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Luther and Asian Theology of Trinity

I BEGIN WITH THE *FILIOQUE* (THE SPIRIT PROCEEDING FROM THE FATHER and the Son) controversy. Under the influence of Eastern Orthodox theology of the Trinity, Moltmann makes a wholesale attack on Sabellian notes in Western trinitarian theology. Thus, ecumenical challenges to the *filioque* added to the creed of Nicea and Constantinople have a well-known history. The doctrine of the Trinity reaches its climax in God's plan of salvation in the person and the work of Jesus Christ, his incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension through the Spirit (cf. Eph 1:3–14). Although there is no explicit mention of the full doctrine of the Trinity (intradivine persons, processions, and relations) in the New Testament, we see that God redeems human beings through Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. The relationship between the economy and the eternal being of God, i.e., between the economic Trinity and the immanent Trinity, is central and essential to understanding the eternal mystery of God in the economy of salvation.

In what follows we are concerned with describing the idea of the Trinity in its historic and dogmatic development. We will trace the controversy about the Trinity in the ancient church with respect to divine passibility, and then summarize the trinitarian ideas in Augustine. It is necessary to discuss Luther's notion of the Trinity with reference to the ancient church and Augustine. After this, I will turn my attention to Luther's theology of the Trinity and the ecumenical debate on the Trinity with respect to Unitrinity (Karl Barth) and Triunity (Moltmann). In an Asian context the Trinity becomes interreligious in an encounter with the wisdom of world religions. After dealing with Asian "other" Trinity (Panikkar and Lee Jung Young), I will try to construct an Asian understanding of the Trinity in a critical dialogue with Luther's theology. A discussion of the

Trinity and *Sunyata* in a Buddhist-Christian context will be attempted, bringing the *filioque* formula into Asian focus. No doubt Christian theology is inherently trinitarian in content and structure. The Trinity is one central symbol of the Christian community. The emergence of trinitarian theology, albeit grounded in biblical narrative, comes about from the theological heritage of the ancient church. The dogma of the Trinity evolved out of christological debate against Arianism and Sabellianism.[1]

Divine Passibility and Trinity in the Ancient Church

I begin with three patterns of understanding God as Trinity since the post-apostolic period: adoptionism, subordinationism, and modalism. A modalist Trinity was a credible threat to the ancient church. In modalist form, divine passibility was strongly affirmed. In the modalist-type, Father, Son, and the Spirit remain only various names expressing one and the same God. The Spirit and the Son do not have their own pre-existence, because God the Father is incarnated in the Son. So-called "Patripassianism" emerges from the notion that God the Father suffered on the cross. This modalist notion was called monarchianism, because it held absolutely the oneness and monarchy of the one God.

In the second and third centuries it took two different forms: modalist monarchianism (or Sabellianism) and dynamic monarchianism. The former gave modalism its theological foundation. Sabellius became a strong advocate of the modalist theology and held that the Father, Son, and the Spirit were simply serial modes or manifestations of God, or masks that God puts on Godself. In Sabellius' serial modalism, God appears serially in each mode in distinct periods in history: as God the Father in the Old Testament, as God the Son in Jesus, and as God the Holy Spirit since Pentecost.

However, the term *mask* is identical to *prosopon*, the word used in the definition of Chalcedon. The one God takes on three forms. In the form of the Father, God appears as the Creator; in the form of the Son, God appears as the Redeemer; and in the form of the Holy Spirit, God appears as the Sanctifier. This would mean that the same God who manifested Godself as the Father was crucified on the cross in the form of Christ. It excludes any relation or distinction in the triune God. Father, Son, and Spirit are three manifestations or modes of appearance of the One God

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1. Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 127.

who is without distinction, unknowable and ineffable to us.[2] To the contrary, dynamic monarchianism describes the Son and Spirit as powers or energies (*dynameis*) emanating from God the Father who is one and has only one visage. Jesus has been made Son of God by the descending of the son-power upon him. Paul of Samosata, elected as the bishop in Antioch (about 260) and an advocate of dynamic monarchianism, interpreted the divine Logos as an attribute of the One God.[3] The single identity of Father and Son (*homoousios*) in this regard is affirmed. Therefore, God exists only as God's wisdom or power in Jesus Christ, and the Logos is not united to the humanity of Jesus.

Against monarchianism, Tertullian contends that the unity of God is balanced by *oikonomia* (*dispensatio*; *dispositio*). God is from all eternity One as the unity that is differentiated in itself. The economy of the divine being expresses the unity and monarchy of God (Father). In so doing, Tertullian insists on God's oneness and God's threefoldness, that is, the *trinitas*, a Latin term that seems to originate from him. According to him, there is only one God "under the following dispensation (*oikonomia*) that the only one God has a Son, God's Word, who proceeded from Godself, by whom all things were made, and without whom nothing was made."[4] The Father and the Son are in distinction, but not in separation. The monarchial idea that Father, Son, and Spirit are the selfsame Person is out of bounds.

According to Tertullian, the plurality of the *trinitas* does not imply a division of the unity. The unity that derives a *trinitas* from itself is dispensed. It should not lead to polytheism. In defending the monarchy, however, he sees the divine substance as tripersonal. The unity of God from which the Trinity is derived is actually administrated or economized by Son and Spirit. Tertullian's opponent Praxeas had upheld that God the Father was the person of Jesus Christ who came down into the virgin Mary and who later suffered. Tertullian's understanding basically excludes this Patripassianism, in a way that not the Father but the Son was born and suffered on the basis of the economy. He introduces the words *substantia* (substance) and *persona* (person). The unity of *substantia* safeguards the *oikonomia* by arranging the three *personae*, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These are three not in *substantia,* but in form and manifestation.

2. Ibid., 135–36.
3. Ibid., 132.
4. *Adv. Prax.* II (PL 2, 456); see LaCugna, *God for Us*, 28.

However, there is a subordinationist tendency in Tertullian because the monarchy is the starting point for his Trinity while the Son and Spirit are assigned second and third places. Therefore, he argues that the "Father is the entire substance, but the Son is a derivation and portion of the whole."[5] Since Tertullian, the Western Church has used substance to express common divinity between Father and Son. Person is used to mean each particular being. The term person, because of its translation from *prosopon*, seems suspect in being close to modalism in the eyes of the Eastern church.

However, the distinction between *ousia* and *hypostasis* remains obscure in the Eastern Church. *Ousia* designates not only a particular subsistence, but also the common substance of each particular. This obscurity is the same in the term *hypostasis*, which means literally substance, being used as equivalent to the Latin *persona* to designate the individual members of the Trinity. *Ousia* and *hypostasis* are translated as *substantia* in Latin, and thereby confusion arises. The teaching of the Trinity in the Eastern Church seems close to tritheism in the eyes of the Western Church, whereas Tertullian's formula "*una substantia tres personae*" sounds like modalism to the Eastern Church.

Origen (ca. 185–254) held the position of an eternity of the Son, and at the same time subordination to the Father. This twofold tendency is marked in his thought. For him, the Father, Son, and Spirit are substantially and inherently good, wise, and holy. Although the Son and the Spirit excel all created beings to a degree that allows no comparison, they are co-eternal and divine, not by platonic participation (*methexis*), but by their substance. "They are themselves excelled by the Father to the same or even a greater degree."[6]

Against the modalist monarchial notion held by the bishop Heraclides, Origen tries to safeguard God the Father in the absolute sense by distinguishing him qualitatively from the Son: the Son is not God in the absolute sense, but he is the image of Father's goodness. The Son was generated eternally from the Father "as the radiance of the eternal light."[7] The Spirit was also "the first of all that have been brought into being by God through Jesus Christ."[8] The radical qualitative distinction between

5. *Adv. Prax.* IX (PL 2, 205); see LaCugna, *God for Us*, 29.
6. *Comm. John XIII.* 25; see Heron, *Holy Spirit in the Bible*, 70–71.
7. *De Princ. I. ii. 2–6*; see Heron, *Holy Spirit in the Bible*, 71.
8. *Comm. John II.*10 (6); ibid., 71.

Father and Son remains unresolved for Origen. In a subordinationist note that can be traced from Tertullian, Origen differs from Paul of Samosata in that the former does not reject the divinity of Jesus Christ. Where Origen distinguishes God from the Son to highlight the unity of God, Paul of Samosata safeguards monotheism by coining the term *consubstantial* to designate the relationship between the Father and the Son. This is done, however, at the expense of the divinity of Jesus Christ.

Since the death of Origen, his disciples parted company from each other. The right wing of Origenism took over the aspect of the eternity of the Son in union with the Father, while the left-wing of Origenism put emphasis on the Son being subject to the Father in order to defend against Sabellianism. The teaching of Arius came in this midst. He argued that the Son is not God, but was created by God. Therefore the Son must have had a beginning. "Before he was begotten or created or defined or established, he was not. For he was not begotten. But we are persecuted because we say, 'the Son has a beginning, but God is without beginning.'"[9]

There has never been such a radical subordination since then. In agreement with Origen, Arius argues that the Father begets or generates the Son. In so doing this begetting occurred at a temporal point rather than an eternal movement within the divine life. In assuming that there was a time when the Son was not, Arius concluded that the eternal nature of God is one, not three.[10] God the Father is self-sufficient, eternal, un-generate without beginning, not subject to emanation. The Son is created, and begotten timelessly before the ages. Therefore, he is neither everlasting nor unbegotten like the Father. If the Father and Son are of the same substance, we have two gods, Arius argued. The motto of Arianism, "there was when he was not," insists that Christ was begotten by God the Father in a time before other creatures. Christ is a creature, even though greater than other creatures. With excessive emphasis on the transcendence of God as the absolute, Arius maintained a strict unitarian monotheism. The subordination of Christ to God is in correspondence to subordination at the level of God's inner life. However, in regard to divine suffering, Arius affirmed that God can suffer in the person of the Logos, even though it is a lesser God who suffers. "He was passible by the Incarnation for if only soul and body suffered he could not have saved the world."[11]

9. LaCugna, *God for Us*, 31.
10. Bettenson, "Letter of Arius to Eusebius," 39.
11. LaCugna, *God for Us*, 34.

In the Council of Nicaea (325), Arius was condemned by the bishops at the council who affirmed that Jesus Christ was not created, but begotten of the substance of the Father, *homoousios* with the Father. By adding consubstantial between Father and Son (upon request of the Emperor Constantine), the Nicene creed safeguarded the divinity of the Son. The Son is "begotten of the Father as only begotten, that is, from the essence of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten not created, of the same essence as the Father."[12] Nicea established the christological basis for a trinitarian theology, but it remained silent about the distinction between Father and the Son, and so tends to lean toward Sabellianism. Prior to Nicaea, *homoousios* was used by Paul of Samosata to mean the single identity of Father and Son.[13]

In the council of Constantinople (381), Arianism was defeated finally by the great effort of Athanasius, who was influenced by the right wing of Origenism. Athanasius understood *homoousios* as substance-unity (*Wesenseinheit*), while rivals of Athanasius understands it as substance-similarity (*Wesensgleichheit*). However, substance-unity without substance-similarity would lead to modalism, whereas substance-similarity without substance-sameness would tend to tritheism. However, in affirmation of the *homoousios* of Nicaea and the axiom of God's impassibility, Athanasius denied the real suffering of the Logos. "The Logos is by nature impassible, and yet because of that flesh which he assumed, these things are ascribed to him, since they are proper to the flesh, and the body itself is proper to the Savior. And while he himself, being impassible in nature, remains as he is, unaffected by them, but rather obliterating and destroying them."[14] In contrast to Arius, who concluded that the Son must be begotten and created, Athanasius proposed a trinitarian monotheism in which the Son is subordinated to the Father in the economy but not at the level of God's inner life.

The Cappadocian theologians (Basil, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory of Nazianzus) found themselves defending the Niceno-Constantinopolitan creed against the extreme Arians, the Anhomoians led by Eunomius. According to the extreme Arians, the Son is altogether unlike the Father. Likewise, the Cappadocians defended themselves against the left-wing of the old Homoian Arianism (*homoias* = like), according to which the

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12. Leith, "Creed of Nicaea," in *Creeds of the Churches*, 30–31.

13. González, *History of Christian Thought*, 267–71.

14. Cf. LaCugna, *God for Us*, 38.

incomparability of Father and Son is declared. While they were moving towards rapprochement with the Nicene Homoousians, a party led by Eustathius of Sebaste was moving in the opposite direction in which a Pneumatomachean tendency is developed. According to them, the Spirit is neither God nor creature, but free.

Against Eunomius, who as a neo-Arian affirmed the radical subordination of Son to Father, Basil distinguished between *God for us* in the economic Trinity and YHWH, in which economy is understood as the condescension (kenosis) of the Son of God to human status. *Oikonomia* is the divine self-expression in salvation history, meaning Jesus' human nature. For Basil, economy means condescension of the Son to human nature by his assumption of human characteristics. In a way similar to Basil, Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa take *oikonomia* to be identical with the human nature assumed at the Incarnation. What is characteristic of Gregory of Nazianzus is that the *oikonomia* of human nature is "a voluntary self-limitation or accommodation."[15] God's condescension is in favor of human deification. "While his inferior nature, the humanity, became God, because it was united to God, and became one person because the higher nature prevailed—in order that I might become God as far as he has been made human."[16]

By distinguishing between the doctrine of the immanent Trinity and the doctrine of the economic Trinity as expressed by the Cappadocians, the language of the Trinity focuses on the Father's relationship to the Son in the intradivine life of God. In the Cappadocian response to Arianism and Eunomianism we see threads of mystical theology. The knowledge of God's work in the world is only a reflection of what God is, but not what God is. In other words, the nature of God remains unspeakable and unknowable like the hind parts of God that were shown to Moses between the gaps in the cliff (Exod 33:23).

The Council of Constantinople (381), in following the effort of the Cappadocians, affirmed the Trinity as one God existing in three *hypostases* that share one *ousia*. However, the Cappadocians were charged with teaching three gods by their opponents. They began to develop the formula *mia ousia, treis hypostaseis* (God exists as three subsistences in one nature), equivalent to the western *one substantia, and three personae* in a broader sense. Three particular subsistences participate in one divine *ousia*.

15. Ibid., 40.
16. Orat. 29, 19, SC 250:219. LaCugna, *God for Us*, 41.

Ousia is equivalent to what is common to the persons, while *hypostasis* is equivalent to what is proper and distinct. For example, Paul, Jane, and John can equally be called human, and this common nature is the *ousia*. However, particular individuals such as Paul, Jane, and John are each a *hypostasis* of an *ousia*. Paul and Jane (two *hypostases*) share the same *ousia*. Therefore, Paul and Jane are *homoousios* because of having a common *ousia*. Father, Son, and Spirit are distinct *hypostases*, which means individual subsistences of the divine *ousia*. *Ousia* expresses concrete existence (for example, Paul, Jane, and John), the divine *ousia* exists hypostatically (as individual Paul, Jane, and John), and therefore, there is no *ousia* apart from the *hypostases*.[17]

According to Basil, the Father, Son, and Spirit, who are one as three individuals, share a common nature. Even an analogy to three human individuals was drawn by Gregory of Nyssa. Of course, Gregory put great emphasis on "the oneness of the *ousia*, on the mutual indwelling of the three *hypostases*, and on the single cooperating activity of the entire Trinity."[18]

In the close approximation of *hypostasis* and *ousia*, *ousia* is ineffable, but God is manifest in the *hypostases* through the economy of salvation: the sending of the Son and Spirit by the Father. The essence of God is beyond every name. The divinity is only a name, not competent to describe God.[19] Nevertheless, Eastern theology generally tends to emphasize the distinct individuality of the three *hypostases* by safeguarding the divine unity in the respective and distinct origins of the Son and Spirit in and from the Father. This would be called the specter of tritheism.

In addition, the monarchy of the Father is strongly affirmed in that Son and Spirit receive divinity from the source. In so doing, the Father is understood as the ruling principle, the cause of Son and Spirit and the source of divinity. This monarchy is difficult to reconcile with a non-subordinationist trinitarian theology. From a perspective of relation of origin, the Father comes from nowhere, the Son is begotten by the Father, and the Spirit proceeds from the Father. The unknowable God is revealed to us through the economy of incarnation allowing for an economic subordination, because Son and Spirit are sent by the Father. The Father is the one who eternally is begetting the Son. So Father is the name (Begetter) of a

17. LaCugna, *God for Us*, 324.

18. Heron, *Holy Spirit in the Bible*, 83.

19. González, *History of Christian Thought*, 320–21.

relation to the Son (Begotten). In light of the doctrine of relations, the essence of God belongs to the Father who communicates divinity to Son and Spirit. However, the primacy of the Father is not weakened by the notion that Father, Son, and Spirit share a common *ousia.* The unity is based on the *ousia* held in common in which the persons exist perichoretically, mutually permeating one another. "For all the attributes of the Father are beheld in the Son, and all the attributes of the Son belong to the Father, in so much as the Son abides wholly in the Father and in turn has the Father wholly in Himself."[20]

In keeping with the tension between a strong monarchy and a common *ousia*, the Cappadocians made a distinction between divine ousia and the manifestation of God through the divine energies (*energeiai*). This apophatic move of the Cappadocians respects the fact that the *ousia* is incomprehensible in a way that the *hypostases* are not. This apophaticism, which in a way corresponds to the neo-Platonic spirituality of the Eastern tradition, is a basis for furthering the Areopagite's *theologia negativa* and the theology of Gregory Palamas in the fourteenth century.[21]

In addition, the sharp distinction between economy and theology makes it difficult to affirm the divine passibility in the full sense because the Logos suffers according to his humanity, but not according to his divinity. In response to Arianism, talk about the Trinity was focused on the meaning of God's inner being rather than the historical manifestation of God's condescension to flesh. John of Damascus (ca. 675–749) follows the Cappadocians. He argues that the Father, Son, and Spirit are one God and have one nature, neither one *hypostasis* nor one *prosopon*. It is impossible to call three *hypostases* of the Godhead one *hypostasis*, though they are in each other. The Trinity has one nature, one divinity, one power, one will, and one principle, which is recognized and venerated in three complete *hypostases*. In fact, the Trinity is conjoined but unmixed and distinguished but inseparable.[22]

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20. R. Deferrari, *Saint Basil*, 227; see LaCugna, *God for Us*, 72.

21. Palamas' doctrine of divine essence and the uncreated divine energies (1296–1539) is regarded as representative of Greek patristic theology of the Trinity. Palamas' distinction between divine essence and energies has remained the standard for explaining the relationship between God's radical transcendence and human experience of the incomprehensible uncreated Light. However, the essential connection between *theologia* and *oikonomia* remains unresolved. Cf. LaCugna, *God for Us*, 184.

The one God is recognized only in the three particular subsistences of fatherhood, sonship, and the Spirit's procession. These three *hypostases* are in each other and have a reciprocal *perichoresis* (*circumincessio*). Though John of Damascus denies subordination in the Trinity emphatically, he affirmed that the Father is the origin (*arche*) of the Son and therefore greater than the Son. Because the Son is inferior to the Father, the Holy Spirit proceeds only from the Father, of course, communicated through the Son. "And we do not speak of the Spirit as from the Son, but yet we call it the Spirit of the Son . . . manifested and imparted to us through the Son."[23]

A subordinationist note between Father and the Son is dominant in the Eastern Church. Moreover, in terms of a distinction between the essence and the energies, God in God's essence remains the incomprehensible mystery, and in this mystery lies the generation of the Son and the sending forth of the Spirit. However, God can be reached by the activity of God's uncreated energies. At the level of energies, the Spirit, reflecting the Son and manifesting the glory incarnate in him, springs primarily "from the same One who is Father of the Son, not proceeds from both of Father and the Son."[24] In the Greek church and ecumenical councils of the ancient church, talk about the Trinity revolves around the priority of YHWH with respect to *God for us,* in which divine suffering does not come to full consideration.

However, at the fifth ecumenical council in Constantinople (553), the purpose was to interpret Chalcedon in such a way as to relieve Nestorian objections. John Grammaticus stresses the hypostatic unity to the point where human nature of Jesus cannot be separated from the divine hypostasis at any single moment. This is the so-called doctrine of the *enhypostasis* of human nature (Jesus) in the divine nature of Christ. Along the way, Leontius of Byzantium, as one of the neo-chalcedonian representatives, affirmed the unity of the man Jesus with the Son of God in the formula of the *enhypostasis* of Jesus in the eternal Logos. The man Jesus has the ground of his human existence not in humanity, but "in" an impersonal humanity of Christ.

The designation "en"-hypostasis expressed Jesus' human nature in unification with the Logos from the beginning. In the doctrine of *enhypostasis*, the Logos-*sarx* Christology tends to ignore Jesus' true humanity. Jesus was a human individual only in his unification with the Logos.

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23. Quoted in Heron, *Holy Spirit in the Bible*, 84.
24. Ibid., 85.

Given this fact, the doctrine of *enhypostasis* leads to dyophysitism (from the Greek *dyo physeis*, "two natures"), speaking of two natures in Christ.[25] In response, Jesus' humanity is defined as a timeless substance. However, this teaching cannot be properly understood apart from the doctrine of the *anhypostasis*.[26] The term *anhypostasis* was attacked because it abolishes the true humanity. As a result, this led to the victory of monophysitism.

However, it must be kept in mind that *anhypostasis* as a negation is inseparably connected with *enhypostasis*, which means that Jesus Christ has a personal existence, but only in and through the Logos. If the Word of God is incarnated in the man Jesus Christ, his humanity is not abolished but fulfilled in union with the person, the *hypostasis*, of the Word of God. A tendency of deeming Jesus an independent personality (ebionitism, adoptionism, Nestorianism) would thereby be blocked.

As the Chalcedonian Christology stated, the Word exists in two natures, divine and human. However, the affirmation of two natures in Christ would imply that Christ has two existences, the one divine, and the other human. The contribution of Leontius was to interpret the chalcedonian formulation "in two natures" along the lines of the priority of the Word and the unity of the Word made flesh.

In terms of this doctrine, Leontius was able to hold that the humanity of Christ always exists in unity with his divinity, that is, in the eternal Logos. Through the affirmation that the humanity of Christ exists always in unity with the eternal Word is real humanity, docetism and ebiotism are ruled out. The positive side of this teaching, which rules out docetism, is called *enhypostasis* (existence in the Logos). The negative side is called *anhypostasis* (no other independent mode of existence apart from the eternal Logos), in which ebionitism is ruled out. The incarnated Word is always the preexistent eternal Word, the Son of God who became man (*enhypostasis*). Jesus the Man is always no other than the eternal Son of God (*anhypostasis*). Given this fact, the neo-chalcedonian representatives formulated the God-Man unity very sharply so that "*unus ex trinitate passus est in carne*" (one of the Trinity becomes passible in flesh).[27] The so-called theopaschite debate (519–534) concerned the passibility of God. Luther's understanding of divine passibility in the Trinity is thought to stand in the theopaschite tradition.

25. Cf. Pannenberg, *Jesus—God and Man*, 338–40.
26. *Handbuch*, 277–8; see *CD*, IV/2:49–50, 91–92.
27. *RGG* A–C, 1771.

Augustine and the Trinity

Augustine's theology of the Trinity is concerned with the articulation of one God who is Trinity. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are simultaneously distinct and co-essential, one in substance.[28] The three Persons are essential in the intra-trinitarian relations, and Augustine discusses the Trinity in the manner of a theo-psychology of the soul, which is created in the image of the Trinity and longs to return to God. In accepting the Trinity as an article of faith (*fides catholica*), he grounded himself in the tradition of the Cappadocian fathers. He followed the fathers who start from the differentiation of each *hypostasis* and move to the unity of the *ousia*. His difference from Greek theology is that Augustine begins with God's unity of substance, and moves to each differentiated particular. Augustine's concern is to explicate that "the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit constitute a divine unity of one and the same substance in an indivisible equality."[29] Being aware of the difference between the Greek notion of "one essence, three substances" (*hypostases*) and the Latin notion of "one essence or substance and three persons," Augustine maintains the unity of the divine essence rather than the monarchy of the Father by staying clear of ontological subordinationism.

According to Augustine, the Father is different from the Son, but not different in substance. This distinction is not one of substance, but of relation. The Father or the Son is not called such with respect to each divinity, but in mutual relationship, or in reference to another. As Augustine states, "Although to be the Father and to be the Son are two different things, still there is no difference in their substance, because the names, Father and Son, do not refer to the substance but to the relation, and the relation is no accident because it is not changeable."[30]

"Unbegotten" of the Father differs from "begotten" of the Son, not in a substantial sense but in a relative sense. However, Augustine made a move to equate person with substance beyond the relative character of a divine person. Therefore the person of the Father is no less than the substance of the Father. "For He is called a person in respect to Himself, not

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28. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 272.

29. *De Tri*, 1.4.7.

30. *De Tri*, 5.5.6. "But Father and Son together are not greater than the Holy Spirit, and no single Person of the Three is less than the Trinity Itself," (*De Tri 8. 1*); see Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 272.

in relation to the Son or to the Holy Spirit, just as He is called in respect to Himself, God, great, good, just, and other similar terms."[31]

Augustine's dissatisfaction with using substance for God in the plural would lead to the use of the term "person" with respect to substance and also in relation to the other persons of the Trinity.[32] In fact, Augustine prefers to use "essence" for naming God rather than "substance." If the person is equated with the substance, the essence of the Father lies not only in respect to himself, but also in relation to the Son and the Spirit. So, for Augustine, to be God and to be the Father or the Son or the Spirit is one and the same. Therefore, the relation is not relative per se, but subsists in relation to the essence. Divine persons become related to one another outside God's *oikonomia* in salvation history. In the taxonomy of salvation history, the Trinity has only one relation to the creature, one Principle, as they are one Creator and Lord.[33] The three Persons act as one principle (*unum principium*). "As They are inseparable, so They operate inseparably."[34]

For Augustine, the Trinity in the intra-divine life is the foundation for historical mission. The incarnation is accomplished by the triune God in one indivisible activity. In contrast to the sequence of the emanationist model of the Cappadocians, in which God is characterized by Father—Son—Holy Spirit—world, Augustine's theology of the Trinity is represented as a circle or triangle model. Augustine prefers to take the unity of God as the point of departure in considering the Trinity. His starting point within the unity of divine essence would lead to a dualistic tendency to separate the immanent Trinity from the economic Trinity. According to Augustine, *opera trinitatis ad extra indivisa sunt* (the works of the Trinity in the world are indivisible), God's activity in creation is the work of the whole Trinity. Put otherwise, as each of the Persons possesses the divine nature in a particular manner, so the role in the external and economical operation of the Godhead is appropriated to each of them in terms of each origin as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.[35]

To distinguish a three-personed Godhead acting in history, he suggested what is called the doctrine of appropriation. That is to say, certain

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31. *De Tri*, 7.6.11.
32. Cf. LaCugna, *God for Us,* 89–90.
33. *De Tri* 5.14.15.
34. *De Tri* 1.7.
35. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 274.

activities in history are appropriated or assigned to each divine person. Some critical reservations in regard to this idea lie in the fact that the doctrine of appropriation would downplay the aspect of the inter-relatedness of the triune God and put excessive emphasis on individuality of each divine person as Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier in historical mission. According to LaCugna, there is no need for a doctrine of appropriation if one starts the theology of the Trinity from the economy of history on the basis of the essential unity of *economia* and *theologia*.[36] That is why "in relation to the creature, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are one Principle as they are one Creator and one Lord."[37]

Regardless of the fact that incarnation is accomplished by the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit in one indivisible activity, Augustine has no intention of saying that the Trinity was born of Mary, crucified, and buried, then rose and ascended into heaven. From the perspective of the social doctrine of the Trinity in which *perichoresis* is understood as the sociality of the three divine Persons, Moltmann maintains that "God's triunity precedes the divine lordship." In this regard, Moltmann is critical of Augustine's rule of *opera trinitatis ad extra indivisa sunt* as a one-sided move, and poses a question to it.[38] From the perspective of consubstantiality of the three persons, we may say that the Trinity creates, the Trinity redeems, the Trinity sanctifies. While at the time, creation is appropriated to the Father, redemption to the Son, and sanctification to the Spirit in Augustine's theology.

Thus, in Augustine's theology the Father and Son produce the Holy Spirit, as Son is begotten by the Father. The self-relationality of divine persons is affirmed against the monarchy of God the Father. The Holy Spirit is distinguished from the Father and the Son and inherently related to the Giver and common gift between the Father and the Son.[39] The Spirit's communion with the Father and the Son is consubstantial and co-eternal. The Spirit is also the substance, and is called Love as well as Gift, because God is Giver and Love.[40]

Augustine, in thinking of the role of the Spirit as the bond of love between Father and Son, or a kind of communion of Father and Son

36. LaCugna, *God for Us*, 100.
37. Ibid., 98.
38. Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 93, 198–99.
39. *De Tri*, V. 12.
40. *De Tri*, VI. 7.

(*quaedam patris et filii communio*) attests that the Spirit, of God as well as of the Son, proceeds from both.[41] However, it is not a separate double procession, but a single simultaneous procession from both, in which the primacy of the father is affirmed, because the Son is generated from the father. As Augustine states, "God the Father alone is he from whom the Word is born, and from whom the Spirit principally proceeds. Therefore, I have added the word 'principally' because we find that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son also. But the Father gave this also to the Son, not as to one already existing and not yet possessing it; but whatever he gave to the only-begotten Word he gave by begetting him. Therefore, he so begot him that the common Gift should proceed from him also, and the Holy Spirit should be the Spirit of both."[42]

In general, a difference between Greek theology and Latin theology is often referred to as a different emphasis on a Tri-unity of divine persons over a Uni-Trinity of divine essence, or Unity over Trinity. What is more important in understanding Augustine is the fact that his starting point begins from the unity of intra-divine life rather than from the plurality of divine persons within the economy of salvation. He appropriated or assigned certain activities to one or another divine person in order to defend himself against charges of modalism; that is to say, creation to Father, redemption to the Son, and sanctification to the Holy Spirit in terms of his doctrine of appropriations.

From here the individuality is more accentuated than interrelatedness. The doctrine of appropriations is devised to assign an attribute or activity to one of the persons according to taxis of the economy without losing the con-substantiality of the three persons. The immanent Trinity calls for a doctrine of appropriation in regard to the economic Trinity. Some would fault Augustine's theology because in it the Trinity would be unbalanced by undermining the relationship between *theologia* (of intra-trinitarian relations and persons) and *oikonomia* (of the redemptive history).[43] In addition, Augustine's psychological approach to the Trinity focuses on the individual human soul as the true economy in which the

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41. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 274.

42. *De Tri* XV. 29. Cf. Kelley, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 47.

43. LaCugna, *God for Us,* 97–100. As she remarks, "once the Augustinian axiom that 'works of the Trinity ad extra are one' is affirmed, and the economy no longer gives access to the distinctions of persons, then the corrective of a doctrine of appropriations is needed in order to restore a proprium to each divine person," (Ibid., 102).

capacity to know the Trinity may occur apart from the incarnation.[44] The soul may know God by knowing itself apart from its social relations, even apart from God's economy of redemption. The critique asserts that the distinction of the divine persons in the economy of salvation gives way to an individualistic economy centering on the relationship between God and the soul.

Luther and the Doctrine of the Trinity

Luther's understanding of the Trinity is characterized by its focus on divine suffering. He is aware of the fact that from the ancient church onward there has been a close relationship between the doctrine of the Trinity and the incarnation. Although rejecting Patripassianism, Luther boldly affirms that God suffers in Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit who works to create faith in Jesus Christ is the Spirit of communication of divine suffering.

As we have already seen in the development of the doctrine of the Trinity in the ancient church, the Latin fathers used *substantia* and *essentia* while the Greek fathers used *ousia*. For expressing the threeness of God the Latin fathers used *persona*, which is equivalent to *hypostasis* for the Greek fathers. Luther's reservations about the word *homoousios* and his dissatisfaction with the concept of *persona* notwithstanding, he knew that there was no better term available in expressing God as the triune God. In a sermon on John 1 in 1537, Luther states, "For want of a better term, we have had to use the word 'person'; the fathers used it too. It conveys no other meaning than that of a hypostasis."[45]

For Luther, the terms such as "trinitas," "Dreifaltigkeit" (threefold-ness), "gedritts" (thirds), or "Dreheit" (threeness) would be risky and tempting, even seeming blasphemous because of sounding like tritheism. Luther feels that the ancient dogmatic terms are not rich enough to articulate and express his own concept of the Trinity. Luther's understanding of Trinity becomes manifest and explicit in his writings such as *The Three Symbols or Confession of the Belief of Christ* (1538), *On the Councils and Churches* (1539), and *On the Last Words of David* (1543).[46]

44. Augustine develops *vesitigia Trinitatis* (traces of the Trinity) in analyzing the idea of love to facilitate our understanding of the Trinity. He locates the image of God in the human capacity to remember, understand, and love God, (*De Tri* xiv.15).

45. *LW*, 22:16.

46. Ibid., 34:199ff; *WA,* 50:262–83 ("The Three Symbols"). *LW*, 41:3 ff; *WA*, 50:547, 12ff ("On the Councils and the Churches"), *LW*, 15:265ff; *WA*, 54, 28–100 ("On the Last

The doctrine of the Trinity for Luther belongs to an *articulus fidei* confessed and witnessed by the scriptures. The prologue of John's Gospel especially shows and affirms the doctrine of the Trinity, in which God is three distinct persons yet one God.[47] As far as the Trinity is an article of faith, a new grammar and a new language are required to describe and express God's majesty and mystery in which we can talk about the Trinity adequately and correctly through faith, not through reason and philosophy. In his explication of Ps 33:6, Luther says that three persons—the Lord, God's Word, and God's Spirit—are mentioned even though David confesses no more than one Creator. "The Lord does not do His own work separately, the Word does not do His own work separately, and the Breath does not do His work separately."[48] In following the creed of Athanasius, Luther neither separates the simple divinity nor mixes or confuses the three persons: "God in three persons and three persons in one single Godhead."[49]

In order to avoid tritheism, Luther advocates Augustine's principle, *opera trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa* (all three personae are one God, acting in full unity in relation to the world). The Trinity, which Luther confesses as the "sublime article of the majesty of God," is along the line of Augustine's fundamental principle concerning a dialectics of distinction but no separation of relationship between the immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity.[50] The immanent Trinity, while necessarily distinguished, at the same time must not be separated from God's economic action toward the world.

As Luther states, according to the scripture "the Father is a different and distinct person from the Son in the one indivisible and eternal Godhead. The difference is that He is the Father and does not derive His Godhead from the Son or anyone else. The Son is a Person distinct from the Father . . . since He was born of the Father from eternity. The Holy Spirit is a person distinct from the Father and Son in the same one Godhead. The difference is that He is the Holy Spirit, who eternally proceeds both from the Father and the Son, and who does not have the Godhead for

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Words of David").

47. *LW*, 22: 5.

48. Ibid., 15:302.

49. Ibid., 34:205, "Three Symbols."

50. Ibid., 37:361, "Confession Concerning Christ's Supper."

Himself nor from anyone else but from both the Father and the Son, and all of this from eternity to eternity."[51]

Luther's affirmation of three persons becomes visible in *opera ad intra* in the intradivine life rather than in the economic relations of the Trinity *ad extra*.[52] Luther appropriates Augustine's distinction between *res* (reality) and *signum* (sign), applying it to the revelation of the Son in a modified sense to emphasize that the humanity of Christ is not a mere sign or figure. "The humanity in which God's Son is distinctively revealed is reality, it is united with God in one person, which will sit eternally at the right hand of God."[53] The Holy Spirit is revealed to us in the form of the dove as an image of the Holy Spirit, as God the Father is revealed to us in the form of voice as an image. However, Jesus' humanity is eternally bound to the Son of God in which incarnation affects and sharpens Luther's understanding of the Trinity. "The Father is not known except in the Son through the Holy Spirit."[54]

Therefore, a dialectical relationship between the sign of the voice and the sign of the dove (in the case of Jesus' baptism) is related to sign-reality in the humanity of Jesus. Luther, in his commentaries on Gen 1 and John 1, follows in the footsteps of Augustine and Hilary, taking into account "appropriations" in the expression of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit concerning creation, redemption, and sanctification. At the same time he does not forget to stress the unity of the works of the Godhead. "Nor is it possible in this manner to divide God subjectively, for the Father is not known except in the Son and through the Holy Spirit."[55]

Luther's notion of the Trinity, when seen from the incarnation, comes close to God's Triunity (*Dreieinigkeit*) because an eternal birth of the Son in the *perichoresis* of the immanent Trinity is highlighted in a historical incarnation of the Son in the *perichoreis* of the economic Trinity. However, when his Trinity is seen from the perspective of a single appropriation it is inclined to God's Unitrinity. In other words, there is a striking balance in Luther between the western tendency toward the unity of divine nature and the eastern tendency toward a perichoretic participation.

51. Ibid.,15:303; *WA*, 54:58.

52. Jansen, *Studien zu Luther's Trinitätslehre*, 197.

53. *LW*, 15:308.

54. Ibid., 1:58.

55. Ibid.,1:58.