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Richard of St. Victor: an Early Scottish Theologian?

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Richard of St Victor was a 12th century apparently Scottish scholastic and mystical theologian who was based in France. The ancient Celtic emphasis on three-ness shows in his work on the Trinity.

The reason I checked out this paper is that I was trying to find out if he was an Irish Scot or a Scottish Scot – not that there was any great difference between the two apart from the Irish Sea, which was the superhighway of the time uniting a Gaelic cultural continuum. Walker inclines towards what seems now to be the accepted view, that he was probably Scottish, which is useful for me using his ideas in Scotland today.

What I find helpful in Richard's thought is not actually discussed in this paper, but it is documented elsewhere on the web. I first hit on it in Raimon Panikkar's potent little book, *The Experience of God: Icons of the Mystery* (Fortress Press, Mn., 2006), pp. 12-13. Panikkarji describes how Richard saw us as having three *modi visionum* or ways of seeing, the three eyes: 1) *oculus carnis*, the eye of the flesh, by which we see physical reality; 2) *oculus rationis*, the eye of reason, by which we see sense, and 3) *oculus fidei*, the third eye, of faith or the soul, by which we see spiritually. Each eye raises the level of the gaze to the next, thereby overcoming any sense of incompatibility between the physical world, reason, and the sacred.

This and other *rare third party resources* that I have scanned for my work and then put on my web for colleagues, is listed at www.alastairmcintosh.com/general/resources.htm

Alastair McIntosh, April 2010.

RICHARD OF ST. VICTOR:
AN EARLY SCOTTISH THEOLOGIAN?
by THE REV. G. S. M. WALKER

THE twelfth century witnessed a memorable conflict between rationalism and authority, in the persons of Peter Abelard and Bernard of Clairvaux. It is, of course, erroneous to exaggerate these two extremes; by the one, reason was ultimately accepted as the servant of personal faith, and by the other, authority was founded on a basis of mystical devotion. None the less it remains true that both, in different directions, were guilty of the same dangerous tendency, that of abstracting one element from the wholeness of human personality, and of confining religion to the sphere of that one element; Abelard was too exclusively concerned with matters of the intellect, while Bernard directed an almost equally exclusive attention to the will; and the factor neglected and suppressed by both, which breaks through in Bernard's Sermons on the Song of Songs, and overwhelms Abelard in his affair with Heloise—the factor of emotion, of personal experience, of the deep springs of affection in the human heart—it was this forgotten factor which another school of theologians had the distinction of restoring to its proper place. The great Victorines took a saner and more balanced view of human nature. They studied man in his totality, and were willing to derive or at least expound their doctrine on the level of practical experience. They occupied a mediating position from which, with exaggerating either, they could give due weight to the claims of both reason and faith.

St. Victor, an abbey of Augustinian Canons Regular, was founded at Paris in the year 1113. Its original impulse came from William of Champeaux (died 1121), pupil of Anselm and opponent of Abelard. It possessed a magnificent library, illustrious teachers and international contacts. Here Hugh, a Saxon by birth, taught from about 1125 until his death in 1141, embracing in the wide sweep of his lucid mind not only a scheme of universal history but also a survey of all known science. The range of his intellectual interests may be estimated from his

fourfold division of human knowledge—theoretical knowledge, the pursuit of truth, comprising theology, physics and mathematics; practical knowledge, the discipline of conduct, comprising moral philosophy, social studies and politics; mechanical knowledge, the guide of action, comprising navigation, agriculture, weaving, the manufacture of weapons, hunting, medicine and drama; and logical knowledge, the science of thought and language, comprising grammar, rhetoric and dialectic. No useful study was omitted from the curriculum of St. Victor, for Hugh wished his pupils to be thoroughly grounded in all sound learning. Yet at the same time nothing of secular concern was to be studied as an end in itself, but purely as a means to strengthen the life of contemplation. The object of his education was intuitive wisdom rather than discursive knowledge, and its result the formation of Christian character by the practice of divine charity. The crown of Hugh's philosophical activity is a mysticism which seeks, not so much a supersensuous revelation of transcendent reality, as an insight into the providential ordering of natural phenomena.

Hugh's disciple and successor in the teaching office was Richard, born in the first quarter of the twelfth century, who entered St. Victor under the abbacy of Gilduin, became subprior by 1159, prior in 1162, and died on 10th March 1173. John of Toulouse, who in the seventeenth century gathered biographical materials from older sources, is uncertain whether to locate his birth-place in England or Scotland. But two recorded epitaphs, of the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries, describe him as being a Scot, and since the Irish ceased to be known by this designation in the course of the eleventh century, it seems that Scotland can fairly claim Richard as one of the earliest, and not the least distinguished, of her theologians.[1] His life was cloistered but not without its tumults; the abbey letter-books indicate the frequency with which his advice was sought from outside; and within the community the neglect of Abbot Ervise forced him, during the last decade of his life, to stress the practical and moral aspects of instruction more fully than his master Hugh had done. Richard is above all a mystic, a theologian of the spiritual life. But he is a practical mystic,

[1] Cf. C. Ottaviano in *R. Accad. dei Lincei*, VI, 1931, *Memorie della Classe di Scienze Morali, Storiche e Filologiche*, vol. iv, p. 412.

devoting the greater part of his literary work to Scriptural exposition, consulting Jews on the details of biblical chronology, arguing against Gregory the Great for the practicability of Ezekiel's Temple as an actual building, and eschewing the more fanciful flights of speculative Greek spirituality. With a flash of poetry in his soul, he is highly sensitive to beauty and specially attracted to the jewels, songs and flowers of Scripture. Apparently unable to refer directly to the Hebrew text, he is none the less deeply interested in the allegorical meaning of Hebrew names, which he can make into an excuse for long digressions on morality. But if his exegesis is pre-scientific, like that of all biblical scholars in the Middle Ages, it is fundamentally sound and sensible, and his doctrine of revelation has a surprising affinity with more modern views. His great originality is shown in proving the ontological necessity of the Trinity from the statement that God is love, and not in the intellectualist manner of Augustine and Anselm. Traces of Anselm's thought are to be found in his argument from perfection to being; but Gilson[1] is incorrect in saying that 'it is always the spirit of Anselm by which he is controlled'. Richard grounds his proofs of the existence of God on an empirical basis; and thus at one blow he preserves both mystical immediacy and natural science. His Trinitarian doctrine moulded that of Alexander of Hales, who cites Richard frequently and expresses the desire to follow him; his mysticism inspired Bonaventura, Pierre d'Ailly and some German contemplatives; and the influence of his thought, in more remote channels, has extended into the modern age.

A list of his writings, in very rough chronological order, will indicate the direction of his interests, expository, mystical, moral and doctrinal. Except where otherwise stated, these works are contained in volume 196 of Migne's *Patrologia Latina*[2]:

I. Early Period (before 1150)—*In Cantica Canticorum*; *In Apocalypsim*; *Explicationes difficultatum Apostoli*; *Adnotationes in Psalmos*; *In Ezechielem*; *De Tabernaculo*; *In Habacuc*; *Declarationes difficultatum Scripturae*; *Quomodo Christus ponitur in signum populorum*; *De fine mundi*; *De comparatione Christi ad florem*; *De sacrificio David*; *De*

[1] *Philosophie au Moyen Age*, 1952, p. 306.
[2] A good bibliography will be found in J. Chatillon and W. J. Tulloch, *Richard de Saint-Victor, Sermons et opuscules spirituels inédits*, vol. I, 1951; to this must be added G. Dumeige, *Richard de Saint-Victor et l'idée chrétienne de l'amour*, 1952, and C. Kirchberger (transl.), *Richard of Saint-Victor, Selected Writings*, 1957.

differentia sacrificii Abrahae a sacrificio B.M.V.; *De superexcellenti baptismo Christi*; *De potestate ligandi et solvendi*; *De judiciaria potestate in finali judicio*; *De spiritu blasphemiae*; *De differentia peccati mortalis et venialis*; *De Emmanuele*; *De missione Spiritus Sancti*; *De gemino Paschate*; *In Nahum* (*P.L.* 96, wrongly ascribed to Julian of Toledo); *Tractatus in Misit Herodes Rex Manus* (*P.L.* 141, wrongly ascribed to Fulbert of Chartres); *In Joel* (*P.L.* 175, wrongly ascribed to Hugh of St. Victor); *In Abdiam* (do.); *Allegoriae in Vetus et Novum Testamentum* (*P.L.* 175, wrongly ascribed to Hugh, but see P. S. Moore in *The New Scholasticon* IX, 1935, pp. 209-25); *Sermones centum* (*P.L.* 177, wrongly ascribed to Hugh, but shown to be the work of Richard by J. Chatillon in *Revue du Moyen Age Latin* IV, 1948, pp. 343-66).

II. Period 1150-1153—*De tribus appropriatis Personis in Trinitate*; *De Verbo incarnato*.

III. Period 1153-1160—*Liber Excerptionum* (*P.L.* 175 and 177, wrongly ascribed to Hugh; the date is fixed by J. Chatillon in *Revue du Moyen Age Latin* IV, 1948, p. 50).

IV. Final Period (1162-1173)—*De eruditione interioris hominis*; *De statu interioris hominis*; *Super exiit edictum seu De tribus processionibus* (ed. J. Chatillon and W. J. Tulloch, *Sermons et opuscules spirituels inédits*, vol. I, 1951); *De gradibus charitatis*; *De quattuor gradibus violentae charitatis*; *De praeparatione animi ad contemplationem seu Benjamin Minor*[1]; *De gratia contemplationis seu Benjamin Major*; *Allegoriae Tabernaculi foederis*; *De exterminatione mali et promotione boni*; *De Trinitate*; *Quomodo Spiritus Sanctus est Amor Patris et Filii*.

There is cause for uncertainty about the authorship of several of these writings, particularly the Commentaries on Nahum, Joel and Abdias (Obadiah), but I propose to treat the first of these at least as being Richard's work. The list of titles indicates a gradual transition from predominantly Scriptural interests to moral and philosophical ones—the *Liber Excerptionum*, for example, offers a vast compendium of universal history and science, divided according to the system of Hugh—and from these again the interest shifts to mysticism and culminates in the doctrine of the Trinity.

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[1] The latter name, referring to mystical rapture, is derived from the false Vulgate and Septuagint rendering of Ps. 67.28 (68.27 in English versions)— '*Benjamin adolescentulus in mentis excessu*'.

As an expositor, Richard loves system and method; thus in expounding the Song of Songs, he prefers to follow the logical order of thought rather than that of the chapters and verses. His scholastic approach is particularly evident in *De Emmanuele* II, where he uses the form of a regular *disputatio* with Master Hugh. His method of Scriptural interpretation adheres to the standard medieval pattern: 'Holy Scripture treats of its material in a threefold manner, following history, allegory and tropology. History is the narrative of past events, embraced in the primary or literal meaning. Allegory is the signification, through a factual record, of some other fact, past, present or to come. Tropology shows us how to recognise our duty through reading what was done, and Holy Scripture greatly excels secular knowledge in this, that in it *not only words but also acts have meaning*' (*Lib. Excerpt.*, II 3, *P.L.* 177, 205 A-B, italics mine). Here Richard adumbrates the modern view that revelation is given through the acts of God; but, wiser than some of the moderns, he realises that revelation cannot be transmitted without an authoritative record of the facts. Sometimes he follows a fourfold division of the senses of Scripture: 'The prophet Nahum prophesies against the kingdom of Assyria—historically, he speaks of the destruction of Nineveh, which was its capital; allegorically, of the devastation of the world; mystically, of the renewal of the human race through Christ; morally, of the restoration of the sinner, fallen in iniquities, to his former dignity or to a greater glory' (*In Nahum*, Praefatio, *P.L.* 96, 705 D). This passage is first developed, on the lines of historical interpretation, by a discourse which fixes the date of Nahum by comparative Greek and Roman chronology. Next, arising from a translation of the name Nahum as 'benevolus', the moral interest leads to a long disquisition on benevolence, in the course of which Cicero is quoted. Richard follows previous exegetes in making great play with the allegorical interpretation of proper names. Thus he writes: 'Of the vineyard of Noah and his drunkenness. . . . Noah, who was the tenth from Adam, signifies Christ. . . . Now Noah is translated "peace". And Christ is our peace, in the present by grace, in the future by glory. His vineyard was the Israelite nation, as it is written: The vineyard of the Lord of Hosts is the house of Israel. And this, when it should have brought forth grapes, brought forth

wild grapes and was turned to bitterness. The vineyard released Barabbas and made Christ, its planter and cultivator, drunk with the wine of His passion. He slept the sleep of death and His wretchedness, that is, the mortality which He had assumed from us and for us, was openly seen. Unhappy Ham, who is the unbelieving people of the Jews, derided Him saying: He saved others, Himself He cannot save; if He be the King of Israel, let Him descend now from the cross and we shall believe in Him. But Shem, who is the Apostles and other disciples and whoever believed in Him from amongst the Jews, and Japheth, who is the Gentile people converted to the faith, covered the nakedness of their father with a cloak, by declaring Christ's passion to have been, not a defect, but the effect of His whole virtue and the true sacrament of human redemption . . .' (*Alleg. in Vet. Test.*, I 17, *P.L.* 175, 643 B et seq.). The same interpretation is found less fully in Cyprian (*Epist.*, 63, 3, *P.L.* 4, 375) and whatever may be thought of its extravagance in detail, the importance of it lies in its Christological reference. The same reference appears very frequently, as in the following shorter passage, whose source is Isidore (*Allegoriae Quaedam ex Vet. Test.*, 98, *P.L.* 83, 113): 'Concerning the curse pronounced by the man of God on the children at Bethel. . . . Elisha is translated "God's salvation". He, who signifies Christ, was mocked by the Jews when raised upon the cross at Calvary. While they mocked Him, they acted in stupid, childish fashion; but after Christ ascended to Bethel, that is, to the house of God, in the fortieth year He sent two bears from the sons of the Gentiles, Vespasian and Titus, who overthrew them with a savage slaughter, and their blood was poured out at the place where they crucified the Lord' (*Alleg. in Vet. Test.*, VII 21, *P.L.* 175, 715 B). Here the historical interpretation combines with allegory in a harmonious manner. But there are occasions when Richard extracts an allegorical meaning which sharply contradicts the plain historical sense. 'For sometimes Scripture itself, as we are taught on the authority of the Fathers, signifies according to the mystical understanding a praiseworthy virtue by what, in accordance with history, it relates as an execrable deed. This is particularly clear in the account given by sacred history of the action of David and Uriah, where the innocent devotion of Uriah pointed to the unfaithfulness of the Jews, and the sin

of David prefigured the great mystery of Christ and the Church' (*Tract. in Misit Herodes* Praefatio, *P.L.* 141, 277 c). Here the patristic authority followed is again Isidore (*Alleg. ex Vet. Test.*, 90, *P.L.* 83, 112). However surprising and even offensive this allegorical interpretation may appear, it does not extend to tropology in providing a model for imitation; 'for David's sin did not cease to be sin in virtue of prefiguring that greatest good' (*P.L.* 141, 278 c).

Richard obtained food for contemplation not only in the Bible, but also in the liturgical ceremonies of the Church. This may be illustrated from the recently discovered *De tribus processionibus*. As its editors (J. Chatillon and W. J. Tulloch, *Sermons et opuscules spirituels inédits*, I, 1951) rightly perceive, an occasion for writing this little work was probably offered by the intervention of Pope Alexander III in the affairs of the abbey, which had been scandalously mismanaged by Ervise for some years after 1162. But they are wrong in identifying the Alexander of the treatise directly with that Pope, for several incidental passages indicate that Richard intends rather to signify Christ speaking through the papacy. Thus he writes: 'This is that Alexander who is set for the fall and resurrection of many, and for a sign to be spoken against' (op. cit., p. 6). Again: 'For this Alexander of ours knew, He knew who says, Be ye holy for I am holy' (ibid., p. 8). And when he writes, 'Thus in the procession of the Purification great Alexander bids all be present with their lamps' (ibid., p. 40), he can hardly be referring to Alexander III, since the Candlemas procession was introduced in the Latin Church as early as the sixth century. The other two processions mentioned in the treatise are those of Palm Sunday and Ascension Day. The three are connected with the names Judaea, Hebrew and Galilee, which are respectively interpreted, following Jerome's *De nominibus Hebraeis*, as 'confession', 'transition' and 'transformation or revelation'. Thus the three festivals, with their ceremonies illumined by a wealth of Scriptural illustrations, are taken to signify: (1) purgation of vices, (2) transition to an active life of good works, and (3) transformation to the practice of contemplative virtues. The result is to provide a mystical scheme of the soul's progress: 'first it is purified, secondly sanctified and thirdly glorified' (ibid., p. 58).

Before turning to the strictly mystical writings, it will be desirable to clarify two points: Richard's doctrine of free-will, and his theory of perception. Human freedom remains as a vestigial likeness of the divine image: 'Among all the blessings of creation nothing in man is more exalted or more noble than free-will. . . . Certainly freedom of the will bears the impress not only of eternity but also of the divine majesty' (*De statu interioris hominis*, I 3, *P.L.* 196, 1118 c). But 'this is rightly called weak because of itself it is never directed to any good thing. . . . It is indeed often directed towards good, but never except by the Holy Spirit. . . . To be free is an utterly different matter from being strong' (ibid., I 12, 1125 c-d). The will is thus morally impaired as a result of sin, and its true freedom can only be recovered by conversion to a higher obedience: 'Man had all things subject to him before the Fall, and found absolutely no opposition in his subjects so long as he freely subjected himself to a Superior' (ibid., I 14, 1126 c-d). From this discipline of voluntary subordination[1] Richard derives one of his most characteristic doctrines—that of the *affectus ordinatus*, desire rightly directed, by which he means that it must be directed towards a fitting object—and this doctrine becomes a focal point in his demonstration of the Trinity. Less severe than Augustine, he confines predestination to the sphere of election: 'for predestination, accurately and properly taken, appears to apply so much to this sphere that we almost always speak of fore-ordaining to life alone, and it is only referred to the other realm with distortion and impropriety. Indeed although God's government extends to either part, because He never leaves anything uncontrolled, yet all His purposes serve only for the salvation of the elect' (*Benjamin Major*, II 21, *P.L.* 196, 103 a-b). His foreknowledge is, however, particularly wonderful in the case of evil, which 'we know occurs only by His permission and never by His performance. Consider, if you can, how worthy of wonder it is that He even could fore-know what He resigned to the will of another, to a will which did not yet exist and which He was never to motivate. For He never motivates an evil will, though He permits its existence' (ibid., 102 b).

For his theory of perception, Richard follows the Aristotelian

[1] His biblical authority is the Vulgate rendering of Cant. 2.4: '*ordinavit in me charitatem*'.

teaching of abstraction by the mind from sense-data. Material objects provide the primary source of knowledge, and therefore contemplation, even of things divine, must begin from the physical universe. 'Without doubt sensory perception precedes spiritual perception in acquiring knowledge, because unless the mind first received sense-data through the bodily senses, it could by no means discover the conclusions it should draw from these. . . . Sense-perception does not grasp immaterial objects; yet these are not attained by reason without its guidance, as has been shown in the proof already alleged above. Certainly it is true that if man had avoided sin, his outward senses would have helped the inner in recognising objects; for who would deny that Adam received his Eve for a helper? But it is one thing to have a companion on your journey, and quite another thing to require a leader for the path' (*Benjamin Major*, II 17, *P.L.* 196, 96 c). Richard therefore begins his scheme of contemplation with percepts or images, and proceeds from these to revelation by way of reason; and his proofs for the existence of God are drawn from the material world. As in his doctrine of Scripture, so here he maintains that physical objects can possess spiritual significance, that the underlying reality is to be abstracted by the mind from things: 'for what we see outwardly in an object or action is quite different from the spiritual power which resides within. Thus you can believe, but by no means perceive, the reality which resides within the Sacrament' (ibid., II 6, 84 a-b).

The *Benjamin Minor*, the first of his great mystical works, is largely concerned with mental and spiritual discipline, basing its psychology on tropological interpretations of the names of Jacob's sons. 'As we have said, the sons of Jacob by Leah are nothing else than ordered inclinations (*ordinati affectus*). . . . Thus the sevenfold progeny of Leah are the seven virtues. In truth virtue is nothing other than an inclination of the mind which is ordered and temperate—ordered, when it is directed to the right object; temperate, when it is of the appropriate degree' (*Benjamin Minor*, VII, *P.L.* 196, 6 b). There is no need to dwell here on the lower reaches of the mystical life, and it will be sufficient to refer to the two highest levels, which concern revealed doctrine: 'it is surely agreed that two types of contemplation are above reason, and both pertain to Ben-

jamin.[1] The first is above reason, but not contrary to reason, while the second is both above and contrary to reason. Now the things above but not contrary to reason are those which, though reason permits their existence, yet cannot be demonstrated or proved by reason. But the things which we affirm to be both above and contrary to reason are those which human reason seems wholly to contradict—such as our belief in the one-ness of the Trinity, and many matters concerning Christ's Incarnation which we hold on the undoubted authority of faith' (ibid., LXXXVI, 61 D). To some extent, Richard later modified his view that the doctrine of the Trinity is irrational.

Contemplation receives a fuller treatment in the *Benjamin Major*, where in contrast with meditation ('earnest mental concentration carefully confined to the object studied'), it is defined as 'the mind's clear and untrammelled survey dispersed in all directions over the matters under review' (*Benjamin Major*, I 4, P.L. 196, 67 D). The servants of contemplation are the image-making faculty and reason, the first dealing with the forms of material objects, the second with their order and causes; visible things are used as symbols and pointers to the invisible by a reason which, based on perceptual experience, is guided by that 'light which lighteth every man coming into this world'; and the climax of contemplation is the apprehension of revealed truth. 'There are six types of contemplation quite distinct in themselves and from each other. The first lies in the imagination and is concerned with imagination alone. The second lies in imagination rationally conceived. The third lies in a reason which operates by images. The fourth lies in reason and is purely rational. The fifth is above but not contrary to reason. The sixth is above reason, and seems to contradict reason' (ibid., I 6, 70 B). Of these six stages or types, the first two, where imagination is supreme, are concerned with visible creatures; the second two, which form the particular domain of reason, deal with invisible but created objects; the last two, in which reason gives place to revelation, handle divine truth (cf. Richard's *recapitulatio*, 193 c). But it is to be noted that reason, although on the one hand it derives its material from the senses, and on the other it resigns its authority to a higher guide, none

[1] The name is interpreted with reference to mystical rapture, as explained above, p. 40, note 1.

the less enters into the operations of all but the first and sixth stages. The mind may be enlarged and elevated by the influence of grace without ceasing to function normally; and rapture, when the subject loses normal consciousness, is only the reward of transfiguration granted to peculiar spiritual fervour (ibid., V 2, 169 D; cf. V 5, 174 A). The purpose of contemplation, however, is not simply the acquirement of supra-rational knowledge, but also the progress of the soul in holy charity: 'it is vain for us to advance in the abundance of divine knowledge, unless this increases in us the flame of divine love. Thus our growth should always be in love arising out of knowledge, and no less in knowledge arising out of love, and as these fructify together they should minister their mutual fruit . . .' (ibid., IV 10, 145 c). By this union of love with knowledge, Richard seeks to solve the conflict of reason and faith.

His greatest and most original work, the *De Trinitate*, is intended to prove the rationality of this central doctrine in the creed; and the method he employs is to investigate the implications of the statement that God is love. The Trinity provided a stock subject for scholasticism. Medieval theology divides here into two leading schools—the Augustinianism of Anselm, Peter Lombard and Aquinas, and the Aristotelian and Neo-Platonic tendencies apparent in Richard and Bonaventura. The immediate background to Richard's work is provided by the errors of Gilbert de la Porrée on the one hand, in distinguishing the divine essence from the Deity and their personal properties from the divine Persons, and on the other hand by the errors of Peter Lombard, who denied the formula that 'substance begets substance' and held that Christ as man could not be an individual entity. One of Richard's main objects is to prove the Son's identity in substance with the Father, which is indeed the whole point of the metaphor of begetting in this context. At the same time, he maintains a sharp distinction between creature and Creator, and finds no place for the Greek scheme of mediating primordial causes and a hierarchy of ideas. He does admit the Greek conception of some bond between the human intellect and divine wisdom, but couples this with an almost Augustinian view of the moral misery of man. He accepts without question the Latin doctrine of the double procession of the Spirit, and this provides the second of

his main arguments for the Trinitarian nature of a loving God. But he fails to make an adequate distinction between substance and person, and there is one passage[1] which would seem to imply the existence of three substances in God. The texture of his argument is close and polished throughout, but there are some logical fallacies, perhaps derived from the ontology of Anselm, as in *De Trinitate*, II 5 (*P.L.* 196, 904 B), where he proves that God must be of infinite magnitude because He is eternal: 'for if His eternity is infinite, but His magnitude finite, one and the same substance will be according to its eternity greater than its magnitude, that is, than itself, and according to its magnitude it will be less than its eternity, again, that is, than itself'.

The Prologue emphasises the priority of faith before all other virtues: 'the just lives by faith. . . . For without faith it is impossible to please God. Where faith does not exist there cannot be hope, since it behoves him who approaches God to believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those that seek Him—otherwise, what hope can there be? But where hope is not, love cannot exist. For who loves one from whom he hopes for no return? Therefore by faith we are induced to hope, and by hope we advance to love. . . . Thus revelation arises through love, and through revelation contemplation arises, and through contemplation, knowledge. . . . You observe whence and how attainment is achieved, and by what stages we ascend, with the help of hope and love and faith, to divine knowledge, and by divine knowledge to eternal life' (*De Trinitate*, Prologus, *P.L.* 196, 887 c et seq.). Faith, in other words, is the first and essential step in laying hold on that life which is hid with God; it is the channel by which we enter into the divine life itself What is that hidden life of God, which can embrace the believer and the mystic, and which is defined as consisting in an eternal society of Persons? Richard confidently answers that love is the significant characteristic of that life, and the sufficient explanation of its social nature. His argument proceeds by two stages. First, love must have from all eternity a worthy object of its love, the desire must be fittingly directed as an *affectus ordinatus*, and in the case of God the worthy object must be itself divine: 'We

[1] *P.L.* 196, 986-7; see A. M. Ethier, 'Le "De Trinitate" de Richard de Saint-Victor' in *Études médiévales d'Ottawa*, IX, 1939, pp. 113 and 119.

have learnt from the previous discussion that in what is supremely good and entirely perfect there must be the plenitude and perfection of all goodness. But where there is a plenitude of all goodness, true and supreme charity cannot be lacking, since nothing is better or more perfect than charity. No one, however, is fittingly said to possess charity on account of a private and personal self-love. It is therefore necessary that love should reach out to another in order that it may be charity. Thus where a plurality of persons is lacking, charity certainly cannot exist. But you will perhaps suggest that, even if there were only one Person in the true Godhead, yet He might still possess charity towards His creation; and indeed He would possess it, but surely He could not possess the supreme charity towards a created person. For that charity would be disordered (*inordinata*), and it is impossible for charity to be disordered in the goodness of supreme wisdom. Thus a divine Person could not have supreme charity towards a person who was not worthy of supreme love. In order that charity may be supreme and supremely perfect, it must be so great that there could not be a greater, and so good that there could not be a better. . . . A divine Person would have only Himself to love worthily, if He did not have any person of equal worth (*condignam personam*). But a person who was not God could not be of equal worth with the divine Person. Then in order to find room for the plenitude of charity in the true Godhead, some divine Person, endowed with a share in the very Deity, was required for the person of equal worth. In this manner you may see how easily reason proves that in the true Godhead a plurality of Persons cannot be lacking' (ibid., III 2, 916 c et seq.). This argument is not original—one brief source for it can be found in Gregory the Great[1]—and by appealing to the required *condignus* as the worthily beloved, it only proves the necessity for two Persons in God. Richard's second argument is all his own, and in it he seeks to prove that two Persons, in order to manifest supreme charity, must have a third as *condilectus* or partner of their love: 'Supreme charity must be entirely perfect. . . . Now it is clearly a characteristic mark of true charity

[1] Greg. Magn., *Homil. in Evang.*, XVII (*P.L.* 76, 1139 A); see F. Guimet, 'Notes en marge d'un texte de Richard de Saint-Victor' in *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Age*, XIV, 1943, p. 376.

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that it wishes another to be loved like itself; indeed in a love that is mutual and very strong, there is nothing rarer or more excellent than that you should wish another to be equally loved by him whom you love supremely and by whom you are supremely loved. . . . Therefore the supreme lover and the supremely beloved must both desire a partner of their love (*condilectum*) with equal longing, and with a concord equal to their longing they must hold him. Thus you may see how the consummation of charity requires a Trinity of Persons, apart from which it could by no means continue with its plenitude unimpaired' (ibid., III 11, 922 c et seq.). Here Richard's human analogy is probably the family, with the Holy Ghost proceeding like a child from the love of Father and Son— though the analogy must not be pressed, since there is no identity between the generation of the Son and the double pro- cession of the Spirit[1]—and on the high level of affection to which he appeals his argument is psychologically sound. It must be remembered that, setting aside revelation, we can only argue from the best and highest elements in human experience, and that these alone are the lines on which a rational demonstration of the Trinity can be constructed. His conclusion therefore runs: 'a communion of love can in no circumstances exist be- tween less than three persons' (ibid., III 14, 925 A).

The next question that must be answered is, Why no more than three? Richard meets this problem with typically scholas- tic reasoning: 'It is doubtless agreed that all the divine Persons participate alike in the whole plenitude; the distinction of their personal properties centres on two points, for it consists in giving and receiving. For the property of one Person, as is clear from the premises, resides only in giving, that of another in receiving alone. Between these lies the mean of both giving and receiving. But perhaps someone may reply to this. . . . Why should there not be a fourth Person isolated alike from giving and receiv- ing? . . . Reason obviously proves that no Person in the God- head can be unoriginate, except for one alone. . . . Thus it is seen that the fourth property can have no place in the Godhead' (ibid., V 15, 960 D et seq.). Expressed in other terms, this means

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[1] Aquinas, *Summa Theol.*, I 27 artt. III, IV *et al.*, distinguishes generation as being *secundum actionem intelligibilem* from procession as being *secundum operationem voluntatis*.

that the Persons can only be distinguished by their mutual relationships; the Father is the unoriginated source, the Son receives being from the Father and joins in transmitting it to the Spirit, the Spirit originates from both; no other relationship is possible, and a fourth Person, unoriginate and unoriginating, could not be distinguished from the first.

To complete his argument, Richard must now demonstrate the unity of these three Persons, and this is his hardest task, for he readily admits that while the unity and Trinity are separately intelligible, the Trinity in unity appears to contradict reason. Here he can only give an illustration, drawn again from human experience: 'Imagine three people, of whom one discovered and taught some piece of knowledge, the second learnt it from its discoverer and wrote it down, the third read and understood it; the first has it from himself, the second from the first alone, the third from both the first and second. . . . If thus there can be one and the same knowledge in three persons, why should we not much more believe that in the three Persons of the divine Trinity there is one and the same wisdom?' (ibid., VI 25, 990 c). The defect of this illustration lies in the fact that a community of knowledge cannot prove a community of being, although by substituting the word 'wisdom' Richard attempts to suggest something of the divine essence. He is happier when he speaks of Trinity and unity in separation: 'From the consideration of omnipotence it is readily proved that God is not and cannot be other than one; from the plenitude of His goodness, that He is personally three; and from the plenitude of His wisdom we clearly understand how the unity of substance agrees with the plurality of Persons' (ibid., VI 25, 992 A).

Such is Richard's demonstration of the Trinity. He promises at the outset to prove the rationality of the doctrine (ibid., I 5, 893 B-C), and recurs to the question of rational proof several times (e.g. III 1, 915 C); he admits the difficulty of understand- ing the Trinity in unity (IV 1, 931 A), yet makes a definite attempt to commend that fact to reason. But in the *Benjamin Minor* (quoted above, pp. 45f) and again in the *Benjamin Major* (IV 17, *P.L.* 196, 156 A-B) he had maintained that while the unity belongs to the fifth grade of contemplation, being above but not contrary to reason, the Trinity in unity, which is both above and contrary to reason, belongs to the sixth. In the