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“In the Spirit”: A Triune reformulation¹

ABSTRACT

The Ecumenical and Reformed Creeds and Confessions uphold the Trinitarian doctrine of God as three in one (Father, Son and Holy Spirit), first formulated in the Nicene Creed in 325 AD. Yet the role of the Holy Spirit seems to be undermined in such formulations. The historical context of the Nicene Creed emphasised the homoousios of the Son. This became the filioque in the Nicene's later formulation. In this article, the author addresses the lacuna of the role of the Holy Spirit in the traditional Trinitarian formulations. Based on John Calvin's understanding of an autotheos Trinity and his timeless view of eternity, the significance of the Holy Spirit should have an equally prominent role. The renewed position should leave no ontological subordinationism either of the Son or the Spirit – a correction to the Eastern and the Western church formulations. In addition, the reformulation read in an autotheistic interpretation shows how the inherent hypostasis submission is consistent with God's mission in the history of salvation.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Insufficiency of the Western and Eastern Trinitarian Formulations

In the Western Church, three things were settled: the deity of the Son that was established at Nicaea in 325 AD, the deity of the Holy Spirit at Constantinople in 381 AD and the procession of



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the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son (*filioque*) at the Council of Toledo in Spain in 589 AD (Thomas 1986:92, 95). The Nicene Creed's formulation depicts the concern against Arianism. The Son is equal to the Father due to his being begotten from the Father's essence that ensures the Son's consubstantiality. The Western theologians endorse the claim that the Son is equal to the Father, so he must be able to do what the Father does; hence the addendum of *filioque* in the procession of the Holy Spirit. The West concludes that the Father generates the Son and then the Holy Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son.

However, at the time the East was dealing with the Pneumatomachi heresy and needed to affirm the full deity of the Holy Spirit (Thomas 1986:91). Therefore, the East insisted that the Father is the monarch (*mono-arche*) or the only source of deity (Gunton 2003:38-39). The Son and the Spirit must come only from the Father. Objections to the western variant were already raised in the ninth century by Photios, the patriarch of Constantinople, where he argues the addition of *filioque* implies that the Spirit is inferior to the first two persons of the Trinity (Peters 1993:64). At the Second Council of Lyon in 1274 AD, the charge became harsher that the Spirit cannot be personal due to the *filioque* clause, since the procession would come from the common divine nature of both the Father and the Son (Jenson 1997:151). As a result, the Latin view was accused of having a modalistic tendency by blurring the distinction between the Father and the Son (Letham 2019a).

Meesters (2012:396) points out that maintaining the causal priority of the Father seems to be incompatible with affirming the co-equality of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. This is true of the formulations for both the West and the East. They inherit the same infirmity, whose root cause can be traced back to Origen (Jenson 1982:75-78). Origen introduced a hierarchy (subordinationism) in the Triune God by his differentiation between the Father and the Son as ὁ θεὸς / θεός, αυτοαγαθος / αγαθος (Meijering 1975:90).² Origen reserves the term αὐτόθεος for referring to "the only true God in the strict sense" (Meesters 2012:401). Thus, Origen's hierarchical Triune structure creates the possibility of Arianism developing.

Arianism's greatest opponent, Athanasius, was also Origen's disciple. He adopted and adapted his mentor's teaching by calling the Son αυτοσοφία, αυτολόγος, to claim the Son's equality with the Father, while avoiding the use of αυτοαγαθος (Meijering 1975:91). Athanasius argues then that the Son has no beginning and at the same time, the beginning of the Son is the Father (Meijering 1975:93).

2 Origen also says the Father is αυτοαγαθος, whereas the Son is only αγαθος.

The formulation about the Spirit's equality was worked out in *mutatis mutandis* fashion: since the Son is equal to the Father, so is the Spirit. While the Son's equality to the Father can be argued from the *filioque* principle, the Spirit has no support argument. The Spirit is undermined, whether from the Father as monarch or the *filioque* positions. In the Athanasian Creed (Schaff 1890:67-68), we again note the undermining of the Spirit.

21. The Father is made of none: neither created, nor begotten.
22. The Son is of the Father alone: not made, nor created, but begotten.
23. The Holy Ghost is of the Father and of the Son: neither made, nor created, nor begotten: but proceeding.³

Not only is there a subordination of the Spirit in the Triune formulations, but the Spirit's role is also absent in the generation of the Son.

Most theologians ignored the role of the Spirit in the generation of the Son. However, Thomas G. Weinandy (1995:8, 18-9) suggests otherwise.⁴ Since Weinandy does not investigate Calvin's *autotheos* Trinitarian understanding, this article contributes by complementing his earlier findings. Moltmann (1992:293f), working from the economic side, sees the synoptic Spirit Christology complementing the Christological pneumatology of Paul and John. He then proposes the possibility of the procession of the Son *from* the Spirit. However, Moltmann (1992:294) loses his ground by adamantly keeping to the Western position of the Spirit's inability to send in the same way the Father and the Son do. Matthew Levering (2016:40-44) differs from Weinandy in that he believes the Holy Spirit does not need to play a productive role to be a co-equal person.

We should then ask the question: What is the Holy Spirit's role in the generation of the Son? My hypothesis is that the triune formulation should

3 The 25th and 26th lines seek to express the Holy Spirit's equality, but without any clear supporting arguments.

4 Weinandy points out that F.X. Durwell, *The Holy Spirit of God* (1986), Leonardo Boff, *The Trinity and Society* (1988), Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God* (1981) and *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation* (1992), Olivier Clément, *The Roots of Christian Mysticism* (1993), Paul Evdokimov, *We Believe in the Holy Spirit* (1991) and Edward Yarnold (1966) have the same proposal.

Ted Peters (1993:66) maintains a similar position: "The Spirit is the condition whereby the generation of the Son is made possible, yet without the Son to whom the Father relates, there would be no divine Spirit." So is the argument of Gunton (1991:199f), as noted by Baars (2004:46): "*de Zoon is van eeuwigheid gegeneerd van der Vader door middel van de Geest*".

be amended with *spirituque* (“and the Spirit”), interpreted as “in the Spirit”, to affirm the Father’s monarchy.

1.2 Calvin’s approach in his doctrine of the Trinity

In this article, I seek to employ Calvin’s methodology and improve the Triune formulation based on his autothean Trinity to better understand the role of the Spirit in God’s *opera ad intra* and its ramifications in *opera ad extra*.

The doctrine of the Trinity, unlike soteriology and ecclesiology, is commonly considered an undisputed matter in the Reformation period. Nevertheless, there are writings by John Calvin in which he defends the Reformation’s stance regarding the doctrine of the Trinity (Doyle 2009:151-74; Greef 2008:158-67). In 1537, Calvin and some others faced a trial due to Pierre Caroli’s false accusation of non-Trinitarian teaching in their writings (Greef 2008:158).⁵ Furthermore, the execution of Michael Servetus in 1553 was also an indisputable proof of Calvin’s commitment to uphold the doctrine of the Trinity (Moorhead 2021). Yet even after his death in 1589, Calvin was still accused by Aegidius Hunnius of undermining the exegetical foundations of the doctrine of the Trinity (Pak 2010:104).

At first, the Reformation was criticised of teaching an unorthodox doctrine of the Trinity due to the *sola scriptura* principle, in which doctrines must be grounded in scripture. Tadataka Maruyama (2022:183) distinguishes between the “Biblicism” of the Reformers and the “Radical Biblicism” of Servetus.⁶ Still, reformers such as Philip Melancthon and William Farel have their own reasons for undermining the doctrine of the Trinity (Warfield 2008:193, 205).⁷ This outlook apparently influenced Calvin, as a second-generation reformer, in approaching the locus on God (Calvin 2011:1.5.9).⁸ Yet, from the very first edition of the *Institutes* (Calvin 1995:44-48),⁹ Calvin spelled out what the Trinity was, so he could easily dismiss Caroli’s baseless charge against him and Farel as the two Genevan ministers. Indeed, we note that despite his great conviction, the young Calvin was reluctant to employ what he considered “trinitarian battologies” (Warfield 2008:210)¹⁰ to the point of him being unwilling

5 Nijenhuis (1972:79) notes that Caroli targeted Viret, Calvin and Farel.

6 Servetus (1932) published his *De Trinitatis erroribus* in 1531.

7 Melancthon did so because the incomprehensible mysteries of God should rather be adored than put under scrutiny, whereas for Farel, “he believed the doctrine of the Trinity too difficult a topic for babes in faith, [thus he simply] had passed over the doctrine of the Trinity”.

8 Calvin’s approach is through God’s works, instead of God himself.

9 In contrast to the *Institutes*, Calvin’s *Catechism of Geneva* written in 1537 was a simple manual for ordinary people devoid of dogma. See Nijenhuis (1972:81).

10 The battologies are referring to the expression “God of God, Light of Light” (see Maruyama 2022:188).

to subscribe to the Nicene and two other ancient creeds (Barbee 2020:164). It was only later, in his charge against Servetus, that we see the mature Calvin (1554:CO 8:489) insisting that his main concern in the dispute is not a matter of vocabulary.¹¹ So, in essence, Calvin did not reject the content of the Nicene or Athanasian Creeds, as shown in his appeal to these creeds in his response to Giorgio Biandrata in 1557 (Tylenda 1977:61).

In the development of Trinitarian doctrine, Warfield (2008:284) praises Calvin for his significant theological contribution by placing his name next to Tertullian and Augustine. Calvin's contribution is in the notion of *autotheos*. His first articulation was in a polemic against Caroli, where he affirms the Son was divine (*a se ipso*), namely, that while the Son is generated from the Father, he possesses "life in himself" (Jenkins 2019:185). Jenkins (2019:187) notes that Calvin was the first theologian who cast aseity as property, instead of as a mode of the divine life.

Brannon Ellis (2012:8) asserts that the goal of trinitarian theological formulation is the absolute unity and equality of the divine persons. Implied in such a statement is that any contributions to development of the dogma of the Trinity should affirm the irreducible *hypostasis* of the Triune God (Calvin 2011, *ICR* 1559:1.13.5)¹² Thus, the Triune God should be affirmed in his unity, diversity and equality (Erickson 1990:337).

1.3 Methodology

From the earlier historical delineation of Calvin's development in his trinitarian theology, I follow Calvin's methodology by striking a balance between, on the one hand, excessive metaphysical speculation and, on the other, radical denial based on the false claim of the sola scriptura principle. Calvin keeps speculation to a bare minimum.

Although he accepted *filioque*, Calvin's concern lies not in the Western nor the Eastern formulations (Van den Brink 2013:23-4. See *ICR* 1559:1.13.2). As shown in his polemic against Caroli, his main concern is affirming sound doctrine without succumbing to an uncritical attitude towards the tradition. As often quoted, Calvin (*ICR* 1559:1.13.29 or 1.13.21) rejects speculative thinking: "it is foolish to imagine a continuous act of begetting, since it is clear that three persons have subsisted in God from eternity". On a historical note, Calvin was cautious in subscribing to ancient councils due to the Reformation's

11 *Nam de vocabulis litem non moveo*. See *ICR* (1536, 47); *ICR* (1559:1.13.3-4). (CO 2:91) where Calvin describes "trinity" and "persons" as novel words that are necessary to unmask false teachers.

12 Calvin says that there is a differentiation of persons by a peculiar quality.

polemic against the Roman Catholic Church's claim of the councils' infallibility (Maruyama 2022:187).

We do need to differentiate that creeds as *norma normata* do not have authority above Scripture as the *norma normans non normata*. Thus, reformulating a creed is not impossible, as was the case with the addenda that includes *filioque* in the Western formulation of the Nicene Creed (Kelly 2006:216, 297-8).

In referring to the Servetus and Biandrata cases, Calvin (*ICR* 1559:1.13.2. note 5) treads carefully in how he handles well-known definitions. Calvin (See *ICR* 1559:1.13.5) emphasises the essential matter, despite the differences in words. While seeking to honour the biblical terms, Calvin does not hesitate to use novel words to uncover the heretics (*ICR* 1559:1.13.3). Thus, Calvin employs non-biblical terminologies like *homoousios* (*ICR* 1559:1.13.4), "consubstantial" (*ICR* 1559:1.13.5) and *hypostasis*, following Augustine's example (*ICR* 1559:1.13.5). Biandrata, whose biblicist approach gained acceptance in Poland, radically rethought the traditional trinitarian theology; he considered "Trinitatis, personae and essential" as *Papistica vocabula* (Tylenda 1977:32). Calvin then acted by warning Prince Mikolaj Radziwill in his dedicatory epistle of the *Commentary on Acts* in 1560 (Tylenda 1977:30. CO 18:158 [epistola 3232]).

Thus, Calvin's theology, along with the Reformation spirit, is to dismiss any excessive metaphysical speculation, while simultaneously reacting against the radical anti-trinitarian spirit based on a false interpretation of the *sola scriptura* principle. Calvin's method of dealing with the doctrine of the Trinity had a positive impact. As pointed out by Barbee (2020:172), Calvin, by using Nicene vocabularies with restraint, was able to refute Servetus by showing that the doctrine of the Trinity was not the council of Nicaea's invention and that ante-Nicene fathers had all along agreed with the doctrine of the Trinity.

2. CALVIN'S AUTOTHEOS TRINITY

Calvin (CO 2:94; *ICR* 1559:1.13.5) follows the classic trinitarian formulation: "in the one essence of God, there is a Trinity of persons". Calvin understands "person" as "subsistence" in God's essence. It is a term of relation, yet qualifies each person's incommunicable quality. Subsistence is different from essence¹³. Calvin describes the essence or God's *ousia* as simple, an integral perfection.

13 Krusche (1957:4) observes "subsistence" has two aspects of relation: relation to the divine essential and relation to the other subsistences.

How does Calvin articulate his *autotheos* (God-in-himself) Trinity? In general, Calvin's *autotheos* is expressed in this manner: "For in each *hypostasis*, the whole divine nature is understood" (*ICR* 1559:1.13.19). That the Father is *autotheos* has never been disputed (Bray 2018:49, n.5). However, we need to delineate the *autotheos* of the Son and the Spirit.

2.1 The *Autotheos* of the Son

As briefly mentioned earlier, historically, Calvin's polemic with Caroli incites him to call the Son *autotheos* (*a se ipso*)¹⁴. Later, in another polemical piece, Gentilis understands that the Son's generation and the Spirit's procession amount to a radical subordination of both persons (Giselbrecht 2019:284). Gentilis believes the Father alone is the only true God; it is he who gives his essence to the other persons of the divinity. In Calvin's understanding of the *autotheos* of the Son, the *ousia* and *hypostasis* of the Son must be differentiated; the Son in his *ousia* is *autotheos*, whereas in his *hypostasis*, he is generated from the Father. As such, the Son has no beginning (or sole beginning) in his own being as God, yet at the same time, the Son's person has his beginning from the Father (*ICR* 1559:1.13.19; Meijering 1975:93; *ICR* 1559:1.13.25. [CO2:113]). Due to the Son's subsistence in God's essence, the Father is seen as the beginning of the Son. What Calvin wants to affirm is that the Son is not a shadow of God's essence, as though the Father is the deifier of the Son and the Spirit (*ICR* 1559:1.13.25).

Calvin's *autotheos* of the Son can also be seen in his commentary on Hebrews 1:3. Calvin (2010a:37) understands that "the substance of God" that is impressed upon Christ refers to the person of the Father, instead of the Father's essence. Thus, *hypostasis* or person ought to be understood as "substance".¹⁵ Furthermore, generation (understood as imprint or χαρακτήρ in Hebrews 1:3) is just one perspective of the Father's relation to the Son. The other perspective that affirms the Son's deity is based on John 1:1-3, which states that the Word abides everlastingly or perpetually resides with God (*ICR* 1559:1.13.7-8). Calvin affirms that the Word has "a solid and abiding essence" in himself and yet, at the same time, "abides everlastingly" with God (CO 2:95). This *theologoumenon* is biblical, even though it is absent in the Nicene Creed's formulation.

The two manners of seeing the relation between the Father and the Son (Heb. 1:2-3 and Jn. 1:1-3) show the deity of the Word, which then affirms

14 See Van den Brink (2013:20, 28), also found in Calvin's polemic against Gentilis.

15 Calvin 2010a: (CO33:12): "*Nomen* (ὑποστάσεως) *quod ego alios sequutus, verti substantiam* (meo iudicio) *non esse vel essentiam patris dénotât, sed personam. Nam illud absurde diceretur, Dei essentiam in Christo impressam esse: quum eadem sit, et quidem simplex utriusque essentia.*"

Calvin's "not before nor after" view of eternity. Otherwise, interpreting the "impression" in a non-autothean manner means the Son can only have a subordinate relationship with the Father. The fact of the Word abiding everlastingly with God has its historical realisation, as *logos in carnae*, in the epoch of Christ's ascension in his glorified body as being seated at the Father's right hand. The *opera ad extra* reveals what is natural in God's *opera ad intra*.

2.2 The Autotheos of the Spirit

Compared to seven sections of his discussion on the Son (§7-13), Calvin was relatively brief in articulating arguments regarding the deity of the Spirit in just two sections (§14-15). Furthermore, in demonstrating the Son's deity, Calvin discusses God's work *ad intra* scripturally, yet the treatment of the Spirit only discusses God's work *ad extra*. He also refuses to use the church fathers' testimonies and chooses only certain selected scriptural passages (*ICR* 1559:1.13.15).

Calvin affirms that the Spirit resides hypostatically in God, which is hardly uncommon in the classical Trinitarian formula (*ICR* 1559:1.13.14). In discussing the three-in-one God, Calvin (*ICR* 1559:1.13.17) shows the Spirit is distinct both from the Father (Jn. 15:26) and from Christ himself who spoke (Jn. 14:16). Yet Calvin (*ICR* 1559:1.13.19) also affirms the simple unity of God:

...the Son is one God with the Father because he shares with the Father the same Spirit; and that the Spirit is not something other than the Father and different from the Son, because he is the Spirit of the Father and the Son.

Torrance (1990:177-8) highlights once more the significance of the Spirit's *autotheos*¹⁶ that may easily be missed:

Even so, Christ himself calls God in his entirety "Spirit" [Jn. 4:24]. For nothing excludes the view that the whole essence of God is spiritual, in which are comprehended Father, Son and Spirit. [...] For as we there hear God called Spirit, so also do we hear the Holy Spirit, seeing that the Spirit is a *hypostasis* of the whole essence, spoken of as *of God* and *from God*.¹⁷

We must differentiate the between the Holy Spirit's *ousia* and *hypostasis*, *mutatis mutandis*, as we did of the Son's. Referring to the phrase "of God", the Holy Spirit is used in generic terms, referring to the *ousia* of God, which

16 Krusche (1957:1) mentioned it earlier, observing it from Warfield, "*auch der Heilige Geist ist hinsichtlich seines Wesens autotheos*".

17 *ICR* 1559:1.13.20. Italic added.

is the whole essence of God (Father, Son and Spirit). But the same name, the Holy Spirit "*from* God", refers to the *hypostasis* of the third person of the Trinity as one who proceeds from the Father and the Son. Therein lies the divine character of the Spirit that Calvin (*ICR* 1559:1.13.14) describes as "circumscribed by no limits"¹⁸. Referring to the same verse, John 4:24, Calvin (*ICR* 1559:1.13.24) notes that the name "Spirit" would not be appropriately restricted to the Father alone, but also fits the Son.¹⁹ In the way the name of the Spirit is used, we can conclude that the Spirit is not subordinate to the other persons in the deity²⁰.

2.3 God's *Ousia*

Regarding God's *ousia*, Calvin (*ICR* 1559:1.13.16) concludes that "Word and Spirit are nothing else than the very essence of God". Despite his warning against unspeculative thinking about God's essence, Calvin contributed to the understanding of God's essence as a simple unity or integral perfection between "Word and Spirit" based on John 1 and John 4:24. In this manner, we understand the *autotheos* of the Word and the *autotheos* of the Spirit. We can refer to the Word as God wholly due to the simple unity of God and similarly, when we refer to the Spirit. "Word" and "Spirit" can be used to refer to the second and the third *hypostasis* respectively, as well as to God's *ousia*, although, of course, in *ousia*, God's Word can never be separated from his Spirit.

"God's essence is Word and Spirit" means *what* God is is *who* God is. God's essence is personal; in each person (*hypostasis*), the whole essence is understood. And yet, God's essence is simple, not a composite of "Word" and "Spirit", but "Word and Spirit" as a whole, inseparable from the Father, as is the Father's own essence. The triune God is self-explanatory in our understanding of the triune God. We cannot think of God's substance without the persons, nor each person without the substance.

The lurking danger, of course, is possible modalism. Seen from the economic side of God's work, such danger is avoided. The clearest example is when God reveals himself to be triune at the baptism of Jesus. While on the immanent side of God's work, as Calvin (*ICR* 1559:3.2.2) repeatedly warns, we wander through endless labyrinths unless we look straight toward Christ.

18 See Krusche (1957:11).

19 Weinandy (1995:83) points out that Augustine and Aquinas note that the Holy Spirit does not have a proper name because he is spirated: like Father and Son, he is both spirit and holy.

20 Ayres (2004:372, 375) suggests that in our Trinitarian discourse, we need to use the grammar of divine simplicity, rather than the grammar of materiality. As such, the essence of God should not be abstracted apart from his person.

It is only in the revealing work of the Son through the Spirit that we may catch a glimpse of who God is in eternity.

Thus, Calvin's notion of *autotheos* ensures the non-subordination of the Son and the Spirit with respect to the Father. Calvin's unique contribution is that in *autotheos*, the final remnants of subordinationism from the doctrine of the Trinity are removed (Van den Brink 2013:28).

Calvin does not introduce a new doctrine, but his perspective is in line with the Creed of the Eleventh Council of Toledo in 675 AD, known for its most explicit Trinitarian formulation (Plantinga 1989:21):

Although we profess three persons, we do not profess three substances, but one substance and three persons... If we are asked about the individual person, we must answer that he is God. Therefore, we may say God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit; but they are not three gods, he is one God... Each single person is wholly God in himself and... all three persons together are one God.

Despite the developed notion of the triune God as *autotheos*, Calvin has not proceeded to improve the Trinitarian formula. Calvin (*ICR* 1559:1.13.20) was concerned about maintaining two things: "unity of essence is retained and a reasoned order is kept, which yet takes nothing away from the deity of the Son and the Spirit". We observe that Calvin, while maintaining the reasoned order or taxis²¹ holds firmly that equality cannot be devalued, thus holding to a non-subordination view of each *hypostasis*.

3. THE ROLE OF THE SPIRIT IN THE SON'S GENERATION

Calvin still understands the generation of the Son as solely from the Father. This undermines the Spirit's role. But the solution lies in Calvin's understanding of eternity, which he spells out in the following way (*ICR* 1559:1.13.18):

Indeed, although the eternity of the Father is also the eternity of the Son and the Spirit, since God could never exist apart from his wisdom and power, and we must not seek in eternity a before or an after, nevertheless the observance of an order is not meaningless or superfluous, when the Father is thought of as first, then from him the Son, and finally from both the Spirit.

21 See Bray (2018:53-6) for an etymological discussion on taxis.

There is no contention with the notion that there is no before nor after in eternity.²² However, there is tension between holding to this transcendent view of eternity with maintaining the taxis. Calvin (*ICR* 1559:1.13.18) maintains the taxis of the Western formulation: "the Son is said to come forth from the Father alone; the Spirit, from the Father and the Son at the same time". With the taxis being affirmed, how can the eternity of the Spirit be truly eternal like the eternity of the Father and of the Son?

The issue at stake in the taxis is the subordination of the Spirit. Weinandy (1995:10) notes:

Aristotelian epistemology fashions the Western conception of the Trinity, that [...] something cannot be loved until it is known, and thus the Father logically begets the Son before he spirates the Spirit.

This becomes a theological oversight simply carried along within the traditional formulation. The Eastern theologians first registered the complaint about the subordination of the Spirit as an objection to the addition of *filioque* by the West²³. Yet, even in the *monarchy* of the Father in the Eastern understanding, both the Son and the Spirit are subordinated. We must extend the application of the anti-Arius statement: "there was never a time when the Spirit was not". The generation of the Son is by the Father, but *never once without the Spirit*.

Without acknowledging the Spirit's role in the generation of the Son, we understand the communication of essence abstractly; like Swinburnson (2010:26-49) who seeks to place Calvin in direct continuity with one type of interpretation of the Nicene Fathers. As mentioned earlier, Calvin sees the Son's generation is of the person of the Father, not his essence. The reformulation of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (381 AD) has removed the "out of the essence of the Father" from the Nicene formulation (325 AD) (Meesters 2012:408). Only when we stop undermining the Spirit's role can we then say clearly that the communication of God's essence from the Father to the Son is not an abstract, ineffable, incomprehensible essence. Instead, the Spirit is God's personal essence who is none other than the Spirit of the Father and of the Son. That the Spirit is both the third *hypostasis* of the Triune God and at the same time God's essence is the *autotheos* formulation of the Spirit.

22 See Weinandy (1995:14).

23 See Van der Kooi and Van den Brink (2017:100), "The Father and the Son, as the result, are equated so far as their relationship to the Spirit is concerned. It threatens the uniqueness of the Father and gives the Spirit a very subordinate place."

3.1 The reformulation

The original Western position as represented by Tertullian held that the Spirit proceeded “from the Father through the Son” (*a patre per filium*) (Breck 1987:53; Weinandy 1995:67-9; Letham, 2019b:118). With the roles being differentiated, we discern both the consubstantiality of the Father and the Son, and also the irreducibility of the persons in the *opera ad intra*. Similarly, when we acknowledge “in the Spirit” in the generation of the Son, we affirm the consubstantiality of the Father and the Spirit, and at the same time, the irreducibility of the persons.

Therefore, the reformulation of the Triune God’s *opera ad intra* is:

The Father generates the Son in the Spirit,
and the Spirit proceeds from the Father through the Son.

These formulas have actually been affirmed by Augustine in the West and the Cappadocians in the East in a shorter form, that God’s acts are formulated “from the Father – through the Son – in the Holy Spirit” (Meesters 2012:411, n.49). Calvin (ICR 1559:1.13.18) too affirms the Trinitarian manner in which God’s acts are differentiated:

...to the Father is attributed the beginning of activity and the fountain and wellspring of all things; to the Son, wisdom, counsel and the ordered disposition of all things; but to the Spirit is assigned the power and efficacy of that activity.

The proposed reformulation is that the applied formulation should not only be true to the economic Trinity, but to the immanent Trinity as well. Therefore, not only *opera Trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa*, but also *opera Trinitatis ad intra sunt indivisa*. The reformulation gives us a clarified picture of the mystery of the Trinity.²⁴

As Weinandy (1995:69) suggests, the formulation of generation and procession can be interpreted as one simultaneous act of the Triune God: “the Father spirates the Spirit *in the same act* by which he begets the Son, for the Spirit proceeds from the Father as the fatherly Love in whom or by whom the Son is begotten”. This shows a rather unidirectional act of God the Father,

²⁴ See Meijering (1975:95) where he describes the mystery in which causality implies superiority and inferiority, whereas the Father is the cause of the Son and yet the Son is not inferior at the same time.

but also affirms the unity of God's *opera ad intra*²⁵. We affirm that the work of God in himself is inseparable, seen in one act but in differentiated roles²⁶.

Seen differently, the view of God as divine discourse serves as another interpretation that removes the ontological subordination in the unidirectional interpretation and avoids the possible modalist heresy in the earlier interpretation (Santoso 2021:86-7; Weinandy 1995:75). In this view, the Father speaks the Son as the Word and the Word, due to his consubstantiality with the Father, is able to speak to the Father in the same way. The Spirit as the one who listens, who empowers both the Father and the Son to speak and listen. This conversation is eternal, without beginning nor end. Is the Spirit undermined? No, for the Spirit who searches the depths of God (1 Cor. 2:10) is active to bring the Word, who is in the bosom of the Father (Jn. 1:18) or within the Son himself to be spoken out. This speech is love. Essentially, the word that the Father speaks eternally is: "My beloved Son" (Matt. 3:7), and the Son's reply is "Abba" (Gal. 4:6).

The benefits of adding the *filioque* in the procession account of the Spirit are mirrored in the benefits of adding *spirituque* in the generation of the Son. Besides affirming the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father in the procession of the Spirit, we also affirm the consubstantiality of the Spirit with the Father in the generation of the Son. By implication, the subordination of the Son was removed by the use of *filioque* and likewise, the subordination of the Spirit is removed by adding *spirituque*. The additional benefit is that the relationship between the Son and the Spirit is seen as reciprocal, instead of unidirectional. We thereby affirm the monarchy of the Father, the irreducible, incommunicable qualities of each person and the co-equality of the persons. There is, however, an imbalance shown in the relationship of "submission", both in the relation of the Son to the Father and the Spirit at his generation, and in the relation of the Spirit to the Father and the Son at his procession (Meesters 2012:410).²⁷ Within this submission paradigm lies the potential to understand God's *opera ad extra*.

This formulation should be understood in terms of *autotheos*. This holds that in terms of the *ousia*, there is no subordination concerning the Son or the Spirit. In terms of the *hypostasis* argument, there is an inherent *hypostasis*

25 Augustine (1887:1.4.7) also affirms the *opera trinitatis sunt indivisa*: "as [the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit] are indivisible, so work indivisibly". See Letham, *The Holy Trinity* (2019:226).

26 There are those who hold to the *opera trinitatis ad intra sunt divisa* view, but this can only be true if the Spirit is seen as a non-participant in the generation of the Son. See Muller (2003:258, n.77).

27 According to Meesters, in a Neo-platonic interpretation, a cause is always superior compared to the object of causation.

submission of the Son in his generation and of the Spirit in his procession (Bray 2018).²⁸ The inherent *hypostasis* submission helps secure our understanding that the immanent Trinity is the economic Trinity. Immanently, the eternal Son is generated from the Father in the Spirit. Economically, Jesus, the eternal Son, was conceived by Mary through the incoming power of the Holy Spirit, proclaimed as the Son of God, thus from the Father (Lk. 1:35). The eternal generation and the incarnation of the Son are *opera Trinitatis sunt indivisa*. Because the Son is generated eternally, his incarnation is then made possible (McCormack 2021:253, 257; Malone 2017:277). The Spirit's work is also related to the Son. Thus, the procession of the Spirit through the Son made possible the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost by the Son.

In addition, the reciprocal relationship of the Son and the Spirit fits perfectly with the doctrine of Christ's two natures. Calvin (2010b: Acts 2:36) has mentioned this relationship: "Jesus is the anointed of the Lord, the governor of the church and the giver of the Holy Ghost." The statement captures the relationship of the Son in his human nature with the Spirit, the relationship of the Son in his two natures with the church and the relationship of the Son in his divine nature with the Spirit. As the Son, he was not anointed with visible oil, but with the Holy Spirit (Calvin 2010b; Acts 4:27). The Father is the one who receives Christ at his right hand and Christ in his divine nature, together with the Father, gives the Holy Spirit in fulfillment of his promise (Jn. 14:26; 15:26). Furthermore, in his human nature, he was anointed with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Jesus Christ fulfills his duty as the God-man by sending the Father's promise, actualised with baptism in the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5) (Gaffin 2022:122)²⁹. If the Son's equality and *hypostatic* submission can be explained in his two natures, what about the Spirit's *hypostatic* submission, as sent by both the Father and the Son? Here lies the inseparable work of the Word and the Spirit, that the Spirit is not only from the Father, but also qualified by the Son (*filioque*). Thus, the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Son, coupled not only with his divine nature, but also with his exalted human nature.

3.2 The *Taxis*

Calvin (*ICR* 1559:1.13.18) maintains the *taxis* in the immanent Trinity; this develops a tension, if not a paradox, in his view that there is no before nor after in eternity. Should we affirm the *taxis* that starts from the Father, then the Son and the Spirit? In light of Rahner's dictum, Gunton (2003:40) says, "the economic Trinity gives access to the eternal God as he is in himself"³⁰. While

28 To avoid Arian connotation, Bray proposes the understanding of "a loving submission" in the Father's relationship with the Son.

29 Gaffin (2022) identifies Jesus in his exaltation as the receiver-giver of the Spirit.

30 Rahner (2001:22); Volf (1998:407).

Rahner’s dictum makes the direction reversible, Poythress (2020:85) employs just one direction: “[t]he ultimate basis for the incarnation lies in who God always is”. As discussed earlier, the ultimate basis for Pentecost, the anointing of the Son and the sending of the Spirit, lies in who God always is, in God’s *opera ad intra* in the eternal generation of the Son and the eternal procession of the Spirit. However, by starting from the economic Trinity, we heed Calvin’s warning against taking the speculative approach.

In the history of salvation, the Father sends the Son “in the Spirit” (Chung 2009:43)³¹ – the Father acts as the unsent-sender. The Son, upon accomplishing his mission, returns to the Father, then, together with him, sends the Spirit. Thus, the Son, who at first was the one being sent, becomes a sender, bestowed with the same authority of the Father by being given all authority in heaven and on earth. The sent Spirit has the authority of the Father and the Son, continuously working by setting apart and sending his chosen people (Acts 13:2)³². The Son and the Spirit are the sent-senders, while the Father holds the supremacy, the monarch as the unsent-sender. The sent character is necessary due to the *opera ad extra* in the history of redemption, whereas the sending character shows the Son and the Spirit are co-equal to the Father. Herein lies the unity of the Triune God from the Father’s perspective. The *spirituque*, however, makes the *taxis* unclear³³.

As we return to the *ad intra*, Calvin (*ICR* 1559:1.13.29) alludes to Hilary’s notion that “eternity is in the Father”. This allusion shows that even though generation and procession are notions of “process” in the eternal realm, God is not bounded metaphysically to our space-time temporal reference. Instead, created “time and space”, even the transcended ones as “eternity and heaven”, both find their existence in, or flow from, the Father. Therefore, affirming the generation of the Son *spirituque* and the procession of the Spirit *filioque* would rectify the *homoousios* of the Spirit and the Son with the Father as eternal. The tension between the atemporal eternity and the kind of temporal *taxis* is indeed real. The *taxis* is not clear in *ad extra*, but certainly not contrary to the one in *ad intra*; in both, the Father is the Monarch as *fons divinitatis* (*ICR* 1559:1.13.25).

31 Luther upholds the same position.

32 Calvin (*ICR* 1559:1.13.14) refers to Isaiah 48:16 as an instance of the Spirit sending the prophets as a mark of his deity.

33 See the Father – Son – Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19); Jesus Christ – God – Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 13:14); Father – Spirit – Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 1:2). Though all *taxis* are equally true, the baptism formula should follow the one explicitly commanded in Matthew 28:19.

4. CONCLUSION

We have affirmed the significance of Calvin's notion of *autotheos* in the Triune God, which applies not only to the Father, but also to the Son and the Spirit. Developing from the autotheistic Trinity and coupled with Calvin's notion of eternity, we affirm the non-subordinated role of the Spirit in the generation of the Son by the Father. Besides achieving the co-equality of the Father, the Son and the Spirit, the autotheistic interpretation of the Son's generation and the Spirit's procession is consistent with God's revelation in his *opera ad extra*, along with the two natures of the Son that provide a solution to the issue of the eternal submission of the Son. Lastly, in our discussion on the *taxis*, although the *taxis* are no longer so well demarcated, we affirm the monarchy of the Father, both in eternity and temporality.

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