

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

Calvin's Doctrine of the Trinity

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When Calvin turns, in his discussion of the doctrine of God, from the Divine Being in general to the Trinity (ch. xiii), he makes the transition most skillfully by a paragraph (§ 1) which doubtless has the design, as it certainly has the effect, of quickening in his readers a sense of the mystery of the divine mode of existence.¹ The Scriptures, he tells us, speak sparingly of the divine essence. Yet by two “epithets” which they apply to it, they effectually rebuke not only the follies of the vulgar but also the subtleties of the learned in their thought of God. These epithets are “immensity” and “spirituality”; and they alone suffice at once to check the crass and to curb the audacious imaginations of men. How dare we invade in our speculations concerning Him either the spirituality or the immensity of this infinite Spirit, conceiving Him like the Pantheists as an impersonal diffused force, or like the Manichaeans limiting His immensity or dividing His unity? Or how can we think of the infinite Spirit as altogether like ourselves? Do we not see that when the Scriptures speak of Him under human forms they are merely employing the artless art of nurses as they speak to children? All that we can either say or think concerning God descends equally below His real altitude. Calvin thus prepares us to expect depths in the Divine Being beyond our sounding, and then turns at once to speak of the divine tripersonality, which he represents as a mysterious characteristic of the divine mode of existence by which God is marked off from all else that is. “But” — this is the way he puts it (xiii. 2, *ad init.*)—“He points Himself out by another special note also, by which He may be more particularly defined: for He so predicates unity of Himself that He propones Himself to be considered distinctively in three Persons; and unless we hold to these there is nothing but a bare and empty name of God, by no means (*sine*) the true God, floating in our brain.”

¹ Something like Calvin's mode of transition here is repeated by Triglandius when he arrives at this topic in his *Antapologia* (c. v.). “That God is most simple in His essence”, writes Triglandius, “eternal, infinite, and therefore of infinite knowledge and power, has been sufficiently demonstrated in the preceding chapter. Whence it is clear that He is one and unique. But Scripture sets before us here a great mystery, namely that in the one unique essence of God, there subsist three hypostases, the first of which is called the Father, the second the Son, the third, the Holy Spirit. An arduous mystery indeed, and one simply incomprehensible to the human intellect; one, therefore, not to be measured by human reason, nor to be investigated by reasons drawn from human wisdom, but to be accredited solely from the Word of God; by going forward as far as it leads us, and stopping where it stops. Whenever this rule is neglected the human reason wanders in a labyrinth and cannot discern either end or exit.”

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That we may catch the full significance of this remarkable sentence we should attend to several of its elements. We must observe, for example, that it ranges the tripersonality of God alongside of His immensity and spirituality as another special “note” by which He is more exactly defined. The words are: “But He designates Himself also by *another* special note, by which He may be more particularly distinguished”,—the *another* referring back to the “epithets” of immensity and spirituality.² The tripersonality of God is conceived by Calvin, therefore, not as something added to the complete idea of God, or as something into which God develops in the process of His existing, but as something which enters into the very idea of God, without which He cannot be conceived in the truth of His being. This is rendered clearer and more emphatic by an additional statement which he adjoins,—surely for no other purpose than to strengthen this implication,—to the effect that “if we do not hold to these three Persons in the divine unity, we have nothing but a naked and empty name of God, by no means the true God, floating in our brain”. According to Calvin, then, it would seem, there can be no such thing as a monadistic God; the idea of multiformity enters into the very notion of God.³ The

² We must not fancy, however, that Calvin conceived the personal distinctions in the Godhead as mere “epithets”, that is, that he conceived the Trinity Sabellianwise as merely three classes of attributes or modes of manifestation of God. He does not say that the tripersonality of God is another “epithet” but another “note” along with His immensity and spirituality,—that is to say, another characteristic fact defining God as differing from all other beings. He explicitly denies that the personal distinctions are analogous in kind to the qualities of the divine essence. He says: “Yet in that one essence of God we acknowledge the Father, with His eternal Word and Spirit. In using this distinction, however, we do not imagine three Gods, as if the Father were some other entity (aliquid) than the Son, nor yet do we understand them to be mere epithets (nuda epitheta) by which God is variously designated, according to His operations; but, in common with the ecclesiastical writers, we perceive in the simple unity of God these three hypostases, that is, subsistences, which, although they coexist in one essence, are not to be confused with one another. Accordingly, though the Father is one God with His Word and Spirit, the Father is not the Word, nor the Word the Spirit.” —*Adversus P. Caroli Calumnias, Opp.* VIII, p. 312. And again, in refuting the Sabellians he expressly draws the distinction: “The Sabellians do indeed raise the cavil that God is called now Father, now Son, now Spirit in no other sense than He is spoken of as both strong and good, and wise and merciful; but they are easily refuted by this,—that it is clear that these latter are epithets which manifest what God is *erga nos*, while the others are names which declare what God really is *apud semetipsum*.” —*Institutes*, edd. 2, and other middle edd., *Opp.* I, p. 491.

³ The idea of “multiformity”, not of “multiplicity” —which would imply *composition*. Hence Calvin, I. xiii. 6 *ad fin.*, declares that it is impious to represent the essence of God as “multiplex”; and at the beginning of that section he warns against vainly dreaming of “a triplex God”, and defines that as meaning the division of the simple essence of God among three Persons. The same warning had been given by Augustine, *De Trinitate*, VI. vii. 9: “Neither, because He is a Trinity, is He to be therefore thought to be triplex; otherwise the Father alone, or the Son alone, would be less than the Father and Son together,—although it is hard to see how we can say, either the Father alone, or the Son alone, since both the Father is with the Son and the Son with the Father always inseparably.” That is to say, God is not a compound of three deities, but a single deity which is essentially trinal. This mode of statement became traditional. Thus John Gerhard says: “That is triune which, one in essence, has three modes of subsistence; that is

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alternative is to suppose that he is speaking here purely *a posteriori* and with his mind absorbed in the simple fact that the only true God is actually a Trinity: so that he means only to say that since the only God that is, is, in point of fact, a Trinity, when we think of a divine monad we are, as a mere matter of fact, thinking of a God which has no existence,—which is a mere naked and empty name, and not the true God at all. The simplicity of Calvin's speech favors this supposition; and the stress he has laid in the preceding discussion upon the necessity of conceiving God only as He reveals Himself, on pain of the idolatry of inventing unreal gods for ourselves, adds weight to it. But it scarcely seems to satisfy the whole emphasis of the statement. The vigor of the assertion appears rather to invite us to understand that in Calvin's view a divine monad would be less conceivable than a divine Trinity, and certainly suggests to us that to him the conception of the Trinity gave vitality to the idea of God.⁴

This suggestion acquires importance from the circumstance that the Reformers in general and Calvin in particular have been sometimes represented as feeling little or no interest in such doctrines as that of the Trinity. Such doctrines, we are told, they merely took over by tradition from the old Church, if indeed they did not by the transference of their interest to a principle of doctrinal chrySTALLIZATION to which such doctrines were matters of more or less indifference, positively prepare for their ultimate discarding. Ferdinand Christian Baur, for example, points out that the distinctive mark of the Reformation, in contrast with Scholasticism with its prevailing dialectic or intellectualistic tendency, was that it was a deeply religious movement, in which the heart came to its rights and everything was therefore viewed from the standpoint of the great doctrines of sin and grace.⁵ He then seeks to apply this observation as follows: "The more decisively Protestantism set the central point of its dogmatic consciousness in this portion of the system, the more natural was the consequence that even such doctrines as that of the Trinity were no longer able to maintain the preponderating significance which they possessed in the old system; and although men were not at once clearly conscious of the altered relation—as, in point of fact, they were not and could not be—it is nevertheless the fact that the doctrines which belong to this category attracted the interest of the

triplex which is compounded of three. We say God is triune; but we are forbidden by the Christian religion to say He is triplex." So Hollaz: "We may speak of the trinal, but not of the triple deity" (Hase's *Hutterus* etc., p. 172). So Keckermann, *Syst.*, 71.

⁴ So in his *Instruction* or *Catechism* of 1537 and 1538 (*Opp.* xxii, p. 52) Calvin says: "The Scriptures, and pious experience itself, show us in the absolutely simple essence of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; so that our intelligence is not able to conceive the Father without at the same time comprehending the Son in whom His living image is repeated, and the Spirit in whom His power and virtue are manifested." Cf. the Commentary on Gen. 1:26: "I acknowledge that there is something in man which refers to the Father and the Son and the Spirit"—the exact meaning of which, however, is not apparent (see below, note 55, p. 590).

⁵ *Die christliche Lehre von der Dreieinigkeit*, III., 1846, pp. 6–7.

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Reformers only in a subordinate degree; and, without giving themselves an exact account of why it was so, men merely retained with reference to them the traditional modes of teaching,—abiding by these all the more willingly that they could not conceal from themselves the greatness of the difference which existed between them and their opponents in so many essential points.”⁶ They no doubt set themselves in opposition to the more radical spirits of their time who, taking their starting point from the same general principles, were led by their peculiarities of individuality and relations, of standpoint and tendency, to discard the doctrine of the Trinity altogether. But they could not stem the natural drift of things. “How could the Protestant principle work so thoroughgoing an alteration in one part of the system, and leave the rest of it unaffected?”⁷ And what was to be expected except that the polemic attitude with reference to the ecclesiastical doctrine of the Trinity, which was at first confined to small parties outside the limits of recognized Protestantism, should ultimately become a part of Protestantism itself?⁸

In accordance with this schematization, Baur represents Melanchthon as, in the first freshness of his Reformation-consciousness, passing over in his *Loci* such doctrines as that of the Trinity altogether as incomprehensible mysteries of God which call rather for adoration than scrutiny;⁹ and, though he returned to them subsequently, doing so with a difference, a difference which emphasized their subordinate and indeed largely formal place in his system of thought.¹⁰ While as regards Calvin, he sees in him the beginnings of a radical transformation of the doctrine of the Trinity. Calvin does, indeed, like Melanchthon, present the doctrine as the teaching of Scripture, and attaches himself to the ecclesiastical definitions of it as merely a republication of the Scriptural doctrine in clearer words. “We perceive, however, that he does not know how to bring the doctrine itself out of its transcendental remoteness into closer relations with his religious and dogmatic consciousness. Instead, therefore, of speculatively developing the Trinitarian relation as the objective content of the idea of God, out of itself, he rather repels the whole conception as a superfluity which leads to empty speculation (*Inst.*, I. xiii. 19), or else where he enters most precisely into it, inclines to a mode of apprehending it in which the ecclesiastical *homoousia* is transmuted into a rational relation of subordination.”¹¹ “The intention was to retain the old orthodox doctrine unchanged; but it was internally, in the new consciousness of the times, already undermined, since there was no longer felt for it the same religious and dogmatic interest, as may be seen from the whole manner in which

⁶ Pp. 9–10.

⁷ P. 10.

⁸ Pp. 10–11.

⁹ P. 20.

¹⁰ Pp. 24 *sq.*

¹¹ Pp. 42–43.

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it is dealt with in these oldest Protestant theologians. Men could no longer find their way in the old, abstract form of the dogma. A new motive impulse must first proceed from the central point of the Protestant consciousness. The first beginnings of a transformation of the dogma are already discoverable in Calvin, when he locates the chief element of the doctrine of the Trinity in the practical consciousness of the operations in which the Son and Spirit make themselves known as the peculiar principles of the divine life (I. xiii. 13, 14), and finds the assurance of the election in which the finite subject has the consciousness of his unity with God solely in the relation in which the individual stands to Christ."¹² That is to say, if we understand Baur aright, the new construction of the Trinity already foreshadowed in Calvin was to revolve around Christ; but around Christ as God-man conceived as the mediating principle between God and man, the unity of the finite and infinite, bearing to us the assurance that what God is in Himself that also He must be for the finite consciousness—in which mode of statement we see, however, a great deal more of Baur's Hegelianism than of Calvin's Protestantism.

So far as this representation implies that Calvin's interest in the doctrine of the Trinity was remote and purely traditional, it is already contradicted, as we have seen, by the first five lines of his discussion of the subject (I. xiii. 2, *ad init.*),—if, that is, as we have seen some reason to believe, he really declares there that vitality is given to the idea of God only by the Trinitarian conception of Him. It is indeed contradicted by itself. For the real meaning of the constitutive place given in Calvin's thought of the Trinity to "the practical consciousness of the operations in which the Son and Spirit make themselves known as the peculiar principles of the divine life", is that the doctrine of the Trinity did not for him stand out of relation to his religious consciousness but was a postulate of his profoundest religious emotions; was given, indeed, in his experience of salvation itself.¹³ For him, thus, certainly in no less measure than it had been from the beginning of Christianity, the nerve of the doctrine was its implication in the experience of salvation, in the Christian's certainty that the Redeeming Christ and Sanctifying Spirit are each Divine Persons. Nor did he differ in this from the other Reformers. The Reformation movement was, of course, at bottom a great revival of religion. But this does not mean that its revolt from Scholasticism was from the doctrines "of God, of His unity and His trinity, of the mystery of creation, of the mode of the incarnation"¹⁴ themselves, but from

¹² Pp. 44–45.

¹³ In the *Catechism* of 1537, 1538 (*Opp.* xxii, p. 52) he says: "Scripture and *pious experience itself* show us in the absolutely simple essence of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit."

¹⁴ This is Melancthon's enumeration of the doctrines which he will not enter into largely in his *Loci*. Cf. Augusti's ed. of 1821, p. 8, as quoted by Baur, p. 20: *Proinde non est, cur multum operae ponamus in locis supremis de Deo, de unitate, de trinitate Dei, de mysterio creationis, de modo incarnationis*. How little Melancthon was intending to manifest indifference to these doctrine is already apparent from the word *supremis* here. Baur's comment is: "It is precisely with these doctrines which the dialectic spirit of

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the formalism and intellectualism of the treatment of these doctrines at the hands of the Scholastic theologians. When Melancthon demands whether, when Paul set down a compendium of Christian doctrine in his Epistle to the Romans, he gave himself over to philosophical disquisitions (*philosophabatur*) “on the mysteries of the Trinity, on the mode of the incarnation, on active and passive creation”, and the like, we must not neglect the emphasis on the term “*philosophical disquisitions*”.¹⁵ Melancthon was as far as possible from wishing to throw doubt upon either the truth or the importance of the doctrines of the Trinity, the incarnation, creation. He only wished to recall men from useless speculations upon the mysterious features of these doctrines and to focus their attention no doubt on the great central doctrines of sin and grace, but also on the vital relations of such doctrines as the Trinity, the Incarnation and Creation to human needs and the divine provision for meeting them. The demand of the Reformers, in a word, was not that men should turn away from these doctrines, but that they should accord their deepest interest to those elements and aspects of them which minister to edification rather than to curious questions that furnish exercise only to intellectual subtlety. Any apparent neglect of these doctrines which may seem to be traceable in the earliest writings of the Reformers was, moreover, due not merely to their absorption in the proclamation of the doctrine of grace, but also to the broad fact that these doctrines were not in dispute in their great controversy with Rome, and therefore did not require insisting upon in the stress of their primary conflict. So soon as they were brought into dispute by the radicals of the age, we find the Reformers reverting to them and reasserting them with vigor: and that is the real account to be given of the increased attention given to them in the later writings of the Reformers, which seems to those historians who have misinterpreted the relatively small amount of discussion devoted to them in the earlier years of the movement, symptomatic of a lapse from the purity of their first love and of a reëntanglement in the Scholastic intellectualism from which the Reformation, as a religious movement, was a revolt. In point of fact, it marks only the abiding faith of the Reformers in doctrines essential to the

speculation of the Scholastics regarded as its peculiar object, and on which it expended itself with the greatest subtlety and thoroughness, — with the doctrines of God, of His unity and trinity, of creation, incarnation, etc, — that Melancthon would have so little to do, that he did not even make a place for them in his *Loci*, and that not on the ground that it did not belong to the plan of that first sketch of Protestant dogmatics to cover the whole system, but on the ground of the objective character of those doctrines, as they appeared to him from the standpoint determined by the Reformation” (p. 20). Even so, however, there is not involved any real underestimate of the importance of these doctrines, but only a reference of them to a place in the system less immediately related to the experience of salvation. Nor must we forget the origin of the *Loci* in an exposition of the Epistle to the Romans and its consequent lack of all systematic form, or completeness.

¹⁵ *Loci*, as above, p. 9, quoted by Baur, p. 21. The point of Melancthon’s remark is that Paul did not give himself over to philosophical disquisition on abstruse topics, but devoted himself singleheartedly to applying the salvation of Christ to sinning souls.

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Christian system, but not hitherto largely asserted and defended by them because, shortly, there was not hitherto occasion for extended assertion and defense of them.

In no one is the general attitude of the Reformers to the doctrine of the Trinity more clearly illustrated than in Calvin. The historian of Protestant Dogmatics, Wilhelm Gass, tells us that “Calvin’s exposition of the Trinity is certainly the best and most circumspect which the writings of the Reformers give us: surveying as it does the whole compass of the dogma and without any loss to the thing itself wisely avoiding all stickling for words”.¹⁶ That this judgment is quoted by subsequent expounders of Calvin’s doctrine of the Trinity,¹⁷ surprises us only in so far as so obvious a fact seems not to need the authority of Gass to support it. Apart, however, from the superiority of Calvin’s theological insight, by which his treatment of the doctrine of the Trinity is made not only “the best and most circumspect which the writings of the Reformers have given us”, but even one of the epoch-making discussions of this great theme, Calvin’s whole dealing with the doctrine of the Trinity supplies an exceptionally perfect reflection of the attitude of the Reformers at large to it. At one with them in his general point of view, the circumstances of his life forced him into a fullness and emphasis in the exposition of this doctrine to which they were not compelled. The more comprehensive character of the work, even in its earliest form, coöperated with the comparative lateness of the time of its publication¹⁸ and his higher systematic genius, to secure the incorporation into even the first edition of Calvin’s *Institutes* (1536) not only of a Biblical proof of the doctrine of the Trinity, argued with exceptional originality and force, but also of a strongly worded assertion and defense of the correctness and indispensableness of the current ecclesiastical formulation of it. No more than the earlier Reformers, however, was Calvin inclined to confound the essence of the doctrine with a particular mode of stating it; nor was he willing to confuse the minds of infantile Christians with the subtleties of its logical exposition. The main thing was, he insisted, that men should heartily believe that there is but one God, whom only they should serve; but also that Jesus Christ our Redeemer and the Holy Spirit our Sanctifier is each no less this one God than God the Father to whom we owe our being; while yet these three are distinct personal objects of our love and adoration.¹⁹ He was wholly agreed with his colleagues at Geneva in holding that “in the beginning of the preaching of the Gospel”, it conduced more to edification and readiness of comprehension to refrain from the explanation of the mysteries of the Trinity, and even

¹⁶ *Geschichte d. prot. Dogmatik*, I., 1884, p. 105.

¹⁷ Köstlin, *Theologische Studien und Kritiken*, 1868, p. 420; Muller, *De Godsleer van Zwingli en Calvijn*, p. 31.

¹⁸ For example, Servetus’ *De Trinitatis erroribus* appeared in 1531, and his *Dialogi de Trinitate* in 1532.

¹⁹ *Institutes*, I. xiii. 5 *init.*: “I could wish that they [the technical terms by which the Trinity is expressed and guarded] were buried, indeed, if only this faith stood fast among all: that the Father and the Son and the Spirit are one God; and yet neither is the Son the Father, nor the Spirit the Son, but they are distinct by a certain property.”

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from the constant employment of those technical terms in which these mysteries are best expressed, and to be content with declaring clearly the divinity of Christ in all its fulness, and with giving some simple exposition of the true distinction between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.²⁰ He acted on this principle in drawing up the formularies of faith with which he provided the Church at Geneva immediately after his settlement there, and he vigorously defended this procedure when it was called in question by that “theological quack”, as he has been not unjustly called,²¹ Peter Caroli. This, of course, does not mean that he was under any illusions as to the indispensableness to the Christian faith of a clear as well as a firm belief in the doctrine of the Trinity, or as to the value for the protection of that doctrine of the technical terms which had been wrought out for its more exact expression and defense in the controversies of the past. He was already committed to an opposite opinion by his strong assertions in the first edition of his *Institutes* (1536), which he retained unaltered through all the subsequent editions; and the controversies in which he was contemporaneously embroiled—with Anabaptists, Antitrinitarians, “theological quacks”—were well calculated to fix in his mind a very profound sense of the importance of stating this doctrine exactly and defending it with vigor. He was only asserting, as strongly as he knew how, the right of a Christian teacher, holding the truth, to avoid strife about words and to use his best endeavors to “handle aright the word of truth”. He never for one moment doubted, we do not say the truth merely, but also the importance for the Christian system, of the doctrine of the Trinity. He held this doctrine with a purity and high austerity of apprehension singular among its most devoted adherents. As we have seen, he conceived it not only as the essential foundation of the whole doctrine of redemption, but as indispensable even to a vital and vitalizing conception of the Being of God itself. He did not question even the importance of the technical phraseology which had been invented for the expression and defense of this doctrine, in order to protect it from fatal misrepresentation. He freely confessed that by this phraseology alone could the subtleties of heresy aiming at its disintegration be adequately met. But he asserted and tenaciously maintained the liberty of the Christian teacher, holding this doctrine in its integrity, to use it in his wisdom as he saw was most profitable for the instruction of

²⁰ Cf. their defense of themselves, *Opp.* xi, p. 6.

²¹ Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, VII, p. 332: “Calvin was in his early ministry charged with Arianism by a theological quack (Caroli), because he objected to the damnatory clauses of the pseudo-Athanasian Creed, and expressed once an unfavorable opinion on the Nicene Creed. But his difficulty was only with the scholastic and metaphysical terminology, not with the doctrine itself.” It would not, however, be easy to crowd more erroneous suggestions into so few words than Dr. Schaff manages to do here. Calvin did not object to the damnatory clauses in the Athanasian Creed: he did not express an unfavorable opinion on the Nicene Creed: he did not have difficulty with the scholastic or metaphysical terminology of the doctrine of the Trinity. Nor is the passage in which he speaks of a certain passage in the Nicene Creed as more suitable for a song than a creed to be found in the tract, *De Vera Ecclesiae Reformatione*, as Dr. Schaff adds in a note.

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his flock—not with a view to withdrawing it in its entirety or in part from their contemplation or to minimizing its importance in their sight or to corrupting their apprehension of it, but with a view to making it a vital element in their faith; first perhaps more or less implicitly—as implied in the very core of their creed—and then more or less explicitly, as they were able to apprehend it; but never as a mere set of more or less uncomprehended traditional phrases. To him it was a great and inspiring reality: and as such he taught it to the babes of the flock in its most essential and vital elements, and defended it against gainsayers in its most complete and strict formulation.

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The illusion into which it is perhaps possible to fall in the case of the earlier Reformers, by which this double treatment of the doctrine of the Trinity is supposed to represent consecutive states of mind, is impossible in the case of Calvin. Circumstances compelled him to deal with the doctrine after both fashions contemporaneously. None can say of him, as Baur says of Melancthon—in our belief wrongly interpreting the phenomena—that he first passed by the doctrine of the Trinity unconcernedly and afterwards reverted to the Scholastic statement of it. At the very moment that Calvin was insisting on teaching the doctrine vitally rather than scholastically, he was equally insisting that it must be held in its entirety as it had been brought into exact expression by the ecclesiastical writers.

Calvin began his work at Geneva on the fifth day of September, 1536, and among the other fundamental tasks with which he engaged himself during the winter of 1536 and 1537 was the drawing up of his first catechism, the “*Instruction* used in the church at Geneva”, as it is called in its French form, which was published in 1537, or the *Catechismus sive Christianae Religionis Institutio*, as it is called in the Latin form, which was published early (March) in 1538. Along with this Catechism, there had been prepared in both languages also a briefer *Confession of Faith*, written, possibly, not by Calvin himself, but by his colleagues in the Genevan ministry, or, to be more specific, by Farel,²² but certainly in essence Calvin’s, and related to the *Catechism* very much as the *Catechism* was related to the *Institutes* of 1536; that is to say, it is a free condensation of the *Catechism*. In this *Confession of Faith*, although it was the fundamental documentation of the faith of the Genevan Church to which all citizens were required to subscribe, there is no formal exposition of the doctrine of the Trinity at all: the unity of God alone is asserted (§2), and it is left to the mere recitation of the Apostles’ Creed, which is incorporated into it (§ 6), supported only by a rare (§ 15) reference to Jesus as God’s Son, to suggest the Trinity. Even in the *Catechism*²³ the statement of the doctrine, although explicit and precise, and

²² So the Strasburg editors and also A. Lang (*Die Heidelberger Katechismus*, 1907, p. xxxv–vi, *Johannes Calvin*, 1909, pp. 38 and 208). Doumergue (*Jean Calvin*, II, pp. 236–257) agrees with Rilliet (*Le Cat. Calv. publié en 1537*, 1878, pp. lii–lvii) in assigning it to Calvin himself.

²³ *Opp.* XXII, pp. 33 sq. The Latin edition of this Catechism (*Opp.* V, pp. 318 sq.) was not printed until 1538, but it must have been prepared contemporaneously with the French, since it was quoted by Calvin in the

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supported by equally explicit assertions of the uniqueness of our Lord's Sonship ("He is called Son of God, not like believers, by adoption and grace, but true and natural and therefore sole and unique, so as to be distinguished from the others", p. 53, *cf.* pp. 45–46, 53, 60, 62), and of His true divinity ("His divinity, which He had from all eternity with the Father", p. 53), is far from elaborate. It is confined indeed very much to the assertion of the fact of the Trinity—although even here it is suggested that it enters by necessity into our conception of God; and even this assertion is made apparently only because it seemed to be needed for the understanding of the Apostles' Creed. In the general remarks on this Creed, before the exposition of its several clauses is taken up (p. 52), we read as follows: "But in order that this our confession of faith in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit may trouble no one, it is necessary first of all to say a little about it. When we name the Father, Son and Holy Spirit we by no means imagine three Gods; but the Scriptures and pious experience itself show us in the absolutely simple (*tressimple*) essence of God, the Father, His Son and His Spirit. So that our intelligence is not able to conceive the Father without at the same time comprehending the Son in whom His living image is repeated, and the Spirit, in whom His power and virtue are manifested. Accordingly, we adhere with the whole thought of our heart to one sole God; but we contemplate nevertheless the Father with the Son and His Spirit." There is certainly here a clear and firm assertion of the fact of the Trinity; we may even admire the force with which, in so few words, the substance of the doctrine is proclaimed, and it is also suggested that it has its roots planted not only in Scripture but in Christian experience, and indeed is involved in a vital conception of God. Calvin assuredly was justified in pointing to it, when the calumnies raised by Caroli were spread abroad and men were acquiring a suspicion that his "opinion concerning the personal distinctions in the one God dissented somewhat (*non nihil*) from the orthodox consent of the Church", as a proof that he had from the first taught the Church at Geneva "a trinity of persons in the one essence of God".²⁴ But it is perhaps not strange that this should seem to some very little to say on the fundamental doctrine of the Trinity in a statement of fundamental doctrines which extends to some forty-two pages in length.²⁵ In its brevity it may perhaps illustrate almost as strikingly as the entire omission of all statement of the doctrine from the accompanying *Confession* (except as implied in the repetition of the Apostles' Creed) the feeling of Calvin and his colleagues that the elaboration of this doctrine belongs rather to the later stages of Christian instruction, while for babes in Christ it were better to leave it implicit in their general religious standpoint (seeing that it is implicated in the experience of piety itself)

debate with Caroli as early as February, 1537 (see Bähler, *Petrus Caroli und Johannes Calvin*, in the *Jahrbuch für schweizerische Geschichte*, xxix, p. 64, note).

²⁴ Preface to the Latin Translation, which was issued, in fact, precisely to meet these calumnies, which had obtained an incredible vogue. (*Opp.* V, p. 318).

²⁵ We may compare, however, the brevity with which the doctrine of the Trinity is dealt with in the Westminster Confession and Shorter Catechism.

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than to clog the unformed Christian mind with subtle disputations about it. Meanwhile, at the very moment when Calvin and his colleagues were preparing these primary statements of faith, in which no or so small a space was given to the doctrine of the Trinity, they were also vigorously engaged in confuting and excluding from the Genevan Church impugners of that doctrine. For from the very beginning of his work at Geneva Calvin was brought into conflict with that anti-trinitarian radicalism the confutation of which was to draw so heavily upon his strength in the future. There were already in the early spring of 1537 Anabaptists to confute and banish, among whom was that John Stordeur whose widow was afterwards to become Calvin's wife.²⁶ And there was to deal with just before their appearance that poor half-crazy fanatic Claude Aliodi—once Farel's colleague at Neuchatel,—who had as early as 1534 been denying the preëxistence of Christ, and was in the spring of 1537 at Geneva, teaching his anti-trinitarian heresies.²⁷

Calvin's exact attitude on the doctrine of the Trinity and its teaching was, moreover, just at this time forced into great publicity by the assaults made upon the Genevan pastors by one of the most frivolous characters brought to the surface by the upheaval of the Reformation.²⁸ It was precisely at this time (January, 1537) that Peter Caroli, who was at

²⁶ So Colladon tells us, *Opp. Calvini* xxi, p. 59; the registers of the Council of Geneva read the name, "Johan Tordeur". See N. Weiss, *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire du Protestantisme Français*, lvi. (1907), pp. 228–229.

²⁷ Cf. Doumergue, *Jean Calvin*, II, pp. 241–2. Herminjard, *Correspondance*, etc., ed. 2, III, *Index*. Cf. also the clear brief account of E. Bähler, *Petrus Caroli und Johannes Calvin* (in the *Jahrbuch für schweizerische Geschichte*, xxix [1904]), pp. 73 sq.

²⁸ The Strasburg editors (*Calvini Opera*, vii, p. xxx) characterize Caroli as "vir vana ambitione agitatus, opinionibus inconstans, moribus levis". Doumergue's judgment upon him is embodied in these words: "Unhappily his character was not as high as his intelligence, and if the new ideas attracted him they did not transform him" (II, p. 252). He quotes Douen's characterization of him as "a bold and adventurous spirit badly balanced, and more distinguished by talents than by rectitude of conduct" (p. 253, note 2). Kampschulte (*Johann Calvin*, I. 162) contents himself with calling him "a man of restless spirit and changeable principles"—who (p. 295) was not above playing on occasion a dishonorable part. A. Lang's (*Johannes Calvin*, 1909, p. 40) characterization runs: "Acute but also weak in character and self-seeking." The inevitable rehabilitation of Caroli has been undertaken by Eduard Bähler, Pastor at Thierachern in Switzerland, in a long article entitled *Petrus Caroli und Johannes Calvin: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte und Kultur der Reformationszeit*, published in the twenty-ninth volume of the *Jahrbuch für schweizerische Geschichte* (1904, pp. 39–168). Bähler's thesis is that Caroli belonged really to that large semi-Protestant party in the French Church which found its inspiration in Faber Stapulensis and its spiritual head in William Briçonnet, Bishop of Meaux; occupying thus a middle ground he could rest content neither in the Roman nor in the Protestant camp,—and from this ambiguous position is to be explained all his vacillations and treacheries. Granting the general contention and its explanatory value up to a certain point, it supplies no defense of Caroli's character and conduct, which Bähler's rehabilitation leaves where it found them. Cf. A. Lang's estimate of Bähler's lack of success: "There remains clinging to Caroli enough of wretched frivolity and of the most deplorable inconstancy. How great over against him stands out particularly Farel!" (*Johannes Calvin*, 1909, p. 209). On Caroli the historians of the Protestant movement in Metz should be consulted, e. g., Dietsch, *Die evang. Kirche von Metz*, pp. 68–77, and Winkelmann, *Der*

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the moment giving himself the airs of a bishop as “first pastor” at Lausanne, conceived the idea of avenging himself upon the pastors of Geneva for what he thought personal injuries by bringing against them the charge of virtual Arianism. That the charge received an attention which it did not deserve was, no doubt, due in part to an old suspicion which had been aroused against Farel by the calumnies of Claude Aliodi.²⁹ These were founded on the circumstance that in his *Sommaire* (1524–5), Farel—with a purely paedagogical intent, as he explained in a preface prefixed to the edition of 1537–8, because he believed the doctrine of the Trinity too difficult a topic for babes in faith—had passed over the doctrine of the Trinity, just as the Genevan pastors did again in their *Confession* of 1537.³⁰ It is difficult for us, in any event, however, at this late date, to understand the hearing which a man like Caroli obtained for his calumnies. The whole Protestant world was filled with suspicions of the orthodoxy of the Genevan pastors. It was whispered from one to another—at Bern, Basle, Zurich, Strasburg, Wittenberg—that they were strangely chary of using the terms ‘Trinity’, ‘Person’,—that they were even “heady” in their refusal to employ them in their popular formularies. It was widely reported that they were beginning to fall into Arianism, or rather into that worst of all errors (*pessimus error*) which Servetus the Spaniard was spreading abroad. Not only was a local crisis thus created, which entailed personal controversies and synods and decisions, but a widely-spread atmosphere of distrust was produced, which demanded the most careful and prompt attention. All the spring and summer Calvin was occupied in writing letters hither and thither, correcting the harmful rumors which had, as he said, been set going by “a mere nobody” (*homo nihili*), urged on by “futile vanity”.³¹ And after the conferences and synods and letters, there came at length treatises. The result is that all excuse is taken away for any misapprehension of Calvin’s precise position.

Throughout the whole controversy—in which Calvin was ever the chief spokesman, coming forward loyally to the defense of his colleagues, who, rather than he, were primarily struck at—two currents run, as they run through all his writings on the Trinity, and not least through his chapter (I. xiii) on that subject in the *Institutes*. There is everywhere manifested not only a clear and firm grasp of the doctrine, but also a very deep insight into it, accompanied by a determination to assert it at its height. Along with this there is also manifest an equally constant and firm determination to preserve full liberty to deal with the doctrine free from all dictation from without or even prescription of traditional modes of statement. There is nothing inconsistent in these two positions. Rather are they out-growths of the same fundamental conviction: but the obverse and

Anteil der deutschen Protestanten an den kirchlichen Reformbewegungen in Metz bis 1543, in the *Jahrbuch der Gesellschaft für lothringische Geschichte und Altertumskunde*, ix, 1897, pp. 229 sq.

²⁹ Cf. Doumergue, *Jean Calvin*, II. 258, note; and Bähler, *Petrus Caroli und Johannes Calvin*, p. 73.

³⁰ Cf. Bähler, as cited, p. 71.

³¹ Doumergue, II. 266–268.

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reverse of the same mental attitude. At the root of all lies Calvin's profound persuasion that this is a subject too high for human speculation and his consequent fixed resolve to eschew all theoretical constructions upon it, and to confine himself strictly to the revelations of Scripture. On the one hand, therefore, because he appealed to Scripture only, he refused to be coerced in his expression of the doctrine by present authority or even the formularies of the past: on the other, because he trusted Scripture wholly, he was insistent in giving full validity to all that he found there. It was the purity of his Protestantism, in other words, which governed Calvin's dealing with this doctrine; giving it an independence which is not yet always understood and has afforded occasion once and again for comment upon his attitude which betrays a somewhat surprising inability to enter into his mind.³²

For the matter, which has been thus vexed, was perfectly simple. Calvin refused to subscribe the ancient creeds at Caroli's dictation, not in the least because he did not find himself in accord with their teaching, but solely because he was determined to preserve for himself and his colleagues the liberties belonging to Christian men, subject in matters of faith to no other authority than that of God speaking in the Scriptures. He tells us himself that it was never his purpose to reject these creeds or to detract from their credit;³³ and he points out that he was not misunderstood even by Caroli to be repudiating their

³² An old instance is supplied by Bellarmine, who, on Caroli's testimony, seeks to intimate that Calvin's refusal at the Council of Lausanne to sign the Creeds resembled the conduct of the Arians at the Council of Aquileia (*Controversarium de Christo*, II. 19, near middle, in *Opp. Omnia*. Paris, 1870, I, p. 335). "Calvin", he says, "is not unlike the Arians in this: for at the Council of Aquileia, St. Ambrose never could extort from the two Arian heretics that they should say that the Son is very God of very God; for they always responded that the Son is the very Only-begotten, Son of the very God, and the like, but never that He is very God of very God, although they were asked perhaps a hundred times. And that from Calvin at the Council of Lausanne, it could never be extorted that he should confess that the Son is God of God, Petrus Caroli, who was present, reports in his letter to the Cardinal of Lorraine." Bellarmine is blind to the fact that Calvin was ready to confess all that the Creeds contained to the exaltation of the Son and *more*, while the Arians would not confess so much. Even F. W. Kampschulte (*Johannes Calvin*, u. s. w., ii. 171) permits himself to say that Calvin "in the controversy with Caroli expresses himself on the Athanasian symbol in a very dubious way (*in sehr bedenklichem Masse*)", and adds in a note: "It was not groundlessly that he was upbraided with this by his later opponents. 'Calvin waxes angry and employs the same taunts as the anti-trinitarians against the Symbol of Athanasius and the Council of Nice, when his opinion touching the Trinity is brought under discussion.' Cf. F. Claude de Saintes, *Declaration d'aucuns atheismes de la doctrine de Calvin*, Paris, 1568, p. 108." Cf. on Kampschulte, Doumergue, *Jean Calvin*, ii, p. 266. We have already had occasion to point out the uncomprehending way in which Dr. Schaff speaks of the matter (above, p. 563, note 21), in which, however, he is only the type of a great crowd of writers.

³³ *Adv. P. Caroli Calumnias*, *Opp.* vii, p. 315: Calvinus quidem et aliis propositum nequaquam erat symbola objicere aut illis derogare fidem. Compare what he writes on Oct. 8, 1539, to Farel of the discussion at Strasburg: Quamquam id quoque diluere promptum erat, nos non respuisse, multo minus improbasse, sed ideo tantum detrectasse subscriptionem, ne ille, quod captaverat, de ministerio nostro triumpharet (Herminjard, VI, p. 53).

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teaching; but Caroli conceded that what he did was—in Caroli's bad Latin, or as Calvin facetiously calls it, "his Sorbonnic elegance" — "neither to credit nor to discredit them".³⁴ He considered it intolerable that the Christian teacher's faith should be subjected to the authority of any traditional modes of statement, however venerable, or however true; and he refused to be the instrument of creating a precedent for such tyranny in the Reformed churches by seeming to allow that a teacher might be justly treated as a heretic until he cleared himself by subscribing ancient symbols thrust before him by this or that disturber of the peace. There were his writings, and there was his public teaching, and he was ready to declare plainly what he believed: let him be judged by these expressions of his faith in accordance with the Word of God alone as the standard of truth. Accordingly, when he first confronted Caroli in behalf of the Genevan ministers, he read the passage on the Trinity from the new *Catechism* as the suitable expression of their belief. And when Caroli cried out, "Away with these new Confessions; and let us sign the three ancient Creeds", Calvin, not without some show of pride, refused, on the ground that he accorded authority in divine things to the Word of God alone.³⁵ "We have professed faith in God alone", he said, "not in Athanasius, whose Creed has not been approved by any properly constituted Church."³⁶ His meaning is that he refused to treat any human

³⁴ Do.: ego neque credo neque discredo. So Calvin tells Farel that Caroli had reported at Strasburg not that Calvin and his colleagues had denied the teaching of the three Symbols, but: nos vero non tantum detrectasse [subscriptionem], sed vexasse multis cachinnis symbola illa quae perpetua bonorum consentione auctoritatem firmam in Ecclesia semper habuerunt (Herminjard, VI, p. 52), And what when writing to the Pope Caroli charges the Protestant preachers with doing is "ridiculing, satirizing, defaming" the symbols and denying not their truth but their authority: eoque devenisse ut concilii Niceni et divi Athanasii symbola majori ex parte riderent, proscinderent, proculcarent, et ab ecclesia legitima umquam fuisse recepta negarent (Heminjard, IV, p. 249). Compare below, note 36, p. 573.

³⁵ Cf. A. Lang (*Johannes Calvin*, 1909, p. 42): "There shows itself here Calvin's self-reliance and independence as over against every kind of ecclesiastical tradition.... Thus, in the Confession which he adduced at Lausanne in his and his colleagues' names, he explains: 'We cannot seek God's majesty anywhere except in His Word; nor can we think anything about Him except with His Word, or say anything of Him except through His Word.' ... 'A religious Confession is nothing but a witness to the faith which abides in us; therefore it must be drawn only from the pure fountain of Scripture.' "

³⁶ *Opp.* X. ii, p. 84 (Herminjard, iv, p. 185): Ad haec Calvinus, nos in Dei unius fidem iurasse respondit, non Athanasii cuius Symbolum nulla unquam legitima ecclesia approbasset. Doumergue (*Jean Calvin*, II, p. 256) renders correctly: Nous avons juré la foi en un seul Dieu, et non en Athanase, dont le symbole n'a été approuvé par aucune Église légitime." Williston Walker (*John Calvin*, p. 197), missing the construction, renders misleadingly: "We swear in the faith of the one God, not of Athanasius, whose creed no true church would ever have approved." So also A. Lang (*Johannes Calvin*, p. 40): Wir haben den Glauben an den einen Gott beschworen, aber nicht an Athanasius, dessen Symbol eine wahre Kirche nie gebilligt haben würde." Calvin is not declaring the Athanasian Creed unworthy of the approbation of any true church; he is recalling the fact that it is a private document authorized by no valid ecclesiastical enactment. For Caroli's account of what Calvin said, see above, note 34, end. Nevertheless, the Athanasian Creed had attained throughout the Western Church a position of the highest reverence (for the extent of its "reception and use" see Ommaney, *A Critical Dissertation on the Athanasian Creed*, 1897,

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composition as an authoritative determination of doctrine, from which we may decline only on pain of heresy: that belongs to the Word of God alone. At the subsequent Council of Lausanne he took up precisely the same position, and addressing himself more, as he says,³⁷ *ad hominem* than *ad rem*, turned the demand that he should express his faith in the exact words of former formularies into ridicule. He was, he tells us, in what he said about the Creeds just “gibing”³⁸ Caroli. Caroli had attempted to recite the creeds and had broken down at the fourth clause of the Athanasian symbol.³⁹ You assert, Calvin said, that we cannot acceptably confess our faith except in the exact words of these ancient symbols. You have just pronounced these words from the Athanasian Creed: “Which faith whosoever doth not hold cannot be saved.” You do not yourself hold this faith: and if you did, you could not express it in the exact words of the Creed. Try to repeat those words: you will infallibly again stick fast before you get through the fourth clause. Now what would you do, if you should suddenly come to die and the Devil should demand that you go to the eternal destruction which you confess awaits those who do not hold this faith whole and entire, meaning unless you express this your faith in these exact terms? And as for the Nicene Creed—is it so very certain it was composed by that council? One would surely suppose those holy fathers would study conciseness in so serious a matter as a creed. But see the battology here: “God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God.” Why this repetition—which adds neither to the emphasis nor to the expressiveness of the document? Don’t you see that this is a song, more suitable for singing than to serve as a formula of confession?⁴⁰ We may or may not think Calvin’s

pp. 420 *sq.*), and was soon to be “approved” by the Protestant churches at large. Zwingli in the *Fidei Ratio* (1530) and Luther in the Smalcald Articles (1537) had already placed it among the Symbols of the churches, whose authority they recognized: and the *Formula Concordiae* and many Reformed Confessions, beginning with the Gallican, were soon formally to accord it a place of authority in the Protestant Churches. See Loofs, *Herzog*³ II, p. 179; Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom*, ed. i, I, p. 40; E. F. Karl Müller, *Die Bekenntnisschriften d. reform. Kirche*, Index sub. *voc.*, ‘Athanasianum’; Ménégos, as cited in note 41. Calvin found at Strasburg that the manner in which he had spoken of the Creeds was offensive to his colleagues there. He writes to Farel (Herminjard, vi, p. 43): “It was somewhat harder to purge ourselves in the matter of the symbols: for this was what was offensive (*odiosum*), that we repudiated them, though they ought to be beyond controversy, since they were received by the suffrages of the whole Church. It was easy to explain that we did not disapprove, much less reject them, but only declined to subscribe them that he [Caroli] might not enjoy the triumph over our ministry which he longed for. Some odium, however, always remained.”

³⁷ *Opp.* viii, p. 316: non tam ad rem quam ad hominem.

³⁸ *jocatus est (ibid., p. 315).*

³⁹ “When he had recited three clauses of the Athanasian symbol, he was not able to recite the fourth ...” (*ibid.*, p. 311, top).

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 315–316. This manner of speaking of the Nicene Creed also impressed the Strasburg theologians unfavorably. Calvin writes to Farel Oct. 8, 1539 (Herminjard, vi, p. 54): “I had to give satisfaction about the battologies I could not by any effort convince them that there is any battology there.

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pleasantry happy. But we certainly cannot fail to marvel when we read in even recent writers that Calvin refused to sign the Athanasian Creed because of its damnatory clauses, “which are unjust and uncharitable”, and expressed “an unfavorable opinion on the Nicene Creed”.⁴¹ According to his own testimony, he did nothing of the kind: he “never had any intention of depreciating (*objicere*) these creeds or of derogating from their credit”.⁴² His sole design was to make it apparent that Caroli’s insistence that only in the words of these creeds could faith in the Trinity be fitly expressed was ridiculous.

Calvin’s refusal to be confined to the very words of the old formulas in his expression of the doctrine of the Trinity did not carry with it, therefore, any unwillingness to employ in his definition of the doctrine the terms which had been beaten out in the Trinitarian controversies of the past. These terms he considered rather the best expressions for stating and defending the doctrine. That they were unwilling to employ them had indeed been made the substance of one of the charges brought by Caroli against the Genevan pastors. But the refutation of this calumny, so far as Calvin himself was concerned, was easy. He had only to point to the first edition of the *Institutes* (1536), in which he had not only freely used the terms in question, but had defended at large the right and asserted the duty of employing them, as the technical language by which alone the doctrine of the Trinity can be so expressed as to confound heretical misconstructions. When, then, Caroli expressed his wonder at “the pertinacity with which Calvin refused the terms ‘Person’, ‘Trinity’ ”, Calvin replied flatly that neither he nor Farel nor Viret ever had the smallest objection to these terms. “The writings of Calvin”, he adds, “testify to the whole world that he always employed them freely, and even reprehended the superstition of those who either disliked or avoided them.”⁴³ That the Genevan pastors passed them by in their *Confession*, and refused to employ them when this was violently demanded of them, he explains,

I admitted, however, that I should not have so spoken if I had not been compelled by that man’s wickedness.”

⁴¹ Schaff, *Hist. of the Christian Church*, vii, p. 322. E. Ménégoz is therefore in the essentials of the matter right, when he expresses his wonder that men can suppose that the circumstances that Calvin “once refused to obey an injunction to sign the Symbol”, or “pronounced a judgment unfavorable to the literary form of this document” — M. Ménégoz is confusing for the moment the Athanasian and Nicene Creeds — prove that “in the depths of his heart he held these anathemas in aversion” (*Publications Diverses sur le Fidéisme*, 1900, p. 276). He adds with equal justice: “It is an infelicitous idea to appeal to Calvin as a witness that Protestantism, though receiving the Catholic Symbols, had no intention of approving their anathemas. And it is a historical error to imagine that the Reformers would have accepted these symbols, if they had not firmly believed them, if they had felt any scruples, or cherished any mental reservations regarding the damnatory clauses. There was no paltering in a double sense in that age. There was no practice of ‘economy’. If the Protestants had felt any hesitation about the anathemas, they would have said so without ambiguity, and they would have purely and simply discarded the symbols. Nothing would have been easier.”

⁴² *Opp.* vii, p. 315.

⁴³ *Opp.* vii, p. 318.

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was due to two reasons. They were unwilling to consent to such tyranny as that when a matter has been sufficiently and more than sufficiently established, credit should be bound to words and syllables. But their more particular reason was, he adds, that they might “deprive that madman of the boast he had insolently made”. “For Caroli’s purpose was to cast suspicion on the entire doctrine of men of piety and to destroy their influence.”⁴⁴ Though they felt to the full, therefore, the value of these terms, not only for confounding heresy, but also for consolidating churches in a common confession, when their use was contentiously demanded of them they followed a high example and refused to give place, in the way of subjection, even for an hour.

Calvin’s attitude to the employment of this technical language is sufficiently interesting in itself to repay a pause to observe it. As we have intimated, it is fully set forth already in the first edition of the *Institutes* (1536) in a very interesting passage, which is retained without substantial alteration throughout all the subsequent editions. The position of this passage in the discussion of the doctrine of the Trinity, however, is changed in the final edition from its end (as in all the earlier editions) to its beginning. In the final edition, therefore, it appears as a preface to the discussion of the substance of the doctrine (I. xiii. 3–5), and it is strengthened in this edition by an introductory paragraph (§ 2), in which an attempt is made to vindicate for one of these technical terms direct Biblical authority. Calvin finds the term ‘Person’ in the ὑπόστασις of Heb. 1:3; and insists, therefore, that it, at least, is not of human invention (*humanitus inventa*). The argument in which he does this is too characteristic of him and too instructive, not only as to his attitude towards the terms in question, but also as to his doctrine of the Trinity and his exegetical methods, to be passed over in silence. We must permit ourselves so much of a digression, therefore, as will enable us to attend to it.

What Calvin does, in this argument, is in essence to subject the statement of Heb. 1:3 that the Son is “the very image of the hypostasis of God” — the χαρακτήρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ—to a strict logical analysis. The term ὑπόστασις, he argues, must designate something the Son is not: for He could scarcely be said to be the *image* of something He is. When we say *image*, we postulate two distinct things: the thing imaged and the thing imaging it. If the Son is the *image* of God’s hypostasis, then, the hypostasis of God must be something which the Son does not *share*; it must be rather something which He is *like*. The Son *shares* the Divine essence: hence hypostasis here cannot mean essence. It must be taken then in its alternative sense of ‘person’: and what the author of the Epistle says, therefore, is that the Son is exactly like the Father in person; His double, so to speak. This Epistle, therefore, expressly speaks here of two Persons in the Godhead, one Person which is imaged, another which precisely images it. And the same reasoning may be

⁴⁴ *Adv. P. Caroli Calumnias: Opp.* vii, p. 318.

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applied to the Holy Spirit. There is Biblical warrant, therefore, for teaching that there are three hypostases in the one essence of God—“therefore, if we will give credit to the Apostle’s testimony, there are in God three hypostases”,—and since the Latin ‘person’ is but the translation of the Greek ‘hypostasis’, it is mere fastidiousness to balk at the term ‘person’. If anyone prefers the term ‘subsistence’ as a more literal rendering, why, let him use it: or even ‘substance’, if it be taken in the same sense. The point is not the vocable but the meaning, and we do not change the meaning by varying the synonyms. Even the Greeks use ‘person’ (πρόσωπον) interchangeably with ‘subsistence’ (υπόστασις) in this connection.

It is not likely that this piece of exegesis will commend itself to us. Nor indeed is it likely that we shall feel perfect satisfaction in the logical analysis, even as a piece of logical analysis. After all, the Son is not the image of the Father in His Personality,—if we are, like Calvin, to take the Personality here in strict distinction from the Essence. What the Son differs from the Father in, is, rather, just in His ‘Personality’, in this sense: as Person He is the Son, the Father the Father, and what we sum up under this ‘Fatherhood’ and ‘Sonship’ is just the distinguishing ‘properties’ by which the two are differentiated from one another. That concrete Person we call the Son is exactly like that concrete Person we call the Father; but the likeness is due to the fact that each is sharer in the identical essence. After all, therefore, the reason why the Son is the express image of the Father is because, sharing the divine essence, He is in His essence all that the Father is. He is the repetition of the Father: but the repetition in such a sense that the one essence in which the likeness consists is common to the two, and not merely of like character in the two. The fundamental trouble with Calvin’s argument is that it seeks a direct proof for the Trinitarian constitution of the Godhead from a passage which was intended as a direct proof only of the essential deity of the Son. What the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews had in mind was not to reveal the relation of the Son to the Father in the Trinity—as a distinct hypostasis in the unity of the essence; but to set forth the absolute deity of the Son, to declare that He is all that God is, the perfect reflection of God, giving back to God when set over against Him His consummate image. The term ‘hypostasis’ is not indeed to be taken here, in the narrow sense, as ‘essence’: but neither is it to be taken, in the abstract sense, as ‘person’. It means the concrete person, that is to say, the whole substantial entity we call God: which whole substantial entity is said to be in the Son exactly what it is in the Father. Nothing is said directly as to the relation of the Son to the Father, as distinct persons in the Trinity: the whole direct significance of the declaration is exhausted in the assertion that this ‘Son’ differs in no single particular from ‘God’: He is God in the full height of the conception of God.

It is not, however, the success or lack of success of Calvin’s exegesis which most interests us at present. It is rather two facts which his exegetical argument brings before us with

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peculiar force. The one of them is that the developed doctrine of the Trinity lay so firmly entrenched in his mind that he makes it, almost or perhaps quite unconsciously, the major premise of his argument. And the other is that he was so little averse to designating the distinctions in the Godhead by the term 'Persons' that that term was rather held by him to have definite Biblical warrant. His argument that ὑπόστασις in this passage cannot mean 'essence', but must mean 'person', turns on this precise hinge, — that the Father and Son are numerically one in essence, and can be represented as distinct only in person: "For since the essence of God is simple and indivisible (*simplex et individua*) He who contains in Himself the whole of it, not in apportionment or in deflection, but in unbroken perfection (*integra perfectione*) it would be improper or rather inept to call its image." In other words, the doctrine of the Trinity in its complete formulation is the postulate of his argument. And the outcome of the argument is that the Epistle to the Hebrews distinctly sets the Father and Son over against one another as distinguishable 'Persons', employing this precise term, ὑπόστασις, to designate them in their distinction. "Accordingly", says Calvin, "if the testimony of the Apostle obtains credit, it follows that there are in God three hypostases." This term as the expression of the nature of the distinctions in the Godhead is therefore not a 'human invention' (*humanitus inventa*) to Calvin, but a divine revelation.

Since, then, the Bible had obtained credit with Calvin, he could not object to the use of the term 'Person' to express the distinctions in the Trinity. But he nevertheless takes over from the earlier editions, in which the discovery of the term in Heb. 1:3 is not yet to be found, a defense of the use of this term on the assumption that it is not Biblical. And this defense is in essence the assertion of the right and the exposition of a theory of interpretation. There are men, says Calvin, who cry out against every term framed according to human judgment (*hominum arbitrio confictum nomen*) and demand that our words as well as our thoughts concerning divine things shall be kept within the limits of Scripture example. If we use only the words of Scripture we shall, say they, avoid many dissensions and disputes, and preserve the charity so frequently broken in strifes over "exotic words". Certainly, responds Calvin, we ought to speak of God with not less religion than we think of Him. But why should we be required to confine ourselves to the exact words of Scripture if we give the exact sense of Scripture? To condemn as "exotic" every word not found in so many syllables in Scripture, is at once to put under a ban all interpretation which is not a mere stringing together of Scriptural phrases. There are some things in Scripture which are to our apprehension intricate and difficult. What forbids our explaining them in simpler terms, — if these terms are held religiously and faithfully to the true sense of Scripture, and are used carefully and modestly and not without occasion? Is it not an improbity to reprobate words which express nothing but what is testified and recorded by the Scriptures? And when these words are a necessity, if the truth is to be plainly and unambiguously expressed, — may we not suspect that the

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real quarrel of those who object to their use is with the truth they express; and that what they are offended by is that by their use the truth has been made clear and unmistakable (*plana et dilucida*)? As to the terms in which the mystery of the Trinity is expressed—the term Trinity itself, the term Person, and those other terms which the tergiversations of heretics have compelled believers to frame and employ that the truth may be asserted and guarded—such as *homoousios*, for example—no one would care to draw sword for them as mere naked words. Calvin himself would be altogether pleased to see them buried wholly out of sight—if only all men would heartily receive the simple faith, that the Father, Son and Spirit are one God and yet neither is the Son the Father, nor the Spirit the Son, but they are each distinguished by a certain property.⁴⁵ But that is just the trouble. Men will not accept the simple faith, but palter in a double sense. Arius was loud enough in declaring Christ to be God,—but wished to teach also that He is a creature and has had a beginning: he was willing to say Christ is one with the Father, if he were permitted to add that His oneness is the same in kind as our own oneness with God. Say, however, the one word ὁμοούσιος—“consubstantial”—and the mask is torn from the face of dissimulation and yet nothing whatever is added to the Scriptures. Sabellius was in no way loath to admit that there are in the Godhead these three—Father, Son and Holy Spirit; but he really distinguished them only as attributes are distinguished. Say simply that in “the unity of God a trinity of persons subsists”, and you have at once quenched his inane loquacity. Now, if anyone who does not like the words will ingenuously⁴⁶ confess the things the words stand for,—*cadit quaestio*: we shall not worry over the words. “But”—adds Calvin significantly—“I have long since learned by experience, and that over and over again, that those who contend thus pertinaciously about terms, are really cherishing a secret poison; so that it is much better to bear their resentment than to consent to use less precise and clear language for their behoof.”⁴⁷ Golden words! How often since Calvin has the Church had bitter cause to repeat them! When we read, for example, William Chillingworth’s subtle pleas for the use of Scriptural language only in matters of faith; his eloquent asseverations—“The Bible, I say, the Bible only is the religion of Protestants”—; his loud railing at “the vain conceit, that we can speak of the things of God better than in the words of God”, “thus deifying our own interpretations and tyrannously enforcing them upon others”,—we know what it all means: that under this cloak of charity are to lie hidden a multitude of sins. When we hear Calvin refusing to swear in the words of another, we must not confuse his defense of personal right with a latitudinarianism like Chillingworth’s. If he said, It is the Word of God, not the word of Athanasius, to which I submit my judgment, he said equally, The sense of Scripture, not its words, is Scripture. No ambiguous meanings should be permitted to hide behind a

⁴⁵ I. xiii. 5.

⁴⁶ non fraudulenter.

⁴⁷ I. xiii. 5. *ad fin.*

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mere repetition of the simple words of Scripture, but all that the Scripture teaches shall be clearly and without equivocation brought out and given expression in the least indeterminate language.⁴⁸

Calvin's interest was, in other words, distinctly in the substance of the doctrine of the Trinity rather than in any particular mode of formulating it. It rested on the terms in which it was formulated only because, and so far as, they seemed essential to the precise expression and effective guarding of the doctrine. This was consistently his attitude from the beginning. Already in the *Institutes* of 1536, as we have seen, he had given this attitude an expression so satisfactory to himself that he retained the sections devoted to it until the end. It is indeed astonishing how complete a statement of the doctrine of the Trinity itself was already incorporated into this earliest edition of the *Institutes*, and how clearly in that statement all the characteristic features of Calvin's treatment of the doctrine already appear. The discussion was no doubt greatly expanded in its passage from the first to the last edition. In the first edition (1536) it occupies only five columns in the Strasburg edition; these have grown to fifteen and a half columns in the middle editions and to twenty-seven and a half (of which eleven and a half are retained from the earlier editions and sixteen are new) in the final edition of 1559. That is to say, its original compass was tripled in the middle editions and almost doubled again in the final edition, where it has become between five and six times as long as in the first draft.⁴⁹ And in this process of expansion it has not only gathered increment but has suffered change. This change is not, however, in the substance of the doctrine taught or even in the mode of its formulation or the language in which it is couched or in the general tone which informs it. It is only in the range and the governing aim of the discussion.

⁴⁸ Dorner's account of Calvin's attitude to these questions is not quite exact either in the motive suggested, or in the precise action ascribed to him, though it recognizes Calvin's contribution to a better understanding of the doctrine (*Doctrine of the Person of Christ*, E. T. II. ii, p. 158, note 1): "Even Calvin, about the time of his dispute with Caroli, asserted the necessity of a developing revision of the doctrine of the Trinity. On this ground he declined pledging himself to the Athanasian Creed, and wished to cast aside the terms 'persona', 'Trinitas', as scholastic expressions. At the same time he was so far from being inclined towards the Antitrinitarians, that he wished to carry out the doctrine of the Trinity still more completely. He saw clearly that in the traditional form of the doctrine, the Son had not full deity, because aseity (*aseitas*) was reserved to the Father alone, who thus received a preponderance over the Son, and was identified with the Monas, or the Divine essence. The Antitrinitarians, with whom he had to struggle, usually directed their attacks on this weak point of the dogma, and deduced therefrom the Antitrinitarian conclusions."

⁴⁹ The *Institutes* as a whole were about doubled in length from the first edition (1536) to the second (1539), and again about doubled in the last edition (1559), so that the last edition (1559) is about four times as long as the first (1536). The treatment of the Trinity was, therefore, a little more expanded than the volume as a whole.

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The statement in the first edition is dominated by a simple desire to give guidance to docile believers, and therefore declines formal controversy and seeks merely to set down briefly what is to be followed, what is to be avoided on this great subject. Positing, therefore, at the outset that the Scriptures teach one God, not many, but yet not obscurely assert that the Father is God and the Son is God and the Holy Spirit is God; Calvin here at once develops, by combining Eph. 4:5 and Mat. 28:19, a Biblical proof of the Trinity which in its strenuous logic reminds us of the analytical examination of Heb. 1:3 which we have already noted. Paul, he says, connects together one baptism, one faith and one God; but in Matthew we read that we are to be baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,—and what is that but to say that the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are together the one God of which Paul speaks?⁵⁰ This is supported by Jeremiah's (23:33) designation of the Son by "that name which the Jews call ineffable"⁵¹

⁵⁰ This argument is retained in the later editions and appears in its final form in the ed. of 1559, I. xiii. 16. In its earliest statement it runs thus (1536, pp. 107–8: Strasburg ed., p. 58): "Paul so connects these three things, God, faith and baptism, that he reasons from one to the other (Eph. 4). So that, because there is one faith, thence he demonstrates that there is one God; because there is one baptism, thence he shows that there is one faith. For since faith ought not to be looking about hither and thither, neither wandering through various things, but should direct its view towards the one God, be fixed on Him and adhere to Him; it may be easily proved from these premises that if there be many faiths there should be many Gods. Again because baptism is the sacrament of faith, it confirms to us His unity, seeing that it is one. But no one can profess faith except in the one God. Therefore as we are baptized into the one faith, so our faith believes in the one God. Both that therefore is one and this is one, because each is of one God. Hence also it follows that it is not lawful to be baptized except into the one God, because we are baptized into faith in Him, in whose name we are baptized. Now, the Scriptures have wished (Mat. at end) that we should be baptized into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, at the same time that it wishes all to believe with one faith in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. What is that, truly, except a plain testimony that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one God? For if we are baptized in their name, we are baptized into faith in them. They are therefore one God, if they are worshipped in one faith."

⁵¹ This awkward periphrasis suggests that, when the *Institutes* were written—in 1534–1535—Calvin had no convenient expression at hand for the Tetragrammaton. This conjecture is supported by the circumstance that "Jehovah" does not seem to occur in the first edition; it is lacking even in the Preface to the First Commandment, where the customary *Dominus* takes its place. Already in the spring of 1537, however (*Opp.* vii. 313; xi. 704, 707, 708; x. 107, 121) it is used familiarly; and thenceforward throughout Calvin's life. During his sojourn at Basle (1535) Calvin had studied Hebrew with Sebastian Münster (Baumgartner, *Calvin Hébraïsant*, p. 18), and it was doubtless from him that he acquired the pronunciation "Jehovah" (see Münster on Ex. 6:3 in *Critici Sacri*, Amsterdam ed., 1698, I. 107, 108; Frankfort ed., I. 447; cf. 32). From his own comment on Ex. 6:3 we may learn the clearness of Calvin's conviction that "Jehovah" is the right pronunciation: "It would be tedious to enumerate all the opinions on the name 'Jehovah'. It is certainly a foul superstition of the Jews that they dare not either pronounce or write it, but substitute 'Adonai' for it. It is no more probable that, as many teach, it is unpronounceable because it is not written according to grammatical rule.... Nor do I assent to the grammarians who will not have it pronounced because its inflection is irregular...." How fixed the pronunciation "Jehovah" had become at Geneva by 1570 is revealed by an incident which occurred at the "Promotions" at the Academy that year. The

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and other Scriptural evidence that our Lord is one God with the Father and the Spirit. He has in mind to prove both elements in the doctrine of the Trinity, the unity of God and the true distinction of persons, and therefore introduces these citations with the words: “There are extant also other clear (*luculenta*) testimonies, which assert, in part, the one

Hebrew Professor, Corneille Bertram, having declared in response to an inquiry that “Adonai” not “Jehovah” was to be read, he was rebuked therefor and compelled to apologize: “This M. de Bèze and all the Company found ill-said, and remonstrated with him for agitating this curious and idle question, and for affirming an opinion which very many great men of this age, of good knowledge, piety, and judgment, have held to be absurd, superstitious and merely Rabbinic” (*Reg. Comp.*, 31 May, 1570, cited by Charles Borgeaud, *Histoire de l’Université de Genève*, 1900, p. 228). — The history of the pronunciation “Jehovah” has not been adequately investigated. It has become the scholastic tradition to say that it was introduced by Peter Galatin, confessor of Leo X, and first appears in his *De Arcanis Catholicae Veritatis*, II. 10 (the first of two chapters so numbered) which was first published in 1516 (*cf.* Buhl’s *Gesenius’ Lexicon*, ed. 13, 1899, p. 311, “about 1520”; Brown’s *Gesenius’ Lexicon*, p. 218a, 1520; Kittel, *Herzog*³ viii. 530–1, 1518; Davidson, *Hastings’ B. D.* art. ‘God’, 1520; A. J. Maclean, *Hastings’ One Vol. B. D.*, p. 300a, 1518; A. H. McNeile, *Westminster Commentary on Exodus*, 1908, p. 23, 1518; Oxford English Dictionary, sub. voc., 1516: *cf.* the very strong statement of Dillmann, *Alttest. Theologie*, p. 215). But this tradition is simply reported from mouth to mouth, from Drusius’ tract on the Tetragrammaton (*Critici Sacri*, Amsterdam ed., vol. I, part ii, pp. 322 *sq.*: also in Reland *Decad. Exercitationum ... de vera pronuntiatione nominis Jehova*). Since Drusius no one seems to have made any independent effort to ascertain the facts, except F. Böttcher, *Ausführliches Lehrbuch der Hebräischen Sprache*, 1866, § 88 (p. 49, note 2). In copying Drusius the scholars have failed to note that he himself points out in a later note, inserted on p. 355, that the form “Jehovah” occurs already in Porchetus, A. D. 1303: and it has been pointed out also that it occurs in Raimund Martini’s *Pugio Fidei*, which was written about 1270 (Böttcher’s suggestion that it may be an interpolation in the *Pugio Fidei* does not seem convincing.) It is not unlikely that Galatin, who draws heavily on Martini either directly or through Porchetti, may have derived it from him: and in any event he uses it not as a novel invention of his own, but as a well-known form. The origin and age of the pronunciation are accordingly yet to seek. The words of Dr. F. Chance (*The Athenæum*, No. 2119, June 6, 1868, p. 796) are here in point: “There is no doubt, I think, that the letters *jvhv* were from the very introduction of the Hebrew points pointed as they now are ... and if so, surely anybody that read what he had before him must have *read* Jehovah. If the word were never so *written* before the sixteenth century, it was probably because up to that time Hebrew was studied by very few people, except by Jews who could not write this holiest of God’s names, and by Gentiles who, having learned their Hebrew from Jews, followed their example in substituting for it in reading and writing, Adonai, the Lord, etc.” — No doubt the vogue of the form in the middle of the sixteenth century is due, not to its accidental occurrence in Galatin’s book, but to the progress of Hebrew scholarship in sequence to the revival of letters, which looked upon the Jewish refusal to pronounce the name as mere superstition and attached an exaggerated importance to the Massoretic pointing. The debate about the proper pronunciation of the name is, in any event, a Humanistic phenomenon, and the form “Jehovah” is found in use everywhere where Hebrew scholarship penetrated, until it was corrected by this scholarship itself. Reuchlin indeed appears not to have used it; nor Melancthon. But it is used by Luther (though not in his Bible), and by Matthew Tyndale in his Pentateuch of 1530, and so prevailingly by Protestant scholars that Romish controversialists were tempted to represent it as an impiety (so Genebrardus) of the “Calviniani et Bezani” following the example of Sanctes Pagninus (who, according to MS. but not printed copies did indeed use it).

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divinity of the three, and in part their personal distinction.”⁵² Then comes the defense of the technical words by which the truth of the Trinity is expressed and protected, of which we have already spoken. The enlarged and readjusted treatment of the topic for the second edition of 1539 seems to have been composed under the influence of the controversy with Caroli. It is marked at least by the incorporation of a thorough proof of the Godhead of the Father, Son and Spirit, of the unity of their essence, and of the distinction between them, and a coloring apparently derived from this controversy is thrown over the whole discussion, in which liberty to formulate the doctrine in our own words and the value of the technical terms already in use are equally vigorously asserted. The material of 1539 remains intact throughout the middle editions (1543, 1550), although some short quotations from Augustine (§§ 16, 20) and from Jerome and Hilary (§ 24) were introduced in 1543. But it is very freely dealt with in the final edition (1559). Only some two-thirds of it (eleven and a half columns out of fifteen and a half) is preserved in that edition, while sixteen new columns are added: about three-fifths of the whole is thus new.⁵³ Moreover, whole sections are omitted (§§ 10 and 15), a new order of arrangement is adopted, and much minor alteration is introduced. In this recasting and expansion of the discussion the chief place in the formative forces determining its form and tone is taken by the attack of the radical Antitrinitarians. The existence of these Antitrinitarian scoffers is recognized, indeed, from the first: they are explicitly adverted to already in the edition of 1536 as “certain impious men, who wish to tear our faith up by the roots”: it is quite clear, indeed, that Servetus’ teachings were already before his mind at this date. But it is only for the final edition (1559) that their assault assumes the determining position at the basis of the whole treatment: and it is only in this edition that Servetus, for example, is named. Now, Calvin not only arrays against them the testimony of Scripture in a developed polemic, but adjusts the whole positive exposition of the doctrine to its new purpose, shaping and phrasing its statements and modifying them by added sentences and clauses. The result is a polemic the edge of which is turned no longer against those who may have doubted Calvin’s orthodoxy, as was the case in 1539, but rather against those who have essayed to bring into doubt or even openly to deny the mysteries which enter into the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. The sharp anti-scholastic sentences which are permitted to remain, serve to give a singular balance to the discussion, and to make it clear that the polemic against the Antitrinitarians has in view vital interests and not mere matters of phraseology.

⁵² *Opp.* I, p. 58.

⁵³ The most notable additions are the argument on ὑπόστασις in Heb. 1:3 (§ 2); the definition of ‘person’ (§ 6); and the whole polemic against Servetus and Gentilis (§§ 22 to end). These sections contain nine of the sixteen new columns.

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The disposition of the material in this its final form follows the lines of its new dominant interest. The discussion opens, as we have seen, with a paragraph designed to bear in on the mind a sense of the mystery which must characterize the divine mode of existence (§ 1). This is immediately followed by an announcement of the Trinitarian fact and a defense of the technical terms used to express and protect it (§§ 2–5). After this introduction the subject itself is taken up (§ 6, *init.*) and treated in two great divisions, by way first of positive statement and proof (§§ 6–20) and by way secondly of polemic defense (§§ 21–end). The positive portion opens with a careful definition of what is meant by the ‘Trinity’ (§ 6) and is prosecuted by an exhibition of the Scriptural proof of the doctrine in three sections: first the proof of the complete deity of the Son (§§ 7–13), then the proof of the deity of the Spirit (§§ 14–15), and then the proof of the Trinitarian distinctions, which includes a dissertation on the nature of these distinctions on the basis of Scripture (§§ 16–20). The polemic phase of the discussion begins with some introductory remarks (§ 21) and then defends in turn the true personality of the Son against Servetus (§ 22) and His complete deity against its modern impugners, Valentinus Gentilis being chiefly in mind (§§ 23–29).

This comprehensive outline is richly filled in with details, all of which are treated, however, with a circumspection and moderation which illustrate Calvin’s determination to eschew human speculations upon this high theme and to confine himself to the revelations of Scripture, only so far explicated in human language as is necessary for their pure expression and protection.⁵⁴ We observe, for example, that he introduces no proofs or illustrations of the Trinity derived from metaphysical reasoning or natural analogies. From the example of Augustine it had been the habit throughout the Middle Ages to make much of these proofs or illustrations, and the habit had passed over into the Protestant usage. Melancthon, for example, gave new currency alike to the old ontological speculations which under the forms of subject and object sought to conceive the Logos as the image of Himself which the thinking Father set over against Himself, and to the human analogies by which the Trinitarian distinctions were fancied to be illustrated, such, for example, as the distinctions between the intellect, sensibility and will in man. Calvin held himself aloof from all such reasoning, doubting, as he says (§ 18), “the value of similitudes from human things for expressing the force of the Trinitarian distinction”, and fearing that their employment might afford only occasion to those evil

⁵⁴ Cf. Köstlin, *Studien und Kritiken*, 1868, p. 419, who speaks of “the circumspect, cautious moderation with which Calvin confines himself to the simplest principles of the Church conception and refuses to pass beyond the simple declarations of Scripture to a dogmatic formulation, much more to scholastic questions and answers, one step farther than seemed to him to be demanded for the protection of the Godhead of the Redeemer and of the Holy Spirit from the assaults of old and new enemies.”

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disposed for calumny and to those little instructed for error.⁵⁵ What he desired was a plain proof from Scripture itself of the elements of the doctrine, freed from all additions from human speculation. This proof he attempted, in outline at least, to set down in his pages. It is interesting to observe how he conducts it.

He begins, as we have already pointed out, with a plain statement of what he means by the Trinity (§ 6). Such a “short and easy definition” (*brevis et facilis definitio*) had been his object from the outset (§ 2, *init.*), and it was in fact in order to obtain it that he entered upon the defense, which fills the first sections, of the term and conception of ‘Person’ as applied to the distinctions in the Godhead. Reverting to it after this defense, he carefully defines (§ 6) what he means by ‘Person’ in this connection, viz., “a subsistence in the Divine essence, which, related to the others, is yet distinguished by an incommunicable property”. What he has to prove, therefore, he conceives to be that in the unity of the Godhead there is such a distinction of persons; or, as he phrases it, in a statement derived from Tertullian, that “there is in God a certain disposition or economy, which makes no difference, however, to the unity of the essence”; or, as he puts it himself a little later on (§ 20, *init.*), that “there is understood under the name of God, a unitary and simple essence, in which we comprise three persons or hypostases”. In order to prove this doctrine, it would be necessary to prove that while God is one, there are three persons who are God, and Calvin undertakes the proof on that understanding. He does not pause here, however, to argue the unity of God at length, taking that for the moment for granted, though he reverts to it in the sequel to show that the distinction of persons which he conceives himself to have established in no respect infringes on it (§ 19), and indeed in his polemic against Valentinus Gentilis very fully vindicates it from the objections of the Arianisers and Tritheists (§ 23 *sq.*). His proof resolves itself, therefore, into the establishment of the distinctions in the Godhead; and in order to do this he undertakes to prove first that the Son and the Holy Spirit are each God, and then to show that the Scriptures explicitly recognize that there is such a distinction in the Godhead as their divinity (taken in connection with the Divine unity) implies.

The proof of the deity of the Son is very comprehensive and detailed, and is drawn from each Testament alike. The Word of God, by which, as God ‘spake’, He made the worlds,

⁵⁵ Cf. I. xv. 4, *ad fin.* Cf. *Commentary on Genesis* i. 26, where, speaking of the human faculties, he remarks: “But Augustine, beyond all others, speculates with excessive refinement for the purpose of fabricating a trinity in man. For in laying hold of the three faculties of the soul enumerated by Aristotle, the intellect, the memory and the will, he afterwards out of one trinity derives many. If any reader, having leisure, wishes to enjoy such speculations, let him read the tenth and fourteenth books of *The Trinity*, also the tenth book of *The City of God*. I acknowledge indeed that there is something in man which refers to the Father, and the Son, and the Spirit; and I have no difficulty in admitting the above distribution of the faculties, ... but a definition of the image of God ought to rest on a firmer basis than such subtleties.” For the later Reformed attitude, see Heppe, p. 85.

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it is argued, must be understood of the substantial Word, which is also called in Proverbs, Wisdom (§ 7); and must accordingly be understood as eternal. In connection with this, the whole scheme of temporal prolation as applied to the Son is sharply assaulted. It is impious to suppose that anything new can ever have happened to God in Himself (*in se ipso*), and there is “nothing less tolerable than to invent a beginning for that Word, who both was always God and afterwards became the maker of the world” (§ 8). To this more general argument is brought the support of a number of Old Testament passages, which, it is contended, advert to the Son with declarations of His deity: such as the Forty-fifth Psalm, “Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever”; Is. 9:6, “His Name shall be called Mighty God, Father of Eternity”; Jer. 23:6, “The Branch shall be called Jehovah our Righteousness” (§ 9). And then the phenomena connected with the manifestations of the Angel of Jehovah are adduced in corroboration (§ 10). The New Testament evidence is marshalled under two heads: the divine names are applied to Christ by the New Testament writers (§ 11), and divine works and functions are assigned to Him (§§ 12–13). Not only are Old Testament passages which speak of Jehovah applied to Christ in the New Testament (Is. 8:10, Rom. 9:33; Is. 45:23, Rom. 14:10, 11; Ps. 68:18, Eph. 4:8; Is. 6:1, Jno. 12:41), but these writers themselves employ the term “God” in speaking of Christ (Jn. 1:1, 16; Rom. 9:5; 1 Tim. 3:16; Jn. 5:20; Acts 20:28; Jn. 20:28), and the like. And what divine work do not the New Testament writers credit Him with, either from His own lips or theirs? They represent Him as having been co-worker with God from all eternity (Jn. 5:17), as the upholder and governor of the world (Heb. 1:3), as the forgiver of iniquities (Mat. 9:6) and the searcher of hearts (Mat. 9:4). They not only accredit Him with mighty works, but distinguish Him from others who have wrought miracles, precisely by this, — these others wrought them by the power of God, He by His own power (§ 13a). They represent Him as the dispenser of salvation, the source of eternal life and the fountain of all that is good: they present Him as the proper object of saving faith and trust, and even of worship and prayer (§ 13b).

The deity of the Spirit is similarly argued on the ground of certain Old Testament passages (Genesis 1:1; Is. 48:16) where the Spirit of God seems to be hypostatized; of the divine works attributed to Him, such as ubiquitous activity, regeneration, and the searching of the deep things of God on the one hand and the bestowing of wisdom, speech and all other blessings on men on the other; and finally of the application of the name God to Him in the New Testament writings (*e. g.*, 1 Cor. 3:16, 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:16; Acts. 5:3; 28:25; Mat. 12:31).

Having thus established the deity of the Son and Spirit, Calvin turns to the passages which elucidate their deity to us by presenting to us the doctrine of the Trinity. These are all in the New Testament, as was natural (suggests Calvin), because the advent of Christ involved a clearer revelation of God and therefore a fuller knowledge of the personal

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distinctions in His being (§ 16). The stress of the argument here is laid upon Eph. 4:5 in connection with Mat. 28:19, which were already expounded at length, as we have seen, in the first edition of the *Institutes*, and are here only strengthened and clarified by a better statement. As we are initiated by baptism into faith in the one God and yet baptism is in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, argues Calvin, it is “solidly clear” that the Father, Son and Spirit are this one God; whence it is perfectly obvious that “there reside (*residere*) in the essence of God three Persons, in whom the one God is cognized” (*cognoscitur*); and “since it remains fixed that God is one not many, we can only conclude that the Word and the Spirit are nothing other than the essence of God itself”. The Scriptures, however, he proceeds (§ 17), no more thus identify the Son and Spirit with God than they distinguish them—distinguish, not divide them. He appeals to such passages as Jno. 5:32, 8:16, 18, 14:16, “another”;⁵⁶ 15:26, 9:16, “proceeding”, “being sent”: but this part of the subject is lightly passed over on the ground that the passages already adduced themselves sufficiently show that the Son possesses a “distinct property” by which He is not the Father, —for, says he, “the Word could not have been *with* God unless He had been another than the Father, neither could he have had His glory *with* the Father, unless He was distinct from Him”: the distinction noted in which passages it is plain, further, is not one which could have begun at the incarnation, but must date from whatever point He may be thought to have begun to be “in the bosom of the Father” (Jno. 1:18). The determination that there is a personal distinction between Father and Son and Holy Spirit leads Calvin to inquire what this distinction carries with it. He finds it to be Scriptural to say that “to the Father is attributed the *principium agendi*, as fountain and source of all things; to the Son, wisdom, counsel and the actual dispensation of things to be done; but to the Spirit is assigned the power and efficiency (*virtus et efficacia*) of the action” —that is to say, if we may be permitted to reduce the definitions to single words, the Father is conceived as the Source, the Son as the Director, the Spirit as the Executor of all the divine activities; the Father as the Fountain, the Son as the Wisdom emerging from Him, the Spirit as the Power by which the wise counsels of God are effectuated (§ 18).⁵⁷ Only now when his argument is finished and his conclusion drawn (§ 19) does Calvin pause formally to point out that “this distinction in no way impedes the absolutely simple unity of God” —since the conception is that the “whole nature (*natura*) is in each hypostasis”, while “each has its own propriety”. “The Father”, he adds, “is *totus* in the Son, and the Son *totus* in the Father” — as Christ Himself teaches in Jno. 14:10. We are here,

⁵⁶ In ed. 1 (1536) he remarks (*Opp.* I, p. 59) that “that the Holy Spirit is ‘another’ than Christ is proved by more than ten passages from the Gospel of John (John xiv, xv)”.

⁵⁷ This passage is already found in ed. 1 (1536) (*Opp.* I, p. 62): “The Persons are so distinguished by the Scriptures that they assign to the Father the *principium agendi*, and the fountain and origin of all things; to the Son the wisdom and *concilium agendi*; to the Spirit the *virtus et efficacia actionis*; whence also the Son is called the Word of God, not such as men speak or think, but eternal and unchangeable, as emerging in an ineffable manner from the Father.”

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however, obviously passing beyond the proof to the exposition of the Trinity,—a topic which occupies some later sections (§§ 19 and 20).

It will have already become apparent from the citations incidentally adduced that in his doctrine of the Trinity Calvin departed in nothing from the doctrine which had been handed down from the orthodox fathers. If distinctions must be drawn, he is unmistakably Western rather than Eastern in his conception of the doctrine, an Augustinian rather than an Athanasian.⁵⁸ That is to say, the principle of his construction of the Trinitarian distinctions is equalization rather than subordination. He does, indeed, still speak in the old language of refined subordinationism which had been fixed in the Church by the Nicene formularies; and he expressly allows an “order” of first, second and third in the Trinitarian relations. But he conceives more clearly and applies more purely than had ever previously been done the principle of equalization in his thought of the relation of the Persons to one another, and thereby, as we have already hinted, marks an epoch in the history of the doctrine of the Trinity. That he was enabled to do this was a result, no doubt, at least in part, of his determination to preserve the highest attainable simplicity in his thought of the Trinity. Sweeping his mind free from subtleties in minor matters, he perceived with unwonted lucidity the main things, and thus was led to insist upon them with a force and clearness of exposition which throw them out into unmistakable emphasis. If we look for the prime characteristics of Calvin’s doctrine of the Trinity, accordingly, we shall undoubtedly fix first upon its simplicity, then upon its consequent lucidity, and finally upon its elimination of the last remnants of subordinationism, so as to do full justice to the deity of Christ. Simplification, clarification, equalization—these three terms are the notes of Calvin’s conception of the

⁵⁸ Cf. L. L. Paine, *The Evolution of Trinitarianism*, p. 95: “It is a remarkable fact that the Protestant Reformation only increased the prestige of Augustine.... The question of the Trinity was not a subject of controversy and the Augustinian form of trinitarian doctrine became a fixed tradition. The Nicene Creed, as interpreted by the Pseudo-Athanasian Creed, was accepted on all sides and passed into all the Protestant Confessions. It is to be noted that Calvin insisted on the use of the term ‘person’ as the only word that would unmask Sabellianism. He also held to numerical unity of essence. This would seem to indicate that Calvin believed that God was one Being in three real persons, and, if so, he must have allowed that in God nature and person are not coincident. Yet he nowhere raises the question, and I am inclined to think he was not conscious of any departure from the views of Augustine.” Calvin does, however, repeatedly raise the question whether ‘nature’ and ‘person’ are coincident and repeatedly decides that they are, in the sense that the person is the whole nature in a personal distinction. “The whole nature (*tota natura*)” is affirmed to be “in each hypostasis” (*in unaquaque hypostasi*), though there is present to each one its own propriety (I. xiii. 19). Hence there is no such thing as “a triplex God”, the simple essence of God being divided among the three Persons” (xiii. 2); the essence is not multiplex, and the Son contains the whole of it in Himself (*totam in se*), etc. (*ibid.*).

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Trinity. And, of course, it is the last of these notes which gives above all else its character to his construction.⁵⁹

The note of simplification is struck at the outset of the discussion when Calvin announces it as his intention to seek “a short and easy definition which shall preserve us from all error” (I. xiii. 2, *ad init.*). What the short and easy definition which he had in mind included is suggested when he tells us later (20) that “when we profess to believe in one God, under the name of God is to be understood the single and simple essence in which we comprehend three persons or hypostases”. He accordingly expresses pleasure in the definition of Tertullian, when properly understood, that “there is in God a certain disposition or economy, which in no respect derogates from the unity of the essence” (6, *ad fin.*); and frankly declares that for him the whole substance of the doctrine is included in the simple statement “that the Father and the Son and the Spirit are one God; and yet neither is the Son the Father nor the Spirit the Son, but they are distinct by a certain property” (5). Similar simple forms of statement are thickly scattered through the discussion. “God so predicates Himself to be one”, he says at its outset, “that He propones Himself to be considered in three Persons” (2, *ad init.*). “There truly subsist in the one God, or what is the same thing, in the unity of God”, he says again, “a trinity of Persons” (4, *ad fin.*). “There are three *proprietates* in God” (*ibid.*). “In the one essence of God, there is a Trinity of Persons, and these are consubstantial” (5, *ad fin.*). “In the divine essence there exist three Persons, in whom the one God is cognized” (16). “There is a Trinity of Persons contained in the one God, not a trinity of Gods” (25). It is quite clear, not only from the frequency with which he lapses into such brief formulas, but also from the distinctness with which he declares that they contain all that is essential to the doctrine

⁵⁹ It is the same thing that is meant by G. A. Meier, *Lehre von der Trinität*, etc. (1844), II, p. 58, where, after remarking that the Reformed were prone to emphasise especially the unity of God (which involves what we have called “equalization”), he proceeds: “External circumstances early led to the sharp emergence of this peculiarity. In the controversy with Gentilis, who maintained that the essential being of the Son was from the Father, Calvin was compelled to contend that in His Godhead and in His nature, the Son is of Himself, and without principium, and only in His personal subsistence, has His principium in the Father.¹ Catholic theologians, especially Petau, have charged him with heresy for this, though he was only enunciating with increased sharpness the conviction of the Church, and rightly recalling that otherwise a plurality of Gods would be introduced.” At the points indicated the following notes are added. “1. ‘Since the name Jehovah is used in the passages cited above, it follows that the Son of God is with respect to His deity solely of Himself,’ *Val. Gentilis impietatum brevis explic. (Calv. Opp. Amsted. 1667, VIII, p. 572)*. ‘The essence of the Son has no principium, but the principium of the Person is God Himself’ (*loc. cit.*, p. 573). ‘We concede that the Son takes origin from the Father, so far as He is Son, but it is an origin not of time, nor of essence, ... but of order only’ (*l. c.*, p. 580).” “2. ‘Unless moreover the Son is God along with the Father, a plurality of Gods will necessarily be brought in’ (*Ep. ad Fratres Polonos*, p. 591). Accordingly Calvin called the “Deus de Deo” a “hard saying”. Against him see Petau, *de theol. dogm.*, II, lib. III, c. 3, §§ 2, 3. On the other hand, Bellarmine acknowledges that in the maintenance of the αὐτοθεότης of the Son there is no real departure from the doctrine of the Church.”

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of the Trinity (*e. g.*, § 5), that in Calvin's habitual thought of the Trinity it lay summed up in his mind in these simple facts: there is but one God; the Father, the Son, the Spirit is each this one God, the entire divine essence being in each; these three are three Persons, distinguished one from another by an incommunicable property.⁶⁰

Calvin's main interest among the elements of this simple doctrine of the Trinity obviously lay in his profound sense of the consubstantiality of the Persons. Whatever the Father is as God, that the Son and the Spirit are also. The Son—and, of course, also the Spirit—contains in Himself the whole essence of God, not part of it only nor by deflection, but in complete perfection (§ 2). What the Father is, reappears therefore in its totality (*se totum*) in the Son and in the Spirit. This is a mere corollary of their community in the numerically one essence. If the "entire nature" (*tota natura*, § 19) is included in each, it necessarily carries with it all the qualities by which it is made this particular nature which we call divine. Calvin is accordingly never weary of asserting that every divine attribute, in the height of its meaning, is manifested as fully in the Son—and, of course, also in the Spirit—as in the Father. In this indeed lay for him the very nerve of the doctrine of the Trinity. And in it, consistently carried out, lies the contribution which he made to the clear apprehension and formulation of that doctrine. For, strange as it may seem, theologians at large had been accustomed to apply the principle of consubstantiality to the Persons of the Trinity up to Calvin's vigorous assertion of it, with some at least apparent reserves. And when he applied it without reserve it struck many as a startling novelty if not a heretical pravity. The reason why the consubstantiality of the Persons of the Trinity, despite its establishment in the Arian controversy and its incorporation in the Nicene formulary as the very hinge of orthodoxy, was so long in coming fully to its rights in the general apprehension was no doubt that Nicene orthodoxy preserved in its modes of stating the doctrine of the Trinity some remnants of the conception and phraseology proper to the older prolationism of the Logos Christology, and these, although rendered innocuous by the explanations of the Nicene fathers and practically antiquated since Augustine, still held their place formally and more or less conditioned the thought of men—especially those who held the doctrine of the Trinity in a more or less traditional manner. The consequence was that when Calvin taught the doctrine in its purity and free from the leaven of subordinationism which still found a lurking place in current thought and speech, he seemed violently revolutionary to men trained in the old forms of speech

⁶⁰ Cf. *Adv. P. Caroli Calumnias* (*Opp.* vii, p. 212): "Yet in that one essence of God we acknowledge the Father with His eternal Word and Spirit. In using this distinction, however, we do not imagine three Gods, as if the Father were some other thing than the Son, nor yet do we understand them to be naked epithets, by which God is variously designated from His actions; but, along with the ecclesiastical writers, we perceive in the simple unity of God these three hypostases, that is subsistences, which although they coëxist in one essence are not to be confused with each other. Accordingly, though the Father is one God with His Word and Spirit, the Father is not the Word, nor the Word the Spirit."

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and imbued with the old modes of conception, and called out reprobation in the most unexpected quarters.

Particular occasion of offense was given by Calvin's ascription of "self-existence" (aseity, αὐτοουσία) to the Son, and the consequent designation of Him by the term αὐτόθεος. This term, which became famous in later controversy as designating Calvin's doctrine of Christ, seems, however, to have come forward only in the latest years of his life, in the dispute with Valentinus Gentilis (1558, 1561); and indeed to be rather Gentilis' word than Calvin's. Calvin, indeed, does not appear to have himself employed it, but only to have reclaimed it for Christ (and the Spirit) when Gentilis asserted that it was exclusively God the Father who could be so designated. "The Father alone", said Gentilis, "is αὐτόθεος, that is, essentiated by no superior divinity; but is God *a se ipso*"; "the λόγος of God is not that one αὐτόθεος whose λόγος it is; neither is the Spirit of God that immense and eternal Spirit whose Spirit it is".⁶¹ Such assertions, declares Calvin, are against all Scripture, which makes Christ very God: for what is more proper to God than to exist (*vivere*), and what else is αὐτοουσία than this?"⁶² But the thing represented by the term—"self-existence"—Calvin asserts of Christ from the beginning of his activity as a Christian teacher. It does not seem to be explicitly declared of Christ that He is self-existent, indeed, in the first edition of the *Institutes* (1536), although it is already implied there too, not only in the general vigor with which the absolute deity of Christ is asserted with all its implications, but also in the identification of Christ with Jehovah, which was to Calvin the especial vehicle of his representation of Him as the self-existent God. "That name which the Jews call ineffable is attributed to the Son in Jeremiah" (Jer. 23:33),⁶³ he already here tells us. In the spring of the following year,⁶⁴ however, at the councils held within a few days of one another respectively at Lausanne and Bern, our Lord's self-existence was fairly enunciated in so many words in the statement of his faith which Calvin made in rebuttal of the charges of Caroli. He begins with a very clear exposition of the doctrine of the Trinity, and then comes to speak of what peculiarly concerns Christ, adverting especially to His two natures. "For", he continues, "before He assumed flesh He was the eternal Word itself, begotten by the Father before the ages, very God, of one essence, power, majesty with the Father, and indeed Jehovah Himself, *who has always had it of*

⁶¹ *Expositio impietatis Valentini Gentilis*, 1561 (*Opp.* ix, pp. 374, 380).

⁶² *Ibid.*, Preface, p. 368. Cf. Beza in his *Life of Calvin*, who speaks of Gentilis under the year 1558 and describes him as wishing to make the Father alone αὐτόθεος (*Opp.* xxi, p. 154). These four references (ix. 368, 374, 380; xxi. 154) are all that are given in the Index to the Strasburg ed. (xxii. 493—this word does not occur in the Index of voll. xxiii sq.) of Calvin's works under the word αὐτόθεος.

⁶³ *Opp.* i, p. 58, at bottom of column.

⁶⁴ May 14 and 31, 1537.

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Himself that He should be and has inspired the power of subsisting in others.”⁶⁵ Caroli at once seized upon this declaration, and complained that therein “Christ was set forth as Jehovah, as if He had His essence of Himself (*a se ipso*)”.⁶⁶ From this beginning rose the controversy. For in this one of his “calumnies” Caroli found some following, and Calvin was worried by petty attacks upon this element of his teaching through a series of years.⁶⁷

Calvin apparently was somewhat astonished by the pother which was raised over an assertion which seemed to him not only a very natural one to make, but also a very necessary one to make if the true deity of our Lord is to be defended. He calls this particular one of Caroli’s assaults the “most atrocious” of all his calumnies, and he betrays some irritation at the repetition of it by others. One effect of it was, however, to make him see that, although it might seem to him a matter of course to speak of Christ as the self-existent God, it was not a matter which could be taken for granted, but needed assertion and defense. He inserted, therefore, in the *Institutes* of 1539 (second edition) a clear declaration on the subject, which, with only the adduction of some additional support chiefly drawn from Augustine (inserted in 1543 and 1559), was retained throughout the subsequent editions. “Moreover”, says he in this passage, “the absolutely simple unity of God is so far from being impeded by this distinction, that it rather affords a proof that the Son is one God with the Father, because He possesses one and the same Spirit with Him: while the Spirit is not another Being diverse from the Father and the Son, because He is the Spirit of the Father and of the Son. For in each hypostasis the whole nature is understood, along with that which is present to each one as His propriety. The Father is as a whole (*totus*) in the Son, the Son as a whole in the Father, as He Himself also asserts: ‘I in the Father and the Father in me’; and that one is not separated from another by any difference of essence is conceded by the ecclesiastical writers.”⁶⁸ By this understanding the opinions of the fathers are to be conciliated, which otherwise would seem altogether at odds with one another. For they teach now that the Father is the principium of the Son; and now they assert that the Son has from Himself (*a se ipso*) both

⁶⁵ *Opp.* vii, p. 314: qui a se ipso semper habuit ut esset, et aliis subsistendi virtutem inspiravit. Cf. ix. 707; x. 107, 121. Cf. Ruchat, *Histoire de la reformation de la Suisse, 1727 sq.*, V., pp. 27–28; Bähler, as cited, p. 75; and also Merle D’Aubigné, *Hist. of the Ref. in Europe in the Time of Calvin*, E. T., VI, p. 316.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 315.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 322: “But the most atrocious calumny of all is where he impugns this statement: that Christ always had it of Himself that He should be; in which he has been followed by some others, men of no account, who, however, worry good men with their improbity; in the number of whom is a certain rogue (*furcifer*) very like himself (Caroli), who calles himself Cortesius.”

⁶⁸ References to Augustine and Cyril are given in the margin: and in 1543 the following is inserted here in the text: “ ‘By these appellations which denote distinctions’, says Augustine, ‘what is signified is a reciprocal relation; not the substance itself which is one.’ ”

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divinity and essence.⁶⁹ When, however, the Sabellians raise a cavil that God is called now Father, now Son, now Spirit, in no way differently from His being named both strong and good and wise and merciful, they may easily be refuted from this, — that these manifestly are epithets which show what God is with respect to us, while the others are names which declare what He is really with respect to Himself. Neither ought anyone to be moved to confound the Spirit with the Father and the Son, because God announces Himself as a whole to be a Spirit (Jno. 9:24). For there is no reason why the whole essence of God should not be spiritual, and in that Spirit the Father, Son and Spirit be comprehended. And this very thing is made clear by the Scriptures. For as we hear God called a Spirit in them, so also we hear the Holy Spirit spoken of, and that both as God's Spirit and as from God."⁷⁰

Calvin was not permitted, however, to content himself with this brief positive declaration. A running fire was kept up upon his assertion of self-existence for Christ by two pastors of Neuchatel and its neighboring country, Jean Chaponneau (Capunculus) and Jean Courtois (Cortesius)—the latter of whom had married the daughter of Chaponneau's wife.⁷¹ Calvin was disposed at first to treat their criticism lightly, but was ultimately driven to give it serious attention. Writing to the Neuchatel ministers regarding certain articles which Courtois had drawn up,—with the help, as was understood, of Chaponneau,—Calvin remarks that he sees no reason for supposing them directed as a whole against him. One of them, however, he recognizes as having him in view,—that one in which, “as from a tripod”, the writer pronounces heretics those who say that “Christ, as He is God, is *a se ipso*”. “The answer”, he declares, “is easy. First let him tell me whether Christ is true and perfect God. Unless he wishes to parcel out the essence of God, he must confess that the whole of it is in Christ. And Paul's words are

⁶⁹ In 1543 there was added: “and therefore is one principium with the Father. The cause of this diversity, Augustine explains well and perspicuously in another place, speaking as follows: ‘Christ with reference to Himself (*ad se*) is called God; with reference to the Father (*ad patrem*) is called Son.’ And again ‘The Father *ad se* is called God, *ad filium* is called Father’. What is called Father *ad filium* is not the Son; what is called Son *ad patrem* is not the Father: what is called Father *ad se*, and Son *ad se* is the same God.’ When therefore we speak *simpliciter* of the Son without respect to the Father, we well and properly assert Him to be *a se*, and therefore call Him the unique principium. When, however, we are noting the relation in which He stands to the Father, we properly make the Father the principium of the Son.” To this there is further added in 1559: “To the explication of this matter the fifth book of Augustine's *De Trinitate*, is wholly devoted. It is far safer to rest in that relation which he teaches, than by more subtly penetrating into the divine mystery to wander through many vain speculations.” And with these words the paragraph closes in 1559.

⁷⁰ *Opp.* i, p. 491.

⁷¹ See Haag, *sub. nom.*, “Chaponneau”, ed. 2, vol. iii, p. 1084: “Shortly afterwards Chaponneau married; he married a widow whose daughter soon became the wife in turn of the Pastor John Courtois, known by some disputes that he had with Calvin. Chaponneau no more than his son-in-law hesitated to enter the lists with Calvin. The quarrel had its rise from a question relating to the person of Jesus ...”

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express: that 'in Him dwelleth the fullness of the Godhead'. Again I ask, 'Is that fullness of the Godhead from Himself or from some other source'? But he will object that the Son is of the Father. Who denies it? That I, for one, have not only always acknowledged, but even proclaimed. But this is where these donkeys deceive themselves: because they do not consider that the name of Son is spoken of the Person, and therefore is included in the predicament of relation, which relation has no place where we are speaking simply (*simpliciter*) of the divinity of Christ."⁷² In support of this distinction he then quotes Augustine, and proceeds to cite Cyril on the main point at issue, — passages to which we shall revert in the sequel. This letter was written at the end of May, 1543, and later in the year we find Calvin holding a conference with Courtois, the course of which he reports to the Neuchatel ministers in a letter written in November.⁷³ Courtois went away, however, still unconvinced, and Calvin found himself compelled not many months later (opening of 1545) to write to the Neuchatel pastors again at length on the subject, under considerable irritation.⁷⁴ "This", he here declares, "is the state of the controversy (*status controversiae*): Whether it may be truly predicated of Christ, that He is, as He is God, *a se ipso*? This Capunculus denies. Why? Because the name of Christ designates the Second Person in the Godhead, who stands in relation to the Father. I confess that if respect be had to the Person, we ought not so to speak. But I say we are not speaking of the Person but of the essence. I hold that the Holy Spirit is the real (*idoneum* = proper) author of this manner of speaking, since He refers to Christ all the declarations in which ἀποουσία is predicated of God, as in other passages, so in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews.... He (Capunculus) contends that Christ, because He is of the substance of the Father, is not *a se ipso*, since He has a principium from another. This I allow to him of the Person. What more does he want?... I confess that the Son of God is of the Father. Accordingly, since the Person has a cause (*ratio*), I confess that He is not *a se ipso*. But when we are speaking, apart from consideration of the Person, of His divinity or simply of the essence, which is the same thing, I say that it is rightly predicated of Him that He is *a se ipso*. For who, heretofore, has denied that under the name of Jehovah, there is included the declaration of ἀποουσία?" ...

It was, however, in his *Defence Against the Calumnies of Peter Caroli*, which was sent out in 1545 in reply to a new "libel" put forth by Caroli early that year,⁷⁵ that Calvin speaks most

⁷² *Opp.* xi, p. 560, Letter 474.

⁷³ *Opp.* xi, p. 652, Letter 521.

⁷⁴ *Opp.* xii, p. 16, Letter 607; *cf.* the letter of Capunculus, *Opp.* xi, p. 781, Letter 590.

⁷⁵ The *Defensio* was pseudonymously published under the name of Nicholas des Gallars, Calvin's secretary. Bähler, as cited, pp. 153 *sq.*, judges it very unfavorably and sharply criticises the advantage taken of its pseudonymity and its inaccuracies, as well as its harshness of tone. "The number of Calvin's polemical writings", says he, "is great, and they are all master-works of their order.... No other, however, surpasses the *Defensio* in harshness and bitterness. It is all in all, scarcely a happy creation of Calvin's...."

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at large on this subject, gathering up into this one defense, indeed, all the modes of statement and forms of argument he had hitherto worked out. He regards Caroli's strictures upon his assertion of Christ's self-existence as the most atrocious of all his calumnies, and prefixes to his discussion of them a citation of his own explanation of the matter, which he calls a "brief and naked explication". This runs as follows: "When we are speaking of the divinity of Christ all that is proper to God is rightly ascribed to Him, because respect is there had to the Divine essence and no question is raised as to the distinction which exists between the Father and the Son. In this sense it is true to say that Christ is the One and Eternal God, existing of Himself (*a se ipso existantem*). Nor can it be objected to this statement,—what certainly is also taught by the ecclesiastical writers,—that the Word or Son of God is of the Father (*a Patre*), even with respect to His eternal essence; since there is a notation of Persons, when there is commemorated a distinction of the Son from the Father. But what I have been speaking of is the divinity, in which is embraced not less the Father and the Spirit than the Son. So Cyril, who is often wont to call the Father the principium of the Son, holds it in the highest degree absurd for the Son not to be believed to have life and immortality of Himself (*a se ipso*). He also teaches that if it is proper to the ineffable nature to be self-existent (*a se ipso*), this is rightly ascribed to the Son. And moreover in the tenth book of his *Thesaurus*, he argues that the Father has nothing of Himself (*a se ipso*) which the Son does not have of Himself (*a se ipso*)."⁷⁶ From this beginning, he proceeds to elucidate the whole subject, drawing freely upon all that he had previously written upon it. The note of the discussion is given in the words: "I assert both truths—both that Christ is of the Father as He is the second Person, and that He is of Himself (*a se ipso*) if we have respect to the Divine essence *simpliciter*"—a declaration which he supports from the Fathers, particularly Augustine, thus: "Similarly Augustine (*Sermo*. 38 "de tempore"): 'Those names which signify the substance or essence of God, or whatever God is said to be in Himself (*ad se*), belong equally to all the Persons. There is not, therefore, any name of nature which can so belong to the Father that it may

From the standpoint of literary history the *Defensio* indisputably deserves unrestricted praise. The elegant, crisp style, the skill with which the author not only morally annihilates his opponent, but puts upon him the stamp of an impertinent person not to be taken seriously, and permeates all with the most sovereign scorn, makes the reading of this book, now nearly four hundred years old, an aesthetic enjoyment, which obscures the protest of righteous indignation at the startling injustices and glaring untruths which the author has permitted himself against Caroli. No doubt Calvin's conduct, if it cannot be excused, may yet to a certain degree be understood, when we reflect that Caroli, through almost ten years, had brought to the Reformer of Geneva incessant annoyances and the most bitter mortification, and by his accusations had imperilled his life-work as perhaps no other antagonist had been able to do" (p. 159). Compare the more measured censure of A. Lang (*Johannes Calvin*, 1909, p. 42) of the harshness of tone and opprobrious language used towards Caroli, in contrast with the high praise given the three Reformers—"when, although it was questionless written by Calvin himself, it was published in the name of his amanuensis, Nicholas des Gallars".

⁷⁶ *Opp.* vii, p. 322.

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not belong also to the Son, or Holy Spirit.' " The whole is brought to a conclusion by a passage the substance of which we have already had before us, but which seems worth quoting again that its force may be appreciated in its new setting: "I confess that if respect be had to the Person we ought not so to speak, but I say we are not speaking of the Person but of the essence. I hold that the Holy Spirit is the real author of this manner of speaking, since He refers to Christ all the declarations in which αὐτοουσία is predicated of God, as well in other passages, as in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews.... They contend that Christ, because He is of (*ex*) the substance of the Father, is not of Himself (*a se ipso*), since He has His principium from another. This I allow to them of the Person. What more do they ask? I acknowledge, then, that the Son of God is of the Father, and when we are speaking of the Person I acknowledge that He is not of Himself. But when, apart from consideration of the Person, we are speaking of His divinity, or which is the same thing *simpliciter* of the essence, I say that it is truly predicated of it that it is *a se ipso*. For who hitherto has denied of the name Jehovah, that it includes the declaration of αὐτοουσία? When, then, they object that the Son is of the Father, that I not only willingly acknowledge, but have even continually proclaimed. But here is where these donkeys are in error,—that they do not consider that the name of Son is spoken of the Person, and is therefore contained in the predication of relation; which relation has no place when we are talking of Christ's divinity *simpliciter*. And Augustine discourses eloquently on this matter" ... quoting the passages from Augustine to which we have already made reference.⁷⁷

That Calvin let the paragraph he had prepared on this subject for the second edition of his *Institutes* (1539) stand practically unchanged—strengthened only by a couple of passages cited from Augustine—in the editions of 1543 and 1550, may be taken as indication that he supposed that what he had brought together in his *Defense against the Calumnies of Caroli* (1545), incorporating as it does the essence of former expositions and defenses, was a sufficient exposition of the subject and defense of his point of view. In the meantime, however, the troubles in the Italian church in Geneva had broken out, culminating after a while in the controversies with Valentinus Gentilis (1558), in which new occasion was given for asserting the self-existence of Christ, and this brought it about that something more on this subject was incorporated into the *Institutes* of 1559. The positive statement was left, indeed, much as it had been given form in the *Institutes* of 1539 (§ 19): but in the long defense of the doctrine of the Trinity against Gentilis and his congeners with which the discussion of the doctrine closes in this edition much more is added on the self-existence of Christ. As over against these opponents the especial point in the doctrine of the Trinity which required defense was the true deity of the second and third Persons. On this defense Calvin entered *con amore*, for he ever showed himself, as

⁷⁷ *Opp.* vii, p. 323.

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he had himself expressed it, a “detester as sacrilegious of all who have sought to overturn or to minimise or to obscure the truth of the divine majesty which is in Christ”.⁷⁸ The God whom Isaiah saw in the Temple (6:1), he says, John (12:14) declares to have been Christ; the God whom the same Isaiah declares shall be a rock of offense to the Jews (8:14) Paul pronounces to be Christ (Rom. 9:33); the God to whom the same Isaiah asserts every knee shall bow (45:23), Paul tells us is Christ (Rom. 14:11); the God whom the Psalmist proclaims as laying the foundations of the earth and whom all angels shall worship (Ps. 102:25, 47:7) the Epistle to the Hebrews identifies with Christ (1:6, 10). Now, continues Calvin, in every one of these passages it is the name “Jehovah” which is used, and that carries with it the self-existence of Christ with respect to His deity.⁷⁹ “For if He is Jehovah, it cannot be denied that He is the same God who elsewhere cries through Isaiah (44:6), ‘I, I am, and besides me there is no God’. We must also weigh”, he adds, “that declaration of Jeremiah (10:11): ‘the gods which have not made the heaven and the earth shall perish from the earth which is under heaven’; while on the other hand it must be acknowledged that it is the Son of God whose deity is often proved by Isaiah from the creation of the world. But how shall the Creator who gives being to all things not be self-existent (*ex se ipso*) but derive His essence from another? For whoever says the Son is essentiated by the Father, denies that He is of Himself (*a se ipso*). But the Holy Spirit cries out against this by naming Him Jehovah.” “The deity, therefore, we affirm”, he says a little later,⁸⁰ “to be absolutely self-existent (*ex se ipso*). Whence we acknowledge the Son, too, as He is God, to be self-existent (*ex se ipso*), when reference to His Person is not present: while, as He is Son, we say He is of the Father. Thus the essence is without principium; but the principium of the Person is God Himself.”

It does not seem necessary, however, to multiply citations. Enough have already been adduced, doubtless, to illustrate the clearness, iterance and emphasis with which Calvin asserted the self-existence of Christ as essential to His complete deity; and at least to suggest his mode of conceiving the Trinity in accordance with this emphasis on the absolute equality, or rather, let us say, identity of the three Persons of the Godhead in their deity. His conception involved, of course, a strongly emphasized distinction between the essence and the Personality. In essence the three Persons are numerically one: the whole essence belongs to each Person:⁸¹ the whole essence, of course, with all its properties, which are only its peculiarities as an essence and are inseparable from it just because they are not other substances but only qualities. In person, however, the three

⁷⁸ *Opp.* vii, p. 314.

⁷⁹ *Opp.* ii, p. 110; *Institutes*, 1559, I. xiii. 23: nam quum ubique ponatur nomen Jehovahae, sequitur deitatis respectu ex se ipso esse.

⁸⁰ P. 113: I. xiii. 25.

⁸¹ *Cf.* I. xiii. 2: The Son contains in Himself the whole essence of God: not a part of it only, nor by deflection only, but *in integra perfectione*.

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Persons are numerically three, and are as distinct from one another as the distinguishing qualities by which one is the Father, another the Son and the third the Spirit. In these facts Calvin found the essence of the doctrine of the Trinity, and in accordance with his professed purpose to find a brief and easy definition of the Trinity we may say that in these facts are summed up all he held to be necessary to a doctrine of the Trinity.

Nevertheless Calvin's conception of the Trinity, if we cannot exactly say necessarily included, yet in point of fact included, more than this. It included the postulation of an "order" in the Persons of the Trinity, by which the Father is first, the Son second, and the Spirit third. And it included a doctrine of generation and procession by virtue of which the Son as Son derives from the Father, and the Spirit as Spirit derives from the Father and the Son. Perhaps this aspect of his conception of the Trinity is nowhere more succinctly expressed than in a passage in the eighteenth section of this chapter (xiii). Here he explicitly declares that "although the eternity of the Father is the eternity of the Son and Spirit also, since God could never be without His Wisdom and Power,—and in eternity there is no question of first and last,—it is nevertheless not vain or superfluous to observe an *order* [in the three Persons], since the Father is enumerated as the first, next the Son *ex eo*, and afterwards the Spirit *ex utroque*. For everyone's mind instinctively inclines to consider God first, then the Wisdom emerging from Him, and finally the Power by which He executes the decrees of His counsel. For this reason the Son is said to come forth (*existere*) from the Father (*a Patre*), the Spirit alike from the Father and the Son." The intimations which are here brought together are often repeated. Thus, for example: "For since the properties in the Persons bear an order, so that in the Father is the *principium et origo* ... the *ratio ordinis* is held, which, however, in no respect derogates from the deity of the Son and Spirit" (§ 20). Again: "But from the Scriptures we teach that *essentialiter* there is but one God, and therefore the essence as well of the Son as of the Spirit is unbegotten (*ingenitum*). Yet inasmuch as (*quatenus*) the Father is first in order and has begotten His own Wisdom *ex se*, He is justly (as we have just said) considered the *principium et fons* of the whole divinity" (§ 28). Again, although he "pronounces it a detestable figment that the essence is the property of the Father alone as if He were the *deificator* of the Son", he yet "acknowledges that *ratione ordinis et gradus*, the *principium divinitatis* is in the Father" (§ 24). "The Father is the fountain of the deity, not with respect of the essence, but the order" (§ 26). And because the Father is thus the *fons et principium deitatis* (§ 23) from whom (*ex quo*, § 18) there have come forth (*existere*, § 18) the Son and afterwards from the Son along with the Father the Spirit (§ 18 *ex utroque*), there is involved here a doctrine of an eternal generation of the Son and procession of the Spirit. Both are repeatedly asserted. Of the Son, for example, we read: "It is necessary to understand that the Word was begotten of the Father (*genitum ex Patre*) before time (*ante secula*) (§ 7); "we conclude again, therefore, that the Word, before the beginning of time, was conceived (*conceptum*) by God (§ 8); "He is the Son of God, because He is the Word begotten of the

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Father (*genitus a Patre*) before the ages (*secula*)" (§ 23); "He is called the Son of God, ... inasmuch as He was begotten of the Father (*genitus a Patre*) before the ages (*secula*)" (§ 24).⁸²

Although such passages, however,—and they are very numerous, or we may perhaps better say, pervasive, in Calvin's discussion of the Trinity,—make it perfectly plain that he taught a doctrine of order and grade in the Persons of the Trinity, involving a doctrine of the derivation—and that, of course, before all time—of the second and third Persons from the first as the fountain and origin of deity, it is important for a correct understanding of his conception that we should attend to the distinctions by which he guarded his meaning. Of course, he did not teach that the essence of the Son or of the Spirit is the product of their generation or procession. It had been traditional in the Church from the beginning of the Trinitarian controversies to explain that generation and procession concerned only the Persons of the Son and Spirit;⁸³ and Calvin availed himself of this traditional understanding. "The essence, as well of the Son as of the Spirit, is unbegotten (*ingenitum*)" (§ 25). "The essence of the Son has no *principium*, but God Himself is the *principium* of His Person" (§ 25). The matter does not require elaboration here, both because this is obviously the natural view for Calvin to present and hence goes without saying, and because his mode of presenting and arguing it has been sufficiently illustrated in passages already cited.⁸⁴ There is another distinction he appears to have

⁸² Already in the *first* edition of the *Institutes* this phraseology is fixed; *Opp.* I, p. 64: "By which we confess that we believe in Jesus Christ, who, we are convinced, is the unique Son of God the Father, not like believers by adoption and grace only, but naturally as begotten from eternity by the Father." So p. 62: "The Word of the Father—not such as men speak or think, but eternal and unchangeable, as emerging in an ineffable manner from the Father."

⁸³ Cf. De Moor, in *Marckii Compend.*, I, p. 735: "The Nicene fathers had reference to nothing but the personal order of subsistence when they said the Son is 'God of God, Light of Light'; while, considered absolutely and essentially, the Son is the same God with the Father." This is expressed by Dr. Shedd with his wonted clearness and emphasis as follows (*A History of Christian Doctrine*, 1873, I, pp. 339 *sq.*): "The Nicene Trinitarians rigorously confined the ideas of 'Sonship' and 'generation' to the hypostatical character. It is not the essence of the Deity that is generated, but a *distinction* in that essence. And, in like manner, the term 'procession' applied to the Holy Spirit pertains exclusively to the third hypostasis, and has no application to the substance of the Godhead. The term 'begotten' in the Nicene trinitarianism is descriptive only of *that which is peculiar to the second Person, and confined to Him*. The Son is generated with respect only to His Sonship, or, so to speak, His individuality (*ιδιότης*), but is not generated with respect to His essence or nature.... The same *mutatis mutandis* is true of the term 'procession'.... Thus, from first to last, in the Nicene construction of the doctrine of the Trinity, the terms 'beget', 'begotten', and 'proceed', are confined to the hypostatical distinctions, and have no legitimate or technical meaning, when applied to the Trinity as a whole, or, in other words, to the Essence in distinction from the hypostasis." ... Calvin was fully entitled to avail himself of this distinction, as he fully did so.

⁸⁴ His later Trinitarian controversies with Gentilis and his companions brought out many strong assertions precisely in point. For example, in the discussion in the *Institutes* (I. xiii. 23 *sq.*), he defines the precise thing he wishes to refute as the representation of the Father as "the sole essentiator" who "in

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made, however, which is not so clear. Although he taught that the Son was begotten of the Father, and of course begotten before all time, or as we say from all eternity, he seems to have drawn back from the doctrine of “eternal generation” as it was expounded by the Nicene Fathers. They were accustomed to explain “eternal generation” (in accordance with its very nature as “eternal”), not as something which has occurred once for all at some point of time in the past,—however far back in the past,—but as something which is always occurring, a perpetual movement of the divine essence from the first Person to the second, always complete, never completed.⁸⁵ Calvin seems to have found this conception difficult, if not meaningless. In the closing words of the discussion of the Trinity in the *Institutes*⁸⁶ he classes it among the speculations which impose unnecessary burdens on the mind. “For what is the profit”, he asks, “of disputing whether the Father always generates (*semper generet*), seeing that it is fatuous to imagine a continuous act of generating (*continuus actus generandi*) when it is evident that three Persons have subsisted in God from eternity?” His meaning appears to be that the act of generation must have been completed from all eternity, since its product has existed complete from all eternity, and therefore it is meaningless to speak of it as continually proceeding. If this is the meaning of his remark, it is a definite rejection of the Nicene speculation of “eternal generation”. But this is very far from saying that it is a rejection of the Nicene Creed—or even of the assertion in this Creed to the effect that the Son is “God of God”. We have just seen that Calvin explicitly teaches the “eternal generation” of the Son, in the sense that

forming the Son and the Spirit has transfused His own deity into them” (§ 23); to whom therefore alone the “essence of God belongs” and to whom as “essentiator” the Son and Spirit owe their essence. In opposition to this he declares that “although we confess that in point of order and degree the *principium divinitatis* is in the Father, we nevertheless pronounce it a detestable figment that the essence is the property of the Father alone, as if He were the deificator of the Son; because in this way either the essence would be multiplex or the Son would be called God only in a titular and imaginary sense. If they allow that the Son is God but second from the Father, then the essence will be in Him *genita et formata*, which is in the Father *ingenita et informis*” (§ 24, near end). “We teach from the Scriptures”, he explains (§ 25, beginning) “that there is one God in point of essence (*essentialiter*), and therefore the essence of both Son and Spirit is *ingenita*. But inasmuch as the Father is first in order and has begotten from Himself (*genuit ex se*) His own Wisdom, He is rightly considered, as I have just said, the *principium et fons totius divinitatis*. Thus God indefinitely is *ingenitus*; and the Father with regard to His Person also is *ingenitus*.” Calvin’s weapon against the tritheists, therefore, was precisely that the essence of God, whether in the first, second or third Person, is not generated: that it is only the Person which is generated, and that, strictly speaking, only the Person of the Son,—the Person of the Father being ingenerate, and it being more proper to speak of the Person of the Spirit as ‘proceeding’. This is merely, however, the traditional representation, utilized by Calvin, not a new view of his own.

⁸⁵ Cf. Sheldon, *Hist. of Christian Doctrine*, I, p. 202: “Like Origen, the Nicene fathers seem to have conceived of the generation, not as something accomplished once for all, but as something parallel with the eternal life of the Son, ever complete and ever continued.” Also, Shedd, *A History of Christian Doctrine*, I, p. 317: “Eternal generation is an immanent perpetual activity in an ever existing essence.”

⁸⁶ I. xiii. 29, *ad fin.*

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He was begotten by the Father before all time. It manifestly was a matter of fixed belief with him. He does indeed refuse to find proof texts for it in many of the passages which it had been the custom to cite in evidence of it.⁸⁷ But he does not therefore feel that he lacks adequate proof of it. There is one argument for it, he tells us, which seems to him worth a thousand distorted texts. "It is certain that God is not a Father to men except through the intercession of that only begotten Son, who alone rightly vindicates to Himself this prerogative, and by whose beneficence it derives to us. But God always wished to be called upon by His people by His name of Father: whence it follows that there was already then in existence the Son through whom that relationship was established."⁸⁸ That the Son is "God of God" he is therefore as fully convinced as the Nicene fathers themselves. When, then, he criticises the formulas of the Nicene Creed, "God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God", as repetitious, this is a criticism of the form, not of the content of this statement.⁸⁹ And when he speaks of the "Deus de Deo" of the Creed as a "hard saying" (*dura locutio*), he by no means denies that it is "true and useful", in the sense its framers put on it, in the sense, that is, that the Son has His *principium* merely as Son in the Father, but only means that the form of the statement is inexact—the term "Deus" requiring to be taken in each case of its occurrence in a non-natural personal sense—and that, being inexact, it is liable to be misused in the interests of a created God, in the sense of Gentilis, and must therefore be carefully explained.⁹⁰ His

⁸⁷ Of this Scholten, *De Leer der Hervormde Kerk*, ed. 4, II, p. 237 (cf. I. 24, II. 229) makes great capital. In the middle edd. of the *Institutes*, I, p. 483, however, Calvin in the very act of discarding these texts as proof asserts his firm belief in the fact of the Divine Sonship of our Lord, as is immediately to be shown. On Calvin's clear-sightedness and critical honesty in dealing with such texts Baumgartner has some good remarks (*Calvin Hébraïsant*, 1889, pp. 37, 38). He illustrates the scandal it created at the time among those accustomed to rely on these texts by citing Aegidius Hunnius' book with the portentous title: *Calvinus judaizans, hoc est: Judaicae glossae et corruptelae quibus Johannes Calvinus illustrissima Scripturae sacrae loca et testimonia de gloriosa trinitate, deitate Christi et Spiritus Sancti, cum primis autem vaticinia prophetarum de adventu Messiae, nativitate ejus passione et resurrectione, ascensione in coelos et sessione ad dextram Dei, detestandum in modum corrumpere non exhorruit. Addita est corruptelarum confutatio* (Wittenberg: 1593).

⁸⁸ Middle edd. of *Institutes*, *Opp.* I, p. 483.

⁸⁹ *Opp.* vii, p. 315, where it is explicitly declared that he had no intention of derogating from the symbol: cf. p. 316.

⁹⁰ *Preface to the Expositio impietatis Val. Gentilis*, 1561 (*Opp.* ix, p. 368): "But the words of the Council of Nice run: Deum esse de Deo. A hard saying (*dura locutio*), I confess; but for removing its ambiguity no one can be a more suitable interpreter than Athanasius, who dictated it. And certainly the design of the fathers was no other than to maintain the origin which the Son draws from the Father in respect of Person, without in any way opposing the sameness of the essence and deity in the two, so that as to essence the Word is God *absque principio*, while in Person the Son has His *principium* from the Father." Petavius' criticism is therefore wide of the mark when (*De Trinitate*, III. iii. 2, ed. Paris, 1865, pt. II, p. 523; cf. also Bellarmine, *De Christo*, Preface, *Opp.* as cited, i, p. 244) he declares that Calvin "speaks rashly and altogether untheologically (*temere et prorsus à θεολογῆταις*)" when he calls this locution 'hard', because he supposes that Christ, as He is God is *a se ipso*, i. e., *αὐτόθεος*." But Calvin (who certainly does believe

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position is, in a word, that of one who affirms the eternal generation of the Son, but who rejects the speculations of the Nicene Fathers respecting the nature of the act which they called “eternal generation”. It is enough, he says in effect, to believe that the Son derives from the Father, the Spirit from the Father and the Son, without encumbering ourselves with a speculation upon the nature of the eternally generating act to which these hypostases are referred. It is interesting to observe that Calvin’s attitude upon these matters is precisely repeated by Dr. Charles Hodge in his discussion in his *Systematic Theology*.⁹¹ It seems to be exactly Calvin’s point of view to which Dr. Hodge gives expression when he writes: “A distinction must be made between the Nicene Creed (as amplified in that of Constantinople) and the doctrine of the Nicene Fathers. The creeds are nothing more than the well-ordered arrangement of the facts of Scripture which concern the doctrine of the Trinity. They assert the distinct personality of the Father, Son and Spirit; their mutual relation as expressed by these terms; their absolute unity as to substance or essence, and their consequent perfect equality; and the subordination of the Son to the Father, and of the Spirit to the Father and Son, as to the mode of subsistence and operation. These are Scriptural facts, to which the creeds in question add nothing; and it is in this sense that they have been accepted by the Church Universal. But the Nicene Fathers did undertake in a greater or less degree to explain these facts. These explanations relate principally to the subordination of the Son and Spirit to the Father, and to what is meant by generation, or the relation between the Father and the Son.... As in reference to the subordination of the Son and Spirit to the Father, as asserted in the ancient creeds, it is not to the fact that exception is taken, but to the explanation of that fact, as given by the Nicene fathers, the same is true with regard to the doctrine of Eternal Generation.”

that Christ is self-existent God and therefore may properly be called *αὐτόθεος*), does not find the locution *Deus de* (or *ex*) *Deo* “hard” (*dura*) on that account: he thoroughly believes both in the *θεὸς ἐκ θεοῦ* of the Creed and in the *αὐτοθεότης* of Christ, and found no difficulty whatever in harmonizing them. When he pronounces this locution ‘harsh’ his mind is on the possibility of its misuse by the Antitrinitarians as if it meant that the Son was *made God* by the Father. When, therefore, Petavius adds (§ 3, p. 524): “So then, the locution, *God is from God*, is not only true but useful (*proba*) and consentaneous to Christian teaching; not as the Autotheani and Calvinists ignorantly babble, *hard*” —he says no more for the substance of it than Calvin had himself said in the very passage in which he called the locution ‘harsh’, —that is to say, that it expresses an important truth, this, to wit, that the Son draws His origin, with respect to His Person, from the Father. No doubt Calvin may also suggest that there might wisely have been chosen a less ambiguous way of saying this than the ‘harsh’ locution *Deus de Deo* — which certainly is capable of being misunderstood as teaching that the Son owes His divinity to the Father — as Gentilis taught. See below, note 95.

⁹¹ *Systematic Theology*, vol. I, 1874, pp. 462 sq. On pp. 466, 467 he gives a very clear statement of Calvin’s position, of which he expresses full approval.

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The circumstance that Dr. Charles Hodge, writing three centuries afterwards (1559–1871), reproduces precisely Calvin’s position may intimate to us something of the historical significance of Calvin’s discussion of the Trinity. Clearly Calvin’s position did not seem a matter of course, when he first enunciated it. It roused opposition and created a party. But it did create a party: and that party was shortly the Reformed Churches, of which it became characteristic that they held and taught the self-existence of Christ as God and defended therefore the application to Him of the term *αὐτόθεος*; that is to say, in the doctrine of the Trinity they laid the stress upon the equality of the Persons sharing in the same essence, and thus set themselves with more or less absoluteness against all subordinationism in the explanation of the relations of the Persons to one another. When Calvin asserted, with the emphasis which he threw upon it, the self-existence of Christ, he unavoidably did three things. First and foremost, he declared the full and perfect deity of our Lord, in terms which could not be mistaken and could not be explained away. The term *αὐτόθεος* served the same purpose in this regard that the term *ὁμοούσιος* had served against the Arians and the term *ὑπόστασις* against the Sabellians. No minimizing conception of the deity of Christ could live in the face of the assertion of aseity or *αὐτοθεότης* of Him. This was Calvin’s purpose in asserting aseity of Christ and it completely fulfilled itself in the event. In thus fulfilling itself, however, two further effects were unavoidably wrought by it. The inexpugnable opposition of subordinationists of all types was incurred: all who were for any reason or in any degree unable or unwilling to allow to Christ a deity in every respect equal to that of the Father were necessarily offended by the vindication to Him of the ultimate Divine quality of self-existence. And all those who, while prepared to allow true deity to Christ, yet were accustomed to think of the Trinitarian relations along the lines of the traditional Nicene orthodoxy, with its assertion of a certain subordination of the Son to the Father, at least in mode of subsistence, were thrown into more or less confusion of mind and compelled to resort to nice distinctions in order to reconcile the two apparently contradictory confessions of *αὐτοθεότης* and of *θεὸς ἐκ θεοῦ* of our Lord. It is not surprising, then, that the controversy roused by Caroli and carried on by Chaponneau and Courtois did not die out with their refutation; but prolonged itself through the years and has indeed come down even to our own day. Calvin’s so-called innovation with regard to the Trinity has, in point of fact, been made the object of attack through three centuries, not only by Unitarians of all types, nor only by professed Subordinationists, but also by Athanasians, puzzled to adjust their confession of Christ as “God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God” to the at least verbally contradictory assertion that in respect of His deity He is not of another but of Himself.

The attack has been especially sharp naturally where the assailants were predisposed to criticism of Calvin on other grounds, as was the case, for example, with Romanists, Lutherans and afterward with Arminians. As was to be expected, it is found in its most

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decisive form among the Romanists, and we are afraid we must say with Gomarus that with them it seems to have been urged in the first instance, rather because of a desire to disparage Calvin and the Calvinists than in any distinct doctrinal interest.⁹² The beginning of the assault seems to have been made by Genebrardus, who “in the first book of his treatise on the Trinity, refutes what he calls the heresy of those denominated *Autotheanites*, that is of those who say that Christ is God of Himself (*a se ipso*), not of the Father, attributing this heresy to Calvin and Beza and in the Preface to his work (mistakenly) surmising that Francis Stancarus was the originator of it.”⁹³ The way thus opened, however, was largely followed by the whole crowd of Romish controversialists, the most notable of whom in the first age were probably Anthony Possevinus, Alphonsus Salmeron, William Lindanus, Peter Canisius, Dionysius Petavius,⁹⁴ all of whom exhaust the resources of dialectics in the endeavor to fix upon Calvin and his followers a stigma of heresy in the fundamental doctrine of the Trinity. A more honorable course was pursued by probably the two greatest Romish theologians of the time, Gregory of Valentia and Robert Bellarmine. Although in no way disinclined to find error in the teaching of Calvin and the Calvinists, these more cautious writers feel compelled to allow that Calvin in his zeal to do full justice to the deity of Christ has not passed beyond Catholic truth, and blame him therefore only for inaccuracy of phrase. Gregory of Valentia, whom Gomarus calls “the Coryphaeus of Papal theologians”, speaking of the error of the *Autotheanites*, remarks: “Genebrardus has attributed this error to Calvin (*Inst.*, I. xiii), but, in point of fact, if he be read attentively, it will be seen that he [Calvin] meant merely that the Son, as He is indeed essentially God, is *ex se*, and is *ex Patre* only as He is a Person: and that is true. For although the Fathers and Councils assert that He is *Deus ex Deo* most truly, by taking the term [God] personally, so that it signifies the

⁹² *Diatribes de Christo* αὐτοθεῶν, printed by Voetius, in *Selectae Disputationes Theologicae*, Part I, 1648, p. 445: calumniandi potius libidine quam erroris cum Arianis societate.

⁹³ We are quoting from Bellarmine, *De Christo*, II, cap. xix, *ad init.* (*Opp.* as cited, i, p. 333). Cf. the opening words of Petavius’ discussion, *De Trinitate*, VI. xi. 5 (*Opp.* as cited, iii, p. 251b): “With respect to more recent writers, there exists a far from small altercation of the Catholics with heretics, especially with Calvin, Beza and their crew (*asseclis*). For Genebrardus in the first book of his *de Trinitate* very sharply upbraids (*insectatur*) them and gives them the name of *autotheanites*, because they say the Son has His divinity and essence of Himself; an error mentioned also by William Lindanus.”

⁹⁴ Voetius, *Dispt.* I, pp. 453, 454, gives an account of the opponents of the Reformed ascription of αὐτοθεότης to Christ. There are three classes: Romanists, Lutherans, and Arminians, to which he adds as fourth and fifth classes Peter Caroli, and the Antitrinitarians (Crell and Schlichting). The Romanists he subdivides into two classes, those who find that Calvin taught heresy and those who object to his language only. The latter sub-class includes only Bellarmine and Gregory of Valentia. Under the former, however, he enumerates a long list of writers with exact references. Cf. also De Moor in *Marck. Comp.* I, pp. 773–4 (V. x).

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Person itself at once of the Father and of the Son;⁹⁵ nevertheless the Son, as He is essentially God, that is, as He is that one, most simple Being which is God, is not from another, because as such He is an absolute somewhat. If this were all that were meant by the other heretics who are called 'Autotheanites', there would be no occasion for contending with them. For it was in this sense that Epiphanius, *Haer.* 69, seems to have called the Son *αὐτοθεός*."⁹⁶ Bellarmine's candor scarcely stretches so far as Gregory's. While he too feels compelled to allow that Calvin's meaning is catholic, he yet very strongly reprobates his mode of stating that meaning and declares that it gives fair occasion for the strictures which have been passed upon him. "When", says he, "I narrowly look into the matter itself, and carefully consider Calvin's opinions, I find it difficult to declare that he was in this error. For he teaches that the Son is of Himself (*a se*), in respect of essence, not in respect of Person, and seems to wish to say that the Person is begotten by the Father [but] the essence is not begotten or produced, but is of itself (*a se ipsa*); so that if you abstract from the Person of the Son the relation to the Father, the essence alone remains, and that is of itself (*a se ipsa*)." But on the other hand Bellarmine thinks "that Calvin has undoubtedly erred in his manner of expressing himself, [and] given occasion to be spoken of as he has been spoken of by our [the Romish] writers". This judgment is supported by the following specifications: "For he [Calvin] says, *Inst.*, I. xiii. 19: 'The ecclesiastical writers now teach that the Father is the principium of the Son, now assert that the Son has both divinity and essence of Himself (*a se ipso*)' And below this: 'Accordingly, when we speak of the Son *simpliciter* without respect to the Father, we may well and properly assert that He is of Himself (*a se*).' And in the twenty-third section, speaking of the Son, 'How,' he asks, 'shall the creator who gives being to all things not be of Himself (*a se ipso*), but derive His essence from another?' And in his letter to the Poles and in his work against Gentilis, Calvin frequently asserts that the Son is *αὐτόθεος*, that is, God of Himself (*a se ipso*), and [declares] the expression in the Creed 'God of God, Light of Light' an improper and hard saying."

The gravamen of Bellarmine's charges we see from a later passage (p. 738 b, near bottom) turns on Calvin's assertion that "the Son has [His] essence from Himself (*a se*)". This,

⁹⁵ That is to say, the phrase "God of God" is interpreted to mean "God the Son, of God the Father"—God in the first instance meaning (not the essence but) the Person of the Son, and in the second instance (not the essence but) the Person of the Father. Only on this supposition, as Gregory allows, can the phrase "God of God" be applied to Christ in exactness of speech. That is to say, Gregory finds the phrase as inexact as Calvin does when he calls it a *dura locutio*.

⁹⁶ We repeat the passage from Gomarus' citation in Voetius' *Disputat.* I, p. 448. Gomarus cites Gregory *ad summae Thomae* part I., disp. 2, quaest. 1, punct. 1, p. 718. The passage is found also, however, in Gregory's treatise *De Trinitate*, II. 1. (to which Voetius refers us, p. 454, adding appropriate references also to I. 17 and II. 22). See Gregorii de Valentia ... *de rebus fidei hoc tempore controversis Libri*, Paris, 1610, p. 205, first column, B and C.

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Bellarmino declares, is to be “repudiated *simpliciter*”, as he undertakes to demonstrate, on the grounds that it is repugnant to Scripture, the definitions of the Councils, the teaching of the Fathers, and reason itself, and as well to Calvin’s own opinions; and is not established by the arguments which Calvin adduces in its behalf. In Bellarmine’s view, however, in so speaking Calvin merely expressed himself badly: he really meant nothing more than that the Son with respect to His essence, which is His as truly as it is the Father’s, is of Himself (*a se ipso*). He thinks this is proved by the fact that Calvin elsewhere speaks in terms which infer his orthodoxy in the point at issue. He speaks of the Son, for example, as begotten of the Father, which would be meaningless, if He does not receive His nature, or essence, from the Father, since “it is not a mere relation which is called the Son, but a real somewhat subsisting in the divine nature”, and the Son is “not a mere propriety but an *integra hypostasis*”. He even plainly says in so many words (I. xiii. 28) that the essence is communicated from the Father to the Son: “If the difference is in the essence, let them reply whether He has not shared it (*communicaverit*) with the Son.... It follows that it is wholly and altogether (*tota est in solidum*) common to the Father and Son.” And he does not embrace the errors which would flow from ascribing to the Son His essence of Himself: for example, he ascribes but a single essence to the Persons of the Trinity, and he does not distinguish the essence from the Persons *realiter* but only *ratione*.

Petavius does not find it possible to follow Bellarmine in this exculpating judgment. For his part, he willingly admits that Calvin sometimes speaks inconsistently with himself, but he cannot doubt that he means what he says, when he declares that the Son has His essence not from the Father but from Himself—and this is a thing which, says he, is not only false, but impious to say, and cannot be affirmed by any Catholic. For it stands to reason, he argues, that everyone “has his essence from him by whom he is begotten; since generation is just the communication of the nature,—whether, as in created things, in kind, or, as in the divine production of the Word, in number. It is indeed impossible to form any conception of generation without the nature, and some communication of the essence, occurring to the mind.” The whole question of Calvin’s orthodoxy, between these writers, it will be seen, turns on their judgment as to his attitude towards the doctrine of “eternal generation”. Bellarmine judges that, on the whole, though he has sometimes expressed himself inconsistently with regard to it, Calvin soundly believes in the doctrine of “eternal generation”; and therefore he pronounces him orthodox. Petavius judges that, though he sometimes expresses himself in the terms of the doctrine of “eternal generation”, Calvin does not really believe in it; and therefore he pronounces him heretical. To both authors alike the test of orthodoxy lies in conformity of thought to the Nicene speculation, and they cannot conceive of a sound doctrine of the Trinity apart from this speculation and all the nice discriminations and adjustments which result from

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it.⁹⁷ And it can scarcely be denied that Calvin laid himself open to suspicion from this point of view. The principle of his doctrine of the Trinity was not the conception he formed of the relation of the Son to the Father and of the Spirit to the Father and Son, expressed respectively by the two terms 'generation' and 'procession': but the force of his conviction of the absolute equality of the Persons. The point of view which adjusted everything to the conception of "generation" and "procession" as worked out by the Nicene fathers was entirely alien to him. The conception itself he found difficult, if not unthinkable; and although he admitted the facts of 'generation' and 'procession', he treated them as bare facts, and refused to make them constitutive of the doctrine of the Trinity. He rather adjusted everything to the absolute divinity of each Person, their community in the one only true Deity; and to this we cannot doubt that he was ready not only to subordinate, but even to sacrifice, if need be, the entire body of Nicene speculations. Moreover, it would seem at least very doubtful if Calvin, while he retained the conception of 'generation' and 'procession', strongly asserting that the Father is the *principium divinitatis*, that the Son was "begotten" by Him before all ages and that the Spirit "proceeded" from the Father and Son before time began, thought of this begetting and procession as involving any communication of essence. His conception was that, because it is the Person of the Father which begets the Person of the Son, and the Person of the Spirit which proceeds from the Persons of the Father and Son, it is precisely the distinguishing property of the Son which is the thing begotten, not the essence common to Father and Son, and the distinguishing property of the Spirit which is the product of the procession, not the essence which is common to all three persons. Of course, he did not hold, as Bellarmine phrases it, that "the Son is a mere relation", "a mere property": the Son was to him too, as a matter of course, "*aliquid subsistens in natura divina*", "*integra hypostasis*". But he did hold that Sonship is a relation and that the Son differs from the Father only by this property of Sonship which is expressed as a relation (I. xiii. 6); and it looks very much as if his thought was that it is only in what is expressed by the term

⁹⁷ It is interesting to observe how constantly the argument hangs formally on the suppressed premise of the Nicene doctrine of generation. Thus Bellarmine argues (p. 334b) that "those who assert that the Son has His essence *a se ipso* err because they are compelled either (1) to make the Son ingenerate *and the same person with the Father*, or (2) to multiply the essences, or at least (3) to distinguish the essence from the person *realiter* and so introduce a quaternity." As Calvin does none of these things, he is pronounced orthodox in meaning. But the point now to be illustrated lies in the assumption under (1) that to make the Son ingenerate is to make Him the same person with the Father. It does not occur to Bellarmine as possible that one should deny the Son to be generated and yet not make Him the same person with the Father, while holding free from (2) and (3). Similarly, when replying to Danaeus, who asks: "If He is not God *a se*, how is He God?", Petavius (p. 256) declares that so to speak is perfidious and ignorant, — "for", says he, "it either robs the Son of His deity or denies that He is God begotten of the Father". The one seems to him as intolerable as the other. Neither Bellarmine nor Petavius seems fairly to have faced the possibility of a doctrine of a true Trinity of Persons in one essence which did not hang on the doctrine of "eternal generation", which seemed to them, thus, equipollent with the doctrine of the Trinity.

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Sonship that the second Person of the Trinity is the Son of the Father, or, what comes to the same thing, has been begotten of the Father. His idea seems to be that the Father, Son and Spirit are one in essence, and differ from one another only in that property peculiar to each, which, added to the common essence, constitutes them respectively Father, Son and Spirit; and that the Father is Father only as Father, the Son, Son only as Son, or what comes to the same thing, the Father begets the Son only as Son, or produces by the act of generation only that by virtue of which He is the Son, which is, of course, what constitutes just His Sonship.

The evidence on which Bellarmine relies for his view that Calvin taught a communication of essence from Father to Son is certainly somewhat slender. If we put to one side Bellarmine's inability to conceive that Calvin could really believe in a true generation of the Son by the Father without holding that the Son receives His essence from the Father, and his natural presumption that Calvin's associates and pupils accurately reproduced the teaching of their master—for there is no doubt that Beza and Simler, for example, understood by generation a communication of essence—the evidence which Bellarmine relies on reduces to a single passage in the *Institutes* (I. xiii. 20). Calvin there, arguing with Gentilis, opposes to the notion that the Father and Son differ in essence, the declaration that the Father “shares” the essence together with the Son, so that it is common, *tota et in solidum*, to the Father and the Son. It may be possible to take the verb “communicate” here in the sense of “impart” rather than in that of “have in common”, but it certainly is not necessary and it seems scarcely natural; and there is little elsewhere in Calvin's discussion to require it of us. Petavius points out that the sentence is repeated in the tract against Gentilis,—but that carries us but a little way. It is quite true that there is nothing absolutely clear to be found to the opposite effect either. But there are several passages which may be thought to suggest a denial that the Son derives His essence from the Father. Precisely what is meant, for example, when we are told that the Son “contains in Himself the simple and indivisible essence of God in integral perfection, not *portione aut deflexu*”, is no doubt not clear: but by *deflexu* it seems possible that Calvin meant to deny that the Son possessed the divine essence by impartation from another (I. xiii. 2). It is perhaps equally questionable what weight should be placed on the form of the statement (§ 20) that the order among the Persons by which the *principium* and *origo* is in the Father, is produced (*fero*) by the “proprieties”: or on the suggestion that the more exact way of speaking of the Son is to call Him “the Son of the Person” (§ 23)—the Father being meant,—the term God in the phrase “Son of God” requiring to be taken of the Person of the Father. When it is argued that “whoever asserts that the Son is essentiated by the Father denies that He is self-existent” (§ 23), and “makes His divinity a something abstracted from the essence of God, or a derivation of a part from the whole”, the reference to Gentilis' peculiar views of the essentiation of the Son by the Father, *i. e.*, His creation by the Father, seems to preclude a confident use of the phrase in the present

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connection. Nor does the exposition of the unbegottenness of the essence of the Son and Spirit as well as of the Father, so that it is only as respects His Person that the Son is of the Father (§25) lend itself any more certainly to our use. A survey of the material in the *Institutes* leads to the impression thus that there is singularly little to bring us to a confident decision whether Calvin conceived the essence of God to be communicated from the Father to the Son in 'generation' and from the Father and Son to the Spirit in 'procession'. And outside the *Institutes* the same ambiguity seems to follow us. If we read that Christ has "the fulness of the Godhead" of Himself (*Opp.* xi, p. 560), we read equally that the fathers taught that the Son is of the Father even with respect to His eternal essence (vii, p. 322), and is "of the substance of the Father" (vii, p. 232). In this state of the case opinions may lawfully differ. But on the whole we are inclined to think that Calvin, although perhaps not always speaking perfectly consistently, seeks to avoid speaking of generation and procession as importing the communication of the Divine essence; so that Petavius appears to be right in contending that Calvin meant what he says when he represents the Son as "having from Himself both divinity and essence" (I. xiii. 19).

We have thought it worth while to dwell with some fulness on this matter, because, as we have suggested already, it is precisely in this peculiarity of Calvin's doctrine of the Trinity that the explanation is found of the widespread offense which was taken at it. Men whose whole thought of the Trinity lived, moved and had its being in the ideas of generation and procession, that is, in the notion of a perpetual communication of the Divine essence from the Father as the *fons deitatis* to the Son, who is thereby constituted the Son, and from the Father and Son to the Spirit, who is thereby constituted the Spirit, could not but feel that the Trinity they had known and confessed was taken away when this conception was conspicuous only by its absence, or was at best but remotely suggested, and all the stress was laid on the absolute equality of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Such a conception of the Trinity would inevitably appear to them to savor of Sabellianism or of Tritheism, according as their minds dwelt more on the emphasis which was laid upon the numerical unity of the essence common to all the Persons or on that which was laid upon the distinctness of the Persons. Dissatisfaction with Calvin's Trinitarian teaching was therefore not confined to Romish controversialists seeking ground of complaint against him, but was repeated in all whose thought had run strictly in the moulds of Nicene speculation. Despite an occasional defender like Meisner or Tarnov,⁹⁸ the Lutheran theologians, for example, generally condemned it. Many, like Tilemann Heshusius and Aegidius Hunnius and, later, Stechmannus, hotly assailed it,

⁹⁸ It is to be hoped that modern Lutherans in general will subscribe the excellent remarks of Prof. Milton Valentine, *Christian Theology*, 1906, I, p. 309: "Emphasis must be laid on the attitude of *aseity* as belonging to the whole Godhead, to the divine Being as such.... It cannot therefore be allowable to think of God as originating the Trinality of the Godhead, as though there was a time when He was not Tripersonal in His Being...." Accordingly he ascribes Self-existence to the Son (p. 322).

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and the best that could be hoped for at Lutheran hands was some such firm though moderately worded refusal of it as is found, for example, in John Gerhard's *Loci Communes*. "The Greek doctors", he tells us,⁹⁹ "call only the Father αὐτόθεος καὶ αὐτοούσιος, not because there is a greater perfection of essence in the Father than in the Son, but because He is ἀγέννητος and *a se ipso* and does not have deity through generation or spiration. Bucanus, *Loc. 1, De Deo*, p. 6, responds thus: 'The Son is *a se ipso* as He is God; from the Father as He is Son.' This he got from Calvin, who. Book I, c. 13, § 25, writes: 'The Son as He is God we confess is *ex se ipso*, considered apart from His Person, but as He is Son we say that He is of the Father; thus His essence is without principium, but of His Person God is Himself the principium.' We are not able, however, to approve these words, but confess rather with the Nicene Creed that 'the Son is begotten of the Father, God of God, Light of Light', and follow the saying of Christ, Jno. 5:26 ... Prov. 8:24.... Zacharias Ursinus¹⁰⁰ therefore is right to separate from his preceptor here, writing in *Catech.*, p. II. 9. 25, p. 179: 'The Son is begotten of the Father; that is, He has the Divine Essence in an ineffable manner communicated to Him from the Father.' D. Lobeckius, *disp. 3 in Augustinum Conf. th. 26*, says: 'The essence should be considered in a two-fold way, either with respect to itself or with respect to its own being, or else with respect to its communication: it has no principium with respect to its own being; but with respect to its communication we say that the essence has as its principium, to be from the Father in the Son, for it has been communicated from the Father to the Son.' " Nevertheless, Gerhard, of course, does not deny that, when properly explained, the Son may fitly be called αὐτόθεος; since that would be tantamount to denying His true divinity. Accordingly he writes elsewhere:¹⁰¹ "The term is ambiguous: for it is either opposed to communication of the divine essence and in that sense we deny that Christ is αὐτόθεος, because He receives the essence by eternal generation from the Father; or it is opposed to the inequality of the Divine essence, and in that sense we concede that Christ is αὐτόθεος. Gregory of Valentia, *De Trinitate*, I. 22: 'The Son as He is a Person is from another; as the most simple being, is not from another.' Christ is verily and in Himself God (*vere et se ipso Deus*), but He is not of Himself (*a se ipso*) God." One would think Gerhard was skating on very thin ice to agree with Gregory of Valentia, — who agrees with Calvin and uses his very mode of statement, — and yet not agree with Calvin.

⁹⁹ Ed. Cotta, I. Tubingen, 1762, p. 29 (Loc. IV. pars ii, v, § 179).

¹⁰⁰ It must not be supposed, however, that Ursinus separated himself from Calvin as to the Self-existence of the Son as He is God: his language is: "the Son is begotten of the Father, of the essence of the Father, but the essence of the Son is not begotten, but, existent of itself (*a se ipso existens*), is communicated to the Son at His begetting (*nascenti*) by (*a*) the Father." "And what is said concerning the generation of the Son", he adds, "is to be understood also of the procession of the Spirit" (*Loci*, p. 542).

¹⁰¹ III. Tubingen 1764, p. 395 (Locus IV, cap. 5, § 67).

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The subordinationism¹⁰² of the Arminians was of quite a different quality from that of the Lutherans. The dominant note which the Lutheran Christology sounded was the majesty of Christ; nothing that tended to exalt Christ could be without its appeal to Lutherans; they drew back from Calvin's assertion of His αὐτοθεότης only in the interests of the traditional Nicene construction of the Trinity. The Arminians had, on the other hand, a distinct tendency to the proper subordinationism of the Origenists; and in the later members of the school, indeed, there was present a strong influence from the Socinians. To them, of course, the Father alone could be thought of as αὐτόθεος and the Son was conceived as in His very nature, because God only by derivation, less than the Father. As in his whole theological outlook, Arminius himself was here better than his successors. He fairly saves his orthodoxy, indeed; but he emphatically denies the αὐτοθεότης of the Son. The Son may just as well be called Father, he intimates, as be represented as "having His essence *a se* or *a nullo*"; and the employment of such language cannot be justified by saying that to affirm that the Son of God, as God, has his essence *a se ipso*, is only to say that the divine essence is not *ab aliquo*: there can, in fact, be no reason for calling the Son αὐτόθεος.¹⁰³ On the other hand, nevertheless, he recognizes that the word αὐτόθεος may be taken in two senses. It may describe the one to whom it is applied either merely as *vere et se ipso* God, or else as God *a se*. In the former usage it is as applied to the Son tolerable; in the latter not.¹⁰⁴ He argues that we must distinguish between saying that the essence which the Son has is from none, and that the Son which has this essence is from none: "for", says he, "the Son is the name of a person, which has a relation to the Father, and

¹⁰² Cf. H. Bavinck, *Geref. Dogmatiek*, ed. 1, vol. II, p. 263. Remarking that the tendency which finds its typical form in Arianism, has manifested itself in various forms in the Church for centuries: "First of all in the form of Subordinationism: the Son is to be sure eternal, generated out of the essence of the Father, no creature, and not made of nothing; but He is nevertheless inferior to or subordinated to the Father. The Father alone is ὁ θεός, πηγὴ θεότητος, the Son is θεός, receives His nature by communication from the Father. This was the teaching of Justin, Tertullian, Clement, Origen, etc., also of the Semi-Arians, Eusebius of Caesarea and Eusebius of Nicomedia, who placed the Son ἐκτός τοῦ πατρὸς and declared Him ὁμοιοῦσιος with the Father; and later of the Remonstrants (Conf. Art. 3; Arminius *Op. theol.* 1629, p. 232 sq.; Episcopius, *Instit. theol.* IV, sect. 2, c. 32; Limborch, *Theol. Christ.* II, c. 17, § 25), of the Supranaturalists (Bretschneider, *Dogm.*, 1^a 602f.; Knapp, *Glaubenslehre*, I. 260; Muntinghe, *Theol. Christ.* pars theor. § 134 sq., etc.), and of very many theologians of recent times (Frank, *Syst. d. chr. Wahr.*, I. 207, Beck, *Chr. Gl.* II. 123 sq., Twisten, II. 254, Kahnis, I. 383, 398; van Oosterzee, II, § 62, Doedes, *Ned. Gel.* 71 sq.)." Cf. also H. C. Sheldon, *History of Doctrine*, II. 9: "The Arminians, while they held to the doctrine of three Divine Persons in the Godhead, diverged from the current teaching on the subject by an express emphasis upon the subordination of the Son and the Spirit. Arminius was not specially related to this development, and contented himself with denying, in opposition to Calvin's phraseology, the propriety of attributing self-existence to the Son. But Episcopius, Curcellaeus, and Limborch were very pronounced in the opinion that a certain preëminence must be assigned to the Father over the Son and the Spirit."

¹⁰³ *Declaratio sententiae suae ad ordines Holl. et Westr.* (pp. 60–65). See E. T. *Works*, translated by James Nichols London, Vol. I, 1825, pp. 627–631.

¹⁰⁴ *Resp. ad xxxi Articulos*, p. 137 (E. T. *Works*, vol. II, 1828, pp. 29–32).

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therefore cannot be defined or contemplated apart from this relation; while the essence, on the other hand, is an absolute somewhat.”¹⁰⁵ “To contend”, he urges, “that to say ‘He is God’ and ‘He has His essence from none’ are equivalent statements, is to say either that the Father alone is God, or else that there are three collateral Gods.”¹⁰⁶ He cheerfully allows that neither of these assertions expresses the meaning of Calvin or Beza: but he contends that they use misleading language when they call Christ *αὐτόθεος*, and he appeals to Beza’s admission, when excusing Calvin, that “Calvin had not strictly observed the discrimination between the particles *a se* and *per se*”.

The gravitation of Arminianism was, however, downward; and we find already taught by Episcopius, no longer a certain subordination in order among the Persons of the Trinity in the interests of the Nicene doctrine of “eternal generation” and “procession”, but rather a generation and procession in the interests of a subordination in nature among the Persons of the Trinity. “It is certain” from Scripture, says he, “that this divinity and the divine perfections are to be attributed to these three persons, not collaterally and coördinately, but subordinately.” “This subordination”, he adds, “should be carefully attended to, because of its extremely great usefulness, since by it not only is there fundamentally overthrown the *τριθεότης* which collateralism almost necessarily involves, but also the Father’s glory is preserved to Him unimpaired.” Wherefore, he continues, “they fall into perilous error who contend that the Son is *αὐτόθεος*, in such a manner that as He is God He is of Himself, as He is Son of the Father; because from this point of view, the true subordination between the Father and the Son is taken away.”¹⁰⁷ It is scarcely necessary to pause to point out with Triglandius¹⁰⁸ that to say that the Son and Spirit are not collaterally or coördinally divine with the Father is to say they are not equally divine with Him, and to say that it is injurious to the Father’s glory to call the son *αὐτόθεος*, even as He is God, is to say that He is inferior to the Father even in His essence. No doubt Episcopius says in the same breath that “one and the same divine nature” is to be attributed to the three Persons. But this is not easy to conciliate with his argument, except on the supposition that in saying “one and the same nature”, his thought wavered somewhat between numerical oneness and specific oneness,¹⁰⁹ or else that he conceived the relation of the several Persons to this one nature to differ among themselves,—one possessing it of Himself, the others by derivation from—shall we even suggest, by favor of?—another.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 139.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Episcopius’ theological works, printed at Amsterdam, 1650–1665; esp. his *Instit. Theolog.*, lib. iv, § 11, de Deo, capp. 32–36. But we cite from Triglandius.

¹⁰⁸ Triglandius, *Antapologia*, cap. v, pp. 77 sq.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Triglandius, pp. 579, 580.

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The path thus opened by Episcopius was eagerly walked in by his successors. All that may be thought to be latent in Episcopius came to light in Curcellaeus. We will, however, permit another hand to describe to us his teaching with regard to the Trinity. "If you take his own account", writes Robert Nelson, in his *Life of Dr. George Bull*,¹¹⁰ there would be no man more orthodox and catholic" than Curcellaeus is "in the doctrine of the Trinity, as also in that of the Incarnation of Christ. And he insisted, that both from the pulpit and from the chair, he had always taught and vindicated that faith, into which he had been baptized, and which he had publicly professed in the congregation, according to the form generally received; and did even teach and vindicate the same at that very time, when the charge of Anti-trinitarianism was brought against him. Yea, he expressed so great a zeal for the orthodox doctrine in this great fundamental, as he would seem forward to seal the truth thereof, even with his blood; if, as he said, God would vouchsafe him this honor. Notwithstanding all this, it is notoriously known, and that from his own very Apology, that he was no less an enemy to the Council of Nice than his Master before him, if not more than he; that he was no friend at all to the use of the word 'Trinity'; that he so explained himself concerning that mystery as to assert no more than a 'specific unity' in the divine Persons; that he defended the cause of Valentinus Gentilis, beheaded at Bern in Switzerland for Tritheism, maintaining his doctrine to have been the same with that of the primitive fathers, particularly of Ignatius, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Athenagoras, Tertullian, and Clemens Alexandrinus; that he impeached the common (which he called the Modern and Scholastic) doctrine of the Trinity for approaching so very near Sabellianism, as hardly to be distinguished from it, and charged it to be a thousand years younger than that which was taught by Christ and His apostles; that he exploded the notion of consubstantiality, in the sense in which it is now generally taken, when applied to the Father and Son; that he was very much afraid to have his mind perplexed with the 'divine relations', or with the manner of 'generation' and 'procession' in the Deity, or with modes of 'subsistence' and 'personalities', or with 'mutual consciousness', and the like; and therefore was for discarding at once all such terms and phrases as are not 'expressly legitimated' by the sacred writers; that he fully believed the Godhead of the Father to be more excellent than that of the Son, or of the Holy Ghost, even so far as to look upon this superiority as a thing unquestionable, and to appeal to the consentient testimony of the primitive Church for evidence; and lastly that he took care to recommend Petavius, and the author of *Irenicum Irenicorum*,¹¹¹ a learned physician of Dantzick ... to the perusal of his readers, for the sake of that collection of testimonies which is to be found in them, as wherein they might easily find 'an account of the primitive faith' in these great articles." A subordinationism like this, of course, could not endure Calvin's Trinitarianism, of which the cornerstone was the equality of the Persons

¹¹⁰ London, 1713, pp. 290 sq.

¹¹¹ Daniel Zwicker. See *Allgem. deutsche Biog.*, XIV, p. 533.

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in the Trinity—which equality it was that was safeguarded by the ascription of *αὐτοθεότης* to Christ.

Indeed, this ascription was equally unacceptable to a subordinationism of far less extreme a type than that of Curcellaeus and his Remonstrant successors. It is the biographer of George Bull to whom we have appealed to bring Curcellaeus' trinitarian teaching before us: and George Bull is perhaps the best example of that less extreme, convinced, no doubt, but well-guarded, subordinationism which we have now in mind,—the subordinationism which entrenched itself in the Nicene definitions and the explanations of the Nicene fathers, interpreted, however, rather from the tentative and inadequate constructions out of which they were advancing to a sounder and truer trinitarianism, than from this sounder and truer trinitarianism of which they were the expression. It can scarcely be doubted that Bull's subordinationism owed much to the Arminian movement, from the extremes of which, on this point at least, he drew back. The Arminianism flowing in from the continent had been a powerful co-factor in the production of that Catholic reaction of seventeenth century England of which Bull was, in its post-Restoration days of triumph, one of the representatives and ornaments. It is interesting to note that the *Theological Institutes* of Episcopius, at the time that Bull was contemplating writing his *Defence of the Nicene Creed*, was "generally in the hands of students of divinity in both universities, as the best system of Divinity that had appeared",¹¹² and that Bull himself speaks of Episcopius with high respect in all except his attitude towards the Nicene fathers.¹¹³ Indeed, when he comes to state the subordinationism which he professes to defend as commended by Catholic antiquity, he avails himself of Episcopius' precise phrase, declaring that all "the Catholic Doctors, those that lived before and those that lived after the Council of Nice", "with one consent have taught that the divine Nature and Perfections do agree to the Father and Son, not collaterally or coördinately, but subordinately".¹¹⁴ But the particular form which Bull's subordinationism took was determined, naturally, by that special appeal which the neo-Catholic party to which he belonged made to primitive antiquity, by which he was led—with some insular exaggeration of the importance of his own position—to suppose that the design of Petavius in his exposition of the unformed trinitarianism of the ante-Nicene fathers was to help "the cause of the Pope" by showing that "there is very little regard to be had to the Fathers of the three first ages, to whom the Reformed Catholics"—that is to say, the Catholicizing party of the Church of England—"generally do appeal".¹¹⁵ Whatever may be said of this conjecture, it cannot be doubted that Bull's design was to show that the appeal

¹¹² Nelson, as cited, p. 301.

¹¹³ *Defence*, Proem., § 5. Ralph Cudworth was at the moment teaching a doctrine of the Trinity indistinguishable from that of Episcopius and his followers.

¹¹⁴ Nelson, p. 315, Bull, Book 4, cap. 1, § 1 (E. T. p. 557).

¹¹⁵ Nelson, p. 287: Bull, Proem, § 8.

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to the “first three ages” yielded in the matter of the Trinity the self-same doctrine which the Nicene Fathers formulated. In order to do this, however, he was compelled to saddle upon the Nicene doctrine a subordinationism which, of the very essence of the Logos Christology of the second and third centuries, was in the Nicene construction happily in the act of being transcended. In the interests of this subordinationism Calvin’s equalization of the Son with the Father through the ascription to Him of αὐτοθεότης was necessarily distasteful to Bull. That the Son is “Very God” and in that sense may fitly be called αὐτοθεός he is, indeed, frank to allow, for he is himself, with all the fathers, a true and firm believer in the Godhead of Christ: but that the Son is αὐτόθεος, “God of Himself”, he repudiates with decision as inconsistent with “catholic consent” which pronounces Him rather θεός ἐκ θεοῦ. For, depending here on Petavius, he will not allow that it is possible to say “that the Son is from God the Father, as He is Son, and not as He is God; that He received His Person, not His essence, or Divine Nature, from the Father”; on the ground that begetting means just communication of essence.¹¹⁶ It is a little amusing to see Bull, from his Anglican tripod, as Calvin would himself have said, patronizing Calvin. He graciously allows that Calvin has deserved well of us “for the service which he rendered in purging the Church of Christ from the superstition of popery”; but he “earnestly exhorts pious and studious youths to beware of a spirit from which have proceeded such things” as Calvin’s unreverential allusions to the Nicene Creed, which he had dared to speak of as containing harsh expressions and ‘vain repetitions’.¹¹⁷ “Even the zeal of Mr. Bull” thus, as his admiring biographer tells us, “hath not here hindered him from treating with esteem the author of so dangerous an opinion” as that Christ is God of Himself, the self-existent God, “while at the same time he is confuting it, for the sake of some laudable qualifications which he discerned in him, and was endeavoring to excuse him as well as the matter could bear, against the insults of the most learned writer of his whole order, so famous for learning”¹¹⁸—by which we suppose Nelson means to intimate that Bull defended Calvin against injurious imputations of Petavius; though we have failed to observe this feature of Bull’s discussion.

In England, too, however, the downward movement fulfilled itself. After Bull came Samuel Clarke and his fellow Arians in the established Church, matched by the Socinian drift among the dissenters. To these, naturally, Calvin’s αὐτόθεος was as far beyond the range of practical consideration as it was to Crell¹¹⁹ or Schlichting,¹²⁰ who did him the honor to express their dissent from it. Clarke, however, may claim from us a moment’s notice, not so much on his own account, as for the sake of a distinction which Waterland

¹¹⁶ *Defense of the Nicene Faith*, IV. i. 7 sq.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, § 8.

¹¹⁸ Nelson, p. 319 sq.

¹¹⁹ *Tract, de uno Deo Patre*, Book I, sect. 2, cap. 2.

¹²⁰ *Contra Meisnerum*.

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was led to make in refuting him. Clarke was willing to admit that the Son may have been begotten of the essence of the Father, though he wished it to be allowed that it was equally possible that He may have been made out of nothing. “Both are worthy of censure”, he said,¹²¹ “who on the one hand affirm that the Son was made out of nothing, or on the other affirm that He is self-existent substance.” In his response, Waterland exhibits afresh the difficulties which lie in wait for those who take their starting-point from even the measure of subordinationism which is embalmed in the language of the Nicene formularies, when they seek to do justice to the full deity of Christ. In the interests of the Nicene doctrine of eternal generation, he proposes to distinguish between necessary existence and self-existence, and, denying the latter, to claim only the former for the Son. The Second Person of the Godhead, he says, participates in the one substance of the Godhead, and is therefore necessarily existent; but He participates in it by communication from the Father, not of Himself, and therefore He is not self-existent. “We say”, he explains,¹²² “the Son is not self-existent, meaning He is not unoriginate. *You*” — that is, Clarke — “not only say the same, but contend for it, meaning not *necessarily existing*.” “Self-existence as distinct from *necessary* existence, is expressive only of the *order* and *manner* in which the perfections are in the Father, and not of any distinct perfection.”¹²³ That is to say, in Waterland’s view, the Son is all that the Father is, but not in the same manner: the Father is all that He is in this manner, viz., that He is it of Himself; the Son, in this manner, viz., that He is it of the Father. Both are necessarily all that they are, and therefore both are necessarily existent: but only the Father is all that He is of Himself, and therefore self-existence can be predicated of Him alone. What is really declared here is obviously only that the generation of the Son is a necessary and not a voluntary movement in the divine nature: and all that is affirmed is therefore merely that the existence of the Son is not dependent on the divine will. Is this all that need be affirmed, however, in order to vindicate to the Son true deity? We must bear in mind that it is not impossible to conceive creation itself as necessary: the history of theology has not been a stranger to the idea that the world is the eternal and necessary product of the divine activity. In order to vindicate true deity to the Son it is not sufficient, therefore, to affirm that He is equally with the Father “necessary in respect of existence”.¹²⁴ That might be true of Him even were He a creature. What must be affirmed of Him if we would recognize His true deity is not merely that He could not but exist, but that the ground of His existence is in Himself. It is self-existence, not necessary existence, in other words, which really imports deity, and it is a degradation of this great and fundamental attribute to attempt to reduce it to a mere synonym of “ingenerate”. It is rather the synonym of

¹²¹ *On the Trinity*. Cf. ii, § 5. An interesting account of Clarke may be found in Nelson, as cited, pp. 322sq.

¹²² *Vindication*, etc., Q. xiii.

¹²³ *Second Defense*, Q. iii.

¹²⁴ *Ibid*.

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necessary existence as applied to deity, describing this necessary existence in its deeper significance and implications. The artificial distinction which Waterland wishes to make between the two as applied to the Son, seems thus merely an invention to “save the face” of the Nicene doctrine of “generation”. Let us admit, says he, in effect, that the Son is equally with the Father “necessary in respect of existence” That is, of course, “self-existent” according to the proper significance of the term in its application to a Divine Being. But let us agree to say that we will not use the term “self-existence” but “necessarily existing” in this sense, and will reserve “self-existence” for another sense, distinct from “necessary existence”. Now, “as distinct from necessary existence”, “self-existence” can express only “the order and manner in which the perfections are in the Father” and not “any distinct perfection”. Granted. If we are to use the term “self-existence” to express some other idea than self-existence—then it may express something which the self-existing, *i. e.*, necessarily existing God who is the Son is not. But then it remains true that this necessarily existing God who is the Son is at this very moment confessed to be the self-existent God—under its synonym of “necessarily existent”. In a word, if we will agree to use the term “self-existent” in the sense of “ingenerate” —which it does not in the least mean—we may, of course, deny that the Son who is “generate” is “self-existent”: but if we employ that term in the sense of “necessarily existent”, —which is just what it means in the full reach of that term as applied to God,—why, then we must say that the Son is “self-existent”. To put the thing in a nutshell: the Nicene doctrine that the generation of the Son and the procession of the Spirit are necessary movements in the divine essence and not voluntary acts of God the Father, carries with it the ascription of necessary existence, in the sense of that term applicable to God, that is of “self-existence”, to the Son and Spirit and requires that each be spoken of as *αὐτόθεος*. To deny to them the quality of *αὐτοθεότης* is thus logically to make them creatures of the Father’s power, if not of His will; by which their true deity is destroyed. Thus the tendency among the so-called strict Nicenists to deny to our Lord that He is, as God, *a se ipso* betrays a lurking leaven of subordinationism in their thought. It indicates a tendency to treat the Nicene doctrine of eternal generation, not, as it was intended by its framers, as the safeguard of the absolute equality of the Son with the Father, but rather as the proclamation of the inferiority of the Son to the Father: the Son because generate must differ from the ingenerate Father,—must differ in this, that He cannot be, as is the Father, self-existent God, which is, of course, all one with saying that He is not God at all, since the very idea of God includes the idea of self-existence.¹²⁵

¹²⁵ De Moor *in Marck. Compend.* I, p. 772, seems to prefer the word “independence” for the expression of the aseity of God and of the Son as God: “By parity of reasoning, it is certain that if the Son be *true* God, He is *independent* God; for independence is easily first among the attributes of God, and is inseparable from the essence of God.... And this being true, the title *αὐτόθεος* or *αὐτοθεός* (for the theologians accent it differently) cannot be denied to the Son, nor to the Spirit, as if this title were suitable to the

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It was, therefore, a very great service to Christian theology which Calvin rendered when he firmly asserted for the second and third persons of the Trinity their *αὐτοθεότης*. It has never since been possible for men to escape facing the question whether they really do justice to the true and complete deity of the Son and Spirit in their thought of the Trinitarian distinctions. It has not even been possible since for men who heartily believe in the deity of the Son and Spirit to refuse to them the designation of *αὐτοθεός*. They may have distinguished, indeed, between *αὐτόθεος* and *αὐτοθεός*—Self-Existent God and Very God—and allowed the latter to the second and third Persons while withholding the former.¹²⁶ But in the very act of drawing such a distinction, they have emphasized the true deity of the second and third Persons, and have been deterred from ascribing *αὐτοθεότης* to them in the sense of self-existence only by confusing it with 'ingeneration'. It is, however, a part of the heritage, particularly of the Reformed Churches, that they have learned from Calvin to claim for Christ the great epithet of *αὐτόθεος*:¹²⁷ and their

Father only." ... "By independence", he continues, "God is, as we have seen at ch. iv, § 20, *a se* in the negative sense, not in the sense of a proper causality of Himself, and it is this that the title *αὐτοθεός* expresses. 1. If then the Son is the supreme and independent God He is *αὐτοθεός*. 2. And since the reality of the Divine essence cannot exist without independence, the Son would not be true God unless He was at the same time *αὐτοθεός*. 3. If the Father be acknowledged to be *αὐτοθεός*, the Son must also be such, unless the Son be denied to be the same God with the Father and a plurality of Gods is erected, a numerical plurality of divine essences. For the same God and the same Divine essence cannot at the same time be *a se ipso* and not *a se ipso*. The Son is not, of course, *αὐτοτιός Son a se ipso*; but He certainly is *αὐτοθεός, God a se ipso*. He is of the Father relatively to His being Son, but He is *a se* considered absolutely as He is God: as He has the Divine essence existing *a se*, and not divided or produced by another essence; but not as if having that essence *a se ipso*. He is 'God *a se*'; not, 'He is *a se*, God', or, what is the same thing, He is not *Son a se*."

¹²⁶ The debate on the *αὐτοθεότης* of the Son caused the theologians to enter into long disquisitions on the force of *αὐτός* in composition and the proper sense or senses of *αὐτόθεος* Voetius, for example (pp. 449–451) argues that *αὐτός* in composition has five senses. It either (1) emphasises singularity; or (2) distinguishes as *κατ' ἕξοχήν*; or (3) means *a se*; or (4) *per se*, intrinsically, essentially; or (5) *per se* and operating with a proper and sufficient principal force, producing somewhat. Accordingly it is improper to assume that theologians always mean the *third* sense, when they employ the term *αὐτοθεός*. Any one of five senses may be intended: (1) God *κατ' ἕξοχήν*; (2) The only, sole God; (3) God essentially, not by participation, *per se* and not *per accidens*, *in se* and essentially, not in some external respect or denomination; (4) God *a se* and not *ab alio*, *ἄναρχος* that is to say, *καὶ ἀναίτιος*; (5) God, the *primus agens*, *primus motor*, dependent on none, but the first cause.

¹²⁷ Voetius, *Disp.* I. 400, gives a characteristic list of Reformed doctors who previous to himself (1648) had taught that Christ is properly to be called *αὐτόθεος*,—lest anyone should think that the *αὐτοθεότης* of Christ had been proclaimed only by one here and there, zealous for their own notion or loving novelty, rather than by all in the necessary defense of the common truth. His list includes, besides Calvin, Beza, Simler, the whole mass of representative Reformed teachers: Danaeus, Perkins, Keckermann, Trelcatius, Tilenus, Polanus, Wollebius, Scalcobrigius, Altingius, Grynaeus, Schriverius, Zanchius, Chamierus, Zadeel, Lectius, Pareus, Mortonus, Whittaker, Junius, Vorstius, Amesius, Rivetus. Heppé, *Dogmat. d. ref. Kirche*, p. 84, records: "And moreover the Son is as such not created or made by God, or adopted out of

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characteristic mark has therefore become the strength of the emphasis which they throw on the complete deity of the Lord. Whatever differences may have existed among them have not concerned the true deity of Christ, but rather the attitude taken by their teachers towards the Nicene speculation of “eternal generation”. Concerning this speculation differences early manifested themselves. Immediate successors of Calvin, such as Theodore Beza and Josiah Simler, were as firm and exact in their adhesion to it as Calvin was dubious with reference to it. “The Son”, says Beza, “is of the Father by an ineffable communication from eternity of the whole nature.”¹²⁸ “We deny not”, says Simler, “that the Son has His essence from God the Father; what we deny is a begotten essence”.¹²⁹ And no less or less prejudiced an authority than Bellarmine pronounces these declarations “Catholic”.¹³⁰ Indeed, despite the influence of Calvin, the great body of the Reformed teachers remained good Nicenists. But they were none the less, as they were fully entitled to be, good “Autotheanites” also. They saw clearly that a relation within the Godhead between Persons to each of whom the entire Godhead belongs, cannot deprive any of these Persons of any essential quality of the Godhead common to them all.¹³¹ And they were determined to assert the full and complete Godhead of them all. Of course, there have been others, on the other hand, who have followed Calvin in sitting rather loosely to the Nicene tradition. Examples of this class are furnished by Trelcatius, Keckermann, Maccovius.¹³² Keckermann, for example, while not denying that many have preferred to say that “the Son has His essence communicated from the Father”, yet considers that this can be said only in a modified sense and must be accompanied by certain important explanations,—for, says he, “it is false if spoken of the essence considered absolutely, since the Son (as also the Holy Spirit) has this *a se ipso*”. For himself he prefers, therefore,

favor or on account of desert, but He is according to His nature God the Son, and is therefore like the Father and the Holy Spirit veritably αὐτοθεός.”

¹²⁸ *Axiomat. de Trinitate*, Axiom 14.

¹²⁹ *Epist. ad Polon.* or *Lib. de Filio Dei*.

¹³⁰ *Op. Cit.*, p. 334b.

¹³¹ Cf. the remark of De Moor, in *Marck. Compend.* I. 775: “Distinctions in *mode of subsistence*, and the personal order which flows from this, cannot affect the equality of essence; and inferiority and inequality cannot consist with numerical oneness of essence.”

¹³² Cf. Voetius, as cited, p. 465: “Trelcatius, *Loc. Com.*, and Keckermann, *Syst. Theol.*, seem to deny the communication of the essence: and Maccovius, in his *Metaphysica*, c. 8, follows them, when, against Arminius, he determines that not the essence, but the personality, is communicated from the Father.” “Strictly speaking, however, we must say”, adds Voetius, “that the Person is begotten by the communication of the essence: though these authors are to be excused because they took the word ‘communication’ too physically and had Valentinus Gentilis in view.” Voetius’ own view is expressed in the “maxims” (p. 461) that: “The essence *in divinis* neither begets nor is begotten, but the person of the Father begets *in, de* and *ex* His essence which is the same with the essence of the Son”: “the essence may therefore be said to be communicated, given, by the Father, and received, and had, by the Son from that communication or gift. Briefly, the Person of the Father begets the Person of the Son by the communication of the essence.”

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to say that “the second mode of existence in the Trinity, which is called the Son, is communicated from the Father”.¹³³ This is, as we have seen, apparently Calvin’s own view, while the more advanced position still which rejects, or at least neglects, the conception of “communication” altogether, whether of essence or of mode of existence,¹³⁴

¹³³ *Systema SS. Theologiae*, Colon. Allobrogum, 1611, p. 86.

¹³⁴ This position was taken by Herman Alexander Roëll, professor at Franeker, at the end of the seventeenth century. The idea of “eternal generation” he held to be wholly unscriptural and at war with the perfect nature of God,—whether as Father or as Son. The designation of the Second Person of the Trinity as Son he at first found to rest on His consubstantiality with the Father (“By the words ‘Son’ and ‘Generation’ is signified, in emphasis, that the Second Person has the same essence and nature with the First, and has coëxisted with Him from eternity”,—*De Generatione Filii*, 1689, p. 5); but afterwards to be expressive rather of His divine mission, and the clear relation existing between God the Sender and God the Sent. A good account is given of his views by Ypreij and Dermout, *Geschiedenis der Nederlandsche Hervormde Kerk*, ii, 1822, pp. 544 sq. The idea of Herman Muntinghe, professor at Hardewijk, at the end of the next century (see Ypreij and Dermout, iv, 1827, pp. 291 sq.) was similar. Much the same notions were introduced into the Congregational Churches of New England by Nathaniel Emmons. “We feel constrained to reject the eternal generation of the Son, and the eternal procession of the Holy Spirit, as such mysteries as cannot be distinguished from real absurdities, and as such doctrines as strike at the foundation of the true doctrine of three equally divine persons in one God” (*Works*, iv, 1842, p. 114). “The Scripture teaches us that each of the divine persons takes His peculiar *name* from the peculiar *offices* which He sustains in the economy of redemption.... The first person assumes the name of Father, because He is by office the Creator or Author of all things, and especially of the human nature of Christ. The second person assumes the name of Son and Word, by virtue of his incarnation and mediational conduct.... The third person in the Trinity is called the Holy Ghost on account of His peculiar office as Sanctifier” (p. 109). This view became thereafter the common view among the New England churches, finding its complete expression in Moses Stuart (*Letters on the Eternal Generation of the Son*, 1822) and Horace Bushnell (*God in Christ*, 1849). Cf. George P. Fisher, *Discussions in History and Theology*, 1880, p. 273: “Hopkins was the last to hold to the Nicene doctrine of the primacy of the Father and the eternal Sonship of Christ. The whole philosophy of the Trinity, as that doctrine was conceived by its great defenders in the age of Athanasius, when the doctrine was formulated, had been set aside. It was even derided; and this chiefly for the reason that it was not studied. Professor Stuart had no sympathy with or just appreciation of the Nicene doctrine of the Son.” It should be noted, however, that the “eternal primacy” of the Father and the “eternal generation” of the Son do not necessarily go together. Neither Roëll nor Emmons, for example, while decidedly denying the “eternal generation” of the Son, doubted that the Father is first in the Trinity, not only in office but also in order—as Emmons (p. 137) expresses it, is “the head of the sacred Trinity”. They do deny, however, that the Father is superior to the Son in nature; and they take their starting point from the absolute deity of the Son, in the interests of which it is largely that they deny the doctrine of “eternal generation”. When Dr. Fisher says, “The eternal fatherhood of God, the precedence of the Father, is as much a part of the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity as is the divinity of the Son”, by the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity he means the doctrine as it was formulated by “the Nicene Fathers who framed the orthodox creed”. The rejoinder lies ready at hand that the Nicene Fathers overdid the matter from the point of view of “the precedence of the Father”, and left the way open for doing less than justice to “the divinity of the Son”—which therefore requires reassertion and better guarding. In point of fact, it is around these two foci—“the precedence of the Father”, which in its exaggeration becomes Arianism, and “the divinity of the Son”, which in its exaggeration becomes Sabellianism,—that the Trinitarian constructions have revolved. The Trinitarian problem is, to find a mode of statement that does full justice

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although it cannot find an example in Calvin, may yet be said to have had its way prepared for it by him. The direct Scriptural proof which had been customarily relied upon for its establishment he destroyed, refusing to rest a doctrinal determination on "distorted texts". He left, therefore, little Biblical basis for the doctrine of "eternal generation" except what might be inferred from the mere terms 'Father', 'Son' and 'Spirit', and the general consideration that our own adoption into the relation of sons of God in Christ implies for Him a Sonship of a higher and more immanent character, which is His by nature and into participation in the relation of which we are admitted only by

to both. To do this it must of course be carefully ascertained from Scripture in what sense "the Father" has "precedence" of the Son; and in what sense the Son is God. Roëll and Emmons deny that the Scriptures accord such "precedence" to the Father as is expressed by the phrase "God of God": they affirm that the Scriptures ascribe absolute deity to the Son. On the New England doctrine of the Trinity from Emmons down see L. L. Paine, *The Evolution of Trinitarianism*, 1900, pp. 103 sq.

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grace.¹³⁵ Certainly other explanations of these facts are possible;¹³⁶ and the possibility—or preferability—of other explanations was certain sooner or later to commend itself to

¹³⁵ Cf. the striking passage, already alluded to in part, which is found in the middle editions of the *Institutes*, at the opening of the discussion (*Opp.* i, pp. 482–3): “But since everything follows from the proof of the divinity [of the Son], we shall lay our chief stress on the assertion of that. The Ancients, whose idea was that the Son existed (*exstittisse*) by eternal generation from the Father, endeavored to prove it by the testimony of Isaiah (Is. 53:8), ‘Who shall declare His generation?’ But it is clear that they were under an illusion in citing this text. For the prophet does not speak there of how the Father generated the Son but by how numerous a posterity His kingdom should be increased [so 1539: but 1550 *sq.*: “but through how long a period His kingdom should endure”]. Neither is there much force in what they take from the Psalms: ‘from the womb before the morning star have I begotten Thee’; for that version is by no means consonant with the Hebrew, which runs thus (Ps. 110:3): ‘From the womb of the morning is to thee the dew of thy nativity.’ The argument, then, which seems to have special plausibility, is taken from the words of the Apostle in which it is taught that the worlds were made by the Son; for unless there had already been a Son, His power could not have been put forth. But little weight can attach to this argument either, as appears from similar formulas. For none of us would be affected if anybody sought to take the word ‘Christ’ back to that time, in which Paul says that ‘Christ’ was tempted by the Jews (1 Cor. 10:9) [where Calvin evidently reads ‘Christ’]. For its particular application belongs properly to the humanity [of Christ]. Similarly, because it is said (Heb. 13:8) that ‘Jesus Christ’ was yesterday, is to-day, and shall be forever, if anybody should contend that the name of ‘Christ’ belonged to Him always, he has accomplished nothing. What do we do but expose the holy and orthodox doctrines of religion to the cavils of heretics, when we contort texts after this fashion, which, when taken in their proper sense, serve our cause either not at all or very little? To me, however, this one argument is worth a thousand for confirming my faith in the eternity of the Son of God. For it is certain that God is not a Father to men, except through the intercession of that only begotten Son, who alone rightly vindicates this prerogative to Himself, and by whose favor it comes to us. But God always wished to be worshipped by His people under the name of Father; from which it follows that already then [*i. e., semper*] He was Son, through whom that relationship is established.” Similarly in his Commentaries he explains Mich. 5:1, 2 of the eternal decree of God not of the eternity of the generation of Christ: and on Ps. 2:7 prefers to follow Paul (Acts 13:33) to referring it to the eternal generation of Christ by “subtly philosophizing on the word ‘to-day’.” In the New Testament he follows the rule (with few exceptions) “that the writers of the New Testament, and especially Jesus Himself, speak of Christ not as the absolute Logos but as the God-man.... Especially in the Gospel of John, the declarations of Jesus concerning

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some. Nothing, meanwhile, could illustrate more strikingly the vitality of the ecclesiastical tradition than that in such a state of the case the Nicene construction of the Trinity held its ground: held its ground with Calvin himself in its substantial core, and with the majority of his followers in its complete speculative elaboration. We are astonished at the persistence of so large an infusion of the Nicene phraseology in the expositions of Augustine, after that phraseology had really been antiquated by his fundamental principle of equalization in his construction of the Trinitarian relations: we are more astonished at the effort which Calvin made to adduce Nicene support for his own conceptions: and we are more astonished still at the tenacity with which his followers cling to all the old speculations.¹³⁷

Himself are expounded not out of an absolute logos-consciousness but out of the theanthropic consciousness of Jesus, so that after John 1:14 there is no further reference to the Logos ἄσαρκος or to the *nuda divinitas Christi* except only in Jno. 8:58 and 17:5" (Scholten, *De Leer der Hervormde Kerk*, ed. 4, II. 231; cf. 229 and I. 24). Similarly of the Holy Spirit (p. 237) he refuses to get proof for His trinitarian relation either from Jno. 14:16 or 1 Cor. 2:10.

¹³⁶ As, for example, that the terms "Son", "Spirit" are not expressive of "derivation" (by "generation" or "spiration") but just of "consubstantiality". The Son is the repetition of the Father; the Spirit is the expression of God. So Roëll in his first view; and even Stuart remarks, justly: "The Hebrew idiom calls him the son of any person or thing, who exhibits a resemblance in disposition or character" (*op. cit.*, p. 105). More broadly, W. Robertson Smith (*The O. T. in the Jewish Church*, ed. 1, p. 42) remarks: "Among all Semites membership in a guild is figured as sonship." That is to say, in the Semitic view, sonship denotes broadly oneness of kind, class; more specifically likeness; at the height of its meaning, consubstantiality; and does not suggest derivation. As the son of a man is a man, the Son of God is God. It is the Indo-European consciousness which imparts to the terms Son, Spirit the idea of derivation.

¹³⁷ When during the first weeks of its sessions, the Westminster Assembly was engaged on the revision of the Thirty-Nine Articles, and Article 8, on the Three Creeds, came up for discussion, objection was made to the ἐκ θεοῦ clauses. It does not appear that there was any pleading for the subordinationist position: the advocates for retaining the Creeds rather expended their strength in voiding the credal statement of any subordinationist implications. Thus Dr. Featley's reply to the current objection was that "although Christ is God of God, it doth not therefore follow that the deity of the Son is from the deity of the Father, as it does not follow *quia Deus passus est ergo Deitas passa est*, or *quia Maria mater Dei, ergo est Maria mater deitatis*" (see his speech printed in his *Dippers Dipt*). Were this taken literally it would explain the Sonship of our Lord wholly from the side of His humiliation and identify His filiation with the incarnation.

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The repeated appeals which he makes to the fathers is, as we have just hinted, a notable feature of Calvin's discussion of the Trinity and especially of his defense of his construction of the Trinitarian relationships. The citations he drew from the fathers for this purpose were naturally much striven over. One instance seems worth scrutinizing, as on it was founded an accusation that Calvin did not know the difference between the two Latin prepositions 'ad' and 'a', or else chose to "play to the gallery", which he counted upon not to know it. That the best Latinist of his day, whose Latin style is rather classical than mediæval, could fail to feel the force of the common prepositions of that language is, of course, absurd: that a reasoner conspicuous for his fair-mindedness in his argumentation could have juggled with ambiguous phrases is even more impossible. An attentive reading of the passages in question will, as was to be expected, quickly make it clear that it is not Calvin but his critics who are at fault. Bellarmine, arguing that the reasons which Calvin assigns for calling our Lord ἀυτόθεος are not valid, adduces his appeal to the passages in which Augustine remarks that our Lord "is called Son, with reference to the Father (*ad patrem*) and God with reference to Himself (*ad seipsum*)". "But", he adds, in rebuttal, "it is not the same thing to say that the Son is God *ad se*, and that He is God *a se*." "For", he somewhat superfluously argues, "the first signifies that the name of God is not relative and yet belongs to the Son: and this Augustine says and says truly, for although the Son is a relative, it is nevertheless a relative which exists, is divine, and accordingly includes the essence which is absolute. But [to say] that the Son is God *a se* signifies that the Son of God is not the Son of God, but is unbegotten, which Augustine never said, but Calvin falsely attributes to him."¹³⁸ "It is either", writes Petavius,¹³⁹ improving even on Bellarmine, "a remarkable piece of chicanery or else a remarkable hallucination in Calvin, when he seems to take as equivalents these two terms *ad se* and *a se*: as also these two, *ad alium* and *ab alio*, which" [*i. e.*, *ad se* and *ad alium*] "Augustine makes free use of in explaining the mystery of the Trinity." Then, after quoting Calvin's citation of Augustine, he concludes: "Unless Calvin had supposed *ad se* to be the same as *a se*, and *ad alium* to be the same as *ab alio*, he would not have employed these passages from Augustine."¹⁴⁰ In point of fact, however, Calvin does not confuse "ad" and "a" and

¹³⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 335.

¹³⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 282.

¹⁴⁰ We suppose Arminius scarcely intended to repeat Bellarmine's and Petavius' accusation of confusion between *a se* and *ad se* when (*Works*, E. T., II, p. 32) he remarks on the modified manner in which ἀυτόθεός is used when applied to Christ, and adds: "But this explanation does not agree with the phraseology they employ. For this reason Beza excuses Calvin and openly confesses 'that he had not with sufficient strictness observed the difference between these particles, *a se* and *per se*.'" The remark of Beza is referred to his *Praef. in Dialog. Athanasii*. We have not access to Beza's edition of this Pseudo-Athanasian tractate and cannot assure ourselves of his meaning. We assume

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he does not cite Augustine's use of the one as if he had employed the other. His citations are not intended to show that Augustine taught that the Son is not of the Father but of Himself: but only to show that we may—or rather must—speak in a twofold way of the Son, absolutely, to wit, as He is in Himself and relatively, as He is with reference to the Father. It is his own statement, not Augustine's, when he proceeds to say that when we thus speak of our Lord absolutely as He is in Himself, we are to say that He is *a se*, and only when we speak of Him relatively as He is with reference to the Father are we to speak of Him as *a Patre*. It is marvellous that anyone could confuse this perfectly clear argument: more marvellous still that, on the ground of such a confusion, anyone should venture to charge Calvin with gross ignorance of the meaning of the simplest Latin words or else of "remarkable chicanery" in his use of Latin texts. Here is what Calvin actually says: "By these appellations, which denote distinction, says Augustine, that is signified

that he was not criticizing Calvin's philological equipment but his doctrinal construction; and we suspect that what he says is that Calvin in insisting that Christ is God *a se ipso* was not sufficiently carefully distinguishing between saying He is God *per se*—in and of Himself, and that He is God *a se*—from Himself. In that likely case Beza is only explaining the differences between himself and Calvin which are expressed in Calvin's denial that the Son has His essence from the Father and Beza's affirmation that He has His essence from the Father. Calvin here, he says, is not sufficiently considering the difference between being God *a se* and being God *per se*. In this case Beza's distinction is much like Waterland's between self-existent and necessarily-existent God and makes *αὐτοθεότης* mean merely ingenerateness; and we note that if our conjecture is right, there is involved a testimony from Beza that Calvin's real thought of the Trinity denied the communication of essence from Father to Son. In his letter to Prince Radziwil on *The Unity of the Divine Essence and the three Persons subsisting in it*, against the Polish Unitarians, Beza declares (*Tractat. Theolog.*, 1552, p. 64) that it is inept to say that "the Father alone is *αὐτόθεος*, that is, as they interpret it, has His Being *a se ipso* and therefore can be called God",—and gives his reason: "For to be *a se* and *ab alio*, do not constitute different kinds of nature; and therefore the Father cannot on that ground be said to be the sole and unique God, nor ought He to be, but rather the sole and unique Father, as the Son is sole and unique because 'only-begotten'." Can we really say that "to be *a se* and *ab alio* do not constitute different kinds of nature (*aliam naturae speciem*)? If the contrast is that of self-existing and derived Being it can scarcely be said. But if the contrast is between ingenerate and generate Being—it is true enough. Every father and son are consubstantial, and the very point of the usage of Father and Son in this connection seems to be to assert their consubstantiality. Beza has this latter contrast in view and only means to say that the ascription of *αὐτοθεότης* to the Son is in no way interfered with by the fact that He is "generate"—for the generate and the generator are ever the same in kind.

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by which they are mutually related to one another: not the substance itself by which they are one. By which explanation, the sentiments of the ancients which otherwise might seem contradictory may be reconciled with one another. For now they teach that the Father is the principium of the Son; and now they assert that the Son has His divinity and essence alike of Himself, and is therefore one principium with the Father. The cause of this diversity is elsewhere well and perspicuously explained by Augustine when he speaks as follows: Christ is called God with respect to Himself, He is called Son with respect to the Father. And again, the Father is called God with respect to Himself, with respect to the Son He is called Father. What is called Father with respect to the Son is not the Son; what is called Son with respect to the Father is not the Father: what is called Father with respect to Himself and Son with respect to Himself is God. When, then, we speak of the Son, simply, without respect to the Father, we rightly and properly assert that He is of Himself; and we therefore call Him the sole (*unicum*) principium; but when we are noting the relation in which He stands to the Father, we justly make the Father the principium of the Son."¹⁴¹ A simple reading of the passage is enough to refute the suggestion that Calvin makes Augustine assert that Christ is "of Himself" when he is merely asserting that Christ is God when considered with respect to Himself and not relatively to the Father. If a matter so clear in itself, however, can be made clearer by further evidence, it is easy enough to adduce direct evidence. For Calvin has incorporated into the *Institutes* here material he uses often elsewhere. And in more than one of these instances of its use elsewhere, he distinctly tells us that he did not understand Augustine in these passages as asserting the aseity of the Son. We may take, for example, a letter to the Neuchatel pastors, written in October, 1543, with respect to Cortesius, with whom he had been having a discussion on our Lord's aseity—or as Calvin puts it, περὶ αὐτοουσίας *Christi*. In the course of the discussion, he says, "we came to that difficulty that he did not think he could speak of the essence of Christ without mention of the person. I opposed to this first the authority of Augustine, who testifies that we can speak in a twofold way (*bifariam*) of Christ, as He is God—according to relation, that is, and simply (*simpliciter*). And that the discussion might not be prolonged, I adduced certain passages of Cyril, where in so many words (*dissertis verbis*) he pronounces on what we were discussing."¹⁴² That is to say, the passages of Augustine were appealed to not as direct witness to the αὐτοουσία of Christ, but only to prove the subordinate point that we can speak of our Lord in a twofold way: the passages from Cyril alone "expressly" declare on the point at issue. The declaration that Cyril was adduced as pronouncing on the point itself in so many words, is a declaration that Augustine was not so adduced.

¹⁴¹ *Institutes*. I. xiii. 19.

¹⁴² *Opp.* xi, p. 454.

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In his assertion of the ἀὐτοθεότης of the Son Calvin, then, was so far from supposing that he was enunciating a novelty that he was able to quote the Nicene fathers themselves as asserting it “in so many words”. And yet in his assertion of it he marks an epoch in the history of the doctrine of the Trinity. Not that men had not before believed in the self-existence of the Son as He is God: but that the current modes of stating the doctrine of the Trinity left a door open for the entrance of defective modes of conceiving the deity of the Son, to close which there was needed some such sharp assertion of His absolute deity as was supplied by the assertion of His ἀὐτοθεότης. If we will glance over the history of the efforts of the Church to work out for itself an acceptable statement of the great mystery of the Trinity, we shall perceive that it is dominated from the beginning to the end by a single motive,—to do full justice to the absolute deity of Christ. And we shall perceive that among the multitudes of great thinkers who under the pressure of this motive have labored upon the problem, and to whom the Church looks back with gratitude for great services, in the better formulation of the doctrine or the better commendation of it to the people, three names stand out in high relief, as marking epochs in the advance towards the end in view. These three names are those of Tertullian, Augustine and Calvin. It is into this narrow circle of elect spirits that Calvin enters by the contribution he made to the right understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity. That contribution is summed up in his clear, firm and unwavering assertion of the ἀὐτοθεότης of the Son. By this assertion the ὁμοουσιότης of the Nicene fathers at last came to its full right, and became in its fullest sense the hinge of the doctrine.^{143 1}

~ Benjamin B. Warfield

Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield (1851–1921) was the last of the great conservative theologians who defended Calvinistic orthodoxy from the chair of theology at Princeton Seminary. After his education at Princeton College and Princeton Seminary, Warfield traveled in Europe and taught NT at Western Seminary in Allegheny, Pennsylvania. He succeeded Archibald Alexander Hodge as professor of didactic and polemic theology at Princeton in 1887. Warfield wrote a vast number of articles, reviews, and monographs for the popular press and learned journals. His scholarship was precise, wide-ranging, and well grounded in scientific literature. He was one of the great academic theologians at the turn of the century, and his work remains alive today among theologically conservative Protestants who share particularly his attitudes toward Scripture.

Like his Princeton predecessors, Archibald Alexander and the Hodges, Warfield was a strict Calvinist. He wrote numerous studies on Calvin, Augustinian theology, and the Westminster Confession, both to illuminate the theological history and to advocate the positions thus illuminated. He set his Calvinism against the tides of liberalism, which he faulted for subverting God’s activity in salvation and divine authority in revelation. He was heartened by the spiritual zeal of the fundamentalists but felt that they were forfeiting rich theological resources by drifting toward anti-intellectualism. He was especially

¹⁴³ Warfield, B. B. (1909). “Calvin’s Doctrine of the Trinity”. *The Princeton Theological Review*, VII(1–4), 553–652.

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antagonistic toward the defenders of revelational religious experience, whether the rationalistic piety of Albrecht Ritschl and A. C. McGiffert, the perfectionism of the "Higher Life" and Keswick movements, or the insistence on special spiritual gifts in modern Pentecostalism. To him these substituted subjective religiosity for the completeness of Scripture. Warfield found himself increasingly isolated in his later years. He shared with the modernists a commitment to learned theological inquiry but rejected their conclusions. He shared with the fundamentalists a commitment to supernatural faith yet questioned their methods.

Warfield is best known today for his painstakingly careful efforts to defend the inerrancy of the Bible. In 1881 with A. A. Hodge he wrote a famous essay, "Inspiration," which set out a carefully stated reassertion of traditional Protestant belief in the full infallibility and truthfulness of Scripture. In countless essays and reviews thereafter, Warfield labored to clarify the Bible's own testimony to its inspiration and to oppose those who detracted from Scripture's infallible authority. This work on the Bible has made Warfield an important guide for conservative evangelicals in the twentieth century, even for those who do not share his Calvinism (he never wavered in rejecting the pretensions of "free will").