

ARTICLE VI.

THE TRINITY.

[Translated by Rev. H. B. Smith, West Amesbury, Mass., from the Theological Lectures of Dr. A. D. C. Twisten, Professor of Theology in the University of Berlin. Continued from No. XI. p. 536.]

INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

[There are several reasons which might be urged, for presenting in the pages of this Review such a discussion of the doctrine of the Trinity as is contained in this article. In the first place, the article is of interest in connection with the present condition of German theology. Since the times when a negative Rationalism prevailed in that country, it is the first elaborate attempt to uphold this doctrine in its orthodox form. These lectures of Dr. Twisten awakened a new interest in this subject among the Germans; and in the more recent discussions, they are uniformly referred to with respect, and as an authority. In the second place, it is of value for the historical materials with which it is filled. While it does not profess to contain a history of the doctrine, it shows on every page the thorough study which the author has bestowed upon the works of the ablest theologians. The subsequent sections are especially valuable, as exhibiting the force and pertinency of many of the distinctions of the Scholastics. No treatise by English or American theologians with which we are acquainted, contains so much of valuable material from like sources. It might be urged, again, that every thorough and fair-minded disquisition upon a doctrine of so much importance, should be received with candor, and may be read with profit, because it may disclose some new aspects and relations of an inexhaustible truth. No doctrine presents itself to every mind in the same relations; and the more important the doctrine, and the more thorough the study of it, the greater variety will there be in the modes of its application and illustration. The more we love a doctrine, the more shall we think about it; and the more we think about it, the more shall we see its connection with other truths; and every one who reverences and loves and thinks about the truth, may aid us in our own studies, even though we do not think all his speculations sound. In the fourth place, in respect to this particular doctrine, it is well known, that the most ortho-

dox divines, while assenting to the fundamental formula, have differed in the way in which they have explained and defended it; and this fact should keep us from arguing that an exposition which is new to us, is therefore an unwarrantable speculation and a hazardous tampering with the faith. The doctrine is contained in the Bible, and it rests upon the authority of the Bible; and this is what Dr. Twisten maintains. But the formula is not in the Bible; and the business of the theologian who embraces this formula is, to show that it best expresses the true sense of the Scriptures, and to defend it against philosophical and other objections. We who hold the same formula, may perhaps be interested in seeing how a German explains it; and we, who encounter the same objections, might at least be willing to read how they are met and answered elsewhere; even though we may not think that the exposition and the defence are as good as our own. And as to philosophising—without some degree of it, we can hardly see how the formula can be fully explained; and when a philosophical objection is made to our statement of a doctrine, it is surely not unworthy of a Christian to attempt to answer it philosophically.

The whole development of this doctrine in the following pages, rests upon the assumption, that the distinction of the first and second persons of the Trinity as Father and Son, is immanent in the Godhead. This position the author has not fortified by arguments, for in Germany it is generally taken for granted. Those who wish to see it more fully discussed, may find it in the Letters of Professor Stuart, and in an Article on the Sonship of Christ, reprinted in a volume of selections from the Princeton Repertory.

Some account of the author of these Lectures may be found in the *Bib. Sac.*, Vol. I. p. 768.—Ta.]

‡ 5. *One Nature and Three Persons.*

THE fundamental formula for the doctrine of the Trinity as defined by the church is, that in one divine essence or nature there are three Persons, distinguished from each other by certain characteristics, and indivisibly participating in that one nature. To get at the meaning of this formula, the first thing of which we naturally think, is a comparison with several human individuals, who have the same human nature; only we ought not, at the same time, to forget the entire difference between any such relation and that of the three divine persons. When we speak of

finite things, by their nature or essence, we usually understand only the genus to which they belong, and the unity which we ascribe to different individuals under this genus, is an abstract unity, existing only in our conceptions. But the divine essence (considered as comprehending all the divine perfections), is no mere notion, but includes in itself actual being, and its unity is a real, numerical unity. Hence, as the Athanasian creed has it, we may not speak of three Gods, as we do of three men. Since unity belongs to the divine essence, the use of the plural in this case would involve a contradiction; there are three who have divinity, but these three are one God, and their consubstantiality (*ὁμοουσία*) does not consist in their having a common nature, but in a real unity of nature.—From this view the notion of *person*, as we ascribe it to the Godhead, is to be determined. We cannot take for granted that this notion is correctly given elsewhere; nor should we allow ourselves, as not seldom happens even in scientific treatises, to be too much guided by the current signification of the word. When we speak of the Three Persons in the Godhead, and of three human persons, we cannot by any possibility mean just the same thing; although there must still be a certain analogy to justify the use of the same expression. As we ordinarily use the word *person*, the assumption of three divine persons will call up tritheistic conceptions in most minds. But the objection which the Oriental church made to this word, that it seemed to favor a *modalistic* view of the Trinity, shows us how remote any such views were from the originators of this terminology. Augustin puts us in the right point of view where he says: ¹ “ In truth, since the Father is not the Son, and the Son is not the Father, and the Holy Spirit, who is also called the gift of God, can neither be the Father nor the Son, there are at any rate three; yet, when it is asked, *what three?* straightway great poverty weighs upon human speech; yet we say, *three persons*, not because that is what should be said, but that we may not keep silence, (*non ut illud diceretur sed ne taceretur*).”

The point from which we started, and which we have hitherto sought to establish, is this: that as we find it necessary to make a distinction in the divine Being between different attributes belonging to the same subject, so it is necessary to distinguish different subjects or persons, having the same attributes, or the same essence. When we then think of Father, Son and Spirit, as divine persons, we think of them as subjects having divine at-

¹ Aug. de Trin. v. 9.

tributes. If we define this notion further, by adding that we are to conceive of them as subjects (persons), who are really and essentially such, that is, who cannot again be taken as predicates, (as can the notions of qualities, or those generic and specific notions, which after Aristotle are called *substantiæ secundæ*¹); and, since here no mere subjective, but a real objective distinction is intended, if we choose instead of a logical a more metaphysical expression—instead of subject, the word *suppositum* or *substance*; if we add to this, that, since the Godhead is to be conceived of as essentially indivisible and as intelligence, that such a subject or *suppositum* can neither consist of parts nor be a part of any other, and that the attribute of intelligence must necessarily belong to it;—if we take these points together, we have got the definition of a divine Person usually given in the schools: *Suppositum intelligens, or Substantia individua intelligens, quæ non est pars aut qualitas in alio, sed proprie subsistit.*² Thus far the same definition will pass also for human personality. But the *propria subsistentia* makes a difficulty; in relation to man, since he does not subsist absolutely for himself, nor independent even of other finite beings, much less of the infinite being; and, in relation to God, of whom we here speak, since it seems to be limited by the re-

¹ *Aristot. Categ. cp. v. (Casaub.)* The notion *man*, e. g., is indeed the subject of the attributes belonging to man, but it can again be used as a predicate; but the notion of a human individual, or the notion *I*, can only take the place of the subject, excepting in tautological sentences. Just so is *God* the subject of the divine attributes, but can at the same time be used as predicate for the Father, Son and Spirit, while these latter can only be used as subjects. Since, now, to exist only as subject, is the logical sign of substance (conf. among others *Kant, Krit. d. rein. Vernunft, S. 149*), we may on this account hold ourselves justified in applying to them the notion of *ὑπόστασις*, of *subsistence*, and that in the sense in which e. g. *Quenstedt* describes *person*,—as *substantia individua intelligens, per se ultimato et immediate subsistens*, so that it may be distinguished a *substantiis secundis, quæ per se subsistunt, sed mediate et in substantiis primis s. individuis*; we understand—as in itself a last subject, beyond which we cannot go, seeking a subject for certain predicates.

² To this definition two points are usually added, viz. *incommunicabilis*, and, *non sustentata ab alio*. But the second of these would seem to be less essential, when we consider the humanity of Christ, which, in virtue of the *ὑπόστασις*, [impersonalitas, i. e. wanting in proper subsistence; others give it as *ἐννοουσις*, meaning the subsistence of the human person in the divine nature of the Logos,] ascribed to it, did not exist by itself, but was borne by his divinity; or, in union with the divine nature, formed one person. These points, also, are only a repetition of what is contained in the others; for the first means, that the notion of person cannot, like that of nature, be the predicate of another subject; and the second is nothing more than a repetition of *proper subsistence*.

lation of the divine persons, partly to one another and partly to the divine essence. On this account, some theologians have been led to make the additional statement, that the subsistence of the divine persons is not absolute but merely relative.¹ Some have even called it a *subsistentia incompleta*. But it is impossible to see what is gained in this way; instead of getting a clear notion of this relation, we are only disturbed and confused about the very definition from which we started, by a partial, one knows not how far-reaching, revocation. We must come back to this, that we ought not to make a definition of a divine person without reference to the divine nature. Considered in this relation, now, we may look at it either abstractly or concretely.² *Concretely*, a divine person is the divine nature itself, impressed with a certain hypostatic character, (*ipsa essentia divina certo caractere hypostatico insignita*);³ Father, Son and Spirit are the same God, the same divine essence, conceived of as generating, as generated, and as proceeding—(*eadem essentia in Patre est ἀγεννήτως, in Filio γεννήτως, in Spiritu S. ἐκπορεύτως*).⁴ Taken *abstractly*, a divine person is the mode in which the divine nature has existed from eternity,⁵ (*modus quo existit id quod Deus est, qui triplex est, a se existere, generatum esse, procedere*);⁶ or, it is one of those relations which we are obliged to distinguish in the divine nature, either to itself, or to the revelation of itself, considered as having a real subsistence;⁷—it is these internal relations, which involve

¹ Conf. Baier, P. I. cp. 1. § 33. not. 6.—Buddeus, L. II. cp. 1. § 51. not.

² Quenstedt de Trin. Sect. 1. θεο. 8; Ὑπόστασις concrete et materialiter, prout implicat simul rem ipsam et rei modum, notat essentiam caractere hypostatico insignitam; abstracte vel formaliter ipsam subsistentiam, quae est actus, modus s. gradus ultimus, quo natura intelligens subsistit complete et incommunicabiliter. Conf. Buddeus, Lib. II. cp. 1. § 51. not. pag. 301. In the notion of a person we have both; the conception of the nature which has personal subsistence in an individual, as the *matter* (or substance); and the conception of this personal subsistence itself, as the *form*. If we take both together, we think of the person concretely; if the last by itself, abstractly. When we speak of the three persons in the divine nature, the abstract predominates: (Quando unius essentiae divinae individuae tres personae dicuntur, intelliguntur tres modi subsistendi, quorum unusquisque implicat materialiter unam illam essentiam divinam. Quenst. de Trin. Sect. II. qu. I. διὰ. obs. 5.

³ Gerhard. exeges. L. III. § 57; Quenst. l. c.

⁴ Gerhard. loc. III. § 85.

⁵ Ὁ ἀναρχος τρόπος τῆς διδίου ἐκπαρξως. John of Damascus in dialect. c. 66.

⁶ Ursinus in explicatt. catech. P. I. p. 249 (ed. 1591).

⁷ Relatio subsistens in divina natura. Aquinas in Summ. P. I. qu. XXX. art. 1 and 2. Conf. qu. XXIX. art. 4; Persona divina relationem originis significat per modum substantiae. That is, relatio in divinis non est sicut acci-

necessary distinctions in the very Godhead, that make up the notion of a divine person. There are, as we have seen, certain necessary relations which we are obliged to make in God; there is the being of the divine essence *through, from and in itself*, (*das Durch-, Aus- und In sich Seyn des göttlichen Wesens*); there are the distinctions in God, considered as absolute subject, which we may express by *generating, generated, and returning into himself*; and in reference to the work of redemption, there are the distinctions of *sending, sent, and proceeding*; these different relations, which we are obliged to recognise in God, are now the very things which constitute the notion of a divine person.

In giving a description of any human person, also, we define or limit the general traits of human nature, and thus bring out the contrasted elements of this one character, in such a form, that the description will not apply to more than one individual. But we have here to consider, on the one hand, that the essence of humanity is such that it can be divided among different persons, and become in some respects a different thing in every person. As *Gerhard* says: "Every human person has his own incommunicable essence; the persons of the Trinity have one and the same communicable essence."¹ The nature common to all men is susceptible of different modifications, and actually receives such in different individuals; the divine nature or essence is no such abstract general notion, and hence excludes such a plurality. On the other hand, in man essence and being (or nature and existence) are not identical, and the difference of being (that is, in different persons), is more than a mere relation of subsistence along with perfect unity of nature. But in God, as his being is not *really* different from his nature, so these relations are not, nor do they add anything to it; although the relations are totally different one from the other. "Relation compared with essence," says *Aquinas*, "does not differ in fact but only in reason; but compared with an opposite relation, by virtue of the opposition it has a real distinction. Thus, too, *Quenstedt*: "The relations themselves are indeed distinguished from the essence only by reason,

dens inhaerens subjecto, sed est ipsa divina essentia, unde est subsistens sicut essentia divina subsistit; sicut ergo deitas est Deus, ita paternitas divina est Deus Pater, qui est persona divina; persona igitur divina significat relationem ut subsistentem.

¹ *Gerhard*. exeg. L. III. § 62: conf. *Quenstedt* de Trin. Sect. II. *did.* obs. 19 In diversis suppositis humanis tres substernuntur humanitates vel essentiae numero diversae, in divinis autem una tantum numero essentia. So too, *Thomas Aquinas*, *Summ. P. 1. qu. XXXIX. art. 3.*

among themselves however they differ so that they likewise make a real distinction of persons, and these would be distinguished from each other even if all operation of the human intellect were to cease."¹ From this comes the position: "In divinis essentia et persona differunt ratione, ipsae vero tres personae a se differunt realiter."² How we may conceive of these relations as distinct from one another, and yet not distinct from the nature of God, is well illustrated in Keckermann,³ by the relation of existence, and mode of existence. "E. g. one and the same hand is now shut and now open; the closed hand is not a different one from the opened, and yet the fist differs and is distinguished from the opened hand; yet it is not *really* distinguished, but in the *modes*. . . . As therefore the degree of heat is not the heat, and the degree of light is not the light; thus, too, the modes of things are not the things themselves, but are something pertaining to the things. A more obscure light and a more clear light, are not two things (*res et res*), are not light and light, but one and the same light with a certain mode or degree; which degree is distinguished from the light itself not really, nor yet by reason or thought alone, but as certain modes from the thing modified." That is, the distinction is not arbitrary, but there is something in the thing itself which justifies it. It will be still more appropriate to refer for illustration to that threefold relation, which in the previous section we found to be the condition of self-consciousness; where the *I* makes itself its own object, and in this object again recognises itself. Here there are certain antagonisms, the making itself an object, and the being made such, the giving itself to be known and the being known, which must be looked upon as really different from one another; and yet, this threefold *I*, which makes itself an object, which is made such, and which knows itself as such, is only one *I*, by virtue of a unity which is not merely generic but numerical; only it is conceived of in different relations to itself. These relations are not *really* distinct from the *I*, which without them would not be *I*, yet in our conceptions of them they are distinguished from it, and that too by a necessity which exists in the very nature of self-consciousness. Yet we repeat, that thus we can only analogically illustrate the sense of the defini-

¹ Thomas in Summ. P. I. qu. XXXIX. a. 1. *Quenstedt de Trin. Sect. I. § 60.* 16, not 3. So *Gerhard* (loc. de natura Dei § 85): *proprietas personalis nihil reale addit essentiae, sed tantum efficit, ut distinctus sit a Patre Filius.*

² *Hutter* in loc. de Trin. Pera. prop. IV. *Quenstedt, I. c.*

³ *Systema theol. Lib. I. c. 4.*

tions of the church respecting our doctrine, but cannot exhaust or adequately express them. Still we may perhaps hope by such a more precise development, to meet many misconceptions, which arise from an imperfect knowledge or rude apprehension of the relation of the three Persons to the one Nature.

We will next proceed to consider some of the objections made to this doctrine. They are thus summarily expressed by De Wette, in his "Doctrinal Theology of the Lutheran Church," § 41. "By the current definition of a Person in the Trinity, we are brought near to Tritheism; the precautionary statements which are made to prevent this, lead us to a modalistic (or Sabellian) view of the doctrine; by other distinctions, again, we are kept back from this, so that we remain in suspense between the two; but still, the whole representation of the doctrine is such, that we cannot avoid the notion of a plurality, of a compounding, and of such relations in the divine nature as wholly exclude the idea that God is an absolute being."

But, from the view already given it is clear that the doctrine of the church is equally removed from tritheism, and from modalism. With respect to tritheism, the objection may be stated in the words which De Wette quotes from Ammon's *Summa*: "An individual and intelligent substance (which is the definition of person), ought also to have an individual will, belonging to himself alone, and if so, then there remains little, or no distinction between person and nature." We grant this fully so far as this, that a divine person, thought of concretely, is not something really distinct from the nature of God, and that it must have the divine will, as well as all the other attributes, in common; but from this too it is clear that, in addition to the will, which is comprehended in the essence of the Godhead, we ought not to speak also of a will as belonging to any single person in the Godhead, as a special will. Just as, according to the Athanasian creed, though Father, Son and Spirit are almighty, "there are not three Almighty's, but one Almighty:" so, though Father, Son and Spirit are intelligent subjects, and therefore subjects endowed with will, yet we cannot speak of three wills, but only of one will of God; which will, however, as the nature of God in general, has a threefold subsistence, that is, is to be conceived of under a threefold relation. And although, again, these relations of the divine nature are distinguished only by reason, *distinctione rationis*,¹ yet it

¹ As John of Damascus says: τὸ μὲν ἐν καὶ κοινὸν πρᾶγματι θεωρεῖται διὰ τὸ ταῦτὸν τῆς οὐσίας καὶ τῆς ἐνεργείας καὶ τοῦ θελήματος, ἐπινοοῖα δὲ τὸ διαρρημένον.

does not follow from this that the doctrine of the church is modalistic, or that according to it the difference of persons is to be regarded as having a mere subjective foundation: for, that distinction is, *distinctio rationis ratiocinatas*, not *ratiocinantis*, that is, such that the occasion of making it, and some foundation for it, are found in the thing itself.

Yet the objection, that between the two views, tritheism and modalism, we remain as it were in suspense, is so far not without foundation, as it is certainly difficult for us to bring together the unity and the *threeness* in one thought. But is this, then, absolutely requisite? Is this the only case in which it is necessary, or advisable, to bring the apparently conflicting elements or aspects of the truth in separate parts before our minds, and to see their unity in the fact that each element demands and leads to the other as the complement of itself?

There is at least one such case, the relation of our free actions to the divine foreordination and coöperation. Here also it is difficult for us to conceive of the same action as dependent upon a free determination of the will, by virtue of which it could be other than it is, and at the same time as dependent upon God's decree, in which it is comprehended as the definite action which it is, and no other. Here we are obliged to separate two points of view, that of contemplation, in which the consciousness of our dependence upon God preponderates, and that of practical conviction, in which the consciousness of our free self-determination preponderates. The unity of the two, however, must be necessarily presupposed and held fast, since, in each of them we have only one aspect of a truth which is completed only by the other. Thus it is here also. There are first of all different elements of religious consciousness, in which we encounter the unity and the *threeness*; the former, in our general sense of the equal dependence of all things upon God; the latter in our conscious experience of redemption through Christ.¹ But since in the Christian mind these elements are constantly interchanged and intermingled, it is impossible for us to hold fast to the unity or to the *threeness* alone. If we first think of God as absolutely one, as the original ground of the manifold forms of things, yet the specula-

¹ *Pezel*, Theol. Melancth. P. I. de Trib. Pers. arg. 1: When God is contrasted with his creatures, unity is mentioned, because there is one creative essence, and yet the three persons constitute that creative essence; but the persons are distinguished when the divinity is described as it is in itself, and when we speak of the incarnation of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit.

tive development of the idea of revelation, and of a personal and intelligent being compels us to make a distinction in the relations which this one original being bears to himself, and to the world; or, if speculation does not lead us to do this, yet will a living Christian consciousness compel us to advance from the feeling of general dependence, to that of our special dependence, as exhibited in the higher life which we have received from Christ, and accordingly to make the distinction in God, of Father, Son and Spirit. If, on the other hand, we begin with the consciousness of redemption, and of the connection, inseparable from this, of our new life with the agency of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, with, through and in whom, we are reconciled and made partakers of the fulness of truth and grace (John 1: 16, 17); and if we see that these three must be conceived of as having a truly divine nature, we need then only to get a clear conception of what it means, *to have a divine nature*, in order at once to see that this nature must necessarily have a unity, and, consequently, that the distinction of the three persons must be expressed in such a way as to show that they are not in fact something independent of this one nature, or inconsistent with its unity. Thus it is, as a father of the church has somewhere said, that the one light of the divine essence separates itself before our eyes into three flames, and these flow together again into one light; in this perpetual transition and movement, the religious consciousness has its life. And this is what the doctrine of the church expresses in its way, even as De Wette has it; when any one thinks himself brought by this doctrine near to a tritheistic conception of the Godhead, it speaks against any dismemberment of the divine nature, in a way that would seem to lead to a modalistic view of the Trinity; and yet it avoids this, again, by other distinctions in which it enforces the objective character of the personal distinctions in the Godhead. We cannot succeed in transforming what is *mobile* into an inflexible and fixed image; not because we have not the appropriate definitions and conceptions, but because we have not an adequate and living vision, (our own self consciousness as we said furnishes us with an analogy); but this *must* be wanting to us, because we are not God himself, and so far this doctrine necessarily remains a mystery. No one knows the Father but the Son, and no one the Son but the Father (Matt. 11: 27); but we must receive with faith what the Son has revealed to us.

But, continues the objector, with this representation of the doc-

trine we cannot keep clear of the notion of a plurality, of a compounding, and of such relations, in the divine nature, as destroy the idea of God as an absolute being.

In the first place, then, as to a plurality in the divine nature. The scholastics had much to say of the relation of number to the divine unity, since Boethius had put forth the canon: *vere unum esse, in quo nullus sit numerus*. Peter the Lombard sought to avoid the difficulty by saying, that number in its application to God and divine things, had only a negative meaning: "these things are rather said to exclude what is not in God than to assert what is" (Sentent. lib. I. dist. 24). He thought, that when we speak of one God, one Father, one Son, we only mean to exclude the notion that there are several such; and when we speak of several divine persons, we only exclude the *singularitas et solitudo*. When we say that there are in God three persons, this only means, that not the Father alone, and also not merely the Father and Son, but that Father, Son and Spirit are to be revered as having a divine nature; besides these, however, no other. Although this position was much contested and limited, yet it is found even in the later scholastics, (e. g. Aquinas, Summa. P. I. quæst. 30. art. 3). The Lutheran theologians, after Hutter's example (Loc. de Trin. Pers. prop. IV. p. 102,) rejected it; to keep themselves from Sabellianism they thought that they ought not to give up anything of the *threeness*. And we can certainly do very well without this, as well as other scholastic means of avoiding the difficulty, if, instead of entangling ourselves in the abstract categories of number and unity, we hold on to the simple and concrete truth, that the plurality of relations does not destroy the unity of essence. In the very exclusion of number from the Godhead we may find the real significancy of the unity of God. By denying to him all number, we ascribe to him absolute unity. But this unity is still an immanent attribute of the divine nature. Its meaning is this, that the nature of God is not capable of a reduplication, is not to be regarded as a generic notion, which includes under itself many or several individuals. But this position is not only not denied but is expressly asserted in the doctrine of the Trinity; for how can we, from a difference in relations infer that there are several natures? So far, then, as there is a plurality contained in the idea of the Trinity, it is not opposed to that unity which belongs to an absolute being, but, if we may make use of the expression, to that solitude or singleness of existence (*solitudo, singularitas*), with which we should find it difficult to

unite the conception of a God, living and blessed, independent of creation.

But it is said, again, that this plurality, existing in God himself, seems to lead to the notion of a certain composition in the divine nature, as though it were made up of parts. We should indeed gain little if we maintained the unity of God, and yet, in order to do this, were obliged to give up the *simplicity* of the divine nature, which is an equally necessary idea. But here we apply the canon: *relationes non componunt sed distinguunt*; or, to express it in more general terms, as distinctions do not involve a separation into parts, so, the unity of what is distinguished does not consist in its being made up of parts. When we distinguish the clearness of the light, and the definite degree of the clearness, we do not thereby say that the light is something compounded of the clearness and its degree. "Composition is only between one thing and another thing (*inter rem et rem*), but a relation is not a thing but only a mode of a thing, therefore a relation cannot be compounded; e. g. degree in color does not compose the color, nor degree in whiteness the whiteness, because the degree of color or whiteness is not a different thing from the color or whiteness, but only a mode of the color or whiteness."¹ Our *I* does not cease to be simple because the notion of it presupposes the distinction of subject and object, and the knowledge that it is both. And, what comes nearer to the point, if we find that we can distinguish the several attributes of God, without detriment to the divine simplicity, why may we not equally distinguish his different internal relations without conflicting with the same notion? For what we have before remarked applies also here, that the distinguishing of them from the divine essence is a *distinctio non realis sed rationis ratiocinatae*.

The question, whether in truth a certain plurality cannot consist with the divine simplicity, is one which has been answered affirmatively by many persons, and that not merely in our times. Thus Lessing² says: "What if this doctrine (the Trinity) were

¹ Keckermann, *System. theol. L. I. p. 76.*

² Lessing, *Erziehung des Menschengeschl.* § 73. Conf. *Poirot cogit. rational.* L. III. cp. 18; p. 447, not. "Simplicity excludes plurality, yet not all, but such as exists between different things, which are single and separate and have not the same but a different reality (or nature);—but if one thing may have many ways and internal modes of contemplating, of possessing and of having complacency in itself in the most perfect manner, each one of which is essentially indissoluble from the others, (which can be no other than the most perfect of all things, that is God,) it will nevertheless be the most simple of all things."

meant to bring the human understanding in the way of seeing that God cannot possibly be *one*, in the sense in which finite things are *one*, that, also, his unity must be a transcendental unity, which does not exclude a kind of plurality?" In our own times there are, as is well known, many who adopt the philosophical position, that the highest unity is to be conceived of as the identity of unity and manifoldness; from which it follows that the simplicity of this unity does not consist in its having no internal distinctions, but approves itself by alternately making and revoking these distinctions.¹ Apart, however, from these speculations, we may say, that we cannot make to ourselves a better conception of this attribute, considering it not merely negatively but also positively, than when we distinguish God from God, in order to comprehend him as the being who is eternally in himself and like himself alone.²

We have still to consider the third of these objections, that the relations which the doctrine of the Trinity ascribes to the Godhead destroy the idea that God is an absolute being. This can have a double meaning. Either, it is found at variance with the idea of the absolute nature of God, to conceive of him under such relations as those of *generation* and *procession*; or, it is doubted whether the absolute divine nature is actually attributed to the single persons, when it is attributed to them under certain relations, to the exclusion of others—(it is thought e. g. that if the Son is to be conceived of as generated, he cannot be called God in the absolute sense in which the Father is, who is conceived of as generating.) The first form of the objection we could not concede to be valid, even if we were speaking only of the external

¹ This is the position of the Hegelian logic.

² Conf. Poirer (*l'oeconomis de la creation*, p. 51); I remark in passing, that the divine simplicity of the essence of God, so far from excluding, necessarily includes, the great mystery of the Trinity. For an intelligent and perfect being which could not have the idea of the essential likeness of itself (which is the Son), would not be a simple being, but a being whose thought would be divided from itself by ignorance; as, too, this being would be divided from itself by indifference if it did not have in itself a love for itself necessarily and eternally springing up. But, further, this same intelligence or knowledge and this essential love of God would not be simple, but necessarily divided, if they were to be necessarily employed upon anything else than the divine nature and essence alone. If there were out of God any other idea, truth, goodness, independent of God, to which God ought necessarily to give his knowledge and his love, the intelligence of God and his love would not be naturally simple, but they would be necessarily shared and dispersed among other things than the pure essence of God."

relations of God to the world and to the revelation of himself in the world; for here, although God be absolute, yet the doctrinal definitions respecting his nature and attributes must be based upon the contrast and dependence which we find to exist in the relations between God and the world. That is, though God be absolute, yet we are obliged to think of him as having certain relations. Still less will the objection hold in respect to the Trinity, for here we are speaking chiefly of the internal relations of the divine essence to itself; and, without such relations, it is impossible for us to have any clear conception of the fundamental definition of what is absolute, viz. that it exists only through itself, for itself and in itself.¹ The discussion of the second form of this objection must be deferred to the next section.

It may be well, in conclusion, to notice in a few words the objections which Schleiermacher has brought against the doctrine of the church in respect to the Trinity.² He finds the doctrine unsatisfactory in two respects; partly, because it makes the unity of nature subordinate to the triplicity of persons, or the converse; and, again, because the doctrine asserts that the three persons are to be held equal, while it fails to show that they are so. This last point is the one which we have retained for discussion in the next section. In respect to the first of these objections, Schleiermacher presents it in the following manner. There has always been a contest upon the question whether, for the relation of the one divine nature to the three persons, we may derive a valid analogy from the relation of genus and species, of a generic notion to the individual beings included under it. He says that we must take this analogy, for if we do not, we cannot have any definite conception of this relation. Then he tries to show, that, according as we take this relation of genus and species in a realistic or nominalistic sense, the divine *monarchy* preponderates and the distinction of persons becomes subordinate, or the *converse*; and that a strict middle course is impossible. From this he concludes that we must decide for the subordination either of the unity or of the *threeness*; or, if we are kept back from this by the definitions of the creeds, we must remain in a fluctuating

¹ [The text gives in a parenthesis, as equivalent to this last clause—"the absolute *aseitas* and *sufficiency* of the divine nature." By *aseitas* is meant that attribute, by virtue of which God is described as the "most free cause of himself;" by the *sufficiency* of God is meant, that he is not dependent either for existence or action upon any other being.]

² Conf. Schleiermacher, Glaubenslehre § 171, 2d edition.

state between the two; and then also we no less fail of the proposed object, that is, establishing the equal validity of both elements.

Whoever has followed our exhibition of the doctrine will, in the first place, find that what Schleiermacher says of the way in which we are to conceive of the relation of the nature and the persons of the Godhead, is not exactly correct. On the one hand all are unquestionably agreed in this, that the relation of a generic notion to the individuals embraced under it, does indeed give us an analogy, but yet only an analogy, and the entire difference which also exists between the two things ought not to be left out of sight. On the other hand, those theologians who have gone into a further illustration of this point, have given us another type of this relation, the analogy derived from our own souls, elevated to a state of clear self-consciousness. Accordingly, the inference which is drawn from the antagonism of nominalistic and realistic views, as to the necessity of the subordination either of the unity or of the triplicity, is of very questionable validity. In the second place, we believe that we have also shown, that this fluctuation between the one and the three, or rather, between those elements of consciousness in which the unity and those in which the triplicity preponderates, is not of so objectionable a character, that it must at any rate be set aside. We should rather say, that the equalization which is claimed for these two elements, is reached by their both appearing as necessary; and that the only thing which conflicts with this equality, is a theory in which the unity is supplanted by the *threeness*, or the latter by the former; or in which the subordination of the one or the other, is maintained as perfectly satisfactory, needing no completion through the antagonism of the elements—which of course entirely excludes the equal validity of the two.

Moreover, I cannot concede that the doctrine of the church is really inclined to lay more stress upon the persons than upon the unity of nature; I rather believe, that if the contest could be resumed where it stood before the rejection of Sabellianism, nothing more could be conceded to the latter than is contained in the doctrine of the church, without involving us in the most decided contradiction with the Holy Scriptures.

[To be continued.]