

UNITY AND TRINITY OF GOD

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It can be stated that, until now, the most elaborate text of the dogma of the Trinity by the ecclesiastic Magisterium is represented by the Decree for the Jacobites included in the Council of Florence (4 February 1442). In brief, the Council of Florence affirms that:

- 1) There is only one God.
- 2) In the unique God there are three Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, equal and distinct, coeternal and consubstantial.
- 3) The Son proceeds only from the Father; the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son as from a unique principle.
- 4) The Three Persons are not three «principia» of creatures, but a unique principle.
- 5) The Son has assumed a real and integral human nature, by being born of the Virgin Mary, to redeem men with his Incarnation, Passion, Death and Resurrection.

GOD AS ONE

The simplest formula of Trinitarian faith¹ states: There is only one God, in three Persons equal and distinct: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

¹ I have previously dealt with this subject, but in this article I have brought several revisions.

In order to *more deeply* study the *unity* of God as distinct from the Trinity of God, it is better to explain the following two points:

- 1) The uniqueness and the unity of God.
- 2) Under what aspect is God intrinsically one?

1. *The uniqueness and the unity of God*

God is the most perfect being, creator of the heaven and the earth. God is unique; all the other beings distinct from him depend on him, are caused by him, are his creatures. God is the «*unum universorum principium*» (Lateran Council IV, DS 800).

The Holy Scripture and the Magisterium continuously affirm that this unique God is infinitely wise, sovereignty free, almighty, fully happy in himself, rich in love and mercy.

2. *Under what aspect is God unique and intrinsically one?*

We affirm that in God there is a trinity of relative persons, that is we affirm that under a certain aspect God is Trine. It is therefore important to precise under what aspect God is instead one.

God is intrinsically one precisely in that he is «God», that is because he is *the very perfect Being*, namely he is 1) the Being who has *in himself all that is necessary to exist*; 2) the Being who is *absolute* i.e. *independent of any other being* 3) the Being who has *the full dominion on the whole of Himself*.

These three definitions of God are typically Christian, they were never reached before, and they clearly indicate the diversity between God and contingent beings, which 1) *do not have in themselves all that is necessary for their existence* (they have it in another, that is in God); 2) *are not independent from any other being*, but they depend on God, are *passive* in all their being; 3) *do not have the full dominion of themselves*, but are radically *dominated*.

In God there is only one intellect, only one will, only one creative power.

I will add some philosophical considerations because I believe they might be useful especially to precise the aspect in which God is intrinsically one.

As already stated, God is the absolute Being², He is the Being who has the full dominion of his whole self, is his own Lord³. On the contrary, contingent beings are essentially passive in existing and in all their being, they do not have the full dominion of themselves.

The fact that God is his own Lord entails that he is omniperfect and unique.

In detail, the fundamental characteristic «Lord of all of himself» necessarily entails that the absolute Being *cannot submit to any radical imposition*⁴. Thus the absolute Being is *omniperfect*, he possesses all perfections to their infinite degree, the substantial perfection (substance, or subject, or «I») with

² Namely, he is free from any dependence on other beings. The term «absolutus» means «lose, free from bonds, *independent*».

³ I prefer the expression «Dominus sui» rather than «ratio sui» (expression used in the scholastic Theology) because the term «Dominus» expresses better a concret and personal being; it seems to me also that the word «Dominus» is more biblical. In fact in the O.T. the tetragramma (i.e. the four consonants of the proper name of God: JHWH) very often were read «Adonai» (my Lord), and the LXX translated the tetragramma with «Kyrios». In the N.T. the most ancient formula of Faith with expressed the divinity of Jesus was: «Jesus is the Lord».

⁴ I say «*radical imposition*» because I do not want to deny that the absolute Being can suffer impositions from creatures, such impositions cannot be «radical», but «in their origin» they must be wanted by the absolute Being Himself. For example, I think it is inevitable to admit that the free action of a creature has an aspect of imposition to God; but it is not a radical imposition, because God Himself has liberally wanted and realized the capacity of that creature to freely want. On this subject recently there has been a real opening. See G. Blandino, *Problems of Theology*, P.U.L. - Coletti, Rome, 1998, page 152, no. 4; Id. *Immutability and Mutability of God*, in *Asprenas*, 1981, 1, 57-75. To understand God's joy and sorrow, we must keep into consideration that He can rejoice and suffer at the same time at different levels. This happens in us too: a woman who terribly suffers for a cancer can rejoice at the same time because her was given the news that her nephew was born, and that both nephew and mother are feeling good. In God there is certainly an intra-Trinitarian joy that is absolute and intangible, but at lower levels God can suffer for Christ's sorrows and rejoice for His love, as he can suffer for our sins and rejoice for our love actions.

the full dominion of Himself and the qualitative perfections⁵ *power*⁶, *knowledge*, *freedom*, *beauty*, *felicity*, *love*.

In fact, every imperfection supposes a non-dominion of himself, a radical imposition: an imperfection is not something that an entity desires and gives to itself. Therefore, the absolute Being must have every perfection. Moreover, the absolute Being must have those perfections to an infinite degree, because any limitation entails a non-dominion of himself, a radical imposition.

In other words: if the absolute Being has the dominion of His whole self and therefore of His perfections and their limits, these perfections have no limits, they are *infinite*⁷.

The infinity of the perfections of the absolute Being entails the *uniqueness* of the absolute Being. However to understand this we do not have to consider any perfection, for ex. the perfection of knowledge or that of love; in fact, it is not evident to us that there may not exist two beings, eachone with an infinite knowledge or with an infinite love, because knowledge and love of one do not necessarily limit, nor do they prevent, the knowledge and love of the other. We have to consider, instead, the perfection of the *dominion* on the other beings: it is clear that the dominion or power of a being limits the dominion, or power of another being, to the point of preventing it completely. If a being *x* has an infinite power, another being *y* can only have the power that the being *x* gives it.

From the cognitive point of view, it can be stated that: the absolute Being has the full dominion of Himself, thus he has

⁵ With the expression «qualitative perfections» I mean all those desirable aspects that we observe in ourselves and in the other beings around us. The classification I am giving is approximate.

⁶ With «power» or «causality» or «action» I mean the *dominion* on the *other* beings, not the dominion on himself.

⁷ If, for absurdo, I were given the unlimited power to broaden my intelligence, I would broaden it indefinitely. Obviously, God has never been in the situation of having, first, limited perfections, and, later, of having the possibility to broaden them to the infinite; it is correct to say that it would be a contradiction to admit that the Being Lord of Himself has only limited perfections.

the full dominion of his capacity of dominating the beings distinct from Him; therefore He has the complete dominion of all the reality distinct from Himself, that is all the reality distinct from Him is dominated by Him, therefore He is *the unique dominator*.

The scheme of the cognitive procedure just exposed is the following:

Lord of himself → *Lord of whole reality* → *unique Lord*

In other words, the following can be said: the absolute Being is almighty, that is he has an infinite power; but it is contradictory to admit the existence of two beings actually distinct and both almighty (because one would limit, or better, prevent the almightiness of the other); therefore the absolute Being is unique⁸.

The absolute Being is also intrinsically *one*, i.e. He is a simple substance, for the same reason for which He is *unique*. In fact, it is not possible to admit in Him a multiplicity of distinct constitutives, each of which is absolute, i.e. His own Lord independent from others, because this would be equivalent to admitting a plurality of Gods.

⁸ Often the following argumentation is presented to prove God's uniqueness: God is infinite, therefore He is unique. Such a presentation is very incomplete and can be misinterpreted. First of all, the term «infinite» can be considered as expressing a *spatial* infinity; which would be completely wrong. God is «infinite» as for His perfection, but He is not spatially «infinite», because He is not even spatial, He is a-spatial. Moreover, it is debatable that there is only one spatial infinity.

To prove God's uniqueness it is not even sufficient to say that He is infinite for perfection, generally; one must stress the infinity of the perfection of *dominion*. In fact, it is not clear if there can be two entities of infinite knowledge or of infinite love, because knowledge and love of one do not limit and do not prevent the knowledge and love of the other; on the contrary the infinite dominion of one limits and prevents the infinite dominion of the other. [The above expounded considerations can be used to formulate a very good philosophical proof of the existence of God. See my short writing: *Ragione e fede*, Roma, AdP, 1998, Appendix.]

Thus God is intrinsically *one* for the same reason why he is *unique*. Unity is the continuation and the apex of uniqueness⁹. The whole intrinsically one God is the Lord of Himself and therefore the whole one God has all qualitative perfections to an infinite degree (because all these are desirable in themselves). Christian revelation affirms that in the unique and one God there are three relative Persons; but it is not sustainable that one Person has the whole dominion, one has the whole knowledge, and another has the whole love. The three relative Persons cannot be distinguished among themselves in this manner¹⁰.

The assertion that the whole intrinsically one God is the Lord of Himself and therefore the whole one God has an infinite potence, an infinite knowledge, and an infinite love coincides with the assertion that in God there is a unique creative potence, a unique intellect, a unique will.

In brief, there is a *unique God, only one Being that is completely Lord of Himself, independent from any other being*. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are not three Gods, since each relative Person is Lord of Himself, i.e. He is God, but not independently of the other two relative Persons, although *in unity* with the other two relative Persons.

⁹ From this essential unity, one can already understand that God cannot be a material entity, because a material entity always has distinct parts, of which everyone is distinct from each other, and is given, *imposed* to the others.

Moreover, God is not material (but is rather similar to a spiritual human oneself) because he is wise, willing, happy, loving.

¹⁰ The following objection has been made to me: «But, could not be admitted that in the unique God, who has the full dominion of himself, there is a plurality of constitutives (as the Christian Trinity) such that one of these constitutives or «*modi essendi*» has the whole potence, another has the whole knowledge, and another has the whole love?».

No, because, as the *whole* One has the full dominion of himself, so the *whole* One (God is simple, in Him there are no parts) has all the qualitative perfections. If something did not have all the qualitative perfections, it would be something which has not the full dominion of himself, that is it would not be something intrinsic to the One.

GOD AS TRINE

From the Revelation it appears that in God there are three Persons equal (as for their level of perfection) and distinct (in the sense that 'one is not the other'¹¹), essentially relative among themselves: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, each of these Persons is God, the unique God, only in unity with the other two relative Persons.

To better study the Trinitarian aspect of God it is useful to examine the following points:

- 1) God is in three different ways of being.
- 2) The three ways of being of God appear as Persons equal and distinct.
- 3) The three Persons are essentially relative.
- 4) Any of the three relative Persons has His own characteristic.
- 5) Can God, as one, be called «person»?
- 6) The connection among the relative Persons and divine perfections.
- 7) Actions "ad extra" of Relative Persons.
- 8) Processions as implications.
- 9) Synthesis.
- 10) Why did just the Second Person become incarnate?
- 11) The Holy Trinity in ourselves.

1. *God in three distinct ways of being*

In God there are three distinct ways of being, or if preferred, God is in three distinct ways of being.

With the expression «three ways of being» I intend to use the most generic expression to say that in the unique divine substance there must be «something triple», there must be «some sort of triplicity» (to us extremely mysterious). As if to say: the unique divine substance must be somehow triple.

Obviously, this expression, so generic, must then be explained (by saying that the three distinct ways of being are three relative Persons).

¹¹ Such distinction can be called «real distinction of alterity» (cfr. G. Blandino, *Questioni dibattute di Teologia/2*, Pont. Univ. Lateranense - Città Nuova, Rome, 1978, pages 154-157).

Anyway, it is opportune to clarify right away that these three ways of being are not basically relative to us; i.e., they are not only different ways in which God appears to us and intervenes in the history of our Salvation¹². They are, instead, ways intrinsic to God, fundamentally *independent from creatures* as much as God Himself is independent from creatures.

2. *The three ways of being of God appear as equal and distinct Persons*

God's three ways of being appear as knowing subjects, willing and acting, equal for level of perfection and distinct among themselves; they appear as an «I» a «You», a «He» talking to each other.

I believe the choice of the word «person» to indicate the three ways of being of the unique God was very appropriate: I think the Latin formula: «One substance, three Persons» is better than the expression by the Cappadoci Fathers: «One essence, three substances».

The words «Father» and «Son» at the human level already indicate two persons; the expression «Holy Spirit» is neutral and does not indicate anything of its own, in fact also the Father and the Son can be indicated as Holy Spirit (each one is spirit, each one is holy).

The three ways of being act as three distinct persons: the Father sends the Son to reveal and to redeem, the Son obeys and comes; the Son talks to the Father, the Father answers his Son. The Father and the Son send the Holy Spirit as consoler and master (He will make the Disciples understand what the Son revealed but they have not yet understood): but the consoler and teacher is a person.

¹² The statement that the divine Trinity consists only in a triple way to be *towards* us, constitutes Sabellius' modalistic heresy. According to modalists, in fact, God is not *intrinsically* trine but only presents Himself to us as trine: He is Father in that He is Creator, He is Son in that He is Revealer, He is Holy Spirit in that He is Sanctifier.

In other words: each of *God's* three ways of being shows itself as a distinct «person»; that is, each one has a real analogy with a human being. As I will thoroughly explain later on, these three Persons are essentially relative among themselves.

I have already said that in God there is only one intellect, only one conscience, one will, one creative power, etc. But it must be said also that in God there are three relative Persons, intelligent, willing, almighty, creative, etc., in common.

The dogma of the Trinity, however formulated, appears to be contradictory: how can there be only one God and three divine (and relative) Persons?

The explanation of this apparent contradiction is that the Revelation of realities unknown to us is done by using their similarity to realities known to us. But similarities or analogies are imprecise and not exact. And from this inaccuracy some apparent contradictions might arise. The divine (relative) Persons are *only* similar or analogous (i.e. slightly similar) to human beings. Obviously, if the divine Persons were exactly correspondent to human beings, then, as three human beings are three men, in the same way three divine Persons would be three Gods; but divine Persons are not exactly correspondent to human beings.

The statement of the existence of three divine Persons (relative) immediately raises the problem: «Is not this Trinity in contradiction with the uniqueness and, especially, with the intrinsic unity of God?».

It can be answered that the Trinity of the relative Persons, even though it is extremely mysterious to us, is not in *evident* contradiction with God's uniqueness because, even though the three Persons are *distinct*, i.e. one is not the other, they are not independent one of the other. That is, each relative Person is not God *independently of the other two*, but only in *unity* (much more than in *union*) with the other two. There is only one Lord of Himself, independent of any other entity.

If in God there is a trinity of relative Persons, this must be a perfection, a beauty: in fact, an imperfection is undergone, but He who is Lord of Himself does not undergo any radical imposition.

The following may, *perhaps*, help understand why in God there is a plurality of relative persons. In human life, the greatest joy is achieved in love for other persons. This could not be accidental, but necessary. Then God's infinite joy would require

an intrinsic plurality of persons with reciprocal love. For this reason, maybe, God is unique, but not solitary (this was said by St. Augustine).

3. *The three Persons are essentially relative*

The three divine Persons, which are ways of being of the unique absolute God, are essentially relative among themselves. What is peculiar of one Person (that is his characteristic, his «property», what constitutes Him and distinguishes Him from the others) is in relation of opposition¹³ to what is peculiar of the other two Persons. «In Deo omnia sunt unum ubi non obviat relationis oppositio» (DS 1330).

The Second Person proceeds from the First, and the Third proceeds from the First and the Second.

There are therefore two processions. The procession is defined as «the origin of one from the other». The proceeding has an analogy with being caused, but is not exactly a being caused, because also the Second and the Third Persons are not created, but divine and consubstantial.

In the first procession the originating principle is constituted only by the First Person. Instead, in the Second procession the originating principle is constituted by the First and the Second Person; yet, these two Persons originate the Holy Spirit in a unitary way, by means of one procession only. For this reason one talks about two «spirantes» and about only one «spirator», with just one «spiratio».

Concerning the principle originating from the second procession, in the Tradition of the Church there are two different formulas which integrate each other. In the Latin Church the most common formula is that the Holy Spirit proceeds «ex Patre Filioque»; in the Greek Patristic the formula according to which the Holy Spirit proceeds «ex Patre per Filium» is used. The Latin formula better expresses the equality between Father and Son, against the subordinationist heresies; the Greek formula better expresses the unitary dynamism of the procession, that is it better expresses that Father and Son are not two parallel

¹³ Or, better, in relation of distinction and implication.

«spirantes», but that the Father *by means of the Son* emanates the Holy Spirit and that, therefore, there is only one «spiratio», as from one «spirator».

V. Lossky, one of the greatest orthodox theologians, brings the following charge against the theology of the Catholic Church: «Catholic theologians make the Holy Spirit proceed from the Father and the Son as they are one, i.e. they make Him proceed from God as one». This is not true. The Holy Spirit does not proceed from God as one, but from the first two relative Persons in a unitary way, and this unity of the procession lies in the fact that the Holy Spirit proceeds *from the Father by means of His Son*. I think, therefore, that, the formula: «ex Patre per Filium» is better than: «ex Patre Filioque».

4. *The peculiarities of each of the three relative Persons*

Each relative Person has His own characteristic which differentiates Him from the others. The peculiar characteristics of the three Persons explain the processions and therefore the reciprocal relations.

The First Person is very frequently called «Father», but also «Principium sine principio» (while the Second Person is called «Principium de principio»). The creation and the efficient causality is attributed to the First Person; for this reason the First Person is often indicated as the Creator, the Omnipotent, the *pantokràtor*.

Also the other two relative Persons are said omnipotent (in fact all the three Persons are omnipotent, knowing and loving), but with special frequency the omnipotence is attributed to the First Person. For this reason, it is justified to think that the First Person has a special connection with the perfection of *Substance* (i. e. with what characterises every substance, either material or spiritual or subject or «I») and with the qualitative perfection of *Power*, or *Causality*, or *Action*. In brief, it can be said that the First Person has a particular connection with the *acting Subject*.

The Second Person is very often called «Son»; this word indicates only the fact that the Second Person proceeds from the First Person, but does not indicate the characteristic typical to the Second Person.

The Second Person is indicated as *Logos*, *Wisdom*. The word «Logos» must be understood in the sense of «Wisdom», or «Knowing Subject». Therefore, the two designations coincide.

The Second Person has accomplished in a complete proper manner an intervention in the history of our salvation to reveal God and His love and to redeem us. It must be noted that the way chosen to redeem us, that is, Incarnation, Passion, Death on the cross and Resurrection, also has the purpose to reveal: in fact, God could grant us forgiveness and grace with a mere act of his will; but he chose the tragic way of the Cross to make us deeply understand (to reveal to us) the gravity of the human fault, the firmness of divine justice, and especially God's passionate love for men.

Such data of Revelation allow us to say that the Second Person has a special connection with *Knowledge*, with *Wisdom*.

The «data» of Revelation are less rich of indication as regards the Third Person.

It is indicated as *Love, Gift, Consolator, Teacher*. To this Person it is frequently attributed man's sanctification and donation of grace.

It can be concluded that, with great probability, the Third Person must have a special connection with *Felicity* and *Love*, or with *loving Felicity*¹⁴ of Himself and of all the other beings.

Therefore, from the Revelation it appears that the First Person has a particular connection with *the acting or dominating Subject*, that the Second Person has a particular connection with *Knowledge*, and that the Third Person has a particular connection with *loving Felicity*. This is an important conclusion.

But it cannot be simply acknowledged that the First Person is the divine acting substance, the Second Person is the divine wisdom, and that the Third Person is the divine loving felicity, because all three Persons are substantial, powerful, wise, happy and loving. Substance, power, wisdom, happiness and love are perfections of God as one and are common to all the three relative Persons¹⁵.

¹⁴ Love is the search for felicity of his own and of others.

¹⁵ Frequently in theological writings it is said that «divine nature is *communicable*» and that «the Father *communicates* divine nature to the Son». It is more exact to say that «divine nature is *common* to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit».

5. *Can God, as one, be called «person»?*

God as one is an intelligent and willing substance (or subject).

I think the better term to indicate God as one is «person» (even better than «substance», «nature», «essence») because God as one has a real analogy with a human person¹⁶ In fact God as one is *an intelligent and willing subject* and therefore, among all the realities of our world, the reality which is the more similar or analogous to Him is just a human person. This, in my opinion, is what we want to mean when we speak of a *personal* God.

Obviously, the analogy between a human being and God as one is different from the analogy which exists among a human being and each of the three relative Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The difference between the two analogies is deeply mysterious to us; as mysterious as God's unity and trinity. Nevertheless, *both similarities or analogies are real* and not necessarily *the first analogy is minor than the second similarities*.

Not to make confusion and to distinguish the two types of analogy it can be said that God as one is *an absolute Person* and that Father, Son and Holy Spirit are *relative Persons*. In this use the term «absolute» opposes to «relative», not to «contingent»; but this use expresses very well also the fact that God as one (that is the absolute Person) is the absolute Being who opposes Himself to contingent beings.

By using the expression «absolute Person» to indicate God as one, it can be said that in the unique absolute Person there are three ways of being and that every relative Person is the absolute Person in one of these three ways of being. And just by keeping in mind that the ways of being we are talking about are ways of being of the absolute divine Person, we can understand

¹⁶ As regards the analogy that each relative Person has with a human person we may put the question whether these three analogies are equal among themselves. I am not able to give an answer, but it is not impossible that there is a difference and this difference could be the reason why Jesus does never converse with the Holy Spirit

why these three ways present themselves as «persons». That is, it is not strange that the three ways of being of the absolute Person are, they too, similar to human beings.

I believe the best formulation of the dogma of the Trinity is the following: *One absolute Person in three relative Persons* (or: *Three relative Persons in one absolute Person*).

I realise, though, that this formulation is not very appropriate for preaching, because people would very easily get the idea of four Persons of the same level. But I think that neither the formula expressing God's unity by saying that: in God there is only one «substance», or only one «nature», or only one «essence» are appropriate for preaching¹⁷.

People do not understand this words, or, even worse, misinterpret them. The word that can be more easily misinterpreted is «nature», because it is normally used to indicate not an individual, but a species. Generally, in English we say: «All men have the same nature» to mean that all men are similar (within certain limits), that is they belong to the same species. Therefore the sentence: «The three divine Persons have the same nature» can be easily interpreted in the sense that the three Persons belong to the same species. Thus, the word «nature» easily leads to think about three Gods.

I believe for preaching the most appropriate formula is the very traditional one: *One God in three Persons*. This formula is also the closest to the formula: «One absolute Person in three relative Persons», because people think of «God» as a person.

6. *The connection among the relative Persons and the divine perfections*

Which is then the connection among the relative Persons and the perfections of the absolute Person?

¹⁷ Some theologians asked what answer should be given from a merely philosophical point of view to the question: «How many persons are in God?».

I believe the answer to give is the following: «In God there *is only one* person», because from a purely philosophical point of view, the question arises only concerning the absolute Person; this question does not arise at all concerning the relative Persons.

We have to search beyond the divine perfections¹⁸; we have to look for something that, at least under some aspects, precedes divine perfections. Very hesitantly I dare to present this hypothesis: the relative Persons are the last foundations of the possibility of divine perfections.

It is inevitable to admit that the last foundation of the possibility of the absolute Being and of divine perfections is his own being. Then it can be suggested that the First relative Person is the last foundation of the possibility of «substance» perfection and «dominion» perfection, that the Second relative Person is the last foundation of the possibility of the «knowledge» perfection, and that the Third relative Person is the last foundation of «felicity» and «love» perfections¹⁹.

The three relative Persons are intrinsic constitutives of the absolute Person.

Then the assertion: «Divine essence is the last foundation of all perfections» can be stated more precisely thus: «Three Relative Persons are the last foundation of all perfections».

7. Actions “*ad extra*” of Relative Persons

One could ask: «Can a Relative Person have a proper action “*ad extra*”?» I would answer: «Yes. although the *basic* efficient

¹⁸ According to St. Thomas, the Second Person *proceeds «per intellectum»* from the Father. But for the fact that the intellect is common to the three relative Persons it makes no sense to say that the Second Person proceeds from the Father, from himself and from the Holy Spirit. The same criticism goes for the procession «*per voluntatem*» of the third Person from the First and the Second: love is common to all three relative Persons, therefore, it makes no sense to say that the Third Person proceeds from the First, the Second and *from itself*.

¹⁹ Notice that, if my hypothesis is right, the «*proprium*» of each relative Person is not something which is in itself desirable in the same manner as the qualitative perfections are desirable. For me it is desirable to have an infinite felicity or an infinite love, but it would not have importance for me to be the last foundation of the possibility of felicity and love. For me it is important to be happy and loving, even if another is the last foundation of such perfections.

I think that the first relative Person lets with love to the Second relative Person the «*proprietas*» of being the last foundation of the possibility of knowledge, and *vice/versa*. The same is valid for the Third relative Person.

causality is proper to God as one, i.e. it is *common* to all the three Relative Persons, each Relative Person can have a proper action "ad extra" at least as much as a contingent being can have proper actions (and intellections and volitions, etc.).

8. *Processions as implications*

The term «procession» initially indicates a local motion. Obviously in God there is neither local motion nor causality. Therefore, the expression «intra-trinitarian procession» is to be understood in a very analogical sense.

I now suggest the hypothesis that the relative Person are implied with each other, in an analogical way, as in a contingent being are implied the subject, the knowledge, and the love: knowledge implies a *subject*, and love implies a *subject* and the *knowledge*, and it implies them in a unitary way, that is it implies a *knowing subject*. So the Second Person, who has a special connection with divine knowledge, presupposes or implies the First Person, who has a special connection with divine substantial perfection or divine Subject; the Tird Person, who has a special connection with divine love, presupposes or implies in an unitary way the First and the Second Person who have, respectively, a special connection with the *divine Subject* and with *divine knowledge*, i.e. it implies the *knowing divine Subject (in a unitary way)*.

In such a hypothesis, the two processions are the two *implications*. Knowing is always the action *of a subject* (i.e. it implies, or proceeds *from, a subject*), and love is always the action *of a knowing subject* (i.e. it implies, or proceeds *from, knowing subject*).

9. *Summary*

God as one has a real similarity with a human being and can therefore be said absolute Person.

In God there are three distinct ways of being, independent of creatures.

These ways of being manifest themselves as *persons*, that is each one shows a real similarity with a human being. But this analogy must be different from the similarity that the absolute Person, i.e. God as one, has with a human being.

The three persons are equal as level of perfection, but they are distinct and different, and essentially *relative* among themselves. The three relative Persons are the three distinct ways of being of the only absolute Person.

On the basis of the Revelation we can point out the characteristic typical to each relative Person and therefore we can, with a certain degree of inaccuracy, designate them respectively: *Acting Substance Person, Wise Person, Loving Felicity Person*.

But it cannot be simply said that the First Person is the divine substance, the Second Person is the divine wisdom, the Third Person is the divine love; in fact, substantiality, wisdom and love are perfections common to the three Persons; all three are substantial, wise and loving. The First Person is the last foundation of the perfections *substance* and *dominion*, the Second Person is the last foundation of the perfection *wisdom*, the third Person is the last foundation of the perfections *felicity* and *love*.

I proposed the hypothesis that the relative Persons are implied each other in the same way in which in a contingent being the subject, the knowledge and the love are implied each other: knowing implies a (knowing) *subject*, and loving implies a subject and the knowledge, and it implies them in a unitary way, i.e. it implies a (loving) *knowing subject*. The Person *Wisdom* implies the Person *Substance*, and the Person *Love* implies in a unitary way the Person *Substance* and the Person *Wisdom*.

The two processions are the two *implications*²⁰.

10. *Why did the Second Person become incarnate?*

It is generally admitted that any divine Person could become incarnate. Then what is the reason for the Second Person to become incarnate?

The reason could be the following: the Second Person has a particular connection with knowledge, therefore He was best suited for the mission of «revealing» God, of making God «known» to men.

²⁰ For a discussion concerning the Thomist conception on intratrinitarian processions and for other similar questions see my book *Questioni dibattute di Teologia/2*, already mentioned, pages 110.

And Jesus revealed God to us, and especially his passionate love, by means of his words, but especially through his passion and death for us.

11. *Trinity in ourselves*

According to the most common theological sentence, founded on the Holy Script and on Tradition, Trinity lives in the soul of the righteous man. On page 189 of *Problems of Theology*, already mentioned, I tried to explain what this dwelling means. Now I need to take into consideration this problem: why is the dwelling of God in the righteous man, even if common to the three Persons (i.e. it is not typical of the Holy Spirit), in the Holy Scripture and the Tradition is very often «attributed» to or «appropriate» to the Holy Spirit?

This could be the answer: because the Holy Spirit has a particular connection with love and the dwelling of the Trinity in the righteous man is a gift of love.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE TRINITY IN OUR LIFE

The divine Trinity will take for us a full and complete importance in the beatific vision, in the afterlife.

Then the three relative Persons in the only Lord of Himself will constitute our eternal joy, our endless beatitude. We will know and love them, as they know and love us. This will be our «deification», our beautiful love adventure, the full realisation of our being-for-felicity.

But for what reason did God reveal to us his Trinity already in this life, when almost all of us (except for a few mystics) do not get to experiment it?

The most immediate reason is to make us thoroughly understand God's Incarnation. Certainly, Jesus could simply tell us that he was God, who became incarnate to reveal His love plan for us and to redeem us from sins with His passion, death, and resurrection. Nevertheless, since there is in God a Trinity of relative Persons and the first of these, the Father, has sent his Son and only He became incarnate, the most natural thing was to reveal to us that the Father had sent Him, His Son.

But the deepest reason was to make us understand that *all three relative Persons love us*, that all three relative Persons *have suffered for us*. The Son on the cross *directly* suffered through His acquired human nature; the Father and the Holy Spirit have suffered *indirectly*, for the love they felt for the Son²¹.

In this way we can understand more deeply the tragedy that, because of His love for us, internally perturbed, at some level, the divinity.

Our spirituality will actually be Trinitarian when we realise that all three relative Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, love us, suffered for us. Therefore, we are deeply in debt of gratitude with all the three relative Persons, not only with the Son. Our pray of love and thanks towards all the Trinity, also towards the Father, and the Holy Spirit, should never cease. «Love is paid with love»: but we will never be able to repay such a love.

Another reason to reveal the Trinity is that any news on Him who will be the enchanting object of our eternal love is interesting to us. And God himself is willing to talk about himself, to manifest to us all what He can about himself, as soon as possible. It is the «hurry of him who loves».

What God told us about His Trinity is indeed *very* mysterious; but it is not *totally* mysterious. The words He told us are not for us mere sounds with no sense; we can really understand something; and this is *much better than nothing*.

²¹ As Mary suffered out of love for Her Son, for the same good reason, the Father and the Holy Spirit suffered.

Some time ago a lady, who by accident suffered a burn, told me: «I thank God, because it could be much worse, and especially because it happened to me and not to one of my sons. I can accept that God made this happen to me, but maybe I would not have been able to accept that this could have happened to one of my sons».

This sentence expresses the intensity of a mother's love, a mother who loves her children more than herself. In a parallel way it is maybe justified to think that the Father loves His Son more than Himself. And then we can understand the apex of God's love for us. This is probably the reason why Jesus, in wanting to express the intensity of God's love for us, focused more on His Father's sorrow than on His own: «God (the Father) loved the world so intensely to give His only Son (to death)...