparxeos*, while in modalism, the *tropos apokalypseus* is a really different one from the *tropos hyparxeos*.²¹⁰

Thus, Barth urges us to abandon the use of “three divine persons” in favor of “three modes of being,” which, Barth believes, keeps the doctrine of the Trinity from the error of tritheism, without fearing the error of modalism.

4.2.4. Criticism of Karl Barth

Our criticism of Karl Barth is limited to his idea that God is just one person. As we have

²⁰⁵ *CD*, I/1, p. 353.

²⁰⁶ *CD*, I/1, p. 382.

²⁰⁷ *CD*, I/1, p. 311.

²⁰⁸ *CD*, I/1, p. 382.

²⁰⁹ *CD*, I/1, pp. 360-61.

²¹⁰ *CD*, I/1, p. 353.

observed before, the gist of Karl Barth's idea on the issue of the threeness and oneness of the Trinity consists in his argument that the triunity of God does not mean three gods, but the one God in threefold repetition. For Barth, the idea of the one God in threefold repetition represented as *tres repetitiones aeternitatis in aeternitate* provides a substantial summary to show how one God is three Persons, and how three Persons are one God. Why do we confess God as the one God, though we know from the revelation of God in the Bible that there are the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit? For Barth, it is because the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are three repetitions of eternity in eternity. For Barth's phrase, "three repetitions of eternity in eternity" implies that what is threefold repeated in eternity is eternity. What is then the eternity that is threefold repeated in eternity? For Barth, eternity is none other than God, as Anselm writes, "God is nothing other than simple eternity itself."²¹¹ Since it is God who is threefold repeated in eternity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are three repetitions of God in Himself. In this context, Barth draws a conclusion that the triune God is one personal God, because he understands in his idea of the threefold repetition of God that divine essence is threefold repeated in Father, Son, and Spirit.

We need to note here that for Barth the God who is threefold repeated in eternity is ontologically nothing but His essence. For Barth, God is the divine essence. In Barth's thought, the threefold repetition of God is to describe that divine essence produces itself in eternity and is in a twofold way its own product (i.e., the Son and the Holy Spirit) in

²¹¹ Anselm of Canterbury, *On the Incarnation of the Word*, 15, in *Anselm of Canterbury: Trinity, Incarnation, and Redemption*, translated by Jasper Hopkins and Herbert Richardson (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1970), p. 34.

eternity.²¹² Yet this does not mean that God is impersonal. He states that “this one God is to be understood not just as impersonal lordship, i.e., as power, but as the Lord, not just as absolute Spirit but as person, i.e., as an I existing in and for itself with its own thought and will.”²¹³ He states, “God is God in a special way as Father, as Son, and as Spirit.”²¹⁴ Rather, for Barth, divine essence is not impersonal, but personal. For the essence of God is “the being of God as divine being,” “the Godhead of God.”²¹⁵ Further, the divine essence in God’s revelation is His being and His act as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.²¹⁶ What kind of “act” is God’s being? God’s being is the being as the fellowship of “the One who loves with the loved himself, and therefore that which the One who loves has to impart to the loved and the loved has to receive from the One who loves.”²¹⁷ The One who loves, for Barth, clarifies that God is a person as a being of act, i.e., loving, which is the essence of God.²¹⁸ In sum, for Barth, insofar as God is the one who loves, “God is not something, not a thing, but a person, the One, the speaking and acting Subject, the original and real I.”²¹⁹

Certainly, Barth’s understanding of the triune God as “threefold repetition of God in Himself” has an explicit connection with such a strong doctrine of divine simplicity as

²¹² *CD*, I/1, p. 367.

²¹³ *CD*, I/1, p. 358.

²¹⁴ *CD*, I/1, p. 359.

²¹⁵ *CD*, I/1, p. 349.

²¹⁶ *CD*, II/1, p. 273.

²¹⁷ *CD*, II/1, p. 276.

²¹⁸ *CD*, II/1, p. 284.

²¹⁹ *CD*, II/1, p. 296.

we see in Thomas Aquinas. First of all, Barth believes that “divine Person” in the Trinity is one and the same reality with divine essence. Thus, he argues that each of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is a distinct mode of divine essence. Secondly, the idea of “threefold repetition of God in Himself” could be understood as claiming substantially the same idea that one and the same essence is three times repeated in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In other words, Barth’s idea, the threefold repetition of one God in Himself, may be understood as an effort to describe the consubstantiality of the three divine Persons. Then, the idea of “threefold repetition of God in Himself” may be taken as having the same notion as the creed of the council of Toledo XI (675) which declares that “we say that the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God each singly; yet there are not three Gods, but there is one God ... We confess and believe, therefore, that singly each person is wholly God and that all three persons are one God.”²²⁰

Nevertheless, Barth's idea that since God is one personal subject, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are not three personalities, is not acceptable. As told above, Barth’s idea of God as one person begins with his conviction that the Godhead of God, the being of God, the act of God is “what the vocabulary of the early Church calls the essence of God, the *deitas* or *divinitas*, the divine οὐσία, *essentia*, *natura*, or *substantia*.”²²¹ Barth then interprets ancient terms, *hypostasis* or *persona*, as a mode of being that denotes the distinctiveness of the threefold repetition of God, or God’s essence.

²²⁰ Henry Denzinger, *The Source of Catholic Dogma*, translated by Roy J. Deferrari (London: B. Herder Book Co., 1955), 279 in p. 108. “Deus ergo Pater, Deus Filius, Deus Spiritus Sanctus singulariter dicitur: nec tamen tres dii, sed unus est Deus ... Singulariter ergo, et unaquaeque persona plenus Deus et totae tres personae unus Deus confitetur et creditur.” Quoted from *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, edited by Henricus Denzinger (Barcinone: Herder, 1976), 529 in p. 177.

²²¹ *CD*, I/1, p. 349.

Truly, Barth may be right to argue according to the Latin theology that divine persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are one and the same reality with divine essence. However, he wrongly takes the classical theological term, person, as referring to mere mode of being (i.e., personal characteristic to make divine persons distinct from one another), arguing for the replacement of the term, person, by mode of being. Barth's argument is groundless. Even according to the theological grammar employed by the ancient church, the term, hypostasis, does not signify merely a distinct characteristic of divine person. Hypostasis is distinguished from τρόπος ὑπάρξεως that Barth translates into "mode of being." The term τρόπος ὑπάρξεως does not refer to "divine person" as such, but merely to "distinguishing particularities of the hypostasis." The divine person is a concrete distinct objective entity, while "mode of being" is its characteristic.

When Barth denies personality to each of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit because they are one and the same divine essence in distinct modes of being, or when he denies that the three divine persons are personal subjects, he confounds the distinction between hypostasis and ousia. If any nature or essence exists or has being, it does only when it is enhypostatized in its person. The doctrine of enhypostasis definitely assumes the distinction between nature or essence and hypostasis as a supposit of nature, no matter whether they are distinct ontologically or conceptually. This distinction is a principle evidently acknowledged by ancient theologians. For example, the Cappadocians teach that "the hypostasis is not the product of nature: it is that in which nature exists, the very principle of its existence."²²² Also, for Aquinas, "person" in God may be interpreted as a supposit of divine essence in our way of speaking about God, which is analogical, and the

²²² John Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought*, p. 57.

divine Persons as supposita are apprehended as “person” in a psychological or moral sense, since God, men and angels share the general meaning of “person” of “what subsists in its own right in an intellectual nature.” Since divine nature is eternally enhypostatized in each divine person, there is no divine person in whom divine nature is not enhypostatized. The ancient orthodoxy takes divine person as supposit or subject in which divine nature is enhypostatized, no matter whether conceptually (in Latin theology), or ontologically (in Greek theology). Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, therefore, signify two things. One is that Father, Son and Holy Spirit are divine persons as hypostasis (i.e., supposita or subjects), which are distinct from essence, conceptually or ontologically. The other is that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are personal beings in whom divine nature is enhypostatized.

Barth is wrong, thus, to argue that because of the ontological identity between divine essence and divine persons, there is only one personality in the Trinity. For when Barth argues that there is only one personality in God because divine persons are one and the same essence, he wrongly ascribes “hypostasis as a subject” to one divine essence. In other words, Barth draws one personal subject from one divine essence. And he applies one personal subject to each of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, since there is only one divine essence among them. He then interprets each of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as one and the same personal subject in distinct modes of being. In addition, Barth wrongly argues that distinct modes of being, that is, characteristics of divine persons, are what ancient orthodoxy intends by the term, hypostasis. Yet even in the ancient church, the term, person or hypostasis, refers to the subject that is attributed to essence by Barth. This does not mean however that there are three essences because of three hypostases. If so, it

would be tritheism. Rather, hypostasis is distinguished from essence in that hypostasis is not a product of nature, but a subsistent being in which nature is enhypostatized, whether conceptually or ontologically. Ancient orthodoxy is well aware that such personal elements as “will” and “activity” pertains to essence rather than hypostasis. However, ancient orthodoxy apprehends “divine person signified by hypostasis” as a subject who has psychological or moral aspects. Barth wrongly argues that if three hypostases signify three subjects, it would entail three distinct essences, because “subject” belong to “essence.” Yet for ancient orthodoxy, three hypostases do not entail three distinct essences. For ancient orthodoxy distinguishes essence from hypostasis as its subject. Essence is the source of “personality;” hypostasis is the supposit of essence. With regard to this respect, Barth wrongly confounds the distinction between hypostasis and essence that ancient orthodoxy makes.²²³ Even though Barth argues that historical ancient orthodoxy supports him, his argument is historically groundless.

In brief, Barth is not wrong in saying that Father, Son and Holy Spirit are personal because they are the threefold repetition of God in Himself. Also he is not wrong in his understanding of the threefold repetition of divine essence in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The idea of the threefold repetition of divine essence is acceptable. Since one and the same nature is always and eternally enhypostatized in divine hypostaseis, the divine nature may be said to be threefold repeated in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Yet, Barth’s

²²³ We observe that Barth’s error of this kind is repeated in his understanding of the consubstantiality between Father and Son. First, Barth says that the notion of consubstantiality in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit teaches that there is only one substance in the modes of beings. Cf. *CD*, I/1, p. 351. Next, he identifies the one substance with the one subject, saying that “of one essence” [between the Father and the Son] as a safeguard against the differentiation or multiplication of God’s essence “forces us really to understand the “persons” as modes of being, i.e., not as two subjects but as twice the same subject.” In short, Barth integrates substance and subject into one reality, while the ancient orthodoxy makes a distinction between substance and subject, between essence and hypostasis. Barth makes an error of the confusion of essence and hypostasis. Cf. *CD*, I/1, p. 439.

problem derives from his understanding that the threefold repetition of God (i.e., deity, Godhead, divine essence) is the threefold repetition of divine subject. By locating divine subject in divine essence rather than in divine hypostasis, Barth wrongly argues that Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one and the same subject, and are distinct only in terms of modes of being. Barth follows the wrong assumption historically repeated (i.e., that divine nature necessarily entails divine person), since divine personality pertains to divine essence. In contrast to Barth, the dissertation confirms that each person of Father, Son and Holy Spirit is not a mere mode of being, but a distinct subject of one divine essence. In other words, the dissertation claims that Father, Son and Holy Spirit are not the threefold repetition of one divine subject in distinct modes of being, but the three subjects of the threefold repetition of one divine essence. Barth is not a modalist in a historical sense, but is modalist in that he acknowledges only one single personality in the Trinity.

4.3. Conclusion

Chapter 4 has discussed whether the notion of divine person as center of consciousness necessarily leads to a danger of tritheism in the light of the understanding of tritheism as we have in chapter 3. Chapter 4 first discussed the ontological concept of divine person. It concludes that it is little convincing to take divine persons as mere modes of being or manners of coming into existence. In both traditions of Greek and Latin theology, divine person is a supposit of divine nature in a conceptual sense (in Latin theology) or in an ontological reality (in Greek theology). As a supposit of divine nature, each divine person is taken as a psychological agent. In no tradition, the notion of divine person is taken in a univocal sense as in human persons or angels. Yet, in both traditions, divine persons are

three subjects who have psychological and moral aspects. Thus, the dissertation concludes that it is no problem to take the divine persons as “centers of consciousness,” in a psychological sense.

Conclusively, it is not necessarily true that three centers of consciousness necessarily entail a tritheism because they bring forth three consciousnesses. For three consciousnesses may result from one divine nature as well as from three divine natures. In addition, there are two types of consciousness: (1) essential consciousness according to divine nature; (2) notional consciousness according to interpersonal relations. Three consciousnesses in essential realm result from three divine natures. Yet three consciousnesses in notional realm do not necessarily derive from three divine natures. They may result from one divine nature. Insofar as three centers of consciousness are not based on three divine natures, they do not entail three consciousnesses in the essential dimension *ad extra*. When three centers of consciousness are based on one divine nature, they entail only one consciousness in the essential dimension *ad extra*, and at the same time entail three consciousnesses within interpersonal relations in the divine life. Therefore a claim that there are three consciousnesses due to each divine person’s self-consciousness (i.e., in the notional acts or within interpersonal relations) has nothing to do with three divine natures, or tritheism. All these conclusions mean that the notion of divine person as center of consciousness does not necessitate tritheism. In order to adjudicate whether a trinitarian theory that claims the notion of divine person as center of consciousness necessitates tritheism, accordingly, we need to examine whether that theory confirms three divine natures or one divine nature. In short, if a theory that argues for three centers of consciousness confirms the substantial unity of the triune God (i.e.,

the doctrine that the unity of the triune God is real, not nominal, the doctrine of *opera trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa*, the doctrine of perichoresis), it is not tritheist.

For Sherlock, there are three distinct conscious subjects in the Trinity, for each divine person is a thinking substance, mind; for Barth, there is only one single conscious subject in the Trinity, for each divine person is a mode of being. Sherlock's problem is that his idea is inconsistent with a theological grammar set by the divine simplicity such as Aquinas' that he assumes as valid. Sherlock breaks a grammar of divine simplicity (e.g., notional distinctions do not cause plural substances), and takes three divine persons as three substances. Yet Sherlock undoubtedly confirms the substantial unity which is the decisive criterion of discerning tritheism (i.e., the doctrine that the unity of the triune God is real, not nominal, the doctrine of *opera trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa*, and the doctrine of perichoresis). Therefore, Sherlock's description of divine persons as three substances is not substantially tritheist, but is formally or descriptively inconsistent with its assumption of divine simplicity. Barth's problem is that he wrongly argues that his refusal to take divine persons as three centers of consciousness and his proposal to replace "person" by "mode of being" are based on historical orthodox theology. For Barth, Father, Son and Holy Spirit are the threefold repetition of one divine subject in distinct modes of being. Even in ancient orthodoxy, yet, divine person is not a mode of being, but a supposit of nature in a conceptual sense (in Latin theology) or in an ontological reality (in Greek theology). Each divine person is a conscious subject or personality. Father, Son and Holy Spirit are the three subjects of the threefold repetition of one divine essence. Barth is not a modalist in a historical sense, but is modalist in that he acknowledges only one single personality in the Trinity.

CHAPTER 5

TEST CASES: JÜRGEN MOLTSMANN AND WILLIAM HILL

5.1. Test One: Jürgen Moltmann's Doctrine of the Trinity

In chapter 4, we have concluded that three centers of consciousness do not necessarily entail tritheism. The concept of three centers of consciousness is not a criterion of discerning tritheism. This means that not all theologians who support three personal subjects in the Trinity are tritheist. However, the conclusion of chapter 4 does not mean that all so-called social trinitarian theories are necessarily safe from a tritheist charge. Employing the result of the study this dissertation has obtained so far, this section intends to show that some social trinitarians may be accused of tritheism. The dissertation chooses to deal with Jürgen Moltmann, who is acknowledged as one of those who represent social trinitarians. Through this task, this section wishes to confirm that the notion of the three divine persons as centers of consciousness is not a criterion of tritheism. The section claims that Moltmann is close to a tritheist. But it does not argue that Moltmann's theory of the Trinity has a tint of tritheism because of his notion of divine persons as personal subjects. Yet Moltmann's notion of the divine persons as the three individual, unique natures and his denial of the notion of divine person in a generic sense drives this section to draw a conclusion that he falls into tritheist errors.

5.1.1. Moltmann's Criticism of the Traditional Approaches to the Divine Unity

One of distinct features of Moltmann's doctrine of the Trinity is connected with the fact that he accepts God neither as the supreme substance, nor as the absolute subject.

Moltmann states that the former "was given by Greek antiquity, continued to be given in

the Middle Ages, and still counts as valid in the present-day definitions of the Roman Catholic Church,” while the latter “springs from the special tradition of the Old Testament and, by way of mediaeval nominalism, passed down to the Idealist philosophy of the nineteenth century.”¹ In his thought, those two ideas contradict the biblical idea of God as triune, since both of them lead inescapably to “the disintegration of the doctrine of the Trinity in abstract monotheism.”² For Moltmann, the Christian doctrine of the Trinity is neither monotheism in a sense of the one supreme substance, nor monarchianism in the sense of the one absolute subject.

Moltmann’s opposition to monotheism or monarchianism³ is based on his reading of the biblical testimonies of salvation history of which the center is Christ. In Moltmann’s understanding, the doctrine of the Trinity derives from “the history of Jesus the Son,” and “has christology as its premise; for it is only christology that makes the knowledge and concept of the triune God necessary.”⁴ In the history of the development of doctrines, the dogma of the Trinity was evolved out of Christology through laborious resistance against Arianism and Sabellianism.

Once monotheistic monarchianism is “introduced into the doctrine and worship of the Christian church,” in Moltmann’s thought, “faith in Christ is threatened.” Strict monotheism makes theological Christology impossible, for in monotheism God “can

¹ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993; German edition, 1980), p. 10. Henceforth, abbreviated *TK*.

² *TK*, p. 17, 18.

³ For Moltmann, monotheism and monarchianism are different only in names, but two sides of the same thing. See *TK*, p. 130.

⁴ *TK*, p. 97.

neither be parted nor imparted.”⁵ Strict monotheism makes it necessary to think of God without Christ, and to think of Christ without God. Arianism and Sabellianism are two different monotheistic versions of God, reducing Christ to “first born of creation” or “mere manifestation or mode of appearance of the One God.”⁶ Therefore, Moltmann characterizes the doctrine of the Trinity as a Christian attempt to christianize the concept of God so that “God cannot be comprehended without Christ, and Christ cannot be understood without God.”⁷

Moltmann’s complaint is that even though the early church managed to reject Arianism and overcome Sabellianism, the early creeds remains under the influences of monotheism and monarchianism where the question of God’s unity is concerned.⁸ According to Moltmann, for example, the term, *homoousios* of the Nicene Creed, which suggests the unity of substance between Father, Son and Spirit, originates from a monotheistic idea of God; the Athanasian Creed, whose thesis is “*unus Deus*,” follows the trend of monarchianism, maintaining the one divine subject.⁹

In Moltmann’s thought, the potential error of modalism is implicitly contained in the Nicene Creed and the Athanasian Creed. He notes the substantial homogeneity of the Nicene Creed. In his thought, if the one divine substance is to represent the unity of the Trinity, then the threeness is “easily reduced to the fundamental unity of the divine

⁵ *TK*, p. 131.

⁶ Cf. *TK*, pp. 132-137.

⁷ *TK*, p. 132.

⁸ *TK*, p. 148.

⁹ *TK*, p. 149.

substance, as its threefold character.”¹⁰ Moltmann says that the modalist tendency of this kind is developed later in the Western tradition. With regard to the Athanasian Creed, Moltmann finds the error of modalism in its notion of the only one absolute subject. In his thought, if God is one subject, the Trinity is reduced to the threefold character of this one, identical subject.¹¹

Moltmann observes the similar error in Karl Barth and Karl Rahner among modern theologians. According to Moltmann, Barth’s doctrine of the Trinity comes under the influence of German Idealism, in which God is interpreted as the absolute subject of his own revelation.¹² Starting from the sovereignty of God, Moltmann argues, “Barth developed the doctrine of the Trinity out of the logic of the concept of God’s self-revelation.” For Moltmann, in other words, Barth develops his doctrine of the Trinity “in order to justify the absolute sovereignty of revelation and lordship as God’s self-revelation and his own lordship.”¹³ Moltmann argues thus that for Barth, God’s sovereignty is interpreted to assert his divine subjectivity or I-ness, or personality. Then, for Barth, personality proceeds from God’s divinity or God’s nature, which reveals God’s sovereignty.

In Moltmann’s thought, this is a serious mistake. For the three divine persons, to whom subjectivity and ‘I-ness’ would have to be ascribed in relation to one another and

¹⁰ *TK*, p. 177.

¹¹ *TK*, p. 149, 177.

¹² By modern European times, Moltmann intends to refer to a stream of thought of God as absolute subject, as in Descartes, Kant, Schleiermacher, Fichte, and Hegel. For a detail, see *TK*, pp. 13-16.

¹³ *TK*, p. 140.

the other persons, would be reduced merely to “three modes of being.”¹⁴ After all, Moltmann concludes that Barth’s idea of “one personal God in three modes of being” reveals its idealist heritage in the use of the reflection of absolute subjectivity, and interprets Barth’s doctrine of the Trinity as Christian monotheism to assert “trinitarian monarchy.”¹⁵

Moltmann observes that Karl Rahner has the same problem as Barth in falling into danger of “Idealistic modalism,” when Rahner argues for “a single divine subject in three ‘distinct modes of subsistence’.”¹⁶ For, like Barth, Rahner too follows the thesis that the one, unique, divine essence implies the uniqueness of a single personality and a single consciousness and a single freedom.¹⁷ Moltmann unhesitatingly characterizes Rahner’s doctrine of the Trinity as “the mystical variant of the Idealistic doctrine of the ‘trinitarian’ reflection structure of the absolute subject.”¹⁸

In Moltmann’s thought, both Barth and Rahner are wrong in that their interpretations of the doctrine of the Trinity obscure the trinitarian history of the Father, the Son and the Spirit to which the Bible testifies, seeking the unity of God in the concept of the one, identical, absolute subject, which is a non-trinitarian concept.¹⁹ Eventually, Moltmann describes Barth’s doctrine as “a late triumph for the Sabellian modalism.”²⁰

¹⁴ *TK*, p. 141.

¹⁵ *TK*, pp. 143-44.

¹⁶ *TK*, p. 144.

¹⁷ *TK*, p. 145.

¹⁸ *TK*, p. 148.

¹⁹ *TK*, p. 143, 144, 148.

²⁰ *TK*, p. 139.

Arguing that the idea of monotheism or monarchianism is not appropriate to describe the Christian God testified in the Bible, Moltmann concludes that the approaches to understand the unity of God in connection with the idea of monotheism or monarchianism are non-trinitarian. In other words, if a theory of the divine unity is to be trinitarian, Moltmann declares, it should not start from “the philosophical postulate of absolute unity,” but from “the biblical history.”

5.1.2 Moltmann’s Idea of the Trinitarian Unity of God

What Moltmann means by his conclusion that the doctrine of the Trinity should begin not with the metaphysics of the absolute subject, but with the biblically attested history of salvation, is that the doctrine of the Trinity should do justice to “the story that is played out between Jesus the Son, Abba his Father, and the Holy Spirit.” As we see in Karl Barth or Karl Rahner, Moltmann argues, the modern formulas of the doctrine of the Trinity whose starting point is monotheistic monarchianism fails in grasping “the personal interrelationship of the Father who loves the Son, the Son who prays to the Father, and the Spirit who confesses and glorifies the Father and the Son.”²¹ The gist of Moltmann’s complaint against historical creeds or contemporary theories of God based on monotheistic monarchianism is summarized as follows: They do not see three different subjects in the triune God, but only one subject, with the result that they

²¹ Jürgen Moltmann, “The Unity of the Triune God,” translated by O.C. Dean, *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 28 (1984), p. 160. You can see the German text of this article in “Die Einheit des dreieinigen Gottes,” in *Trinität: Aktuelle Perspektiven der Theologie*, edited by Karl Rahner and Heinrich Schlier (Freiburg: Herder, 1984), pp. 97-113.

unavoidably fail in taking into account the trinitarian differences among the three divine persons of the Father, the Son and the Spirit.²² Moltmann states this point as follows:

Whoever proceeds in this “salvation-historical” fashion begins with knowledge of Jesus the “beloved Son”; with faith in “Abba,” the “Father of Jesus Christ”; and with the experience of the Holy Spirit, who renews men and women in faith. Thus he begins with knowledge of these three distinct and different subjects and their unique and particular cooperation in history, and only then does he ask about their relationship to one another and their unity. In this way he approaches the history of salvation as the history of the revelation of these subjects and perceives their own history as the history of the living, changing relations that unite the three subjects.²³

Moltmann’s approach of the history of salvation to the doctrine of the Trinity leads him to argue with conviction that the main problem of the doctrine of the Trinity is not how to understand the threeness of divine persons, but how to explain the oneness of divine persons. For, in Moltmann’s thought, it is biblically evident that “Father, Son and Spirit are subjects with will and reason who speak to each other, are devoted to each other in love, and together are ‘one’.”²⁴ In this context, Moltmann procures one qualification that he cannot give up in dealing with the matter of the unity of God: the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are three personal subjects, and cannot be understood as three modes of being of a single divine subject. In other words, the notion of the unity of God must not abolish both the subjectivity of each divine person and the subjective differences between the persons.

Does Moltmann then deny the consubstantiality of the three divine persons too, when he rejects the idea of the one absolute divine subject that is implied in monotheistic

²² Jürgen Moltmann, “The Inviting Unity of the Triune God,” in *Monotheism*, edited by Claude Geffre and Jean-Pierre Jossua (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1985), pp. 54-55.

²³ “The Unity of the Triune God,” p. 161.

²⁴ “The Unity of the Triune God,” p. 165.

monarchianism? As we said in the preceding section, for Moltmann, monotheism and monarchianism are not substantially different, but one and the same thing. It might be reasonable then to suppose that Moltmann neglects the consubstantiality of the three divine persons. However, Moltmann makes several statements to confirm the consubstantiality of the three divine persons.

The Son is the 'only', the 'only begotten', eternal Son of the Father. He is not created *ex nihilo* but – as the metaphors of generation and birth suggest – proceeds from the substance of the Father. Consequently he is one in substance or essence with the Father and has everything in common with him, except his 'Personal' characteristics.²⁵

If the Spirit, together with the eternal Word, proceeds from the Father as 'origin of the Godhead', then we must also say that the Spirit is not created, but that he issues from the Father out of the necessity of the Father's being and is of the same essence or substance as the Father and the Son. In experiencing the Holy Spirit we experience God himself: we experience the Spirit of the Father, who unites us with the Son; the Spirit of the Son, whom the Father gives; and the Spirit who glorifies us through the Son and the Father.²⁶

Judging from the two passages quoted above, Moltmann obviously shows an unreserved acknowledgment that the three divine persons are consubstantial.

In what sense does Moltmann acknowledge the consubstantiality of the three divine persons? In effect, Moltmann does not take the Christian doctrine of God as monotheism in a sense of the one supreme substance and believes that monotheism fundamentally leads to monarchianism. Furthermore, Moltmann emphasizes that the unity of the three divine persons must not be understood as the homogeneity of the divine substance.

If we search for a concept of unity corresponding to the biblical testimony of the triune God, the God who unites others with himself, then we must dispense with both the concept of the one substance and the concept of the identical subject.²⁷

²⁵ TK, p. 166.

²⁶ TK, p. 170.

²⁷ TK, p. 150.

Here Moltmann clearly rejects to take the one substance of the three divine persons as the divine unity of Christian God. The question above is eventually rephrased as follows: In what sense does Moltmann oppose the notion of the one divine substance for the unity of God, while confirming the consubstantiality of the three divine persons? In order to understand an answer to this question, we need to figure out what unity of God Moltmann has in mind.

For Moltmann, who definitely argues that the doctrine of the Trinity should not begin with monotheistic monarchianism but with the biblically attested history of salvation, the ground of the unity of the Christian God should not be found in the “sameness” or “identity” of those which are compared, but in the “unitedness” or “at-oneness.” There are several reasons for his argument. With regard to negative aspects, two reasons are mentioned. One is his conviction that the biblically attested history of salvation is none other than the history of the revelation of the three different personal subjects. Since the unity of the three different personal subjects cannot be that like “sameness” or “identity,” the idea of unity as “sameness” or “identity” contradicts the notion of the unity of the triune God. The other is Moltmann’s thought that the idea of “unitedness,” or “at-oneness” is not necessitated by the concept of consubstantiality or one absolute subject. He states, “the at-oneness of the three divine Persons is neither presupposed by these Persons as their single substance nor is it brought about as the sameness or identity of the divine lordship or self-communication.”²⁸ Rather than the notion of “sameness” or “identity,” thus, Moltmann grounds the unity of the triune God in the notion of “unitedness,” or “at-oneness” of the three Persons with one another.

²⁸ TK, p. 150.

On the other hand, Moltmann has two positive reasons for his favor of the notion of “unitedness” or “at-oneness” as the unity of the triune God. One is that the idea of “at-oneness” presupposes “the personal self-differentiation of God, and not merely a modal differentiation, for only persons can be at one with one another, not modes of being or modes of subjectivity.” The other is that “only the concept of unitedness is the concept of a unity that can be communicated and is open.”²⁹ In Moltmann’s thought, if we have to start from the biblical testimony of the three Persons of the history of Christ, “the unity of the Father, the Son and the Spirit is then the eschatological question about the consummation of the trinitarian history of God.” For him, this implies that “the unity of the three Persons of this history must consequently be understood as a *communicable* unity and as an *open, inviting unity, capable of integration.*”³⁰ This kind of understanding of the unity of the trinitarian God of Moltmann’s necessarily leads Moltmann to reject the concept of the unity of the one homogeneous substance or one personal subject. He states as follows:

The *homogeneity* of the divine substance is hardly conceivable as communicable and open for anything else, because then it would no longer be homogeneous. The *sameness* and the identity of the absolute subject is not communicable either, let alone open for anything else, because it would then be charged with non-identity and difference. Both these concepts of unity – like the monadic concept – are exclusive, not inclusive. If we search for a concept of unity corresponding to the biblical testimony of the triune God, the God who unites others with himself, then we must dispense with both the concept of the one substance and the concept of the identical subject.³¹

²⁹ TK, p. 150.

³⁰ TK, p. 149.

³¹ TK, pp. 149-150.

Here we find a reason why Moltmann does not take the idea of the unity of the one substance and the one absolute subject. In his thought, that idea of the unity of substance and subject contradicts the communicable, open, and inviting unity of the trinitarian God who are three different personal subjects.

Moltmann has a presumption in his developing idea of the communicable, open and inviting unity. That presumption derives from the qualification that he has in dealing with the matter of the unity of the triune God: the Father, the Son and the Spirit are three personal subjects. After all, we need to examine what idea of divine person Moltmann has. The study of Moltmann's idea of divine person will help us understand first why he favors the idea of the communicable, open and inviting unity and in what sense he denies the unity of one substance, while confirming the consubstantiality.

After scanning the meanings of both *hypostasis* in Greek theology and *persona* in Latin theology, Moltmann gives a definition of divine person: "If we take Boethius' definition, the trinitarian Persons are not 'modes of being'; they are individual, unique, non-interchangeable subjects of the one, common divine substance, with consciousness and will."³² Here we see again two aspects exist in Moltmann's understanding of divine person. One is "the one, common divine substance"; the other is "non-interchangeable uniqueness." For Moltmann, the divine consubstantiality explains why each divine person is equally personal; the uniqueness of divine persons does why they are three. Moltmann continues to write:

But since the trinitarian Persons are unique, they cannot merely be defined by their relationship to their common nature. The limitation to three would then be incomprehensible. The personality which represents their untransferable, individual being with respect to their common divine nature, means, on the other hand, the character of relation with respect to the other Persons. They have the

³² TK, p. 171.

divine nature in common; but their particular individual nature is determined in their relationship to one another. In respect of the divine nature the Father has to be called '*individua substantia*', but in respect of the Son we have to call him 'Father'. The position is no different in the case of the Son and the Spirit. The three divine Persons exist in their particular, unique natures as Father, Son and Spirit in their relationships to one another, and are determined through these relationships. It is in these relationships that they are persons. Being a person in this respect means existing-in-relationship.³³

For Moltmann, the common divine nature of the three different divine Persons means that each of them has the untransferable, individual personality, since each of them is commonly divine; the uniqueness of each divine Person derives from the particular individual nature that each of them has. In other words, if divine Persons are to be personal as equally divine beings, they should be the same with respect to divine nature. In this respect, they have the divine nature in common. But if divine Persons are to be personal, they should be also determined through the relationship of the divine Persons to one another. For divine persons do exist in the context of relationship. As the Father, the Son and the Spirit exist in their relationship to one another, they exist in their particular, unique natures.

With this notion of personal relationship among divine persons, Moltmann begins to expand his own idea of the trinitarian unity. After Moltmann explains the substantial and the relational understanding of person respectively in connection with Boethius and Augustine, he turns his attention to Hegel. Moltmann finds an insight of the trinitarian unity in Hegel's idea that "the Persons do not merely 'exist' in their relations; they also realize themselves in one another by virtue of self-surrendering love."³⁴ Moltmann interprets Hegel's insight of person as a third understanding of person, that is, the

³³ TK, pp. 171-172.

³⁴ TK, p. 174.

historical understanding of person, in addition to the substantial and the relational understanding of person. In Hegel's insight, Moltmann finds a perfect notion to make it possible to perceive the trinitarian God witnessed in the biblically attested history of salvation, that is, "the revelation, the self-emptying and the glorification of the triune God." For "God's passion for his Other, God's self-limitation, God's pain, God's joy, and God's eternal bliss in the final glorification" that are revealed in the history of the triune God, could be well reflected in Hegel's idea of person in which persons "realize themselves in one another by virtue of self-surrendering love."³⁵

Now it is understandable that Moltmann favors the notion of "unitedness" or "at-oneness" as the unity of the triune God over the notion of one substance or one subject. In Moltmann's thought, whatever unity is really trinitarian should reflect the history of the three divine Persons who exist in the light of the others and in one another by virtue of self-surrendering love. That unity of the triune God is best understood as a communicable, open and inviting unity. Since the homogeneity of the divine substance and the identical sameness of the absolute subject are neither communicable nor open for anything else, Moltmann argues that the unity of the triune God must go without both the concept of the one substance and that of the identical subject.

At the same time, Moltmann does not neglect to say that the three divine Persons have the divine nature in common. For when they are one in divine nature, in Moltmann's thought, they are personal as *equally* divine beings. For Moltmann, thus, the idea of the common nature in the divine Persons is needed only in order to show that they are personal as divine beings that are *equal to one another in divinity*. Unlike the concept

³⁵ TK, p. 174.

of the one substance and of the identical subject, the idea of the consubstantiality of the divine Persons does not contradict the particular, individual natures of divine Persons, without which, Moltmann believes, a theory of the Trinity would go against the witness of the Bible. Therefore, Moltmann denies on the one hand the unity of the one substance and of the identical subject, while affirming the consubstantiality of the three divine Persons.

This explanation of Moltmann is verified in Moltmann's own explanation of the unity of triune God.

The unity of the triune God is not to be found solely in the single divine *substance*, or merely in the identical divine *subject*; it consists above all in the unique *community* of the three Persons. The trinitarian Persons possess in common the divine essence, and exercise in common the divine sovereignty. This means that their trinitarian community precedes their substantial and their subjective unity *ad extra*. The expression 'tri-unity' means: three Persons – one fellowship, in a singular union or at-oneness. In saying this we are putting the trinitarian concept of God's unity before the metaphysical concept of that unity. In their relationship to one another the divine Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, exist simultaneously for one another and in one another in so intimate a way that in themselves they constitute their complete, trinitarian unity.³⁶

For Moltmann, the unity of the triune God does not refer to the single divine substance, or the identical divine subject, but the trinitarian community. Each divine person needs to be equally divine in order to form the divine community of trinitarian persons. In other words, they need to possess the divine essence in common as members of the divine community.

Moltmann's unity of the divine community of trinitarian persons finds its best expression in the classical doctrine of *perichoresis*. Moltmann understands the doctrine of perichoresis as follows: "Precisely through the personal characteristics that distinguish

³⁶ Jürgen Moltmann, "The Fellowship of the Holy Spirit – Trinitarian Pneumatology," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 37 (1984), p. 289.

them from one another, the Father, the Son and the Spirit dwell in one another and communicate eternal life to one another.”³⁷ Moltmann argues that the doctrine of perichoresis “makes it possible to conceive of a community without uniformity and a personhood without individualism.”³⁸ For Moltmann, thus, the unity of the trinitarian Persons should be the perichoretic unity, which does not reduce the threeness to the unity, or dissolve the unity in the threeness.

This perichoretic form of unity is the only conceivable *trinitarian concept of the unity* of the triune God, because it combines threeness and oneness in such a way that they cannot be reduced to each other, so that both the danger of modalism and the danger of ‘tritheism’ are excluded.³⁹

Consequently, Moltmann definitely says that the unity of the trinitarian Persons cannot and must not be sought in the homogeneity of divine substance or in the one absolute subject, but must be understood as the perichoretic unity.

Apart from the problem of threeness and oneness, Moltmann has another reason for the perichoretic unity of the trinitarian Persons. In his thought, that is the characteristic of perichoresis, which is open, inviting and integrating. Moltmann states:

If we see the trinitarian unity perichoretically, then it is not a self-enclosed, exclusive unity. It is a unity which is open, inviting and integrating, as we see when Jesus prays to the Father for the disciples (John 17:21) “... that they also may be *in us*.” This indwelling of human beings in the triune God entirely corresponds to the converse indwelling of the triune God in human beings: “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word; and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him” (John 14:23). Perichoresis does not merely link others of the same kind; it links others of mutual indwelling of

³⁷ *TK*, p. 175.

³⁸ Jürgen Moltmann, *Experiences in Theology: Ways and Forms of Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), p. 316.

³⁹ *Experiences in Theology: Ways and Forms of Christian Theology*, p. 322.

God and human beings in love: “He who abides in love abides *in God* and *God in him*” (I John 4:16).⁴⁰

For Moltmann, basically, the unity of the triune God should not do harm to the personal differences of divine persons. Moltmann describes such a unity of the triune God as the unity of “unitedness,” “at-oneness” in which the divine persons indwell in each other and are communicable and open even to humanity and to the world. Moltmann is firmly convinced that “the Trinity is open, not out of deficiency and imperfection, but in the superfluity and overflow of the love which gives created beings the living space for their livingness, and the free scope for their development.”⁴¹ Moltmann names this kind of Trinity “the open Trinity.” And he summarizes the unity of the open Trinity with various terms, that is, the unity of “unitedness,” the unity of “at-oneness,” “communicable, open, inviting, and integrating unity.” In one word, that is the unity of perichoresis.

5.1.3. Evaluation of Jürgen Moltmann

The contemporary tritheist controversy about Moltmann revolves around two issues. One is whether the notion of divine persons as centers of consciousness necessarily tritheism; the other is whether Moltmann's perichoretic unity (i.e., so-called open unity as unitedness or at-oneness) goes or dispenses with the substantial unity of the triune God.

As for the issue of center of consciousness, for example, William Stacy Johnson accuses Moltmann of being a tritheist, because he “goes so far as to conceive the plurality of God as three individual persons in the modern sense, that is, with three distinct centers of consciousness.” In Johnson's belief, “if each of these three is a ‘person’ in the modern

⁴⁰ *Experiences in Theology: Ways and Forms of Christian Theology*, pp. 322-323.

⁴¹ *Experiences in Theology: Ways and Forms of Christian Theology*, p. 323.

sense of a 'personality' with a distinct center of consciousness, then we are indeed left with tritheism, i.e., three gods."⁴² Regina Radlbeck reads Moltmann as taking the divine persons as three independent, conscious, and willful centers of act, and argues that such a notion of divine persons solidifies a suspicion of his falling into a tritheism.⁴³ In her thought, also, Moltmann's unity of the triune God as three independent centers of consciousness, will, and act, is not "the unity of will" in a strict sense, but merely "the community of will," which clarifies his tritheist error.⁴⁴

With regard to the second issue, that is, Moltmann's idea of "perichoretic unity," John Thompson evaluates Moltmann's idea as an insufficient reflection of trinitarian unity. In Thompson's thought, Moltmann's perichoretic unity is the unity of

⁴² William Stacy Johnson, "The Doctrine of the Triune God Today," *Insights* 111 (1995), p. 12, 13, 14. While acknowledging that Moltmann's way of describing the divine Persons as three unique personalities may bring the danger of tritheism in his theology, Paul D. Molnar draws our attention to his observation that an opposite heretic element of modalism, i.e., patipassianism, may be sensed in Moltmann, seeking a support from K. Rahner. Molnar states, "Whereas the tradition rejected patipassianism in order to stress the *eternal* distinction between the Father and Son (independent of creation), so that we might perceive the freedom of God's action in Christ, Moltmann ... collapses the actions of the economic Trinity into the being of the Father in eternity by arguing that ... *the pain of the cross determines the inner life of the triune God from eternity to eternity.*" Molnar keeps stating, "Still, the Father is not remote from the suffering of the Son on the cross, since there is a *perichoresis* between the Father and the Son. Nonetheless, the events in time receive their meaning from God's free will actualized in those occurrences. Moltmann cannot say this, because his method insists that Christ's suffering and the love of the immanent Trinity can be understood in a 'single perspective' which encompasses them both. ... Thus, ... Rahner states: In Moltmann and others I sense a theology of absolute paradox, of Patipassianism." See Paul D. Molnar, "The Function of the Trinity in Moltmann's Ecological Doctrine of Creation," *Theological Studies* 51 (1990), pp. 689-690.

⁴³ Regina Radlbeck, *Der Personbegriff in der Trinitätstheologie der Gegenwart: Untersucht am Beispiel der Entwürfe Jürgen Moltmanns und Walter Kaspers* (Regensburg: Verlag Friedrich Pustet, 1989), pp. 94-95.

⁴⁴ Regina Radlbeck, p. 97: "Moltmann spricht nämlich nicht, wie sie meinen, von einer 'unity', sondern von einer 'community of will', nicht von einer Willenseinheit oder Willensidentität der drei göttlichen Aktzentren, sondern von ihrer *Willenskonformität* und *Willensgemeinschaft*. Hat sich aber dort, wo ein Konzept Vater, Sohn und Geist als drei selbständige, bewußte und willensfähige Aktzentren vorstellt, der Verdacht des Tritheismus nicht schon erhärtet?" Italics original.

communion.⁴⁵ John O'Donnell gives a similar evaluation to John Thompson's, yet in more detail. In O'Donnell's observation, the attempt to explain the divine unity with the idea of community often brings in "the danger of destroying the unity of the divine substance." Thus, O'Donnell thinks it impossible to "integrate the model of community into trinitarian theology without falling into the heresy of tritheism."⁴⁶ In O'Donnell's estimation, Moltmann's notion of perichoresis is "only a moral union, a union of intention which does not do justice to the unity of being of the one divine nature." O'Donnell concludes that Moltmann's fatal error is that Moltmann evidently threatens the ontological unity of the Trinity by seeking a way to avoid the idea of one substance or of one subject in terms of history.⁴⁷

Against those criticism, contemporary theologians' defense of Moltmann from the charge of tritheism is mainly focused on the second issue, in other words, his concept of perichoretic unity. Stephen K. Moroney, for example, commends Moltmann for his good use of the doctrine of perichoresis in avoiding both modalism and tritheism.⁴⁸ M. Douglas Meeks also compliments Moltmann because he "creatively adheres to the Cappadocian

⁴⁵ John Thompson, "Modern Trinitarian Perspectives," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 44 (1991), p. 364.

⁴⁶ John O'Donnell, "The Trinity as Divine Community: A Critical Reflection upon Recent Theological Developments," *Gregorianum* 69 (1988), p. 32.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 21. A good expression to show Moltmann's danger of weakening the ontological unity of the triune God is made by Ted Peters. Granted that Moltmann is not a pluralist in that he never intends to mean that each of the three subjective centers is a part of the one God, Peters states, "nevertheless, his continued emphasis on three discrete subjects or centers of activity makes it difficult to conceive of a principle of unity that is comparable to that of the plurality. It appears that we end up with a divine nominalism." See Ted Peters, *God as Trinity: Relationality and Temporality in Divine Life* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), p. 109.

⁴⁸ Stephen K. Moroney, "Perichoresis in the Trinity," presented at the Midwestern Regional Fort Wayne, IN, March 22-23, 1996 (Portland, OR: Theological Research Exchange Network, microfilm-published, 1996), p. 8.

doctrine of *perichoresis*.” In Meeks’ thought, the doctrine of perichoresis is actually “the essence of Moltmann’s method and his mode of thinking.” It is not surprising at all to observe also that Moltmann employs such meanings as union, community, fellowship, correspondence, reciprocity, mutual coinherence, indwelling, and mediation of different persons or realities, “at every decision-making juncture” of his theology.⁴⁹

Would Moltmann’s use of the doctrine of perichoresis rescue Moltmann from the charge of tritheism? According to Klauspeter Blaser, it would be improper to charge Moltmann with tritheism just because Moltmann defines God in terms of the element of “Community” rather than “One.” For it needs to be acknowledged that Moltmann’s emphasis on the unity of “unitedness” surpasses the affirmation of the existence of three divine beings who are relatively separate and hierarchically different.⁵⁰ Moroney also defends Moltmann from the accusation of tritheism, arguing that Moltmann’s perichoretic unity is not a merely moral or intentional unity. In Moltmann’s unity of perichoresis, Moroney argues that the three divine persons shares “a deep, mutual, eternal fellowship in which their union transcends a mere moral union.”⁵¹ In his criticism on the social model of the Trinity, John L. Gresham actually protects Moltmann from the charge of tritheism, arguing that Moltmann’s idea of perichoretic unity is supported by the

⁴⁹ M. Douglas Meeks, “Jürgen Moltmann’s Systematic Contributions to Theology,” *Religious Studies Review* 22 (1996), p. 96.

⁵⁰ Klauspeter Blaser, “Les Enjeux d’une Doctrine Trinitaire Sociale: A Propos du Dernier Livre de Jürgen Moltmann,” *Revue de Théologie et de Philosophie* 113 (1981), p. 163: “Alors, trithéisme? Les critiques ne manqueront pas de reposer cette question. Il est évident que, vus au travers des schémas de discussions traditionnels, les énoncés de Moltmann tendent à nourrir ce malentendu. Je crois cependant qu’un tel reproche manque de nuances: le fait de définir Dieu comme communauté et non comme UN, de dire son unité sous forme de com-union (Einigkeit) dépasse l’affirmation de l’existence de trois êtres divins relativement séparés et hiérarchiquement différenciés.”

⁵¹ Stephen K. Moroney, p. 9.

ontological unity of the triune God.⁵² In Gresham's thought, truly, Moltmann rejects "traditional theology's unity of divine substance and modern theology's unity of the one divine subject," but he "grounds the unifying fellowship of the trinitarian life in the ontological unity of the Son and the Spirit with the Father from whom they proceed." Gresham evaluates Moltmann's perichoretic unity as a sufficient reflection of the ontological unity of the triune God.⁵³

As we have examined, the contemporary criticism against Moltmann is focused on two issues: one is the notion of the divine persons as centers of consciousness; the other is Moltmann's perichoretic or open unity as unitedness or at-oneness. With regard to the first issue, the dissertation has already suggested defining criteria of tritheism and has concluded that the notion of the three divine personal subjects as such does not necessarily entail a tritheism. In light of the dissertation 4.1, it would be wrong to say that Moltmann is a tritheist on the ground that Moltmann claims three divine personalities in a psychological sense.

But how about the second issue (i.e., the perichoretic unity)? According to chapter 3, a trinitarian theory that wants to avoid the error of tritheism should affirm the unity of divine substance not just as nominal nor as moral, but as real and substantial. We have two principles of application to verify whether a theory holds the substantial unity of the triune God. One is the inseparable operation *ad extra*; the other is the perichoresis of the three divine Persons. In his opponents' view, Moltmann's idea of open unity is not sufficiently complemented by the ontological unity of the triune God and ends up with a

⁵² John L. Gresham, "The Social Model of the Trinity and Its Critics," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 46 (1993), pp. 342-343.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 334-335.

merely moral unity, even though he makes use of the term perichoresis to express his idea. On the contrary, the defenders argue that Moltmann deserves complimenting for his good employment of perichoresis to describe the social model of the Trinity. They do not see any problem of the lack of the ontological unity of the three divine Persons. They take note of both Moltmann's frequent remarks of the consubstantiality of the divine Persons and his acknowledgement of the monarchical origin of the Father. Therefore, we need first to delve into the analysis of Moltmann's awareness of the ontological unity to validate either opposition or defense, and secondly to apply our understanding of tritheism to that analysis.

Let's begin with Moltmann's understanding of the monarchical origin of the Father. Indeed, Moltmann affirms with respect to the constitution of the Trinity that the Father, from whom, as the doctrine of the two processions teaches, the Son and the Spirit takes their divine hypostases, is the source of the Godhead.⁵⁴ But Moltmann does not say that the monarchical origin of the Father implies that the unity of the Trinity should be represented by monarchical monotheism. He definitely denies the notion of the unity of the triune God as the unity of the only one absolute subject. What he wants to say with the monarchical unity of the Father is merely to explain how the triune God is constituted, that is to say, to make it sure that the origin of the Godhead is neither the Son nor the Spirit, but the Father. In this sense, the claim that Moltmann is close to a tritheist seems disqualified. For the usual understanding of the monarchical unity of the Father amounts the denial of any acknowledgement of plural ultimate principles.⁵⁵ If Moltmann intends,

⁵⁴ *TK*, p. 177.

by mentioning the constitutional unity of God, to reject the idea of plural ultimate principles in a definite way, he would have a clear ground on which to justify himself from the charge of tritheism.

In addition to the monarchical unity of the Father, Moltmann frequently mentions the common nature in the three divine Persons. As we know from the preceding section, 5.1.2, Moltmann not only places an unambiguous emphasis on the consubstantiality among the Father, the Son and the Spirit, but also ascribes their consubstantiality to the monarchical unity of the Father from whom the Son and the Spirit proceed. This thus might contribute to defending Moltmann from the accusation of tritheism.

Furthermore, Moltmann loves the doctrine of perichoresis. For Moltmann, the doctrine of perichoresis is the best way to describe the unity of the triune God, that is to say, how the three different subjects are one without doing harm to their differences. The doctrine of perichoresis reflects well the biblical witness to the oneness of the three divine personal subjects, which, in his belief, is the openness, invitation, and integration of the three Persons to each other so that they may be united and at-oneness. Moltmann's conclusive remark is thus that the unity of the triunity lies in the eternal perichoresis of the trinitarian Persons.

Our observation so far is that the essential elements for the ontological unity of the triune God seem to explicitly exist in Moltmann's doctrine of the Trinity, such as the monarchical unity of the Father, the consubstantiality of the divine Persons, and the perichoretic unity. Moreover, if the dissertation's thesis of divine Person as conscious center of action is convincingly sound, Moltmann's idea of the three divine personal

⁵⁵ As we mention in 2.1, one of chief strategies to defend the divine unity in patristic theology is to insist that the source of the divine unity is the monarchy of the Father as the source of order and being.

subjects is valid and orthodox. It might be said then that Moltmann seems to be acquitted from the charge of tritheism.

However, Moltmann's problem starts from his strong conviction that the notion of the perichoretic unity of the triune God is possible with the presupposition that the three divine Persons should be personally different. If the three divine Persons are not personally different, but merely modally different, Moltmann argues, it would make the perichoretic unity of the unitedness or the at-oneness impossible, for "only persons can be at one with one another, not modes of being or modes of subjectivity."⁵⁶

This conviction as such is not a problem at all. It may be acknowledged that the divine persons are at once personally distinct and relationally united in the doctrine of perichoresis. Yet, Moltmann thinks that the homogeneity of the one divine substance in the Trinity contradicts the perichoretic unity since the homogeneity of the one divine substance denies the personal differences of divine persons. In short, he argues for the perichoretic unity of the triune God, on the one hand, and denies the homogeneity of the divine substance, on the other hand.

Yet is Moltmann right in arguing that the homogeneity of the divine substance contradicts the perichoresis of the three divine persons? Here, we observe an interesting contrast between Moltmann and the church fathers in developing and adopting the doctrine of perichoresis. In Moltmann's thought, the concept of the substantial homogeneity of the divine Persons cannot be consistent with the unity of perichoresis; in patristic theology, the doctrine of perichoresis confirms and at the same time is supported by, the identity of essence among the three divine Persons, as we mentioned in 3.4. In

⁵⁶ *TK*, p. 150.

particular, Ps. Cyril, who first used the notion of perichoresis in the doctrine of the Trinity, rejected John Philoponus' argument that the divine persons are three individual substances that are equally divine. Ps. Cyril emphasized with the doctrine of perichoresis that the three divine persons are identical in essence and differ only in their relations of origin.⁵⁷ A little later, John Damascus employed the doctrine of perichoresis to explain why the three divine persons are one in substance whereas three human persons are three substances.⁵⁸ For Moltmann, the idea of perichoresis demands that three divine persons are three particular, unique natures in the Trinity, while for church fathers, it intends to explain why three divine persons are not three particular natures. In brief, for church fathers, the doctrine of perichoresis is entailed by, and confirms, the homogeneous substance of the divine persons. However, for Moltmann, the doctrine of perichoresis contradicts it. Therefore, Moltmann's use of the doctrine of perichoresis is entirely opposite to church fathers'.

Why does Moltmann think that the homogeneity of the divine substance contradicts the perichoresis of the three divine persons, even though he affirms the consubstantiality of the three divine persons? The answer to this question gives us a clue to determine whether Moltmann has a tint of tritheism. In my analysis, the answer is that in Moltmann's thought, the doctrine of perichoresis demands the personal differences of the three divine persons, and the personal differences of the three divine persons demand the three individual, particular natures of the three divine persons, and the three individual, particular natures of the three divine persons contradict the homogeneity of

⁵⁷ John P. Egan, "Toward Trinitarian *Perichoresis*: Saint Gregory the Theologian, *Oration* 31. 14," *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 39 (1994), p. 87.

the one divine substance, and therefore the homogeneity of the one divine substance contradicts the doctrine of perichoresis. In brief, the difference between Moltmann and ancient fathers in understanding and employing the doctrine of perichoresis is made by the fact that for Moltmann, the personal differences of the three divine persons are based on the substantial differences of the three divine persons. Moltmann argues that “the three divine persons exist in their particular, unique natures as Father, Son and Spirit in their relationships to one another, and are determined through these relationships.”⁵⁹

Moltmann thinks that each divine person has a particular, unique nature because of the personal difference due to his personal relationship to each other. For Moltmann, the homogeneity of the divine substance contradicts the idea of three particular, unique natures of the three divine persons, and leads to a wrong conclusion that the divine persons are not personally different, but merely modally different. So he does not accept the doctrine of perichoresis together with the homogeneity of the divine substance.

We see another contrast between Moltmann and the church fathers in explaining the relation between the nature of each person and the personal difference of each person. The church fathers think that the personal differences of divine persons make each person distinct from each other, but do not go so far as to say that those personal differences make each person substantially distinct. This reveals that in the light of the ancient grammar of the Trinity, Moltmann falls into the same error as historical tritheist heresies such as Philoponus or Roscelin, as have studied in chapter 2.

⁵⁸ Reinhold Seeberg, *Text-Book of the History of Doctrines*, vol. 1, trans. Charles E. Hay (Pasadena: Wipf & Stock, 1997), p. 236.

⁵⁹ *TK*, p. 172.

Can we read Moltmann in the same way as Cornelius Plantinga Jr.? At glance, there might be some compatibility between individual, unique natures (of Moltmann) and personal essences (of Plantinga). But there is no compatibility between them. For Moltmann, the Father is an “individual substance” in respect of divine nature, and is called as “Father” in respect of the Son. Yet for Plantinga, “personal essences” do not refer to the divine persons of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but to their personal properties. The Father is not a “personal essence,” but has his distinct personal essence. Accordingly, Moltmann is not only in a trouble with the ancient orthodoxy, but also does not fit a modern idea such as Plantinga’s.

Furthermore, Moltmann’s favor toward the personal differences of the trinitarian Persons leads him to reconsider the concept of person itself. In other words, Moltmann’s detestation of homogeneity applies not only to the concept of substantial unity, but also to the doctrine of the three Persons in a generic sense of Persons. Moltmann states:

The doctrine of the three hypostases or Persons of the Trinity is dangerous too, because it applies one and the same concept to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. This suggests that they are homogeneous and equal, namely hypostases, persons or modes of being. But the heading hypostasis, person or mode of being blurs the specific differences between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. ... If we wanted to remain specific, we should have to use a different concept in each case when applying the word ‘person’ to the Father, the Son and the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not a person in the same, identical sense as the Son; and neither of them is a person in the same, identical sense as the Father. Their description as divine Persons in the plural already shows a tendency towards modalism in itself. For the generic term hypostasis or person stresses what is the same and in common, not what is particular and different about them.⁶⁰

Moltmann here suggests even to repeal the doctrine of the three hypostases or persons, or his use of personal subjects. If the trinitarian persons are to be understood in their relationships to one another and not apart from them, in Moltmann’s argument, no one of

⁶⁰ *TK*, pp. 189-190.

them can be described with a generic term, such as person. Each of the trinitarian persons is different, unique and individual, because of the relational differences among them. Moltmann thus argues that if we want to describe each of them in a concrete way, we should apply a different, unique and individual person-concept to the Father, the Son and the Spirit. Otherwise, he is afraid that we would not break off from the tendency toward modalism.

Together with his emphasis on particular, unique and individual natures of the trinitarian Persons, Moltmann's detestation of the use of Person in a generic sense provides us with the evidence that his frequent remarks of the consubstantiality of the trinitarian persons are not significant enough to prove his affirmation of the ontological unity of the persons of the triune God. For when he says that they are different, not merely in their relations to one another, but also in respect of their character as persons,⁶¹ Moltmann actually amounts to saying that there is no ontological identity among the trinitarian persons because of their individuality and differences. If the Father, the Son and the Spirit of the Trinity are not to be described in any generic term, and thus if they are described as ontologically distinct existents in their particular, unique, individual natures, what comes up in the foreground is merely particularity, uniqueness, and individuality; the idea of their consubstantiality recedes in the background. Then, the consubstantiality of the Father, the Son and the Spirit would be reduced to being merely nominal. For it would not be easy to imagine that the three existents who cannot be expressed in any generic term are really and concretely common in substance.⁶²

⁶¹ *TK*, p. 189. Cf. Jürgen Moltmann, "The Unity of the Triune God," p. 170.

In conclusion, Moltmann is on the verge of tritheism for two reasons: (1) Moltmann's idea of the perichoretic unity is not derived from, and does not confirm, substantial homogeneity. (2) Moltmann's doctrine of consubstantiality is diluted by his denial of any generic term and might be reduced to being merely nominal. Accordingly, Moltmann's use of the doctrine of perichoresis does not provide Moltmann with a safe-lock from the charge of tritheism. Moltmann's overall construct of the Trinity more or less gravitates toward tritheism.

5.2. Test Two: William Hill's Doctrine of the Trinity

William Hill is a good example to show that not all social trinitarian theologians are necessarily tritheist. Hill may be categorized as a social trinitarian in the sense that he affirms the distinctive aspects of social trinitarianism. In other words, Hill sees no problem in recognizing psychological dimension in divine persons, and argues that Father, Son, and Spirit are "three centers of consciousness in community, or in mutual communication."⁶³ In the preceding section, we have observed that Moltmann fails in

⁶² The danger contained in Moltmann's suggestion to abandon all subsuming generic concepts in the doctrine of the Trinity is well clarified by Thomas R. Thompson, too. He states: "There is one feature, however, of Moltmann's proposal which, if pursued, would, I think, take him too close to the tritheist edge. This concerns his suggestion that we abandon all 'summing-up' or generic terms in trinitarian discourse, since 'in the life of the immanent Trinity everything is unique.' ... To do away with these general items would actually impugn their common divinity, since 'God' in, say, the fifteenth verse of the *Quicumque* could then no longer function as a predicate adjective, nor could the *homoousios* in the *Niceanum*. Even given divine simplicity one would still have to say that they are three divine somethings – 'persons,' 'relations,' 'X's' (Edmund Hill). ... Since we approach the Trinity as creatures, it is best we keep in mind the class or sortal difference on whom we think. For finer distinctions we already possess some appropriate linguistic and conceptual tools: such as the difference between genus (divinity/person) and personal differentia (person/Father). The intent of Moltmann's 'trinitarian principle of uniqueness' is noble, but his means of implementing this seems uninformed." See Thomas R. Thompson, "Imitatio Trinitatis: The Trinity as a Social Model in the Theologies of Jürgen Moltmann and Leonard Boff," pp. 97-98.

⁶³ William J. Hill, *The Three-Personed God: The Trinity As a Mystery of Salvation* (Washington D.C.: the Catholic University of America Press, 1982), p. 272. Henceforth, *TPG*.

substantiating the ontological unity of the three Persons convincingly enough to remove any suspicion of tritheism that might be raised when he takes the divine unity as the unity of unitedness rather than that of substantial homogeneity. In this section, the dissertation argues that Hill's case is not the same as Moltmann's. Hill is consistent with the traditional emphasis on the substantial unity of the triune God even when he puts his focus on the necessity and possibility of the notion of divine Persons as psychological subjects. The dissertation concludes that Hill's construction of the Trinity is faithful to historical orthodoxy and is not tritheist. The dissertation hopes that the case of Hill will be a positive example that contributes to showing that the notion of the three divine persons as centers of consciousness is not a criterion of tritheism.

5.2.1. Hill's Description of the Trinitarian Problem

In the preface of his book, Hill is in sympathy with Karl Rahner's lament that the doctrine of the Trinity should hold a central place in Christian thought but has been subject to theological neglect.⁶⁴ As an effort to remedy this neglect, Hill's determination is to present a doctrine of the Trinity that "will ... enable us to know God not as some self-enclosed Absolute but rather as a self-communicating God of salvation, a God of men who live in history."⁶⁵ This effort means to afford and develop insights into the mystery of God's own being and identity, that is, the issue of oneness and threeness of the triune God.

⁶⁴ *TPG*, p. ix. Also see his statement that "contemporary Christians by and large do not appropriate God for themselves in a specifically trinitarian way. Yet both worship and thought remain replete with symbols expressing God as triune – symbols, however, that remain at a certain remove from actual life." *TPG*, p. 251.

⁶⁵ *TPG*, p. x.

In explaining in what sense God is one and in what sense God is three, Hill notes that modern theology is open to the milieu of thought that is different from the traditional one in three respects. First, the meaning of person is changed because of the contemporary development of psychology and philosophies of consciousness. Hill states, “if person means a center of consciousness, radicated⁶⁶ in an autonomous exercise of freedom, then it makes little sense to speak of three Persons of the one Godhead – especially since person, so conceived, is frequently understood as self-creating ... and as finite by definition because of the limitations imposed by other persons.”⁶⁷ In Hill’s thought, the limitation of finiteness connoted in the modern use of person vitiates its traditional use in the trinitarian formula. Secondly, an alteration is made with regard to the notion of nature. Hill states that nature is “no longer the essential structure by which the person exists, determining the ways in which it can act, but a historical product of the person subject to ongoing transformation and bespeaking the open realm of what is possible for persons in society.”⁶⁸ The reduction of the nature to a historical product rather than to *id quo* means the dismissal of the notion that nature as such is innate or chronic. The third change is that “the relationality inherent in personhood is construed as necessarily temporal one and so unimaginable outside of history.”⁶⁹ In Hill’s thought, such a change of view brings about a view that reality is not static but dynamic, or “is not Being but Creative Becoming.” Hill thinks it necessary to dialogue with this modern

⁶⁶ Hill is using an archaic word. The word “radicated” is derived from *radicare*, meaning “take root in.”

⁶⁷ *TPG*, p. 254.

⁶⁸ *TPG*, p. 254.

⁶⁹ *TPG*, p. 254.

state of affairs in order to articulate and to develop the doctrine of the Trinity in the contemporary context.

In dealing with the issue of the unity and plurality of God, Hill adheres to the doctrine of the divine simplicity. In Hill's thought, the doctrine of divine simplicity derives from "the awareness that any composition of parts is indicative of a lack of fullness in being." Hill thus connects divine simplicity with the concept of God as Perfect Being, or Pure Being. The concept of God as Pure Being is necessary for the intelligibility of the finite world. Hill states that "a world of empirical and phenomenal objects demands, for its intelligibility, Pure Being, necessarily existing, in which the originated and contingent beings exist by participation."⁷⁰ In brief, Hill thinks that the idea of God cannot dispense with the notion of the divine simplicity, and that every contingent being depends on God as Pure Being for its existence.

With this understanding, Hill opposes the idea of God as Pure Becoming, for "such a conception reduces God to being a cosmic deity, finite in his being, dependent upon the world, and subordinate to something more ultimate – for example, to the God-world process itself, or to what is conveyed in the category of 'Creativity'."⁷¹ Hill rejects the modern concept that God as the ultimate reality is "Pure Becoming." Therefore, Hill concludes that the doctrine of divine simplicity as the absolute precondition of the understanding of the reality of God calls for the mind to place a logical priority on the concept of the unity of God over the plurality of God. In dealing with the idea that the reality of God is at once One and Three, in other words, the natural progress of

⁷⁰ *TPG*, p. 256.

⁷¹ *TPG*, p. 256.

intelligence “moves from seeking to understand the divine reality in its unity to entering subsequently upon the attempt to understand the divine plurality on the level of personhood.”⁷²

Yet, the notion of divine simplicity does not vitiate the faith that “already confesses God’s revelation of himself as a Trinity in history.”⁷³ For the infinite life of God that is implied in the notion of divine simplicity can be accessed to finite beings only when it is mediated by way of conditions of finitude. Hill states, “unless that infinite life is mediated under conditions of finitude it remains inaccessible to men; thus it comes to us only from within events of history, and so to the extent of, and after the manner of, God’s loving dispositions towards men.”⁷⁴ Yet Hill does not mean by saying this mediation of history that “we know only God’s effects, and nothing about God himself,” nor that “God in his very deity” is “identified with history.” What he intends to say is that God’s revelation of himself in history provides the only ground for our “inchoate awareness of the identity of the God who saves.” That is to say, “there can be no room here for arbitrary speculation.”⁷⁵ The reality of God that is mediated to us through his revelation in history leads us to be aware that God who is simple is God as Trinity.

For Hill, the trinitarian problem is then connected with the issue of how to articulate the relationship between the one simple God and the plural persons in that one

⁷² *TPG*, p. 256. By this saying, Hill does not intend to deny that “there is a dialectical movement at work in which the mind returns from the notion of plurality to a deepening grasp of unity.” His emphasis is on the universal validity of the way of thinking by way of analogy, which he believes justifies the order from unity to plurality. Yet, Hill does not provide an explanation about how the analogical approach justifies this order. See p. 257.

⁷³ *TPG*, p. 257.

⁷⁴ *TPG*, p. 258.

⁷⁵ *TPG*, p. 258.

simple divine reality as revealed in history. Since the absolute condition in dealing with that matter is the divine simplicity, in Hill's thought, "God's triunity is best approached from his essential unity."⁷⁶ The primary theme that Hill attempts to elucidate is how to explain the concept of person without doing harm to the essential unity. In this context, Hill pays attention to a contemporary controversy caused by the employment of a modern concept of person in the doctrine of the Trinity. He is well aware that the application of the modern concept of person to divine person would unavoidably imply something like tritheism because of its connotation of autonomous finite individuality. However, he worries also over a covert and subtle form of cryptomodalism that might be embedded in the Western tradition under the influence of Augustinian trinitarianism. Here, Hill observes the value of the psychological dimension in the modern concept of person, which would help to overcome the cryptomodalism that might be innate in the methodology to approach the Trinity from the essential unity, even though such an order of approach is right. Hill writes as follows:

The contemporary use of person, in spite of the misunderstanding it can well give rise to, offers ... certain advantages to the theologian of the Trinity. Notably these are: (i) its extension to consciousness, of self and others; (ii) its greater emphasis on relationality; and (iii) its focus on intersubjectivity. Ancient uses of the concept did not include these, but did not expressly exclude them either; a contemporary theology must appropriate them. Briefly put, the traditional understanding conveyed by *hypostasis*, without relinquishing any of its metaphysical density, must be deepened and expanded to where it incorporates the psychological sense.⁷⁷

Hill does not neglect the danger of anthropomorphism in the literal application of a modern psychological concept of person to divine Person. So, Hill puts two conditions

⁷⁶ *TPG*, p. 258.

⁷⁷ *TPG*, p. 255.

that need to work in the theoretical construction of the Trinity: “(i) the retention of the underlying metaphysical dimension, and (ii) an explicit awareness of the strictly analogical character of the language at work.”⁷⁸ The awareness of these two conditions leads Hill to do a theology which rejects neither the appropriation of metaphysics, nor that of psychology. In other words, for Hill, both the ontological dimension and the psychological dimension should be considered in connection with the concept of divine Person.

In sum, for Hill, the trinitarian problem of the oneness and threeness of the Christian God is concretely described as a problem about how to confirm and deepen the psychological dimension in divine Person and to harmonize it with the metaphysical dimension without vitiating the essential unity. That is to say, Hill attempts to seek a way about how to explain the divine Person as a psychological category as well as a metaphysical category in the concept of essential unity.

5.2.2. Hill’s Three Phases of Developing a Theology of the Trinity

Hill explores three stages to develop a theology of the Trinity: “first, unity as ground of the Trinity; secondly, the Trinity in itself as real plurality; thirdly, that plurality as personal.”⁷⁹ In the first phase, Hill tries to explain how the ground of three metaphysical dimensions of divine Person may be conceived in the concept of God. Hill begins the explanation with his affirmation of the deity as the Pure Act of Be-ing, or *Ipsum Esse*.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ *TPG*, p. 255.

⁷⁹ *TPG*, p. 259.

⁸⁰ Here, Hill follows the methodological trace of Thomas Aquinas. See *TPG*, pp. 62-69.

Hill distinguishes Be-ing (as participial form) from either Being (as noun) or Becoming (as progression term), arguing that Be-ing is the concept that overcomes the limitations of both Being as a static concept and Becoming as a concept connoting imperfection.

This (i.e., the concept of Be-ing) surmounts at once a basic difficulty in speech about God: use of the concept being (as a substantive) suggests a static divinity that is a self-enclosed Absolute; use of the concept becoming, by contrast, introduces into God the imperfection of change and dependence. The former is Aristotle's notion of divinity; the latter is Whitehead's. The worldly process that characterizes all creaturely existence does not reveal that God himself is a God of process; rather it mirrors forth, faintly, that God's being is not something static, akin to essence, but a dynamism expressed as actuality.⁸¹

For Hill, the notion of God as Be-ing, or Pure Act is foundational in his development of a theology of the Trinity. Since God is Be-ing rather than Being, in Hill's thought, the reality of God is construed as pure actuality rather than as infinite essence or substance. Hill argues, then, "it readily follows that divinity is a pure dynamism, transcendent to all forms of finite becoming."⁸² For Hill, the conception of God as Pure Dynamic Act implies that God's reality is construed as "intentionality," for the dynamism revealed as God's reality "cannot be chaotic, unintelligible, utterly without meaning."⁸³ Here, Hill articulates "intentionality" as God's reality in the concepts of "knowing" and "loving." If the activities of "knowing" and "loving" articulate God's reality as Be-ing, Hill continues, then, the concept of a spiritual dynamism in God comes to light. Since to know and to love is to know and to love something or someone, Hill writes, "a subject-object dichotomy comes to light that is not expressed in the concept being."⁸⁴ In Hill's thought, what God knows and loves is formally distinct from himself, but is none other than

⁸¹ *TPG*, p. 260.

⁸² *TPG*, p. 261.

⁸³ *TPG*, p. 261.

himself. However, the real identity but formal distinction between subject and object does not invalidate a spiritual dynamism in God's reality. Hill explains the reason:

The knowing of the other implies a certain psychic distance (even when it is the self that is known, there is required an objectification as "other," otherwise knowledge loses all meaning); what is known has to be granted its otherness as object over against the knower now constituted as subject. Loving appears rather as a recoil movement; the lover overcomes the cognitive distance in rejoining the other to himself, but without absorbing its otherness.⁸⁵

The articulation of "Be-ing" in "knowing" and "loving" brings a spiritual dynamism into light. At the same time, Hill notices that "knowing" and "loving" show their distinctive characteristics respectively that cannot be reduced to one another. The "knowing" is indigenously self-expressive, since it implies a certain psychic distance between knower and known; the "loving" is rather self-unitive, since it overcomes the cognitive distance between lover and loved. Hill connects these irreducible characteristics with the ground for the three metaphysical dimensions of divine Persons.

In the second phase, Hill explains how the three Persons in the metaphysical sense are really plural. Here Hill replaces the term, "articulation" in "the articulation of Be-ing in knowing and loving" by a theological term – a mysterious "eruption," "effusion," "emanation," or "procession," which describes such spiritual activities of knowing and loving.⁸⁶ For Hill, these emanations of knowing and loving logically designate both relationality and opposition in the doctrine of the Trinity.⁸⁷ By these designations, Hill

⁸⁴ *TPG*, p. 261.

⁸⁵ *TPG*, p. 261.

⁸⁶ *TPG*, p. 262.

⁸⁷ *TPG*, p. 263. Here Hill follows Thomas Aquinas in whose teaching, according to Hill's summary, "logical development ... proceeds from processions to relations that are real, mutually opposes, and thereby really distinct from one another." See n. 25 in p. 263.

does not mean that “the Trinity of Persons can be deduced from an analysis of pure actuality.” In his confidence, yet, working under the light of faith, the analysis of pure actuality affords to theological reason “a posterior analogy for talking about the Trinity.”⁸⁸ In other words, Hill justifies this kind of effort as “the metaphysics of faith” which “remains at bottom a *fides quaerens intellectum*.”⁸⁹ For Hill, the distinctions of knowing and loving within intentionality can help us to apprehend the possibility of providing the concept of relationality that is not inimical to the divine unity. That possibility that Hill sees, in other words, the possibility that relational distinctions are “real and yet do not contravene the divine unity and simplicity,” lies in the fact that these emanations of knowing and loving are not “natural” “in the sense of being the necessary and spontaneous resultancy of a nature.” For they are “from within the intentionality of pure spirit.”⁹⁰ Hill makes a clear distinction between emanations proper to the intentionality of Pure Be-ing and necessary or natural emanations of God’s substance, like the emanations of light and heat from the sun. The former emanations do not vitiate the divine unity and simplicity; the latter do. Between those former emanations, Hill relates the emanation of knowing to Word, Image and Son; the emanation of loving to Spirit and Paraclete. Just as the emanations of knowing and loving proper to the intentionality of Pure Be-ing are really distinct, so are Father, Son and Spirit; yet “there is no logical impediment to understanding them as constituting one identical essence because the distinctions are not on the plane of essence at all.”⁹¹

⁸⁸ *TPG*, p. 264.

⁸⁹ *TPG*, p. 75.

⁹⁰ *TPG*, p. 265.

⁹¹ *TPG*, p. 266.

After identifying immanent processions with the articulations of Being in Knowing and Loving, and affirming their real distinctions, Hill develops his idea into the notion of subsisting. In Hill's thought, relational distinctions in God do not in the divine substance. For they are not "in relation to" the divine nature at all, since they are not on the plane of divine essence at all. Each of relational subsistents is God and all three of them are God.⁹² In Hill's thought, the recognition that the relational distinctions in God subsist in and of themselves brings to light the notion of person as a metaphysical principle. Now, Hill finds an expression of divine Person in the Trinity in the metaphysical sense: Person in God can be apprehended as "a distinctly Subsisting Relation" in the metaphysical dimension.⁹³

The sequence that Hill's logical moves in these developments have followed started from the divine unity as the ground of the Trinity and arrived at the plurality of the Trinity in the metaphysical dimension. Hill evaluates himself with regard to this logical move, saying that "this phase of trinitarian thought represents a triumph of Western trinitarianism; it stands impoverished without some recovery of the contribution coming from Eastern trinitarianism."⁹⁴ Hill is keenly aware that the logical trace of his development following Western trinitarianism would be hardly cleared of the charge of modalistic tendency, unless it is complemented by additional phase of thought on the personhood of "a distinctly subsisting Relation." Hill raises introductory questions for the third phase: "What does person, in this metaphysical sense of being a distinctly subsisting

⁹² *TPG*, p. 266.

⁹³ *TPG*, p. 267.

⁹⁴ *TPG*, p. 267.

relation explaining distinction in God, have to do with person as a center and subject of consciousness?” or “If divine persons are subsistent relations grounded in the processions or eternal origins as true conscious actions, who are the subjects of these originative acts called generation and spiration?”⁹⁵

In the third phase, Hill reverses the initial dynamism of “being as self-expressive in knowing and self-unitive in loving, concluding to real plurality in God.” He shifts his primary focus onto “the plurality of persons who act knowingly and lovingly,” namely, “subjects exercising the act of ‘to be,’ ‘to know’, and ‘to love’.” This shift is possible and necessary because we should acknowledge at the very beginning that “God is not a thing, a mere object, an impersonal force, the mere ground of being – but a conscious, knowing, loving, creating, revealing, saving God who enters into an I-Thou dialogue with man in history.”⁹⁶ For Hill, his focus on the plurality of subjects presupposes that there is no absolute person of divinity, that is to say, that there is not some fourth reality behind the Father, Son, and Spirit. For there is “no divine nature subsisting in itself in addition to the three Persons.”⁹⁷

The idea that divine nature subsists only in each of Father, Son, and Spirit gives Hill a clue to the trinitarian problem of the oneness and threeness of the Christian God, as it were, a problem about how to confirm and deepen the psychological dimension in divine Person and to harmonize it with the metaphysical dimension without vitiating the essential unity. Since the divine nature subsists in each of divine Persons, in Hill’s

⁹⁵ *TPG*, p. 268.

⁹⁶ *TPG*, p. 268.

⁹⁷ *TPG*, p. 269.

argument, all three Persons exercise the divine consciousness, which is essential. At the same time, since each Person is a distinctly Subsisting Relation, each of the divine Persons exercises consciousness that is exclusive to each Person in its relationality to the other two. This is notional consciousness. Hill states as follows:

Consciousness in God is a prerogative of the divine nature, but by definition it calls for a subject or subjects who exercise such consciousness. Since God is a Trinity, these subjects are in reality three-fold: Father, Son, and Spirit. All three persons know the divine truth and love the divine goodness and thereby are themselves known and loved. This constitutes *essential* consciousness, knowledge, and love. But that selfsame consciousness is also *interpersonal* in kind; it bespeaks activity exclusive to each person in its relationality to the other two, something distinctive rather than common in which the very identity of the person consists. This is *notional* consciousness, knowledge, and love. ... Consciousness in God, in short, is at once essential and personal; the former establishes the persons in their unity, the latter establishes them in their distinction.⁹⁸

For Hill, subsistent relations in the metaphysical sense are subjects of actions at once essential and notional. This means that to understand the distinction between “essential” and “notional or personal” is a key in formulating the trinitarian theory of the oneness and threeness of God.

In Hill’s thought, the distinction between essential and personal consciousness is verified in the formal distinction between nature and person, which was sanctioned by the council of Chalcedon (451). In the doctrine of the Trinity, the distinction between nature and person enables us to differentiate between an absolute and a relative dimension in God’s being, between a *principium quod* and a *principium quo*, or between the subject who acts and the nature by which it acts. For Hill, the teaching of the council that the subject who acts and the nature by which it acts should not be confused implies two things: (1) the three subjects should not be understood as representing three essences,

⁹⁸ TPG, p. 270.

since they are one in essential actions; (2) the one divine essence should not be construed as signifying one personal subject, since in God there are three subjects who are distinct in notional actions. According to Hill, consequently, the Persons in God are “principles, subjects of notional acts.” At the same time, since relation includes both a principle of distinction and a formal reason for unity, the three subjects as subsistent relations “constitute a divine intersubjectivity: Father, Son, and Spirit are three centers of consciousness in community, in mutual communication.”⁹⁹ For Hill, the centers are three, for they are notionally distinct; their consciousness is one, for they are essentially one. Thus, Hill describes the members of the Trinity as “constituting a community of persons in pure reciprocity, as subjects and centers of one divine conscious life.”¹⁰⁰ Eventually, Hill interprets the doctrine of *perichoresis*, *circuminsessio* or *circumincessio* as a teaching proper to his own theory of the Trinity as a divine community, *koinonia*: “Three who are conscious by way of one essential consciousness, constituting a divine reciprocity that is an interpersonal and intersubjective unity.”¹⁰¹

These three phases that Hill has traced are from the analysis of a spiritual dynamism, through the affirmation of real plurality in the metaphysical dimension, to the complement of plural personalities in the psychological dimension. In Hill’s confidence, his theoretical development of the Trinity has two good aspects. Since it is complemented by the psychological dimension, on the one hand, it is cleared of the charge of modalism, which would arise when the metaphysical dimension is not supported by the

⁹⁹ *TPG*, p. 272.

¹⁰⁰ *TPG*, p. 272.

¹⁰¹ *TPG*, p. 272.

psychological dimension. On the other hand, since it sufficiently considers the metaphysical dimension, it does not need to fear any charge of tritheism. In brief, Hill shows with his three phases of seeking an understanding of a theory of the Trinity that God is not a self-enclosed Absolute but a self-communicating tripersonal God.

5.2.3. Evaluation of William Hill

Hill's construction of the Trinity holds two elements that are commonly observed in social trinitarian theories. Opponents of social trinitarianism often argues that those elements are tritheist. First, Hill argues that the divine Persons should be understood as personal subjects or centers of consciousness. For Hill, Barth's "modes of being" and Rahner's "modes of subsistence" unavoidably end up in modalistic error. Secondly, For Hill, the three divine Persons of the triune God are three centers of consciousness in mutual communication, or in perichoretical fellowship. Hill never affirms the connotation of the autonomous individuality that might be associated with the notion of "center of consciousness."

In our evaluation of Hill with regard to tritheism, we have already concluded that the first one of those two elements cannot be tritheist. For as we conclude in 4.1.3, the notion of the three divine personal subjects as such does not necessarily entail a tritheism. Hill cannot be accused of tritheism because of his affirmation of three personal subjects in the Trinity. In our evaluation of Hill, therefore, we need to place our focus on the second element, that is, his concept of the interpersonal community as the divine unity of the triune God. In order words, we need to examine how Hill's idea of the interpersonal community reflects the ontological unity of the triune God. This means that we need to

check whether or not Hill vitiates the ontological unity when he adds the psychological dimension to the metaphysical dimension in the three divine Persons and suggests the idea of “three centers of consciousness in mutual communication.” In order to determine whether Hill sufficiently confirms the ontological unity, we will examine Hill’s understanding of several essential elements for the ontological unity, such as the consubstantiality of the divine persons, the doctrine of the inseparable operation *ad extra*, and the doctrine of perichoresis.

First, Hill is not a tritheist, for he fully confirms the consubstantiality of the three divine persons. Hill takes the doctrine of *homoousios* as meaning the numerical identity of essence among the three divine Persons rather than the unity of their substance in a mere generic essence.¹⁰² Hill does not accept the idea that the unity of the three divine persons is like “the instance of Adam, Eve, and Seth as three individuals of one human nature.”¹⁰³ For if so, the substantial unity of God would be reduced to “essence taken abstractly, dependent on act of the mind.” Hill surely knows that the three men analogy is used by the Cappadocians, in particular, Gregory of Nazianzus. But Hill states that the reduction of the substantial unity to a nominal sense is not their intention to use this analogy. For “the Cappadocians are full aware of the limits of their language.”¹⁰⁴ According to his reading of the patristic theology, Hill asserts that “each divine hypostasis is the *ousia* of God by an ‘identity of nature’; “the divine oneness is not abstract and notional, but real and concrete.”¹⁰⁵ This shows that Hill is not a tritheist, for

¹⁰² *TPG*, pp. 45-46.

¹⁰³ *TPG*, pp. 47-48.

¹⁰⁴ *TPG*, p. 48.

¹⁰⁵ *TPG*, p. 48.

he follows the interpretation of *homoousios* as the identity of nature in a numerical sense rather than as that in a generic sense.¹⁰⁶

Secondly, with regard to the doctrine of *opera trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa*, Hill states little. Yet here is one passage related to it. What we are sure of in his writing is the implication that Hill does not oppose that doctrine. For example, Hill writes:

... The divine persons themselves, in their hypostatic distinctions, are present within the economy of salvation. This is not merely a presence of God who happens to be triune, in which the trinitarian dimension is explained by appropriation. It is rather a *proper* presence of two Persons in virtue of their being sent into history; the Father is not sent, yet is present – this is demanded by **the inseparability of the Three**, as well as by the doctrine of *perichoresis* – as the

¹⁰⁶ We can observe Hill's idea of the substantial unity from his criticism of William Hasker, whose view of the Trinity is described as a society of persons or individuals. According to Hill, Hasker's understanding of the divine Persons is that each of them "is really distinct from the other two and is the Subject of his own distinct experiences in the unity of the one divine nature and life." Hill appreciates Hasker's affirmation of divine Persons in a psychological sense. Yet in Hill's thought, Hasker's understanding of the relation between person and nature does not do justice to the ontological unity of the triune God. Hill states his criticism as follows: "Put very simply, the unity Hasker gives to the divine nature is only generic in kind. While allowing that the nature of God is *common* to all three persons, this dissolves any real *identity* of that nature with the persons, singly or severally. On reflection, it would appear that Hasker lacks any genuine concept of person; he speaks only of nature in the concrete (the individual) and nature in the abstract (the common nature)." Hill opposes Hasker's position because he believes it makes the ontological unity into a conceptual abstraction. In Hill's thought, Hasker's logical consequence contradicts the real and ontological identity of the members of the Trinity with the single divine nature, which vitiates the ontological unity. Hill's criticism reveals the fact that Hill is faithful to Thomas Aquinas' teaching of divine simplicity as well as his idea of God as the Pure Act of Be-ing, *Ipsum Esse*. The fact revealed here evidences that, for Hill, it cannot be imagined to compromise the ontological unity of substantial homogeneity in order that the notion of divine Persons may carry with itself the psychological dimension. Hill's rejection to compromise the ontological unity can be observed also when he rejects Joseph A. Bracken's idea of speaking the three Persons in God as individuals who possess a similar or common nature. Bracken, who understands the triune God to be "a social reality," "a unity in community," or "a divine *koinonia* of interpersonal relationships," posits "within the Godhead not one consciousness, one mind, and one will, but three." Hill quotes from Bracken as follows: "If this communitarian hypothesis for the Trinity be acceptable, then each of the three divine persons would possess his own consciousness, hence have a mind and will proper to himself." Hill definitely refuses both ideas of three individual natures and three consciousnesses/minds/wills. For in Hill's thought, the social unity which consists of three individuals each of whom has his own consciousness, mind, and will, is nothing more than "a higher form of *accidental* unity, a social aggregate of individuals as nuclear units." The unity of a social aggregate of individuals guarantees merely no more than the unity of unanimous will, that is to say, the moral unity, which "does not go beyond unanimity." Hill doubts that such a social unity of individuals can logically avoid the shadow of tritheism. In Hill's analysis, such a communitarian unity as Hasker's or Bracken's necessarily entails tritheism unless its concept of Person in a psychological category should be complemented by the metaphysical dimension rooted in the ontological unity of substantial homogeneity. All quotes are from *TPG*, p. 217, 218, 219, 220, and 223.

One who sends. ... The divine presence in one mission is an incarnate one proper to the Word; that in the other mission is an ecclesial one proper to the Paraclete. The effect of the former is *manifestive* of God; the effect of the latter is rather *unitive* to God. But both effects are trinitarian in mode. Each can be proper to the respective member of the Trinity because there is no **operation *ad extra*** involved.¹⁰⁷

Hill clarifies that each divine person is present in the economy of salvation in his proper hypostatic distinction. For example, he confirms that the divine person who is incarnate in the individual humanity of Jesus is the Word. At the same time, Hill implies that he supports the doctrine of *opera trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa* when he states that the Father is present in the economy of salvation as the One who sends though he is not sent.

If we consider Hill's understanding of the doctrine of perichoresis, finally, we will observe that the doctrine of perichoresis safely confirms that Hill is not a tritheist. The comparison between Hill and Moltmann helps us make an evaluation that Hill has no tint of tritheism. Unlike Moltmann, Hill does not presuppose that the doctrine of perichoresis should demand the particular, unique natures in the Trinity. Certainly, Hill acknowledges that the doctrine of perichoresis cannot work without presupposing the distinction among the three divine Persons. Yet Hill does not think that the mutual relations of the three divine Persons as the ground of their real distinctions do compromise the ontological simplicity of the divine essence. For Hill, the doctrine of perichoresis is what deepens the meaning of this mysterious truth, that is, "God is 'undivided in Three who are distinct'" into developing a statement that "each hypostasis 'inheres' in the other two."¹⁰⁸

Consequently, unlike Moltmann, Hill does not think that the perichoretical unity of

¹⁰⁷ *TPG*, p. 287. Emphasis mine.

¹⁰⁸ *TPG*, p. 49.

personal subjects in a psychological sense is vitiated by the substantial homogeneity. It is within this context of the identity of nature that we need to understand Hill's description of the perichoresis of personal subjects as the togetherness, or the joyous "sharing" of divine life.¹⁰⁹ For Hill, the togetherness or the joyous sharing of divine life is rooted in and supported by the ontological unity. It is the essential unity that establishes the Persons in their existential unity of perichoresis.¹¹⁰

In sum, this understanding of Hill leads us to conclude that Hill does not vitiate the ontological unity at all, when he adds the psychological dimension to the metaphysical dimension in the three divine Persons. Hill's own statement well reflects the upshot of our evaluation:

The concept of "person" – if it is to do service in speech about the Trinity – cannot be employed merely as a psychological category; its ontological rooting needs to be made manifest and taken into account. At the same time, the notion cannot be dismissed as merely a metaphysical one; it must carry with it the psychological dimension.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ *TPG*, p. 272. For example, Hill explains the perichoresis: "Each person is constituted what might analogously be called an 'I' in self-awareness of its own unique identity, but only by way of rapport to the other two persons as a non-self; indeed, it is in virtue of that free interplay, wherein each person disposes himself towards the others in knowing and loving, that each person gains his unique identity. The Greek Fathers made much of *perichoresis* ... to suggest this togetherness, this joyous 'sharing' of divine life."

¹¹⁰ *TPG*, pp. 221-222. Clearly, Hill opposes Bracken in this respect. Bracken employs Walter Brugger's idea in order to justify the communitarian unity of three individuals in whom there are three consciousnesses. "Accepting that ontic unity is either substantial or accidental," Brugger makes a distinction in accidental unity between "*esse in alio uno*" and "*esse in alio pluribus*." In Brugger's argument, the latter is of a higher order than the former. For "the latter is not a mere random aggregate, but a unification of many substances which transcends the unity radicated in substantial form because it is achieved in the conscious exercise of knowledge and love, in the deployment of freedom." In this sense, Bracken intends to convince us that "a moral unity of freely committed beings is greater than the physical or substantial unity of infrarational things." However, Hill rejects their opinions, stating that "still and all, the sort of unity towards which these two explanations reach (both Bracken's and Brugger's) needs to be grounded and explained as a genuine ontic unity." For Hill, there are not two kinds of unity in God of substantial unity and existential unity; "the divine essence *is* the divine existence and they represent a single unity."

¹¹¹ *TPG*, p. 222.

Hill's understanding of the Trinity as three centers of consciousness in community, or in mutual communication, has nothing to do with tritheism defined in the dissertation. For Hill's concept of divine Person as a psychological category is always complemented by that as a metaphysical category rooted in the ontological unity. As Catherine M. LaCugna mentions,¹¹² Hill as an expert in the theology of Thomas Aquinas works his theory of the Trinity through interpreting and expanding Aquinas. This means that Hill's theology of the Trinity faithfully reflects Aquinas' doctrine of divine simplicity and has no structural openness to tritheism. Hill's theology shares a lot with Lonergan, another modern adherent to Aquinas' theology in that both theologians recognize and emphasize the psychological dimension of divine persons and attempt to harmonize both the metaphysical and psychological dimensions. Together with Lonergan's, Hill's theology of the Trinity represents a modern version of Aquinas' theology. In short, with all the notions of divine persons as centers of consciousness and the divine unity as the interpersonal community of three personal subjects, Hill is safe from a charge of tritheism.

¹¹² Catherine Mowry LaCugna, "Current Trends in Trinitarian Theology," *Religious Studies Review* 13 (1987), pp. 141-146.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Is the Christian God one personal subject or three personal subjects? Is the notion of the three divine persons as three centers of consciousness tritheist? The answer to these questions cannot be given unless tritheism is defined. It differs according to various scholarly positions on what tritheism is. So far we have examined how the councils of the church understand tritheism and have suggested a definition of tritheism. Also, we have examined whether each divine person is a conscious subject in the light of our understanding of tritheism. This chapter will provide a conclusive summary of our whole study on the issue related to the contemporary tritheist controversy.

The contemporary controversy over tritheism, which took place together with the retrieval of the doctrine of the Trinity in the latter half of the 20th century, revolves around the issue raised by Karl Barth and Karl Rahner: the Christian God is one personal subject. In their thought, it would result in an expressive tritheism to apply the modern concept of person as center of consciousness to the notion of divine person. For Barth, the doctrine of the Trinity does not teach that there are three personalities in God, for the personality of God in a modern sense is located in the one unique essence of God, which is recognized in its simplicity. Barth's idea of God is thus that the one personal God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Moreover, Rahner goes so far as to deny any mutual or interpersonal communion or love among the three divine Persons, for their mutual love presupposes that they are three spiritual centers or subjects, which represents a tritheism. In order to avoid falling into tritheism, Barth proposes to replace the term, "person" by "mode of being;" Rahner favors "manner of subsisting." Since Barth and Rahner, one

group has appeared in the theological landscape and condemned a trinitarian theory of three personal subjects to be tritheism.

Against that kind of view, another group, including so-called social trinitarians centering around Jürgen Moltmann and Leonardo Boff, develops their view to claim that the notion of divine persons as conscious centers of action would lead to tritheism only when it implies individual autonomy, or separateness. Thus the notion of divine person in a psychological sense has nothing to do with tritheism, so long as divine persons are interactive, inter-relative, or indwelling in each other. In this view, the idea that there is only one personality in the Trinity is a mere rebirth of modalism. The two opposing views running in parallel do not seem to be reconciled with each other because of the lack of the universal agreement in dealing with the matter of modalism and tritheism.

How should we evaluate the phenomenal retrieval of the trinitarian theology that is rushing into a swirl of chaos revolving around the issue of the notion of divine Person? The dissertation seeks an answer to this question. The first task of the dissertation to deal with the relation of the notion of divine person as center of consciousness with tritheism is clarify what tritheism is. For the contemporary controversy over tritheism has its cause to a certain degree in the unclear understanding of tritheism. And it would be pointless to deal with the matter of the notion of divine Person without presupposing an exact concept of tritheism.

Historically speaking, the councils of the church condemned as tritheist those whom the councils thought failed in providing a right way of understanding the oneness of the three divine Persons. Almost all of those condemned as tritheists have one postulate in common: “nature exists with its connatural person, as no person dispenses

with nature.” In their thought, the one nature of God entails one person; the three persons three natures. If one nature of God entails one person, the other persons should have different natures. This is fit for the postulate that three persons entail three natures. Yet they had different views about in what sense the three divine persons have different natures.

For example, the Arians argued that the three persons are different in divinity. Their methodology was to ground personal properties of the divine persons at the level of substance. In their thought, the Father and the Son are substantially different from each other, and the Son is less divine than the Father, since the personal property of the Son (i.e., being begotten) is less divine than the personal property of the Father (i.e., being unbegotten). Unlike Arians, John Philoponus, Roscelin of Compiègne, and Joachim of Fiore did not claim that there is a difference among the divine persons in a degree of divinity. But Philoponus and Roscelin made the same mistake as Arians did when they argued that personal properties of the divine persons made them three individual natures. They grounded personal properties at the level of nature. John Philoponus interpreted the consubstantiality of the three divine persons as intellectually abstract, or nominal, taking the threeness of the Trinity as three particular persons who have their own particular natures. Roscelin of Compiègne feared that the oneness of divine substance defeated the uniqueness of each divine person, taking the unity of the triune God as that of resemblance and equality. Finally, the error of Joachim of Fiore was on the oneness of the Trinity. Joachim argued that the unity of the three divine persons was not true and proper as substantial, but collective and analogous as non-substantial.

Against those above, the councils of the church rejected their postulate that nature exists with its connatural person. The councils opposed the application of that postulate to the talk about God. In their thought, the doctrine of divine simplicity, which is foundational in theology, gives a different teaching. In other words, the councils confessed that the three persons do not entail three natures, for the nature of God is simple. The way of the councils to explain the plurality of the three persons in God whose nature is simple is to avoid the confusion of nature and person in God. After confessing the true deity of the Son in the council of Nicaea (325), the council of Constantinople (381) confirmed that there is a distinction between nature and person in God. This implied that the possibility of divine plurality must not be sought in the realm of nature, but in the distinctive relationship of divine persons.

Therefore, the councils who responded to various tritheists did not acknowledge that the divine persons with their distinct characteristics could be translated into distinct, particular, individual natures. The councils did not allow the term “nature” to be employed to describe personal distinct characteristics. This implies that according to the historical study, the three natures in whatever sense, whether generic or particular, necessarily entails tritheism. Since divine nature is simple, there is none but one nature in the Trinity. The three divine persons are one and the same in nature; are distinct in their relationship.

If the divine persons are discerned not by nature but by their relationship to one another, what are divine persons in an ontological sense? Are the divine persons different realities from divine nature? Or are they identical with it in the ontological reality, that is, distinct modes of nature? When we seek an answer to these questions according to an

ancient grammar of theology, it may differ according to what view we have on the divine simplicity. In Greek theology (Gregory of Nyssa and Gregory of Palamas), divine person is understood as a distinct reality from divine nature in the sense that divine person is a supposit of divine nature. Here, it is confessed that divine nature is simple rather than God is. Yet in Latin theology (Augustine and Thomas Aquinas), divine persons are identical with divine essence and differ from essence only conceptually, not really. Here, it is confessed that God is simple; there is no distinction at all in God. This difference between Greek and Latin theology leaves us two different positions about tritheism in relation to the divine simplicity. For example, Gilbert of Poitiers was condemned as a tritheist in the council of Rheims (1148) because he did not think that the substantial unity of the three divine Persons rejected a real, ontological distinction between divine essence and divine Person. From the perspective of Greek theology, yet, Gilbert would not be condemned for that reason.

The dissertation recognizes that some modern theologians considered, the understanding above of tritheism might change in part. Unlike the ancient grammar of theology we studied in chapter 2 and a part of chapter 3, some modern theologians employ a little different grammar of a modern philosophy of religion in their understanding what essence or nature is. They understand essence to be a permanent, unchangeable, and unique property that every individual thing has and nothing else could exemplify. Accordingly, for them, so far as the relational property of each divine person is the property that no other person could possibly exemplify, each relational property is essence. With such an understanding, for example, Cornelius Plantinga Jr. calls relational property as “personal essence” which is distinct from common essence, namely, “generic

essence.” Here it is to be noted that personal essences do not refer to divine persons as such, but to personal properties, whereas individual, particular, personal natures in the ancient grammar do refer to divine persons, as in tritheists’ argument, three divine persons are three particular natures.

If this modern grammar applies to the doctrine of the Trinity, thus, the criterion that the notion of the three distinct natures in the Trinity is tritheist is not necessarily valid. If a theory means according to Plantinga’s grammar by three individual natures that each divine person *has* his proper personal property, it is not a tritheist, insofar as it confirms one generic essence (i.e., one divine nature). If that theory denies one generic essence, it is tritheist. Thus, in a modern grammar, whether the notion of the three distinct natures in the Trinity is tritheist depends on whether it is supported by one divine nature. Yet if a theory says by three individual natures that each divine person *is* his proper personal property, it is tritheist. For it is in the ancient grammar, not in Plantinga’s grammar that it is grammatically permissible to say that a divine person is his distinct personal property. Yet the ancient grammar rejects the idea of three distinct natures as tritheism. Then, the criterion that the notion of the three distinct natures in the Trinity is tritheist is conditionally valid, according as it is said in the ancient grammar or in a modern grammar.

According to an ancient grammar, the concept of three different, individual, personal substances (whether in a primary sense or in a secondary sense) entails tritheism. For in an ancient grammar, three different substances means that three divine persons are three different substances (whether in a primary sense or in a secondary sense), which are rejected as tritheist. In a modern grammar, an argument that three divine persons *are*

three different substances is not permissible. For divine person is not an abstract entity such as substance or essence. Yet an argument that three divine persons *have* three different substances is permissible. In a modern grammar, accordingly, the notion of three different substances or essences as such does not necessitate tritheism unless it denies the one common or generic substance or essence. This analysis draws a conclusion: a theory that confirms the one divine nature in God is not tritheist.

We conclude therefore that the denial of three particular or personal natures as a criterion for discerning tritheism can be treated in the final criterion, that is to say, the substantial unity of the three divine persons. In other words, whatever theory compromises the substantial unity or consubstantiality of the three divine persons is tritheist. Specifically, the substantial unity of the three divine persons is expressed in three doctrines: (1) the doctrine that since divine nature (the common nature in an ancient grammar; the generic essence in a modern grammar) exists as an ontologically real entity, the unity of the triune God is not nominal, but ontologically real; (2) the doctrine of the inseparable operation or work *ad extra* of the Trinity; (3) the doctrine of perichoresis. Then, whatever theory vitiates one of these three doctrines can be said to be tritheist.

With regard to the issue on the notion of divine person as center of consciousness, the dissertation reaches a conclusion that the notion of the three divine persons as centers of consciousness in the Trinity does not necessarily entail tritheism. The dissertation makes a distinction between two types of consciousness: essential consciousness (i.e., consciousness due to essential acts based on divine nature) and notional consciousness (i.e., consciousness according to personal relations). This implies two things: (1) There is only one essential consciousness in the Trinity, since there is no division, distinction,

separation of consciousness in the essential acts *ad extra* of the three divine persons. (2)

There are three distinct consciousnesses in the notional acts within interpersonal relations of the three divine persons. On the basis of this distinction, the dissertation claims that a theory to claim that there are three essential consciousnesses in the Trinity is tritheist, for the three essential consciousnesses derive from three divine natures. However, a theory that claims that there are three notional consciousnesses in the Trinity is not tritheist, insofar as it confirms one divine nature. In other words, a trinitarian theory that claims that there are three consciousnesses because each divine person is self-conscious (i.e., in notional acts or within interpersonal relations) has nothing to do with tritheism, insofar as it confirms one divine nature. In order to adjudicate whether a trinitarian theory that claims the notion of divine person as center of consciousness necessitates tritheism, accordingly, we need to examine whether that theory confirms three divine natures or one nature. If it confirms the substantial unity of the three divine persons (i.e., the doctrine that the unity of the triune God is real, not nominal; the doctrine of *opera trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa*; the doctrine of perichoresis), it is not tritheist.

The dissertation examined two theologians. One is William Sherlock; the other is Barth. Sherlock supports three centers of consciousness in the Trinity and takes each divine person as a thinking substance, mind or self-consciousness. Barth argues for only one center of consciousness in the Trinity and takes each divine person as a mode of being. The dissertation examined whether a divine person as center of consciousness is a substance or mind (like Sherlock's argument), or whether a divine person is a mode of being, that is to say, a mode of one person God (like Barth's claim).

Sherlock's idea that divine persons are three thinking substances or three distinct infinite minds might look tritheist. According to the doctrine of divine simplicity, personal relations should not be taken as substances. Sherlock makes a distinction between relational substances and absolute substance. The three thinking substances refer to relational substances; the one divine nature refers to absolute substance. For Sherlock's idea, three absolute substances are tritheist; three relational substances are not tritheist. In actuality, Sherlock undoubtedly confirms the substantial unity of the triune God (i.e., the doctrine that the unity of the triune God is real, not nominal; the doctrine of *opera trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa*; the doctrine of perichoresis). Sherlock's idea is not tritheist. However, Sherlock's problem is that his idea is not consistent with the doctrine of divine simplicity that he assumes to formulate his idea. His idea is not supported by a modern idea such as Plantinga's, either. For Sherlock's relative substances refer to divine persons; for Plantinga, personal essences are relational properties of divine persons. Sherlock's relative substances neglect in effect the distinction between substance as such and person as its supposit.

Since the one divine essence is personal, Barth argues, there is only one personality in God. For Barth, the triune God is a threefold repetition of God in himself, that is to say, one personal subject in threefold repetition. Barth claims that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are not three personalities, but three modes of being. Barth believes his idea is faithful to ancient orthodoxy. But τρόπος ὑπάρξεως that Barth translates into "mode of being" does not refer to "divine person" as such, but merely to "distinguishing particularities" of divine persons. Each divine person is a concrete distinct objective entity; "mode of being" is its characteristic. In addition, when Barth

denies that each divine person is a personal subject, he neglects the distinction between divine essence and divine person as its supposit. In other words, Barth wrongly neglects that in spite of the ontological identity between divine essence and divine persons, “hypostasis” is a supposit or subject in which divine nature is enhypostatized. In contrast to Barth, the dissertation claims that Father, Son and Holy Spirit are not the threefold repetition of one divine subject in distinct modes of being, but the three subjects of the threefold repetition of one divine essence. Barth is not a historical modalist. Yet Barth presses his idea of the Trinity into a modalist shape in that he acknowledges only one single personality in the Trinity.

Judging from the arguments we have made so far, the dissertation concludes that the contemporary controversy over tritheism centering around the notion of the divine persons as three centers of consciousness is pointless and deviates from the right track in dealing with trinitarian theories such as social trinitarianism. No trinitarian theory needs to be charged with tritheism only because it asserts that the three divine persons are three centers of consciousness. If the dissertation is right, the notion of the three divine persons as centers of consciousness as such does not entail tritheism. However, this does not mean that all so-called social trinitarian theories are safe from a tritheist charge. It means merely that social trinitarian theories need not be charged with tritheist only because they affirm the notion of the three divine persons as centers of consciousness. The focus of the tritheist controversy should be placed on the substantial unity or consubstantiality of the triune God. In other words, when we adjudicate whether a theory is tritheist, we need to analyze it thoroughly to know how it understands the substantial unity of the triune God.

In order to show that the notion of the three divine persons as centers of consciousness is not a criterion of tritheism, we tested two cases of Jürgen Moltmann and William Hill. Both theologians may be categorized in a so-called social trinitarian group. They are not different in asserting that the three divine persons are centers of consciousness in a psychological sense. Both repeatedly remark the doctrine of perichoresis as well as the doctrine of consubstantiality. Yet Moltmann is on the verge of tritheism; Hill is completely safe. It is because for Moltmann the doctrine of consubstantiality is reduced to merely nominal; because for Hill the psychological dimension of the divine Person is well complemented by the metaphysical dimension of the substantial unity.

APPENDIX: PROPOSITIONS

RELATED TO DISSERTATION

1. The simplicity of the divine nature is understood as implying that there is no numerical agreement between divine nature and divine person and that the unity of the triune God is neither the nominal unity in intellectual abstraction, nor the unity of will in collective community of three individual, particular natures.
2. In the Trinity, the three divine persons are the supposita of the divine nature, each being a psychological and moral agent rather than a mere mode of being or manner of coming into existence.
3. It is not necessarily true that the three centers of consciousness entail tritheism because they bring forth three consciousnesses. There are two types of consciousness: essential consciousness according to divine nature and notional consciousness according to personal relations. Three notional consciousnesses do not entail tritheism. In the Trinity, there is only one essential consciousness; there are three notional consciousnesses. Insofar as the three centers of consciousness are based on one divine nature, they entail only one essential consciousness *ad extra*, and at the same time entail three notional consciousnesses within personal relations in the divine life.
4. William Sherlock supports the notion of three centers of consciousness in the Trinity; Karl Barth opposes it. Yet both fall into the same mistake in that they neglect that hypostasis is a subject of ousia.
5. Jürgen Moltmann and William Hill agree to claim that the unity of the Trinity may be understood as interpersonal unity or integrating unity. However, Hill confirms the substantial unity of the three divine persons in a real sense, whereas Moltmann reduces it to a mere nominal sense.

FROM COURSE WORK

6. Robert Bellarmine claims that the controversy over middle knowledge between Thomism and Molinism could be resolved in his idea of divine concurrence. In relation to controversies against Protestants, Bellarmine's idea of divine concurrence criticizes the Reformed doctrine of predestination, appealing to the notion of middle knowledge. Also, it provides a good source for Arminius.
7. Recent ecumenical dialogues between Roman Catholics and Protestants both in America and Germany declare that the interpretation of the justification of the sinner should not be any longer considered as the article by which the church stands or falls. According to the dialogues, both most differences in the doctrine of justification and mutual misunderstandings of those differences could be

cleared, since, for both Roman Catholics and Protestants, the justification of the sinner commonly depends only on the ground of *solus Christus – sola gratia* structure. However, such a declaration sounds superficial and little convincing. As G. C. Berkouwer rightly states, opposing points in the doctrine of justification do not lie in whether the one recognizes God's sovereign grace while the other denies it. Rather, those conflicts are caused by their different understandings of the manner in which God's grace relates itself to the sinner, that is to say, the relationship between grace and free will.

8. Carl F. H. Henry understands Christian ethics as the morality of the regenerate man. For him, Christian ethics must be the ethic of Christians and that for Christians. Unlike Henry, Lewis Smedes develops a Christian theory of "mere morality" which is universally applicable to all people, no matter whether people believes in God or not. The fact that the common ground of the commonality of ethics among all the members of the human race favors Smede's approach over that of Henry's.
9. Abraham Kuyper says that there are two kinds of people: regenerated and unregenerated. In his thought, this difference occasions the two kinds of science: Christian and non-Christian. This idea may be understood to teach that there is no hope of a religiously neutral science of mutual agreement. As Nicholas Wolterstorff points out, it appears that there are many cases or examples to show that an extreme reductionism between two sciences does not work. In many cases, the antithetical idea needs complemented by the common grace.
10. T. F. Torrance argues that Karl Barth does not deny the possibility or existence of natural theology. In his thought, Barth just wants us not to make a deistic separation between God and the world, pointing out that the natural knowledge of God is relativised and set aside by the knowledge of God mediated through Christ. However, as Richard Muller states, Torrance's argument does not work for two reasons. First, Barth's identification of Jesus Christ with revelation does not make it possible that the analogy out of our normal life is theologically employed; secondly, Barth's radically Christocentric epistemology neglects that the revelation of God in the created order is distinct from that of God in Christ.

MISCELLANEOUS

11. Many of those who believe that the stories of miracles in the Bible make it incredible often fail to recognize that the people, who appear in those stories of the Bible, and/or who recorded them in the Bible, and/or who believed the miracles truly and really occurred, are fundamentally by nature no less skeptical of the reports of miracles than we are today.

12. It is not necessarily false to claim that there are few Ph.D. programs in the world that are tougher than and qualitatively superior to that of Calvin Theological Seminary which is one of a few institutes still teaching Reformed theology with faithfulness.

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