

THE ROLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN WITHIN  
ORIGEN'S AND AUGUSTINE'S COMMENTARIES

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**DECLARATION**

Submitted by GIOVANNI HERMANIN DE REICHENFELD to the UNIVERSITY OF EXETER as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Theology, September 2018.

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## **Abstract**

The aim of this thesis is to propose a heuristic comparison between Origen's and Augustine's different understandings of the role of the Holy Spirit in their interpretation of the Gospel of John. In particular, I will analyse the functions of the Spirit both in his Trinitarian role and in his soteriological agency. In carrying on this analysis, I will provide an evaluation of the extent to which the two authors' pneumatologies are shaped by the Gospel of John. The work is divided in three parts (A, B, C), composed of six chapters.

In chapter I (introduction), I will present the methodology, grounds and aims of the present comparison, together with an evaluation of scholarly debate and of primary sources.

In part A, I will deal with the role of the Spirit as a Trinitarian agent. I will analyse the ways in which Origen (chapter II) and Augustine (chapter III) represent the Spirit as a Trinitarian hypostasis, his ontological derivation and his status in the Trinity.

In part B, after a short analysis of the significance of dualism in the Gospel of John (represented by the concept of 'the world'), I will present the soteriological role of the Spirit in Origen's and Augustine's commentaries (respectively, chapter IV and V), with a particular focus on the relation between the Spirit and 'the world'.

Finally, in part C (chapter VI), I will propose a comparison of Origen's and Augustine's pneumatologies in light of the dualistic framework which they both derived from the Johannine Gospel, with a particular focus on the interpretation of the Father-Son-Spirit relation and on the dualism between God and 'the world'.

Hence, this thesis will offer not only a re-evaluation of the two authors' pneumatologies, but also a new assessment of the Johannine derivation of their Trinitarian thought, of their soteriology, and of the connection between the two.



## Table of Contents

<b>Abstract</b>	p. 3
<b>Table of Contents</b>	p. 5
<b>Acknowledgments</b>	p. 11
<b>CHAPTER I. Introduction</b>	p. 13
I.1.1 Why Commentaries on John's Gospel?	p. 16
I.1.2 Why Study the Spirit in Origen's and Augustine's Commentaries?	p. 20
I.1.3 Scholarship on Origen and Augustine	p. 22
I.1.4 Methodology	p. 29
I.1.5 Three Theological Questions	p. 30
I.2 The Sources	p. 35
I.2.1 ΩΡΙΓΕΝΟΥΣ ΤΩΝ ΕΙΣ ΤΟ ΚΑΤΑ ΙΩΑΝΝΗΝ ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΟΝ ΕΞΗΓΗΤΙΚΩΝ. Scholarship, Dating and Textual Problems	p. 35
I.2.2 <i>Aurelii Augustini In Iohannis Evangelium Tractatus</i> . Scholarship, Dating and Textual Problems	p. 42
<b>PART A. THE SPIRIT IN GOD</b>	p. 49
<b>CHAPTER II. The Spirit in God: Origen</b>	p. 51
II.1: Proceeding from the Father: The Trinitarian Problem and the Ontological Relation between the Father and the Son	p. 51
II.1.1 Divergent Scholarship	p. 51
II.1.2 To What Extent Does Origen Have a Doctrine of the Trinity?	p. 55
II.1.3 The Father and the Son: Subordinationism	p. 58
Conclusions	p. 72

II.2: The Spirit as One of the <i>All Things Made Through the Logos</i> : According to Origen, Is the Spirit a Creature?	p. 76
II.2.1 The Spirit as God in God	p. 76
II.2.2 The Spirit as a Creature in God	p. 82
Conclusions	p. 90
<b>CHAPTER III. The Spirit in God: Augustine</b>	p. 93
Introduction	p. 93
III.1 Augustine's Trinity in Contemporary Scholarship	p. 96
III.2 Hermeneutical Problems in Studying the Trinity in the <i>Tractates on John</i>	p. 102
III.3 God as Ontological Stability: Being and <i>Idipsum</i>	p. 107
III.4 Trinitarian Relationships: The Son, the <i>Quod Habet Hoc Est</i> and the Problem of God's Attributes	p. 114
III.4.1 The Relation of Identity	p. 116
III.4.2 Generation, Arianism, Subordinationism	p. 121
III.5 The Holy Spirit: The Procession, the <i>Filioque</i> and their Ontological Implications	p. 128
Conclusions	p. 140
<b>PART B. THE SPIRIT AND THE WORLD</b>	p. 143
The World and the Spirit in the Gospel of John	p. 145
<b>CHAPTER IV. The Spirit and the World in Origen</b>	p. 149
Introduction	p. 149
IV.1 Noetic and Perceptible Cosmos: The Concept of the World in the <i>Commentary on John</i>	p. 154
IV.1.1 Turning the Perceptible into the Noetic: The World in the Spiritual Gospel	p. 154
IV.1.2 The 'Lamb of God Who Takes Away the Sins of the World': The Salvation of the Cosmos	p. 157

IV.1.3 The 'Light of the World': The Participation of the Son in the Cosmos	p. 160
IV.1.4 'You Are of This World, I Am Not of This World': The Noetic and the Perceptible Cosmos	p. 164
IV.1.5 Reconstructed Dualism: The Two Worlds, Their Participation in God and the Body	p. 171
IV.2 The Holy Spirit in the Cosmos: the 'Matter' of the Noetic Ascent	p. 175
IV.2.1 Father, Son and Holy Spirit: The Worldly Works of a Unified Trinity	p. 176
IV.2.2 The <i>Logikoi</i> and the Son	p. 180
IV.2.2.1 Participation and Contemplation	p. 180
IV.2.2.2 The Son in the Cosmological Order	p. 182
IV.2.3 The <i>Pneumatikoi</i> and the Spirit	p. 186
IV.2.3.1 The Participation in the Spirit	p. 187
IV.2.3.2 Human Spirit and Divine Spirit	p. 189
IV.2.4 The 'Material of the Gifts from God': The Holy Spirit as the Substratum of the Noetic Ascent	p. 192
IV.2.4.1 The Spiritual Substratum	p. 192
IV.2.4.2 The Spiritual and the Noetic	p. 194
IV.2.4.3 The Spirit in the Cosmos	p. 196
Conclusions	p. 200

<b>CHAPTER V. The Spirit and the World in Augustine</b>	p. 205
Introduction	p. 205
V.1 <i>Dilectores Mundi Mundus Dicuntur</i> : The Ambiguity of the Concept of <i>Mundus/Saeculum</i> in the <i>Tractates on John</i>	p. 210
V.2 <i>Spiritus/Caritas vs Mundus/Saeculum</i> . The Opposition between <i>Mundus Creatus</i> and <i>Mundus Recreatus</i>	p. 216
V.2.1 Augustine's Dualism: Between John and Mani	p. 216
V.2.2 <i>Mundus Creatus</i> : The 'Image Within' as Opposed to the World in a Dualistic Framework	p. 219

V.2.3 <i>Mundus Recreatus</i> : The Recreation of the Lost Image	p. 225
V.3 The <i>Proprium</i> of the Spirit: Christ, the Holy Spirit and the World as <i>Massa Damnationis</i>	p. 240
V.3.1 Unity and Relationship in God: The Inseparability of the Works of the Trinity	p. 242
V.3.2 Augustine’s Trinitarian Gospel: Christ’s <i>Proprium</i> in Relation to the World	p. 246
V.3.2.1 The Son of God; the Son of Man; the World	p. 247
V.3.2.2 The Predestination of Christ	p. 253
V.3.2.3 The Final Judgement	p. 256
V.3.3 Augustine’s Trinitarian Gospel: The Holy Spirit’s <i>Proprium</i> and the Absolute Irreconcilability between the Spirit and the World	p. 258
V.3.3.1 Holy Spirit: Love and Grace	p. 260
V.3.3.2 Holy Spirit: Unity and Communion	p. 263
V.3.3.3 The Spirit and the World	p. 270
Conclusions	p. 277

**PART C. ORIGEN AND AUGUSTINE: A COMPARISON** p. 281

<b>CHAPTER VI. The Holy Spirit, the Trinity, the World and the Gospel of John: A Comparative Analysis</b>	p. 283
VI.1 The Grounds and Aims of the Comparison	p. 283
VI.2 The Spirit in God: Origen’s and Augustine’s Understanding of the “Immanent” Trinity in Their Commentaries on John	p. 291
VI.2.1 The Generation of the Son	p. 291
VI.2.2 The Procession of the Spirit	p. 296



VI.3 The Spirit and the World: The Relationship between the Trinity and the World in Origen and Augustine	p. 304
VI.3.1 'He Was in the World; yet the World did not Know Him'	p. 305
VI.3.2 The Spirit in the World	p. 316

<b>Bibliography</b>	p. 327
Primary Sources	p. 327
Secondary Sources	p. 337



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# I.1 Introduction

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The aim of my research is to enquire about the status and role of the Holy Spirit in Origen's and Augustine's *Commentaries on the Gospel of John*. On one hand, I will focus on the intra-Trinitarian status of the Spirit; on the other hand, I shall analyse the two authors' interpretation of the Spirit as that agent – described in the fourth Gospel as the gift of God – which guides human beings in the process of Salvation.<sup>1</sup> In analysing both the Trinitarian and the soteriological agency of the Spirit in the two authors' theologies, this thesis will discuss the extent to which Origen's and Augustine's pneumatologies are shaped and informed by the Gospel of John. The very characteristics of John's Gospel – in particular, the Father-Son-Spirit relation and the dualism between God and the world – represent the bases on which the two authors deal with two main Christian problems: the intra-Trinitarian shape of God and his relation to “the world”, interpreted both as the original creation and as human beings in their present condition. I will also show that, led by the text of the Gospel, both authors present a very close link between Trinitarian theology and Soteriology.

Until few years ago, Origen and Augustine were taken as representatives of two different traditions: the “Greek Eastern” and the “Latin Western”. It was a common opinion that, while the former presented a Trinitarian theology mostly focused on the Father, the latter was focused on God's essence. Therefore, Origen and Augustine were usually chosen by scholars as representatives of two different Christian traditions, namely the Greek and Latin ones. In the last twenty years this construction has been criticized by many scholars.<sup>2</sup> The heuristic comparison carried on in my thesis does not aim to replicate the old “East” versus “West” paradigm. Rather, through the study of Origen's and Augustine's pneumatologies, this work will unfold how and why their understandings of the themes and theological categories of the fourth Gospel

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<sup>1</sup> For the idea of the Spirit as gift in the Gospel of John see: *Jn.* 4:10; 7:37-39; 14:16-17; 14:26; 15:7.

<sup>2</sup> For a full bibliographical discussion on this trend of scholarship see: *infra*, VI.1.

represent two very different possibilities of interpreting Christianity as a whole.<sup>3</sup> In this sense, the two authors are forefathers and examples of two different *trajectories* or *paradigms* in the history of Christianity. These *paradigms* that I will present in this thesis, are different from that of “Greek” and “Latin” Christianity, since they rather have to do with the way the two authors interpret the two main Johannine themes: the relation between hypostases (thus, the Trinitarian theology) and the dualism between God and “the world”.

Origen has a *rational* (λογικός) and *noetic* interpretation of the Scriptures and of reality, based on a tenacious defence of free will and a stubborn faith in the redeeming power of rationality. Everything that exists is rational; the world is rational as well as God and his will.<sup>4</sup> The Spirit is therefore mainly interpreted as the *rational* and *divine* Trinitarian entity in which humanity is called to partake in, until the actual universal salvation of all rational beings will be achieved. In this sense, in Origen’s interpretation, the Spirit is the Trinitarian agent that smooths the difference between God and the world. Therefore, while maintaining a strong Johannine focus on the redeeming action of the Saviour, his interpretation smooths the Gospel’s dualism between the Spirit and the world.<sup>5</sup>

Augustine’s exegesis and ontology are shaped on rational beliefs as well. His interpretations of the Trinity and his discussion of “the world” both respond to the need of explaining reality in rational terms. Nevertheless, his theological mindset struggles to find an explanation for the overwhelming presence of evil in human affairs. His dumbfounded awareness of evil, together with his understanding of the incapacity of human being to be free from evil, opens the gates to a radical interpretation of the Gospel’s dualism.<sup>6</sup> In his theology, the

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<sup>3</sup> A clear example is the influence Origen’s doctrine of the Spirit had on the Cappadocian Fathers and on the Post-Nicaean debate. The same Gregory of Nazianzus explicitly states it saying that: ‘Origen is the stone on which all of us were sharpened’. Gregory’s quotation is from Kilian McDonnell, ‘Does Origen Have a Trinitarian Doctrine of the Holy Spirit?’, in *Gregorianum* 75 1 (1994), p. 5-35, p. 6 n. 7. For a debate on Origen and Origenism after Nicaea see: Emanuela Prinzivalli, *Magister Ecclesiae: il dibattito su Origene tra il III e il IV secolo*, Roma 2002; Emanuela Prinzivalli, ‘La controversia origeniana di fine IV secolo e la diffusione della conoscenza di Origene in Occidente’ in *Augustinianum* 46 1 (2006), p. 35-50.

<sup>4</sup> One could argue that even matter is rational insofar as it serves God’s plan of redemption for every being with a rational will.

<sup>5</sup> On dualism in the Gospel of John see in particular, *infra*, part B.

<sup>6</sup> See the analysis by Blumenberg, who identifies in Augustine’s theodicy the main problematic point of Augustine’s theology. The failure of giving an adequate ‘humanistic’ answer to the

Spirit is interpreted both as the ontological bond of love in the Trinity and as the grace of God that pulls the elect out of the world.<sup>7</sup> Thus, Augustine's system is based on the contrast between the goodness of God, who saves God's chosen creatures through an act of personal love for each redeemed man and woman, and the astonishing perversion of the world. Salvation is not for "the world", but for single and particular human beings. Consequently, Augustine constantly opposes the Spirit to the world, for the world is bad in its own essence. The dualism of the Gospel of John is thus interpreted in a radical way.

The 'debate' between these two souls of Christianity, represented here by Origen and Augustine, could be said to span the entire history of Christianity. It is possible to find traces of it in the ninth century controversy between Eriugena and Gottschalk,<sup>8</sup> as well as in the sixteenth century argument between Erasmus and Luther<sup>9</sup> or in the seventeenth century controversy between Jansenists and Jesuits.<sup>10</sup> Although analysing these debates falls beyond the scope of my research, I deem a heuristic comparison between Origen and Augustine valuable for a number of reasons. First, my analysis will encourage a better understanding of the two authors' theologies, particularly their pneumatology, and, secondly, it will point out with greater accuracy the Scriptural (in particular, Johannine) bases of these two different theological trajectories which are visible throughout the whole history of Christian thought.

Having provided a general outline of my research, I will now illustrate the reasons why I have chosen to study *the Spirit* specifically in the two authors' respective *Commentaries on John*.<sup>11</sup> Then, I will discuss the current

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problem of evil led to the abandonment of Augustine's solutions by the modern age. See Hans Blumenberg, *Die Legitimität der Neuzeit*, Frankfurt am Main 1966 trans. *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, Cambridge 1986, in particular p. 309-361.

<sup>7</sup> Augustine deems the gift of God, that is, Spirit-Grace, to be completely free from the bond of human actions, for it is impossible for humans to deserve it. For this reason, some scholars have defined his theology as a 'theology of terror' see: Kurt Flasch, *Logik des Schreckens. Augustinus von Hippo: Die Gnadenlehre von 397*, Mainz 1995.

<sup>8</sup> See: Dermot Moran, *The Philosophy of John Scottus Eriugena. A Study of Idealism in the Middle Ages*, Cambridge 2004.

<sup>9</sup> See in particular the debate over free will, that is Luther's *De Servo Arbitrio* (1525) written in response to Erasmus of Rotterdam's *De Libero Arbitrio* (1524).

<sup>10</sup> See: Gaetano Lettieri, *Il metodo della grazia. Pascal e l'ermeneutica giansenista di Agostino*, Roma 1999.

<sup>11</sup> Hereafter Origen's *Commentary on John* will be quoted as *ComJn* Augustine's *Tractates on John* will be quoted as *Trloh*.

scholarship, showing where my work places in it, and the methodology I will use in analysing the two authors' works. Finally, I will introduce the primary sources.

### **I.1.1 Why Commentaries on John's Gospel?**

I believe the two commentaries on John give the scholar an exceptional point of comparison of the two theologians' doctrine of the Spirit.

First, it is worth noting that both authors consider the fourth Gospel as the most important book of all the Scriptures: Origen claims it is the 'firstfruits of all the Scriptures', while Augustine refers to John the evangelist as: 'An eagle who saw with his own eyes the eternal Truth', adding that 'Saint John the apostle, not undeservedly in respect of his spiritual understanding compared to the eagle, has elevated his preaching higher and far more sublimely than the other three [evangelists]'.<sup>12</sup> Both theologians consider this Gospel as the highest pinnacle of Scripture, the one in which the most sublime doctrines are expounded.<sup>13</sup> As a matter of fact, they both noted that this Gospel is centred on Christ's divinity, while other Gospels are mainly about Jesus' humanity.<sup>14</sup> From a methodological point of view, claiming that the fourth Gospel is the most important and profound text of the Scriptures leads to the consequence that what the exegete says in interpreting this text should be considered normative even in the interpretation of other texts. If the Gospel of John is indeed the 'firstfruits of all the Scriptures', containing the 'eternal Truth' of God, then the doctrines expressed within the interpretation of the Gospel ought to be taken in higher consideration than those expressed in the interpretation of other texts.<sup>15</sup> This statement should not be

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<sup>12</sup> See *ComJn*, I.19; I.21; I.44. and *Trloh*, XXXVI.5. Augustine's first quotation is from *The Harmony of the Gospels*, I.6.9. The second quotation is from *Trloh*, XXXVI.1.

<sup>13</sup> The fact that Augustine refers to the Gospel of John as the most important text of all Scriptures not only in his *Tractates*, but also in other works (e.g. *The Harmony of the Gospels*), proves that such a claim should not be taken as a rhetorical tool, but as a genuine theological statement. The same could be said of Origen, who makes no such claim for any other book of the Scriptures.

<sup>14</sup> See *ComJn*, I.40 and *Trloh*, XXXVI.1; LXVIII.6.

<sup>15</sup> I deem this observation to be particularly interesting with regard to Origen's exegesis, since the large majority of works by modern scholars on Origen's hermeneutics is based on his exegesis of the Old Testament, rather than of the New Testament.



rigidly interpreted, but I deem it useful to solve some inconsistencies with other exegetical works.<sup>16</sup>

Secondly, the role of 'Spiritual Gospel' makes the fourth Gospel particularly interesting for studying Origen's and Augustine's conception of God. The high Christology shown in the Gospel of John, particularly in the Prologue, makes it the most valuable source for understanding the scriptural basis for the two authors' conceptions of the Trinity. Other scholars have already noticed this characteristic in both Origen and Augustine. It is not surprising then that there are a great number of studies on the relation between the Father and the different aspects (ἐπινοΐαι) of the Son in Origen's work on John.<sup>17</sup> These works will be addressed and discussed in my thesis, with particular regard to those who study the relation between Son, Spirit and world. For instance, Greggs' interpretation of the relationship between the ἐπινοΐαι of the Son – taken as the means by which the Son deals with the problem of the universality of God and the particularity of the creation – and the Spirit, which makes the reality of that universal work of the Son living and acting in individuals and communities in the present age.<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, scholarship on Augustine's *Tractates on John* has been mainly focused on his notion of the Trinity. The first part of this thesis will therefore consider the peculiar role that the Spirit plays inside the Trinity, focusing on the intra-Trinitarian relationship between the hypostases. Nevertheless, differently from the aforementioned scholarship, it will try to unfold not only the Trinitarian thought of the two authors, with a particular focus on the Spirit, but also the influence the Gospel of John had on the formation of their theologies.

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<sup>16</sup> This is especially true regarding Origen's most debated doctrines – e.g. *apokatastasis* and pre-existence of the souls. I deem it methodologically wrong to give the same importance to what Origen says in the Homilies on the Old Testament to what is said in the *Commentary on John*. In fact, Origen admits that these kinds of matters are reserved for those who are more advanced and, therefore, cannot be preached to all the people. See *ComJn*, XX.2-7.

<sup>17</sup> See: K. Torjesen, 'The Logos incarnate and Origen's exegesis of the Gospel' in Richard P. C. Hanson and Henri Crouzel, *Origeniana Tertia*, Roma 1985, p. 29-41; Richard P. C. Hanson, 'Did Origen teach that the Son is ek tēs ousias of the Father?', in Lothar Lies (ed), *Origeniana Quarta*, Innsbruck 1987, p. 200-202; Rowan Williams, 'The Son's knowledge of the Father in Origen' in L. Lies (ed), *Origeniana Quarta*, p. 146-153. See also Edward Moore, 'Christ as a Demiurge: The Platonic Sources of Origen's Logos Theology in the *Commentary on John*', in *Philotheos* 8 (2008), p. 200-207.

<sup>18</sup> See: Tom Greggs, *Barth, Origen, and Universal Salvation: Restoring Particularity*, Oxford 2009; see in particular p. 55-84 (Pre-existence and restoration: Logos and Logika) and p. 152-170 (Spiritual growth: The work of the Spirit in the saints of God).

There is a third characteristic that makes the fourth Gospel a pivotal text for the study of Origen's and Augustine's thought: the dualistic structure of the Gospel. Since the work of Bultmann, the radical dualism presented by the Gospel has been one of the most important threads in scholarship on the Gospel of John.<sup>19</sup> This dualism opposes the goodness of God's revelation carried by the Redeemer to the wickedness of "the world" in which the Redeemer came.<sup>20</sup> Defining the idea of dualism, one must be very careful not to confuse John's dualism with Gnostic – in particular, Valentinian – or Manichaean dualism. It is not my intention here to affirm the derivation of the Gospel of John from Gnosticism, as Bultmann did. Nor will I discuss the extent to which Gnostic dualism could be rightly considered to be a derivative of the dualism that we already find in the Gospel of John, thus considering John as the source of the Gnostic dualism, as Pétrement did.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, I believe that they share a fairly similar dualistic structure, which – however – they interpreted very differently. Gnostics knew and used the fourth Gospel. As a matter of fact, both Gnosticism and Manichaeism have a radical *cosmic* dualism, in which the good power of a superior God fights against the wicked powers of the inferior God who created the world. Gnostic theological systems are based on the idea that the world is perverted in its *essence*, thus having no possibility of being redeemed. In fact, Gnostic myths are based on the idea that in the beginning, some portions of the good God fell down into the wicked world. The actions of the Redeemer are limited to those people who naturally and ontologically possess a divine nature. These pneumatic human beings<sup>22</sup> are awakened by the work of the Redeemer, who pulls his children from the world of darkness, leading them back to the fullness of light (the Pleroma). Moreover, this cosmic

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<sup>19</sup> See: Rudolf Bultmann, *Das Evangelium des Johannes*, Göttingen 1964, trans. *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, Oxford 1971.

<sup>20</sup> Acknowledging that, of course, Bultmann's interpretation is dated and disputed, I still think that the issues he raised regarding dualism were the kinds of issue that were pondered by Origen and Augustine. Therefore, I use Bultmann here to bring those particular issues into focus.

<sup>21</sup> Simone Pétrement, *Le Dieu séparé: les origines du gnosticisme*, Paris 1984, trans. *A Separate God: The Christian Origins of Gnosticism*, New York 1990.

<sup>22</sup> I am referring here to the anthropological division into three natures – spiritual, psychic and hylic – held by the great majority of Gnostic systems, in particular Valentinianism. See, for example, Origen's understanding of the fragments of Heracleon reported in Origen's *ComJn*, X.210-215. Whether Heracleon himself considered these three natures as fixed is a problem that will be addressed tangentially in *infra*, IV.2.3.1.

structure is expressed through a complex mythology that traces the cause of the perversion of the world in the primordial sin inside the Godhead. Such *cosmic dualism* is not the same as the one we find in the Gospel of John, since the fourth Gospel presents rather a *historical dualism*. In the Gospel, the darkness comes into existence because of the will of the world to turn away from the light. This estrangement of the world from God led to the necessity of a Redeemer, who enters into a world that has lost the capacity of understanding his Word. The Word of the Redeemer is therefore incomprehensible to the world of darkness. Moreover, this world has no possibility of saving itself without the powerful action of the Redeemer and his good revelation. Henceforth, history becomes the History of Salvation, that is, the history of the coming of the Saviour into the world in order to convert the portion that he chose and destroy the darkness. In fact, no communication is possible between the world of darkness and the Redeemer. The darkness simply cannot accept the light, just as the world hates the Redeemer and his community. In other words, the radical opposition between the Flesh (the world of darkness) and the Spirit (the light of God), is not natural, but depends on the will of believers. The insistence on the *flesh* taken up by the Saviour tells us about the possibility of turning the world, at least a part of it, to God. The entire Gospel is therefore structured in pair of opposites: the light and the darkness, the Redeemer and the Devil, the community of the apostles and the world.<sup>23</sup>

I think the dualistic character of the fourth Gospel is of the greatest importance, since the way in which Origen and Augustine interpreted the Gospel's dualism marks the difference between their interpretations of the Johannine doctrines. For this reason, the second part of my dissertation shall analyse the way Origen and Augustine deal with the concept of "the world" and connect it to their pneumatologies. In fact, understanding the way by which these dichotomies are interpreted and resolved by the two authors enlightens us as to Origen's and Augustine's interpretations. Such a work is particularly needed since it has not

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<sup>23</sup> For the history of the development of the Gospel of John and of the Johannine community see the masterpiece by: Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, II vols, New York 1966-1970. See also: Raymond E. Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple*, New York 1979. See also the more recent: Harold Attridge, 'Johannine Christianity', in Margaret M. Mitchell and Frances M. Young (eds), *The Cambridge History of Christianity: Origins to Constantine*, Cambridge 2006, p. 125-143. More bibliography and discussion on dualism in the Gospel of John can be found in *infra*, part B and in VI.3.1.

been done before. In particular, this thesis will unravel the way in which both Origen and Augustine fought against two different cosmic dualisms: Valentinian Gnosticism, for Origen, and Manichaeism for Augustine. Therefore, the way in which they approached a historically dualistic text such as the Gospel of John is of the utmost importance in order to detect the speculative distance between the two theologians and the Johannine derivation of their thoughts.

### **1.1.2 Why Study the Spirit in Origen's and Augustine's Commentaries?**

One of the problems of studying the Spirit in Origen's and Augustine's exegesis on John is that, according to many scholars, a constructive doctrine of the Spirit is not traceable in the fourth Gospel itself.<sup>24</sup> If truth is to be told, the text is more concerned with the revelation of the Son and his relation to the Father. However, the Spirit is clearly presented in the Gospel of John in relation to the *binitarian* structure of the Father and the Son. In many passages the Spirit is said to be sent by the Father in the name of the Son, as a *gift* for human beings – e.g. *Jn.* 7:37-39 and *Jn.* 14:26. Of course, it is not the intention of this work to enquire about the pneumatology of the Gospel of John itself. Rather, I will be investigating the development of pneumatology in the early church as it emerges from readings of John's Gospel. Therefore, a comparative study regarding the role of the Spirit in Origen's and Augustine's texts is essential in trying to resolve some of the questions raised above.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> For references see: Tricia Gates Brown, *Spirit in the Writings of John: Johannine Pneumatology in Social-scientific Perspective*, New York 2003, p. 1-21 and 62-70.

<sup>25</sup> The importance of the role of the Spirit in Origen's work is highly debated, especially in German scholarship. From Harnack's time Origen was often blamed for not having sufficiently developed a clear doctrine of the Spirit. See: Adolf von Harnack, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, Friburg 1890, trans. *Outlines of the History of Dogma*, Cambridge 2009. Many scholars still think of the Spirit as an almost functionless figure in Origen's thought. See in particular: Wolf-Dieter Hauschild, *Gottes Geist und der Mensch: Studien zur frühchristlichen Pneumatologie*, München 1972; Wolf-Dieter Hauschild, *Lehrbuch der Kirchen- und Dogmengeschichte: Alte Kirche und Mittelalter*, Gütersloh 1995; See also the more recent: Wolf-Dieter Hauschild and Volker H. Drecoll, *Pneumatologie in der alten Kirche*, Bern u.a. 2004. This traditional view has been strongly criticised by: Christoph Marksches, 'Der Heilige Geist im Iohanneskommentar des Origenes. Einige vorläufige Bemerkungen', in Christoph Marksches (ed), *Origenes und sein Erbe. Gesammelte Studien*, Berlin 2007, p. 107-126, who traces in the *Commentary on John* a clear role of the Spirit in the history of salvation. On Origen's doctrine of the Holy Spirit see also: Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, 'The Holy Spirit as Agent, Not Activity:

It is now worth explaining in more detail the reasons why I have chosen to study the Spirit *within* Origen's and Augustine's commentaries on John. The answer to this question is twofold. On the one hand, the role of the Holy Spirit in the fourth Gospel – that is, his function of active force of God by participating in which the Johannine community understood itself as anointed – is highly significant for the two authors. In fact, the Spirit is the keystone for the Trinitarian and dualistic problems raised by the evangelical text. The doctrine of the Spirit is therefore very challenging, and John's Gospel constitutes one of the most important scriptural sources for both authors. On the other hand, I deem it particularly useful not only to study their doctrine of the Holy Spirit, but to enquire about their understanding of the Spirit *in their exegeses*. Consequently, this work wants to put emphasis on the commentaries as a source of *theological* – not only hermeneutical – information. The scholarly attempt to systematise Origen's and Augustine's thought sometimes risks failing to give enough consideration to the theological doctrines of the two authors as presented in their exegeses. Indeed, studying the Trinitarian role of the Spirit in Augustine's *Tractates on John* is different from using one of his systematic works – e.g. *On the Trinity* – for in the *Tractates* Augustine has to deal with the many ambiguities of the Gospel's text. Equally, it is not the same to study the relation between the Spirit and the world as systematically expounded by Origen in *On First Principles* and to study it in Origen's careful exegesis of the 'firstfruits of all the Scriptures'. The real significance of every theological doctrine is measured by the application of the same doctrine to the biblical exegesis. Therefore, my research will demonstrate the extent to which the two authors' pneumatologies are drawn from, rather than imposed on, the text of the fourth Gospel. The doctrine of the Spirit (which stood in the centre of Augustine's thought and is one of the most controversial issues in Origen's scholarship) in the exegesis of the fourth Gospel (which poses all the theological questions explained above) is therefore an extremely interesting case study.

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Origen's Argument with Modalism and its Afterlife in Didymus, Eunomius, and Gregory of Nazianzus', in *Vigiliae Christianae* 65 (2011), p. 227-248. See also: George C. Berthold, 'Origen and the Holy Spirit' in Robert J. Daly (ed), *Origeniana Quinta*, Leuven 1992, p. 444-448.

### I.1.3 Scholarship on Origen and Augustine

The aim of the present work is to make a more in-depth contribution to comparative studies of Origen and Augustine, proposing a systematic comparison between Origen's *Commentary on the Gospel of John* and Augustine's *Tractates on John*. In fact, a methodical comparison between these two works is not present in the scholarship.<sup>26</sup> The paucity of comparative scholarship on the theological contents of Origen's and Augustine's *Commentaries on John* is, in my opinion, due to the presence of more systematic works of the same authors – e.g. *On First Principles* and *Against Celsus* regarding Origen; *On Christian Doctrine*, *The City of God*, *On the Trinity* regarding Augustine. For this reason, a study of the theological contents of the two commentaries is particularly needed, since it provides the possibility not only of identifying the two author's doctrines, but even to study how they fit within the living practice of exegesis. My work aims at considering commentaries on the Bible as *theological* sources, for it is exactly from the Bible that the two authors took the scriptural material for their – sometimes opposed – doctrines.

However, such a bibliographical deficiency might be explained with a lack of consensus over the general theology of these two thinkers.<sup>27</sup> One of the main disputes regarding Origen's thought – a dispute in which the interpretation of his *Commentary on John* plays a major role – is that concerning his relation to Platonic philosophy as well as the philosophical derivation of some of his most controversial doctrines – in particular, the *apokatastasis* and the pre-existence of the soul. This debate has seen advocates of both sides. An example is that of the dispute between O'Leary, who believes that Platonism exerted a substantial

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<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, there are some comparative articles. For an essay on Augustine's and Origen's interpretations of *Jn. 13* on the figure of Judas and the consequent problem of evil see: Gaetano Lettieri, 'Origene, Agostino e il mistero di Giuda: due esegesi in conflitto di Ioh XIII', in Mario Maritano and Enrico dal Covolo (eds), *Commento a Giovanni. Lettura origeniana*, Roma 2006, p. 83-133. On the Spirit in Origen's *Commentary* see: Giuseppe Ferraro, *Lo Spirito Santo nel quarto Vangelo: i commenti di Origene, Giovanni Crisostomo, Teodoro di Mopsuestia e Cirillo di Alessandria*, Roma 1995. On the Spirit in the *Tractates* see: Giuseppe Ferraro, *Lo Spirito e Cristo nel commento al quarto Vangelo e nel trattato trinitario di sant'Agostino*, Città del Vaticano 1997.

<sup>27</sup> It is neither possible nor useful to attempt here an exhaustive literature review on Origen and Augustine. This brief overview does not claim to give an exhaustive account of scholarship, but only to provide a general survey of their most debated doctrines.

influence on Origen's thought<sup>28</sup> and Edwards, who has a minimalist opinion regarding the effect of Platonic categories on Origen.<sup>29</sup> On the other hand, the scholarship on Augustine has been divided over two main points: 1) the interpretation of Augustine as a systematic thinker in all his writings and 2) the interpretation of Augustine's doctrine of grace. A first group of scholars tends to minimize Augustine's theological turning point, which occurred during the writing of the *Various Questions to Simplicianus* (397). Hence, they tend to interpret Augustine as a consistent thinker, denying that the doctrine of grace led him to hypothesize the idea of predestination – at least until a very late stage of his life.<sup>30</sup> The second group tends to emphasize the differences between Augustine's production during his youth and his maturity, using the *Various Questions to Simplicianus* as a watershed. Hence, they stress the change in his theology, affirming the development of notions of predestination.<sup>31</sup> The monograph by Lettieri is a relevant example of the second group.<sup>32</sup> Other scholars have gone on a different path. A particular mention should be given to the work of Harrison, who denies a discontinuity between the first and the second Augustine, stating that the main themes that scholarship usually

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<sup>28</sup> Joseph Stephen O'Leary, 'Platonic Dissolution of History in Origen's Commentary on John X 5-34', in Jane Baun, Averil Cameron, Mark Edwards and Markus Vinzent (eds), *Studia Patristica* 46, Leuven 2010, p. 241-247.

<sup>29</sup> See: Joseph Stephen O'Leary, *Christianisme et philosophie chez Origene*, Paris 2011 and Mark Edwards, *Origen against Plato*, Aldershot 2002. Both these works will be discussed later on in this dissertation.

<sup>30</sup> On the interpretation of the whole Augustine's production as a unity see: Peter Iver Kaufman, 'The Lesson of Conversion. A Note on the Question of Continuity in Augustine's Understanding of Grace and Human Will' in *Augustinian Studies* 11 (1980), p. 49-64. On the same wavelength see: Francisco J. Weismann, 'The Problematic of Freedom in St. Augustine: Towards a New Hermeneutic', in *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 35 1 (1989), p. 104-119. See also: Carol Harrison, *Augustine: Christian Truth and Fractured Humanity*, Oxford 2000. For a philosophical interpretation of Augustine see: Werner Beierwaltes, 'Zu Augustins Metaphysik der Sprache', in *Augustinian Studies* 2 (1971), p. 179-195. Beierwaltes' work is completely focused on Christ's ontological role. In underlining the function of the Son as the ontological mediator between God's eternal Being and the becoming of the world, Beierwaltes does not take the doctrine of grace very much into account. See also: Werner Beierwaltes (ed), *Platonismus und Idealismus*, Frankfurt Am Main 1980, in which the author interprets the entire history of Christianity as history of its becoming philosophy.

<sup>31</sup> In this regard see the apodictic statement of: James Wetzel, 'Snares of Truth: Augustine on Free will and Predestination', in Robert Dodaro and George Lawless (eds), *Augustine and his Critics*, London 2000, p. 121-141: 'Without the doctrine of predestination there is no Augustinian theology of grace', p. 125. For a radical interpretation of Augustine's doctrine of predestination see the work of Kurt Flasch, *Augustin: Einführung in sein Denken*, Stuttgart 1980, who offers a complete different interpretation between Augustine the 'theologian' and the Augustine the 'philosopher'. While recognising the doctrines of grace and predestination as the basis of Augustine's theological thought, Flasch separates this component from the 'philosophical' one, which Augustine supposedly inherited from neo-platonic speculation.

<sup>32</sup> Gaetano Lettieri, *L' altro Agostino: ermeneutica e retorica della grazia dalla crisi alla metamorfosi del De Doctrina Christiana*, Brescia 2001.

attributed to the second Augustine, namely ‘the Fall and original sin, the inability of the will to do the good without divine aid, and the necessity for divine grace to move the will’, are features of his early theology as well.<sup>33</sup> So far as my work is concerned, I will not address directly neither the debate over Origen and philosophy, nor that of Augustine’s turning point. Nevertheless, both these debates will be addressed tangentially, while the main aim of my research remains showing the Johannine declination of the two authors’ pneumatologies. Therefore, rather than addressing the influence of philosophy in Origen’s thought, I will focus on the “Johannine consistence” of his pneumatology. Similarly, instead of focusing on the various meanings and shades of “predestination” in Augustine’s thought, I will underline the way in which Johannine dualism influenced his thought.

It is now time to analyse the comparative scholarship, that is, the scholarly context of this dissertation. In 1948, at the beginning of his monograph on Origen, J. Daniélou wrote: ‘Origen and St. Augustine were the two greatest geniuses of the early church’.<sup>34</sup> Such a comparison between Origen and Augustine proposed by one of the most important promoters of contemporary scholarship on Origen cannot be fortuitous; nor it is fortuitous that studies on Origen flourished in the cultural milieu of *La Nouvelle Théologie*.<sup>35</sup> Being utterly aware of the theological distance between Origen and Augustine, Daniélou’s statement intended to recover Origen from the theological disgrace to which he had been condemned for too many centuries. Daniélou acknowledged Origen as the champion of a different kind of Christianity, which, according to him, was minimalised in western culture. From Daniélou’s time onwards, scholarship proposed many studies about the relationship between Origen and Augustine.<sup>36</sup> Daniélou’s readings of Origen have been challenged by many scholars in the last 60 years. Nevertheless, a number of works on Origen and Augustine still

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<sup>33</sup> See: Carol Harrison, *Rethinking Augustine's Early Theology: An Argument for Continuity*, Oxford 2006, p. 19.

<sup>34</sup> Jean Daniélou, *Origène*, Paris 1948, trans. *Origen*, New York 1955, p. VII.

<sup>35</sup> About the theological movement of *La Nouvelle Théologie* and its inestimable contribution to Origen’s scholarship – and, in general, Patristic studies – see: Brian E. Daley, ‘The *Nouvelle Théologie* and the Patristic Revival: Sources, Symbols and the Science of Theology’, in *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 7 4 (2005), p. 362–382.

<sup>36</sup> Even before World War II, a comparison between these two authors was attempted by: John Murray, ‘Origen, Augustine and Plotinus’, in *The Month* 170 (1937), p. 107-117.



echo his statement – e.g. I. Ramelli: ‘Augustine of Hippo is only comparable to the greatest patristic philosopher, Origen of Alexandria’.<sup>37</sup> Daniélou, like many other modern scholars, understood that the importance of these comparative works lies in the inestimable significance that Origen and Augustine had not only in their own times, but also in the construction of later Christian traditions. As a matter of fact, comparing them means understanding the seeds through which Christianity itself grew.

Scholarship on the comparison between Augustine and Origen can be divided in two categories: studies on the influence Origen had on Augustine, which are mainly focused on the derivation of some Augustine’s doctrines from Origen, and comparative studies of their doctrines.

Regarding the influence Origen might have had on Augustine, there is no consensus among scholars. Some scholars, such as Edwards and Harrison, are very sceptical about the influence Origen had on Augustine.<sup>38</sup> With the exception of Courcelle and Altaner, scholars have generally ruled out the idea that Augustine could have had direct knowledge of Origen’s *On First Principles*.<sup>39</sup> The few elements of connection that convinced these two scholars of this possibility have been proven insufficient by many other scholars, such as La Bonnardière.<sup>40</sup> Other scholars, among whom it is worth quoting Heidl, Grossi, Teske, Ramelli and others, assert that Origen’s influence, with particular regard to his exegetical works, was, on the contrary, quite important. Assessing such a matter in one of her articles, Gasparro has suggested that, rather than considering some of Origen’s positions, especially those regarding the nature of the soul, as purely “heretical”, Augustine tended to regard them as “errors”

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<sup>37</sup> Ilaria Ramelli, ‘Origen in Augustine: A Paradoxical Reception’, in *Noumen* 60 (2013), p. 280-307, 281.

<sup>38</sup> See: C. Harrison, *Rethinking Augustine’s Early Theology*, p. 120 n. 24; Mark Edwards, ‘Augustine and His Christian Predecessors’, in Mark Vessey and Shelley Reid (eds), *A Companion to Augustine*, Oxford 2012, p. 215-226, 223-224.

<sup>39</sup> Pierre Courcelle, *Les lettres grecques en Occident de Macrobe à Cassiodore*, Paris 1948, p. 185; Berthold Altaner, ‘Augustinus und Origenes’, in *Historisches Jahrbuch* 70 (1951), p. 15-41.

<sup>40</sup> Anne-Marie La Bonnardière, ‘Jérôme informateur d’Augustin au sujet d’Origène’ in *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 20 (1974), p. 42-54.

rather than “heresies”.<sup>41</sup> Grossi has hypothesised the existence of four phases of Augustine’s relationship to Origen, spanning from curiosity, to admiration, to hostility, with a last phase identified with his thought after the condemnation of Pelagianism.<sup>42</sup> Notwithstanding Augustine’s wavering attitude toward Origen, we know that the bishop of Hippo considered Origen a great biblical exegete, leading some scholars to look for Origenian influences on Augustine’s exegesis. Bammel noticed a number of parallels in Augustine’s exegesis of the *Epistle to the Romans* with Rufinus’ translation of Origen’s *Commentary to the Romans*.<sup>43</sup> Moreover, in an influential monograph, Heidl suggested that the *libri pleni* that Augustine was studying just before his baptism and that he mentioned in *Against the Academics* are to be identified with Origen’s *Homilies on the Song of Songs* in Jerome’s translation and, possibly, even with his *Commentary on the Song of Songs*. In addition, backing the thesis first proposed by Teske, he found much Origenian exegesis in Augustine’s *On Genesis against the Manichees*.<sup>44</sup> In a quite recent monograph, Keech advocates for a strong Origenian influence on Augustine’s Christology, with a particular focus on the reception of Origen’s exegesis of *Rom.* 8:3 and its reference to Christ’s sinlessness. According to the author, Augustine ultimately ‘fought the heresy of Pelagius with the orthodox exegesis of Origen’.<sup>45</sup> Whether the complex arguments presented by the aforementioned scholars are compelling is not the matter of my thesis. For sure, we know that, if Augustine actually read some

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<sup>41</sup> Giulia Sfameni Gasparro, ‘Agostino di fronte all’eterodossia di Origene: un aspetto della questione origeniana in occidente’, in Giulia Sfameni Gasparro (ed), *Origene e la tradizione origeniana in occidente. Letture storico-religiose*, Roma 1988, p. 123-150.

<sup>42</sup> Vittorino Grossi, ‘L’origenismo latino negli scritti agostiniani: dagli origenisti agli origeniani’, in *Augustinianum* 46 1 (2006), p. 51-88. On the presence of Origen in Augustine’s thought during the last years of his life see also: Vittorino Grossi, ‘La presenza in filigrana di Origene nell’ultimo Agostino (426-430)’, in *Augustinianum* 30 (1990), p. 423-440. Findings and conclusions of this work were re-published and synthesised in Vittorino Grossi, ‘La presenza di Origene nell’ultimo Agostino (426-430)’, R. J. Daly (ed), *Origeniana Quinta*, p. 558-564.

<sup>43</sup> See: Caroline P. Bammel, ‘Justification by Faith in Origen and Augustine’, in *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 47 2 (1996), p. 223-235. On the differences and similarities between Origen’s and Augustine’s exegeses of Paul see: Caroline P. Bammel, ‘Augustine, Origen and the Exegesis of St Paul’, in *Augustinianum* 32 (1992), p. 341-368.

<sup>44</sup> György Heidl, *The Influence of Origen on the Young Augustine: A Chapter of the History of Origenism*, Piscataway 2003. Even before Heidl’s work, Origen’s influence on Augustine’s *On Genesis against the Manichees* was stated by: Roland J. Teske, ‘Origen and St. Augustine first *Commentary on Genesis*’, in R. J. Daly (ed), *Origeniana Quinta*, p. 179-185. On the passage of *Against the Academics*, II.2.5 see: György Heidl, ‘Augustine *Contra Academicos* 2,2,5: Origen in the Background?’, in *Adamantius* 5 (1999), p. 53-61. See also: György Heidl, ‘Did the young Augustine read Origen’s *Homily on Paradise*?’ in Wolfgang A. Bienert and Uwe Kuhneweg (eds), *Origeniana Septima*, Leuven 1999, p. 507-604.

<sup>45</sup> Dominic Keech, *The Anti-Pelagian Christology of Augustine of Hippo, 396-430*, Oxford 2012, p. 141.

writings of Origen he must have done it in Latin translation, due to his deficient knowledge of the Greek language.<sup>46</sup> It is also worth noting that the large majority of scholars have concluded that Origen's influence on Augustine is limited to the first years of his life, while the "Origenistic debt" was then refuted and dismissed – either consciously or unconsciously – in Augustine's mature thought. For sure, we know that Augustine mentions Origen on very few occasions.<sup>47</sup> In almost all of these, Augustine criticises Origen's theodicy and, most of all, his doctrine of redemption, with particular regard to universal salvation and the possibility of a second fall.<sup>48</sup> A particular mention is due to Augustine's references to Origen in *The City of God*. I am referring especially to Augustine's refutation of 'those merciful thinkers' who reject the eternity of hell and those who affirm the doctrine of the pre-existence of the soul – see *On First Principles*, I.6.<sup>49</sup> Nevertheless, none of these references can prove beyond reasonable doubt Augustine's first-hand knowledge of Origen, that is, a knowledge which is not mediated by the so-called "Origenistic controversies". In *Against Priscillianists and Origenists*, IV.4 Augustine refers to Origen's orthodox teaching on the 'immutability and eternity of the Trinity' as something Orosius has learned from others. In *On Heresies*, XLIII he admits to having learned about heretical doctrines imputed to Origen – the denial of the resurrection of the dead, the creaturehood of Christ and of the Holy Spirit, the allegorical interpretation of the Bible – through a letter of Epiphanius. Equally, he refers to the opinion of others that defend Origen, who say that Origen teaches that Father, Son and Spirit are of one substance. Finally, he reports the opinions of 'others, who have read his books' who confute him also regarding these matters (*quamvis et in istis eum convincere studeant qui eius plura legerunt*).<sup>50</sup> The picture coming out of these few quotations seems that of a cautious prudence in reporting what others said about Origen. No reference to the subordination of the Son is found in Augustine's account of Origen, despite the fact that, as this

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<sup>46</sup> Augustine complains explicitly his lack of knowledge of Greek in *On Christian Doctrine*, II.11 and II.16, where he exhorts the students to study Hebrew and Greek in order to avoid his own frustration in approaching the original texts.

<sup>47</sup> See for example: *Retractations*, I.7.6 and 2.44; *On Heresies*, XLIII; *Imperfect Work against Julian*, V.7; *Against Priscillianists and Origenists* 4.4 and 6.7; *The City of God*, XI.23.2 and XXI.17.

<sup>48</sup> Whether these themes are actually to be ascribed to Origen would be too long to ascertain here. For sure, Augustine deemed them to be Origenian.

<sup>49</sup> See: *The City of God*, XI.23 and XXI.17.

<sup>50</sup> See: *On Heresies*, XLIII.

thesis will prove, Augustine clearly refutes a theory of the procession of the Spirit from the Son which is quite similar to that proposed by Origen.<sup>51</sup> Moreover, no direct reference in Augustine's *Tractates on John* to Origen's *Commentary on John* could be found. This lack is not surprising, considering that the *Tractates on John* is a work of Augustine's maturity. Whether or not Origen had exerted some influence on the young Augustine, this influence was long gone before the writing of the *Tractates*.

Besides analysing the historical connections between the two authors, a number of comparative works have been written concerning the theological doctrines of these two theologians. These studies, mainly articles, took into account different aspects of their theological doctrines, covering a wide range of fields, including the interpretation of some specific passages, comparing the two authors' exegesis of small portions of text.<sup>52</sup> O'Leary focuses his attention on the relation between the Trinitarian procession of the Son and his soteriological role in the two authors.<sup>53</sup> Slotemaker enquires about their different – and yet, similar – conception of the primacy of the Father in the Trinitarian communion.<sup>54</sup> Ludlow proposes a comparative reading of their interpretation of "Spirit" and "letter".<sup>55</sup> Lettieri proposes a comparison between the two authors' interpretation of the figure of Judas in the fourth Gospel.<sup>56</sup> My study aims to contribute to this line of scholarship and I will engage critically with these works throughout my work.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> See: *infra*, III.5 and VI.2.2.

<sup>52</sup> See, for example, an article on the exegesis of Paul: Stephen Hildebrand, 'The Letter Kills but the Spirit Gives Life: Romans 7 in the Early Works of Augustine and in Rufinus' Translation of Origen's *Commentary*', in *Augustinian Studies* 31 1 (2000), p. 19-39.

<sup>53</sup> See: Joseph Stephen O'Leary, 'The Invisible Mission of the Son in Origen and Augustine', in W. A. Bienert and U. Kuhneweg (eds), *Origeniana Septima*, p. 605-622.

<sup>54</sup> John T. Slotemaker, 'The Primacy of the Father in Origen of Alexandria and Augustine of Hippo: Beyond East and West', in Sylwia Kaczmarek and Henryk Pietras (eds), *Origeniana Decima*, Leuven 2011, p. 855-871.

<sup>55</sup> Morwenna Ludlow, 'Spirit and Letter in Origen and Augustine', in Paul S. Fiddes and Gunter Bader (eds), *The Spirit and the Letter. A Christian Tradition and a Late-Modern Reversal*, London 2013, p. 87-102.

<sup>56</sup> See: G. Lettieri, 'Origene, Agostino e il mistero di Giuda'; Gaetano Lettieri, 'Apocatastasi logica o apocalisse della carne? Origene e Agostino paradigmi divergenti d'identificazione storico-sociale cristiana', in Eugenio Canone (ed), *Anima-corpo alla luce dell'etica. Antichi e moderni*, Firenze 2015, p. 133-146.

<sup>57</sup> See *infra*, VI.

## I.1.4 Methodology

The aforementioned scholarly debates will be constantly addressed in the present work. However, as I have already stated, my thesis will focus only on the two commentaries on the Gospel of John, drawing some conclusions on the Johannine influence on the two authors' conception of the role of the Holy Spirit. Acknowledging the differences with their other works, I will try to reveal the doctrines of the two authors just as they result from their commentaries, using other works mainly as points of comparison.<sup>58</sup>

To achieve my goal, I will conform to the historical-critical method. As such, I will analyse the commentaries from a historical and philological perspective, freeing my research as much as possible from any kind of confessional or sectarian prejudice. The theological, historical and philosophical questions raised in this work will be treated exclusively as historical and scientific evidence, while no moral or theological judgement will be proposed.

It is now worth remembering here the methodological value of the heuristic comparison in the work I am about to embark on. This work is not interested in affirming Augustine's knowledge of Origen's *Commentary on John*. No attempt will be undertaken to demonstrate Augustine's familiarity with the Alexandrian theologian; neither is this work intended to prove the historical derivation of any of Augustine's theological doctrines from Origen. The main point of my work is to carry out a heuristic comparison between the two major theologians of the Patristic age in order to highlight the precise character of the theological trajectories and paradigms of two of the most influential theologians in Christian history. For this reason, each chapter will explore the same research questions, offering first an analysis of the doctrines as they emerge from their commentaries on the Gospel of John and, secondly, a comparative analysis of my findings.

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<sup>58</sup> Such a work is made possible by the fact that both the commentaries were written in the maturity of the two authors, therefore they reflect their mature thought.

## I.1.5 Three Theological Questions

Both Origen and Augustine consider God as a Trinity and investigate the relation between the three hypostases: the Father, the Son and the Spirit. Moreover, both authors show a hermeneutic of the Gospel based on the idea of turning the material Gospel into the spiritual Gospel.<sup>59</sup> The tension between the Letter and the Spirit – which they both take from the epistles of Paul – is still the main criterion through which they read the entirety of the Scriptures.<sup>60</sup> In addressing the problematics raised by the texts, this work will enquire about the role of the Spirit with regard to three main aspects inferable from the Gospel of John.<sup>61</sup> This work will deal with three research questions: 1) the role of the Holy Spirit in the two authors' Trinitarian constructions (the Spirit in God); 2) their interpretation of the Johannine concept of "the world"; 3) the peculiar relationship between the Spirit and the world.

Thus, my thesis will be divided into three parts. Part A, which comprises chapters II and III, will explore the Trinitarian role of the Spirit as an ontological hypostasis, investigating the Trinitarian role of the Spirit in Origen and Augustine respectively. The second part of this thesis (part B, composed by chapters IV and V) will be devoted to showing Origen's and Augustine's interpretation of the Johannine concept of the world and of the role the Holy Spirit plays in the relationship between God and the world. At the beginning of part B, I will propose a brief analysis of the concept of "the world" in the Gospel of John. Chapter IV will show Origen's understanding of the relationship between world and Spirit, while Chapter V will investigate Augustine's understanding. Finally, the third part of the thesis (part C), composed of chapter VI, will deal with the comparison of the two author's Trinitarian doctrine, interpretation of the world and understanding of the soteriological role of the Spirit. In proposing such a comparison, this last chapter will also systematise

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<sup>59</sup> See *ComJn*, I.40 and the whole *Trloh*, I.

<sup>60</sup> In this regard see the aforementioned article of M. Ludlow, 'Spirit and Letter in Origen and Augustine'. See also S. Hildebrand, 'The Letter Kills but the Spirit Gives Life'; C. P. Bammel, 'Augustine, Origen and the Exegesis of St Paul'.

<sup>61</sup> In all three aspects, the definition of the Spirit as the 'gift' of God to creatures is of the highest importance. In fact, the Spirit is defined as the gift of God in the whole Gospel - e.g. *Jn.* 14:16-17; *Jn.* 14:26; *Jn.* 15:7. *Spiritus, caritas* and *donum* are explicitly connected by Augustine in *On the Trinity* XV.17-31 and XV.32, where he states the equivalence of the three concepts.

the findings of my research, thus unfolding two different *paradigms* that mark the two authors' pneumatologies and the connection between Trinitarian theology and soteriology in their interpretation of the fourth Gospel.

Regarding the first question, I will prove that Origen believes that the Spirit proceeds only from the Father through the Son; therefore, the Spirit is conceived as the last of the Trinitarian hypostases. Although he cooperates with the Son, the Spirit is subordinated to him, as well as to the Father.<sup>62</sup> Chapter II will discuss this subordination and will show how the distinction between the hypostases indicates a different ontological status as well as a different way of operating towards human nature.<sup>63</sup> Chapter III of this thesis will instead deal with the Spirit's role in Augustine's Trinity, showing the outstanding importance the *procession* of the third hypostases gets in Augustine's trinitarian thought. Augustine – as a consequence of the Nicaea's dogmatic precepts and in opposition to the Arian heresy<sup>64</sup> – proposes a concept of Trinity in which the three hypostases are totally equal and share the same *substantia*.<sup>65</sup> Each one of them is God, but all three are one God. Through this perfect equality, all kinds of subordination cease. As the Son is the perfect image of the Father, also the Spirit has the same properties as the other hypostases. The distinction between the *personae* refers, therefore, only to their relation. It follows that the procession of the Spirit is not only from the Father, but from the Son as well.<sup>66</sup> Both chapter II and chapter III will also show the extent to which the two authors' Trinitarian speculation is linked to different understandings of the text of John.

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<sup>62</sup> See *ComJn*, II.73-75; II.77; II.83; II.87.

<sup>63</sup> The idea of an ontological subordination in Origen's doctrine of the Trinity was questioned by some scholars. For an introductory account see: Tadrous Y. Malaty, *Origen: The Deans of the School of Alexandria*, New York 1995, p. 276-282 and Henri Crouzel, *Origen*, San Francisco 1989, p. 103. The reason for questioning this category stands on the fact that Origen speaks of the coeternity of the three hypostases. Therefore, Origen's subordinationism must not be considered to be ontological, but mainly logical. Therefore, the difference between the hypostases only derives from their logical order. This view will be questioned later in this work.

<sup>64</sup> See: Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology*, Oxford 2004.

<sup>65</sup> See *Trloh*, XXXVI.9: "*Una substantia est, una divinitas, una coaeternitas, perfecta aequalitas, dissimilitudo nulla*". See also: Augustine, *On the Trinity*, VI.5-7.

<sup>66</sup> See for example *Trloh*, XCIX.8. This innovation by Augustine was gradually accepted by Latin Christianity. Far from being an otiose debate between specialists, it was to bring many consequences in history, being eventually one of the most important disputes that led to the schism of the Churches between the Constantinople Patriarchy and Rome in 1054.

Chapter IV will discuss how Origen deals with the Johannine concept of the world, suggesting that Origen, who is particularly active in deconstructing the gnostic dualism, tends to smooth the Gospel's dualism. His interpretation of the world reflects an understanding of the differences between creatures as a mere difference of logical and ontological levels of understanding the Truth. Every creature, the ruling principle of which is identified as reasoning (λογικός), has a share in the Son according to the noetic understanding of his *epinoiai*. Salvation is interpreted as the *spiritual* and *noetic* journey that leads progressively from the darkness of the perceptible world to the light of the noetic knowledge of God. In this journey, the Spirit plays a crucial role.<sup>67</sup> Therefore, the Gospel's dualism between God and the world is interpreted as the difference between *noetic* and *perceptible* world. Contrariwise, in chapter V, I will suggest that Augustine interprets John's dualism in a strict sense. Although Augustine proposes an anti-Manichaean interpretation of "the world", which might signify both the original good creation of God and the present condition of sin, his exegesis is mainly focused on the world as place of perdition ruled by the Devil and tainted by evil. The worldly rejection of light is taken as a distinctive sign of the privileged love addressed by God only to some of his children. Moreover, the world's incapacity to save itself without the powerful help of God leads Augustine to identify the only possible redemption as lying in the Holy Spirit, who is utterly separated from the world.

Besides illustrating the two authors' interpretation of the concept of the world, chapter IV and V will deal also with the relation between the Spirit and the world, which is the third theological question this thesis will address. First of all, this thesis will show that, in both authors, trinitarian theology is strongly related to soteriology. Therefore, the ontological role that the Spirit plays in the Trinity determines his soteriological role in dealing with the world. I will show that, in Origen, the Spirit's subordination to the Father and the Son and his liminal nature of a divine agent which is, in a certain way, both God and a creature, is pivotal to understand his soteriological characteristic. Indeed, the Spirit is

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<sup>67</sup> Thus, it will be necessary to discuss Origen's terminology to define the 'spiritual'. In fact, Origen makes a distinction between what is the noetic (νοητόν), spiritual (πνευματικόν), or rational (λογικός). An explanation of these three terms and their diversity will be undertaken later in the present work (see *infra*, I.2.1 and IV.2.4.2).



interpreted as the giver of the *spiritual substratum* which allows creature to turn from the perceptible world to the noetic one. The way creatures participate in the Spirit is therefore different from that by which they participate in the Son, as the Spirit and the Son are ontologically different. Quite differently, Augustine understands the Spirit as that hypostasis which makes it possible for the Trinity to be a unity. Since the ontological nature of the Spirit is that of being *communion* and *unity* in and of the Trinity, the Spirit also represents the eminent agent through which human beings attain salvation. Therefore, for human beings being saved means being pulled out from the world by entering in the communion of the Holy Spirit, which is in-himself Trinitarian communion.



## I.2 THE SOURCES

### I.2.1 ΩΡΙΓΕΝΟΥΣ ΤΩΝ ΕΙΣ ΤΟ ΚΑΤΑ ΙΩΑΝΝΗΝ ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΟΝ ΕΞΗΓΗΤΙΚΩΝ. Scholarship, Dating and Textual Problems

'We must dare to say that the Gospels are the firstfruits of all the Scriptures, but that the firstfruits of the Gospel is that according to John, whose meaning no one can understand who has not leaned on Jesus' breast nor received Mary from Jesus to be his mother also' (*ComJn*, I.23). Through these words Origen starts his *Commentary* on the fourth Gospel. Therefore, in analysing such a work, the modern scholar has to deal with the responsibility of studying Origen's most important exegetical work. Moreover, as noted in 1959 by Gögler, Origen's *Commentary on John* is to be considered the oldest preserved commentary on a text of the New Testament.<sup>68</sup> For these reasons, the *Commentary* has been well-studied both as a source of Origen's doctrines, and as an example of Origen's exegesis of a biblical text. It is possible to divide the scholarship on the *Commentary* into four categories. Firstly, there are many essays about Origen's exegesis of single passages of the *Commentary*.<sup>69</sup> Secondly, there are several articles and papers on the theological contents of the *Commentary*. It is worth noting that the large majority is about the Logos theology, that is, the logical and ontological relation between the Father and the Son/Logos.<sup>70</sup> Thirdly, a massive number of works are to be found on the relation between Origen's *Commentary* and that of Heracleon, his Valentinian Gnostic opponent whose fragments are preserved in Origen's text.<sup>71</sup> Since Origen's *Commentary* is written as a response to that of his Gnostic adversary, facing the problem of his dialectical

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<sup>68</sup> Rolf Gögler, *Einführung zu Origenes, Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, Einsiedeln 1959, p. 15.

<sup>69</sup> See for example the numerous essays of Simonetti in: Manlio Simonetti (ed), *Origene esegeta e la sua tradizione*, Brescia 2004.

<sup>70</sup> See Henri Crouzel, *Théologie de l'image de Dieu chez Origène*, Paris 1956; Marguerite Harl, *Origène et la fonction révélatrice du Verbe incarné*, Paris 1958; K. Torjesen, 'The Logos Incarnate and Origen's Exegesis of the Gospel', p. 29-42.

<sup>71</sup> In this regard see the recent article by Carl Johan Berglund, 'Origen's Vacillating Stances toward his "Valentinian" Colleague Heracleon', in *Vigiliae Christianae* 71 5 (2017), p 541-569. In this article, the author tries to understand the dependability of Origen's quotation of Heracleon's text, highlighting that 'Origen's stances may correspond to an equal variance in the dependability of the information he presents about his predecessor' (p. 568).

relation to Gnosticism is indeed crucial.<sup>72</sup> In my opinion, this relation must not be understood as a mere opposition, but as a constant attempt to demythologize the Gnostic myth by means of a rigorous use of the anagogical method.<sup>73</sup> Therefore, although it is not the main point of this work, in tackling Origen's exegesis I will take into consideration Heracleon's propositions, particularly regarding their divergent interpretation of one of the most important Johannine themes: the interpretation of 'the world'.<sup>74</sup>

Finally, regarding Origen's hermeneutics, the *Commentary* has been extremely important in a number of works through the years, as it provides an essential textual basis (in Greek language) for understanding Origen's hermeneutical principles and theological doctrine. The main objective of this thesis is not that of attempting a structural comprehension of Origen's hermeneutics.<sup>75</sup> Nevertheless, it is worth noting the distance between the exegetical methodology enunciated by Origen in *On First Principles*, IV.2-3 and the exegesis of the fourth Gospel. As already noted by R. Heine and others,<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> On the relation between Origen and the Gnosticism see: J. Daniélou, *Origen*; Hans Jonas, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist: Die Mythologische Gnosis*, Göttingen 1934; Manlio Simonetti, 'Eracleone e Origene', in *Vetera Christianorum* 3 (1966), p. 111-141; Manlio Simonetti, 'Eracleone e Origene: continuazione e fine', in *Vetera Christianorum* 4 (1967), p. 23-64; Manlio Simonetti, 'Eracleone e Origene sulla Samaritana', in *Vetera Christianorum* 53 (2016), p. 5-18; Josep Rius-Camps, *El dinamismo trinitario en la divinización de los seres racionales según Orígenes*, Roma 1970; Holger Strutwolf, *Gnosis als System. Zur Rezeption der Valentinianischen Gnosis bei Origenes*, Göttingen 1993; Antonio Orbe, *Estudios Valentinianos I: Hacia la primera teología de la procesión del Verbo*, Roma 1958; Antonio Orbe, *Estudios Valentinianos II: En los albores de la exégesis joanea (Joh 1,3)*, Roma 1955; Antonio Orbe, *Estudios Valentinianos III: La unción del Verbo*, Roma 1961; Antonio Orbe, *Estudios Valentinianos IV: La teología del Espíritu santo*, Roma 1966; Antonio Orbe, *Estudios Valentinianos V: Los primeros herejes ante la persecución*, Roma 1955.

<sup>73</sup> Regarding the dialectical relationship between Origen and Valentinianism and the crucial importance of their respective interpretations of the fourth Gospel in differentiating the two see Gaetano Lettieri, 'Il nous mistico. Il superamento origeniano dello gnosticismo nel *Commento a Giovanni*', in Emanuela Prinzivalli (ed), *Il Commento a Giovanni di Origene: il testo e i suoi contesti*, Villa Verrucchio 2005, p. 177-275.

<sup>74</sup> In this regard see *infra*, II.1.3; II.2.2; IV.1.3; IV.2.3.1.

<sup>75</sup> I quote here some of the major works in this regards: Richard P. C. Hanson, *Allegory and Event: A Study of the Sources and Significance of Origen's Interpretation of Scripture*, Westminster 1959; Henri de Lubac, *Histoire et esprit: l'intelligence de l'Écriture d'après Origène*, Paris 1950, trans. *History and Spirit: the Understanding of Scripture according to Origen*, San Francisco 2007; Karen Jo Torjesen, *Hermeneutical Procedure and Theological Method in Origen's Exegesis*, Berlin 1986. It is also worth noting the use of the commentary in the attempt of de-platonizing Origen by M. Edwards, *Origen against Plato*. Much more bibliography will be provided in due course.

<sup>76</sup> See Ronald E. Heine, *Origen: Commentary on the Gospel According to John, Books 13-32*, Washington 1993, p. 10-23; Manlio Simonetti, 'Il Commento a Giovanni tra esegesi e teologia', in E. Prinzivalli (ed), *Il Commento a Giovanni di Origene*, p. 15-41; Manlio Simonetti, 'Scrittura

Origen rarely proposes three levels of exegesis in the existing portion of the *Commentary*. In expounding the text, he usually presents two levels of comprehension: the one according to the letter (πρὸς τὸ ῥητὸν) and the anagogical one (ἀναγωγή).<sup>77</sup> The last one is the more important, thus is to be understood by the more advanced believers. The anagogical meaning is presented by Origen as either a noetic (νοητόν), a spiritual (πνευματικόν), or a rational (λογικός) meaning. In translating Origen's Greek, I will use the word 'noetic' as the translation for νοητόν, the word 'rational' as the translation of λογικός and the word 'spiritual' as the translation for πνευματικόν.<sup>78</sup> A distinction between these three terms will be proposed in this thesis. I will particularly show the difference between *noetic* and *spiritual*, showing that, while the former indicates a purely intellectual participation in the Son, the latter points out to a substantial participation in the Holy Spirit.<sup>79</sup> This is also the reason why Origen describes the task of the exegete as the turning of the perceptible gospel (τὸ αἰσθητὸν εὐαγγέλιον) into the spiritual (πνευματικόν) and intelligible (νοητόν) Gospel (*ComJn*, I.44-46).<sup>80</sup>

Regarding the circumstances for the writing of the *Commentary*, Origen probably composed it at the request of his friend Ambrose.<sup>81</sup> The *Commentary* shows all features of a scholastic work, written for students who were familiar with the Scriptures. For this reason, Origen does not usually offer a single interpretation of the Gospel's narrative. It is rather usual for him to propose several possible readings, thus giving to the reader the possibility of choosing the most appropriate one. The *Commentary* was meant to be a huge production. We know for sure that Origen wrote thirty-two books, covering from the beginning of the Gospel to *Jn.* 13:33. Nothing suggests that Origen ever

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sacra', in Adele Monaci Castagno (ed), *Origene. Dizionario: la cultura, il pensiero, le opere*, Roma 2000, p. 424-437.

<sup>77</sup> See for example *ComJn*, XXVIII.48-49. Origen's use of technical exegetical terminology is highly debated in the scholarship. Among the others, see Manlio Simonetti, 'Considerazioni su allegoria e termini affini in alcuni scrittori greci', in M. Simonetti (ed), *Origene esegeta e la sua tradizione*, p. 51-70; Peter W. Martens, *Origen and Scripture: The Contours of the Exegetical Life*, Oxford 2012; For an historical background see: John David Dawson, *Allegorical Readers and Cultural Revision in Ancient Alexandria*, Berkeley 1992.

<sup>78</sup> R. P. C. Hanson, *Allegory and Event*, p. 245 states that there is a different meaning for each of these terms.

<sup>79</sup> In this regard, see in particular *infra*, IV.2.4.2.

<sup>80</sup> See *infra*, IV.1.1.

<sup>81</sup> See: *ComJn*, I.9. *Against Celsus* and *On Prayer* were written for Ambrose as well.

finished this work. It is highly probable that the thirty-second was the last book Origen ever dictated. Only nine of them are preserved, books I, II, VI, X, XIII, XIX, XX, XXVIII and XXXII. A number of fragments of the *Commentary* are extant as well. Nevertheless, modern scholars have convincingly questioned the authenticity of most of these fragments.<sup>82</sup> Only five of them can be attributed to Origen beyond any reasonable doubt.<sup>83</sup>

Even more complex is the attempt to date this work.<sup>84</sup> Several theories were proposed over the last century. Even if a consensus on the dating of every single book does not exist, we know for sure that the first five books were dictated by Origen while he was in Alexandria. This means that they belong to the same period of the *Commentary on Genesis* and *On First Principles*. In book VI.8-10, Origen says that his work was interrupted at the beginning of the sixth book because of the trouble he had in Alexandria with the bishop Demetrius, and that he restarted the sixth book in Caesarea. Nautin places the year of Origen's move from Alexandria to Caesarea in 234.<sup>85</sup> This dating was criticized by R. Heine, who places the move in late 232 or early 233. Heine underlines that Origen wrote four books on Genesis and 'at least five, and probably eight or more, books of the *Commentary on John*, and his treatise *On Prayer* after he arrived in Caesarea, but before the persecution of Maximinus, which started in 235. It is highly probable that Origen needed more than a few months to accomplish such a great amount of work. Moreover, in *ComJn*, VI.10, Origen complains about his delay in writing the book because of the absence of stenographers at his arrival in Caesarea. Consequently, I find Heine's point more consistent with the evidence than the one of Nautin.<sup>86</sup>

We are not sure of the numbers of books Origen wrote after his settlement in Caesarea and before the persecution of Maximinus. P. Koetschau found a

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<sup>82</sup> See the exceptional work of: Ronald E. Heine, 'Can the Catena Fragments of Origen's Commentary on John Be Trusted?' in *Vigiliae Christianae* 40 2 (1986), p. 118-134.

<sup>83</sup> Those are the fragments from Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, VI.25.7 and from the *Philocalia* which constitutes the partial text of books IV and V. For this reason, I will use in this work only the fragments whose authenticity cannot be reasonably questioned. Every time I will use any other fragment I will point it out.

<sup>84</sup> The dating I follow here depends greatly on: R. Heine, *Origen: Commentary [...] Book 13-32*, p. 4-19.

<sup>85</sup> Pierre Nautin, *Origène: Sa vie et son oeuvre*, Paris 1977, p. 426.

<sup>86</sup> R. Heine, *Origen: Commentary [...] Book 13-32.*, p. 5 n.12.

reference to *ComJn*, X.246 in *On Prayer*, 15.1.<sup>87</sup> Since *On Prayer* was surely written before 235 then the tenth book was written before the persecution. On the other hand, no evidence has been found for dating book XIII. We can assume, with Heine, that this was composed before the persecution, but this assumption is fairly arbitrary. The third group of books were probably dictated while Gregory the Thaumaturgus was a student of Origen. Koetschau, Crouzel and Heine agree in taking Gregory's allusion in his *Oration and Panegyric Addressed to Origen*, 2.18 as a reference to *ComJn*, XXXII.87.<sup>88</sup> If we admit that Gregory left Origen in 245 or before, this means that Origen finished the extant books of the *Commentary* by 245.<sup>89</sup> A more convincing attempt was made by R. Heine, who found some clear references in the *Panegyric* to the twentieth book of Origen's *Commentary*.<sup>90</sup> Because of the close relation between the nineteenth book and the twentieth, it is reasonable to say that they were composed in the same period. Accepting both these conjectures, we can date the third group of books (XIX-XXXII) in a period between the end of the persecution (238) and the departure of Gregory (between 243 and 245).

In conclusion, setting aside the problems of dating the single tractates, it is clear that the *Commentary on John* is a late work of Origen, composed in his full maturity. This makes the work even more valuable in trying to disclose Origen's theological doctrines.

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<sup>87</sup> Paul Koetschau, *Beitrage zur Textkritik von Origenes' Johannescommentar*, Leipzig 1905, p. 75-78.

<sup>88</sup> Paul Koetschau, *Des Gregorios Thaumaturgos Dankrede an Origenes*, Freiburg 1894; Henri Crouzel, 'Origène s'est-il retiré en Cappadoce pendant la persécution de Maximin le Thrace?', in *Bulletin de Littérature Ecclésiastique* 64 (1963), p. 195-203; R. Heine, *Origen: Commentary, [...] Book 13-32*, p. 15-16. Koetschau claims Gregory's idea of 'getting around with unwashed feet' to be a reference of Origen's symbolic interpretation of the foot washing as the soul cleansing. This reference is the only one we have about the composition of the thirty-second book. Although at the moment it is the best evidence we have for dating the last part of the *Commentary*, I do not think this can be considered a definitive proof.

<sup>89</sup> Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, VI.30 says Gregory arrived in Caesarea during the reign of Gordian (238-245). P. Nautin, *Origène*, p. 411, set the departure of Gregory in 245. Other scholars prefer to set Gregory's departure in 243. R. Heine, *Origen: Commentary [...] Book 13-32*, p. 18 proposes to date the composition of books XIX-XXXII around 241-242.

<sup>90</sup> Ronald E. Heine, 'Three Allusions to Book 20 of Origen's *Commentary on John* in Gregory Thaumaturgus' Panegyric to Origen' in Elizabeth A. Livingstone (ed), *Studia Patristica* 26 (1993), p. 261-266.

Finally, it is worth spending a few words on the manuscript tradition of Origen's *Commentary on John*. The manuscript tradition refers to eight manuscripts. It is possible to classify them in two groups. The first one is derived from the *Codex Monacensis Graecus 191* (XIII century), the second follows the *Codex Venetus 43* (XIV century). According to the three major critical editions, it is highly probable that the *Codex Venetus 43* was a transcription of the *Codex Monacensis Graecus 191*, with some supplements from some codices now lost. For this reason, our knowledge of the text is basically based on only one manuscript, the *Codex Monacensis Graecus 191*. The first edition of the text was made by Pierre-Daniel Huet, *Origenis in sacras scripturas commentaria*, Rothomagi 1668, based on the *Codex Regius Parisiensis* (XVI century). The second important edition by Carolus Delarue, *Origenis opera omnia I-IV*, Paris 1738-1759 was based on the *Codex Barberinus Graecus V, 52* (XV century) and the *Codex Bodleianus Misc. 5* (XVII century). Migne used this edition in 1857. Finally, there are three great modern editions of the work. The first one is by Alan England Brooke, *The Commentary of Origen on St. John's Gospel*, 2 vols, Cambridge 1896, based on the *Codex Monacensis Graecus 191*. It was followed some years later by Erwin Preuschen, *Origenes Werke, vol. 4: Der Johanneskommentar. Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller 10*, Leipzig 1903, based on the same manuscript. Finally, the most recent edition is by Cécile Blanc, *Origène. Commentaire sur saint Jean*, V vols, *Sources chrétiennes* 120, 157, 222, 290, 385, Paris 1966-1992. While keeping in mind the remarks of both Preuschen and Koetschau, *Beiträge Zur Textkritik*, in this work I will follow Blanc's edition for the text of the *Commentary*, and Preuschen's edition for the ordering and enumeration of the fragments. Beside those already cited, it is worth quoting the partial translations of the *Commentary* by Allan Menzies, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol 4: Tertullian, Minucius Felix, Commodian, Origen*, New York 1905 and Rolf Gögler, *Einführung zu Origenes, Das Evangelium nach Johannes*. A very good translation and comment in Italian was done by Eugenio Corsini, *Commento al Vangelo di Giovanni di Origene*, Torino 1968. See also the more recent edition by Vito Limone, *Origene; Commento al Vangelo di Giovanni*, Milano 2012. For an introduction and translation of the entire text in English see: *Origen: Commentary on the Gospel According to John, Books 1-10*, ed Ronald



E. Heine, Washington 1989, and R. E. Heine, *Origen: Commentary [...] Book 13-32*.

## **I.2.2 Aurelii Augustini In Iohannis Evangelium Tractatus.**

### **Scholarship, Dating and Textual Problems**

Augustine's CXXIV *Tractates on the Gospel of John* is one of his most theologically rich exegetical works. Augustine was committed to it for over fifteen years, probably from 406 to 423. For this reason, the lack of adequate scholarship about its theological contents may appear odd to those who firstly approach this work.<sup>91</sup> However, it would be improper to say that the *Tractates* has been ignored by scholars. On the contrary, according to the review provided by H. R. Drobner, it is one of Augustine's more analysed texts, together with *On the Trinity* and *On Christian Doctrine*.<sup>92</sup> This inconsistency can be explained by the fact that the majority of publications are more concerned with the transmission of the text, problems of dating and classification of the literary genre than with the theological content of the *Commentary*. Nevertheless, there are a considerable number of studies regarding single *Tractates* and many studies on Augustine's exegetical and hermeneutical methodology.<sup>93</sup> The paucity of studies on the theological contents can be due to a lot of factors, like the difficulty of finding a precise date for the work, the absence of a well-defined literary genre and the absence of a focal topic. Moreover, the same structure and length of the *Tractates* might have discouraged historians from presenting a unified work that interprets the theological content. Lastly, as I stated before, the sporadic nature of studies on the theological contents of the *Tractates* is probably due to the presence of more systematic works of the same author – e.g. *On Christian Doctrine*, *The*

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<sup>91</sup> This situation had been already noticed at the beginning of the twentieth century by: Hugh Pope, 'St Augustine's *Tractatus in Iohannem*: A Neglected Classic', in *The American Ecclesiastical Review* 49 (1913), p. 161-172. It is quite disconcerting to note that, about one hundred years later, the *status quaestionis* remains, albeit some exceptions, substantially unchanged. In this regard see: Douglas Milewsky, 'Augustine's 124 Tractates on the Gospel of John', in *Augustinian Studies* 33 1 (2002), p. 61-77.

<sup>92</sup> See: Hubertus R. Drobner, 'Studying Augustine: An Overview of Recent Research', in R. Dodaro and G. Lawless, *Augustine and his Critics*, p.17-34.

<sup>93</sup> There are of course remarkable exceptions. See for example: John M. Norris, 'The Theological Structure of St. Augustine's Exegesis in the *Tractatus in Iohannis Euangelium*', in Joseph T. Lienhard, Earl C. Muller, Roland J. Teske (eds), *Augustine: Presbyter Factus Sum*, New York 1993, p. 385-394; John M. Norris, 'Augustine and Sign in *Tractatus in Iohannis Euangelium*', in Frederick van Fleteren and Joseph C. Schnaubelt (eds), *Augustine: Biblical Exegete*, New York 2001, p. 215-231.

*City of God*, *On the Trinity* etc. – which reinforces the scholarly tendency not to analyse commentaries for their theological contents.

Regarding the literary genre, the main question concerns the relation between the tractate, the homily and the commentary as literary forms. Homily and commentary were the most popular genres among Christians authors of the first two centuries. While homilies come from Jewish practices of commenting on the Bible in the synagogue, academic commentaries are a Hellenistic inheritance.<sup>94</sup> In Augustine's time, the two genres were already set. In *On Christian Doctrine* Augustine offers an explanation of what is to be found in a *tractatus*: *Debet igitur divinarum scripturarum tractator et doctor, defensor rectae fidei ac debellator erroris, et bona docere et mala dedocere, atque in hoc opere sermonis conciliare aversos, remissos erigere, nescientibus quod agitur quid expectare debeant imitare.*<sup>95</sup> The tractate is therefore a third literary genre that is quite similar to the homily. The tractate could be preached and then written or vice versa, just like the homily. In one of his *Epistles* Augustine himself compares them, stating their equivalence: *Tractatus populares quos Graece homilias vocant.*<sup>96</sup> Therefore, tractates were preached for the utility of the hearers and should be considered almost equivalent to homilies.<sup>97</sup>

As aforementioned, the literary genre is only one of the problems faced by the interpreter. Another one concerns the dating of each tractate. Since Maurini's edition in 1680, scholarship used to indicate 416 as the composition date of the work. In 1930, Marie Comeau published a work analysing a passage of *On The Trinity* XV.27.48 supposedly taken from *Trilogia*, XCIX.8, thus confirming the traditional dating of the work.<sup>98</sup> Everything changed in 1933, due to the work by

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<sup>94</sup> In this regard see: Manlio Simonetti, 'Omèlie e commentari patristici', in Claudio Moreschini, *Esegesi, parafrasi e compilazione in età tardoantica. Atti del terzo convegno dell'Associazione Studi Tardoantichi*, Napoli 1995, p. 361-381.

<sup>95</sup> *On Christian Doctrine*, IV.4.6: 'It is the duty, then, of the interpreter and teacher of Holy Scripture, the defender of the true faith and the opponent of error, both to teach what is right and to refute what is wrong, and in the performance of this task to conciliate the hostile, to rouse the careless, and to tell the ignorant both what is occurring at present and what is probable in the future'.

<sup>96</sup> *Epistle*, CCXXIV.2: 'The tractate for the people that are called homily by the Greeks'.

<sup>97</sup> See Gustave Bardy, 'Tractare, Tractatus', in *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 32 (1946), p. 211-235; See also Christine Mohrmann, 'Praedicare, Tractare, Sermo: Essai sur la terminologie de la prédication paléochrétienne', in *La Maison-Dieu* 39 (1954), p. 97-107.

<sup>98</sup> Cfr. Marie Comeau, *Saint Augustin exégète du Quatrième Evangélie*, Paris 1930, pp. 2-5.

Seraphinus Zarb.<sup>99</sup> Having noted the differences in length and style between the first and the second part of the *Commentary*, he proposed to date the first block of tractates (*Trloh*, I-LIV) in 413, the second (*Trloh*, LV-CXXIV) in 418. Furthermore, he justified these differences stating that, while Augustine preached the first block, he only dictated the second, reserving the preaching for a later time. Then, having traced some strong anti-Donatist passages, which are absent in the second block, he altered the previous dating. Zarb's dating system was commonly accepted, albeit with some adjustments by other scholars, until 1965,<sup>100</sup> when Anne-Marie La Bonnardière proposed a different interpretation regarding the style of the *Trloh*, LIV-CXXIV.<sup>101</sup> According to her, the stylistic difference between the first and the second group of *Tractates* is due to the fact that the second was written by Augustine as a guide for preachers ('schemas de leurs futurs sermons'),<sup>102</sup> as suggested by Augustine in *On Christian Doctrine* IV.29.62. Moreover, she proposed classifying the first group of *Tractates* (*Trloh*, I-LIV) in four subgroups. The first one, (*Trloh*, I-XII), was preached around 406-407, since all treatises convey traces of the vibrant anti-Donatist controversy and do not mention the Council of Carthage of 411. In addition, there are allusions to some imperial legislation promulgated in those two years. The second group (*Trloh*, XIII-XVI) was probably preached around 407-408, although it lacks any evidence suggesting a specific dating. The third group (*Trloh*, XVII-XXIII) is dated around 417-418 due to the strong dispute about Arianism, caused by the invasion of the Goths of 417. The fourth group (*Trloh*, XXIV-LIV) was preached around 419-421. The rest of the *Tractates* (*Trloh*, LV-CXXIV) were dictated, not preached, by 423. The last significant

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<sup>99</sup> Seraphim M. Zarb, 'Chronologia Tractatum S. Augustini in Evangelium Primamque Epistulam Ioannis Apostoli', in *Angelicum* 10 (1933), p. 50-110.

<sup>100</sup> See for example: Maurice Le Landais, 'La seconde partie de l'*In Joannem* de saint Augustin et la date du commentaire', in *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 36 (1949), p. 517-541. A few years later the author published the most famous work: Maurice Le Landais, 'Deux années de prédication de Saint Augustin: Introduction à la lecture de l'*In Iohannem*', in *Etudes Augustiniennes* 28 (1953), p. 9-95. Here Le Landais demonstrated the contemporaneity between *Trloh*, I-XII and the *Expositions on the Psalms* 119-133 and the first ten *Homilies on the First Epistle of John*. Le Landais proposed to date it all between December 414 and August 415.

<sup>101</sup> See: Anne-Marie La Bonnardière, *Recherches de chronologie augustinienne*, Paris 1965. About the chronology of Augustine's work see the more recent work of Pierre-Marie Hombert, *Nouvelles recherches de chronologie augustinienne*, Paris 2000.

<sup>102</sup> A.-M. La Bonnardière, *Recherches de chronologie augustinienne*, p.124-125.

work about dating was published by Marie-François Berrouard. As I will show below, I deem her conclusions to be quite acceptable, pending new evidence.<sup>103</sup>

Consequently, at present, it is possible to classify the *Tractates* of the Commentary in four main groups:<sup>104</sup>

1) The first group consists of *Trloh*, I-XVI. Here Augustine comments on the first four chapters of the Gospel. They were definitely preached before the Council of Carthage (411), in which the Donatists were defeated by the Catholics. The precise dating is 406-407, as proposed by La Bonnardière and Berrouard.

2) The second group is composed of *Trloh*, XVII-LIV. *Trloh*, XX-XXI-XXII have a peculiar history and must not be considered part of this group. *Trloh*, XVII-LIV are characterized by strong debate against Pelagius and Arius. Berrouard claims this controversy shows that the date of preaching must have been before 417, proposing 414 as the most likely date. Since they are strictly bonded together, then it is probable they were preached in a very short length of time.

3) The third group is comprised of *Trloh*, XX-XXI-XXII. First of all, they present textual problems: some codices do not contain these three *Tractates*.<sup>105</sup> Moreover, they interrupt Augustine's speech. In *Trloh*, XXIII.15 Augustine says: *iam hoc et hesterno die satiassime audistis*.<sup>106</sup> With these words, he is not referring to the *Trloh*, XXII, rather to the Gospel passage commented on *Trloh*, XIX.<sup>107</sup> It may appear weird that Augustine intentionally omitted a part of the Gospel. Nevertheless, we do not have any evidence to illuminate the particular history of these *Tractates*. Berrouard proposes dating them between 419 and 421, but this dating is fairly arbitrary.

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<sup>103</sup> See in particular Marie-François Berrouard, 'La date des *Tractatus I-LIV in Ioannis Evangelium* de Saint Augustin', in *Recherches Augustiniennes* 7 (1971), p. 105-168. It is particularly worth noting the connection between the draft of the second part and what Augustine affirms in *Epistle*, XXIII\*A. See: Marie-François Berrouard, 'L'activité littéraire de Saint Augustin du 11 septembre au 1 décembre 419 d'après la lettre 23\*A à Possidius de Calama', in Johannes Divjak (ed), *Les lettres de Saint Augustin découvertes par Johannes Divjak*, Paris 1983, p. 301-327. Finally, see the more recent study, in which she clarifies the dating of the *Tractates*: Marie-François Berrouard, *Introduction aux homélies de Saint Augustin sur l'Évangile de Saint Jean*, Paris 2004.

<sup>104</sup> The classification proposed here is based both on the works of Berrouard and the clear exposition of Giovanni Reale, *Agostino: Commento al Vangelo di Giovanni*, Milano 2010, p. XVII-XXII.

<sup>105</sup> For the peculiar history of these *Tractates* see: Marie-François Berrouard, *Homélies sur l'Évangile de Saint Jean XVII-XXXIII*, Paris 1977.

<sup>106</sup> *Trloh*, XXIII.15: 'You have already heard enough about this yesterday'.

<sup>107</sup> The first scholar who noted this lacuna was: David F. Wright, 'Tractatus 20-22 of St. Augustine's in Johannem', in *The Journal of Theological Studies* 15 (1964), p. 317-330.

4) The fourth and last group consists of *Trloh*, LV-CXXIV. There is evidence of the fact that these *Tractates* were never preached by Augustine. This was firstly hypothesised by Zarb in 1933 and became evident after the publication in 1981 of 27 unpublished *Epistles* of Augustine by Divjak.<sup>108</sup> In the *Epistle* XXIII\*A,3 addressed to Posidonius of Calama and dated in December 419, Augustine claims to have dictated the first six speeches of this group, in a period from 11 September to early December. About these *Tractates*, Augustine says: *ut faciam de Iohannis quoque Evangelio ea quae restant, dictare iam coepi populares tractatus non prolixos mittendos Carthaginem*.<sup>109</sup> Therefore, these six *Tractates* were dictated and not directly preached. There is no reason for thinking it was not the same for the other *Tractates* of the group. About the dating, we are sure that these six tractates were dictated in 419. Regarding the rest of the *Tractates* we are only sure they were dictated after 419. Berrouard believes that all treatises were completed by 423.

With regard to the manuscript tradition of the *In Iohannis Evangelium Tractatus*, we refer to a conspicuously large number of codices. On the one hand, the frequent use of this work during the Middle Ages led to the preservation of a good number of manuscripts. On the other hand, repeated reading caused the loss of the more ancient codices (VII-VIII century), which are indeed quite fragmentary. Nevertheless, despite the different ages of the numerous exemplars at our disposal – both in fragments and completed – it is easy to detect the lack of significant variations in the text of different codices. The text of the *Tractates* is overall very well preserved and almost never presents substantial differences. A checklist and analysis of the extant manuscripts can be found in the work of David F. Wright, 'The Manuscripts of St Augustine's *Tractatus in Evangelium Iohannis*: a Preliminary Survey and Check-List', in *Recherches Augustiniennes* 8 (1972), pp. 57-104; David F. Wright, 'The Manuscripts of the *Tractatus in Iohannem*: A. Supplementary List', in *Recherches Augustiniennes* 16 (1981), p. 59-100. The first edition of the *Tractates* dates back to the beginning of the sixteenth century, by *Nona pars*

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<sup>108</sup> *Augustinus. Epistulae ex duobus codicis nupter in lucem prolatae, Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* 88, ed Johannes Divjak, Vienna 1981.

<sup>109</sup> *Epistle* XXIII\*A,3: 'In order to complete what is still to do on the Gospel of John I started to dictate some tractates for the people. These tractates are not very long and have to be sent to Carthage'.

*librorum divi Aurelii Augustini: In evangelium secundum Iohannes tractatus CXXIV*, ed Johannes Amerbach, Basel 1505. Not long after, a new edition was made by Erasmus of Rotterdam, *D. Aurelii Augustini Hipponensis episcopi, omnium operum*, Basel 1529. This edition had a great influence on the Reformation. A new edition which was meant to replace that of Erasmus was done by a number of catholic theologians of the University of Leuven in 1576: *Tractatus in Evangelium Iohannis*, ed Theologi Lovanienses, Antwerp 1576. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century it appeared the first edition made by the comparison of many codices by the work of the Benedictine monks of St Maur: *Sancti Aurelii Augustini Hipponensis episcopi operum in Iohannes Evangelium tractatus*, ed Maurina vel Maurini Paris 1679-1700. The text of this edition derived from the comparison of 18 codices. The accuracy of this edition made it the point of reference for all the next editions, like the 19<sup>th</sup> century: *Patrologiae cursus completus series Latina 35: In Joannis Evangelium tractatus CXXIV*, ed Jacques Paul Migne, Paris 1864, p. 1379-1976. Even the critical edition I used for this work, while amending some passages and collecting a greater number of manuscripts, is based on the Maurists' edition: *Augustinus. In Iohannis evangelium tractatus CXXIV, post Maurinos textum edendum. Corpus Christianorum Series Latina 36*, ed Radbod Willems, Turnhout 1954. Regarding translations into modern languages, the *Tractates* received particular attention, being translated many times in different languages. Among the others, I quote here the massive edition of Marie-François Berrouard, *Augustin d'Hippone. Homélie sur l'Évangile de Saint Jean*, VII vols, *Bibliothèque Augustinienne* 71, 72, 73A, 73B, 74A, 74B, 75, Paris 1969-2003. The latest translation in English, in several volumes is, *Augustine. Tractates on the Gospel of John*, V vols, *The Fathers of the Church* 78, 79, 88, 90, 92, ed John W. Rettig Washington D.C. 1988-1995.





# **PART A. THE SPIRIT IN GOD**



## II. The Spirit in God: Origen

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### II.1: Proceeding from the Father: The Trinitarian Problem and the Ontological Relation between the Father and the Son

#### II.1.1 Divergent Scholarship

Starting a dissertation on the role of the Holy Spirit within Origen's doctrine of the Trinity in the *Commentary on John* poses some methodological problems that need to be faced. The first problem is raised by the very nature of the object in question; indeed, every study which claims to understand and systematise the function, role and essence of the Holy Spirit in an author before the end of the fourth century is at risk of anachronism. As already stated by K. McDonnell: 'not until the fourth century was the status and role of the Holy Spirit raised in any significant way'.<sup>1</sup> This does not mean that the Spirit was not part of the common creed, or that Christians used to believe in a *binitarian* God – that is, a God formed by Father and Son only. Nevertheless, a systematic enquiry about the Holy Spirit is not traceable before the Cappadocian fathers. The council of Nicaea proposed a creed in which the Holy Spirit, albeit present, was largely ignored. The Nicene formula declaims a concise 'We believe in the Holy Spirit', thus not enquiring about his function and role.<sup>2</sup> From these brief considerations it follows that, even though the Spirit was always included in Christian early creeds, the Holy Spirit as such was never taken as a primary object of enquiry. Therefore, every scholar who undertakes a study of the Spirit in the era before Cappadocian fathers must be extremely careful not to apply theological categories and systematisations that belong to later ages. Nevertheless, in the third century theological landscape, there is one significant exception: Origen. For all we know, he is the first theologian to propose a systematic enquiry about the role of the Spirit in the Trinity. Before him, we barely know anything about the consideration the Spirit had in the early church. There apparently was a common belief that the Holy Spirit was the source of

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<sup>1</sup> 'Does Origen Have a Trinitarian Doctrine of the Holy Spirit?', p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> See: L. Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy*.

inspiration of the Old and New Testament, hence somehow connected with the divinity of Father and Son, but further speculations are unknown.<sup>3</sup>

The two main texts in which Origen's pneumatology is expounded are *On First Principles* and the *Commentary on John*. Here the second methodological issue is found: the very notion of the Trinity. As we will note below, according to many scholars, Origen does not have a consistent doctrine of the Trinity. The problem is a real one and it concerns both philology and theology.

From a theological point of view, scholars still debate the real significance of the Trinity in Origen's thought.<sup>4</sup> The debate about the significance of Origen's Trinitarian formulae is deeply connected with the role of the Spirit. In general, scholars who deny the presence of a constructive Trinity in Origen's thought tend to deny a significant role to the Spirit. For instance, Harnack claims that the only reason Origen inserted the Spirit within the Trinity is that he could not deny the rule of faith,<sup>5</sup> but there is no significant place for the Spirit in his theology.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, he claims Origen was not very interested in the Trinity as such. The same interpretative line has been followed by other scholars, such as Fortman, Trigg and Schülts.<sup>7</sup> In addition, other scholars even deny that Origen was interested in the Spirit at all. Florensky refers to Origen's pneumatology as a 'false window',<sup>8</sup> while Hauschild accuses Origen of having an immature pneumatology.<sup>9</sup> The idea that bonds these scholars together is that Origen's thought does not *need* a pneumatology; he inserted the Spirit only in reverence

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<sup>3</sup> See: Manlio Simonetti, *Origene: I Principi*, Torino 2002, p. 164 n. 1.

<sup>4</sup> A good review of the literature, though not up to date, can be found in K. McDonnell, 'Does Origen Have a Trinitarian Doctrine of the Holy Spirit?', p. 8-10. I mainly follow him in this brief presentation of the two groups, updating his analysis with more modern scholarship.

<sup>5</sup> In the preface of *On First Principles* Origen makes a brief summary of the rule of faith, regarding God, Christ, the soul, the Scriptures and the free will; all issues to which he attempts to respond more in depth in the tractate itself. In order to understand what is true and what is not, Origen states that everyone who wants to call himself 'Christian' must hold a doctrine that is based on the apostolic teaching and tradition: *Illa sola credenda est veritas quae in nulla ab ecclesiastica et apostolica discordat traditione*. (We maintain that the only Truth we have to believe in is the one that does not conflict in any way with the tradition of the church and of the apostles). See *On First Principles*, I.Praef.2.

<sup>6</sup> See: Adolf von Harnack, *History of Dogma*, New York 1961, Vol 4 p. 110.

<sup>7</sup> See: Edmund J. Fortman, *The Triune God. A Historical Study of the Doctrine of the Trinity*, Grand Rapids 1972; Joseph W. Trigg, *Origen*, Atlanta 1983; Christian Schütz, *Einführung in die Pneumatologie*, Darmstadt 1985.

<sup>8</sup> See: Pavel Florensky, 'On the Holy Spirit', in Alexander Schmemmann (ed), *Ultimate Questions: An Anthology of Modern Russian Religious Thought*, New York 1965, p. 143.

<sup>9</sup> See: W.-D. Hauschild, *Lehrbuch der Kirchen-und Dogmengeschichte*; see also: W.-D. Hauschild and V. H. Drecoll, *Pneumatologie in der alten Kirche*.

to the rule of faith. The idea that the sanctification of creatures and the inspiration of the Bible could have been played by the Son/Logos without the help of the Spirit will be challenged in my dissertation.

On the other hand, other scholars underline the brilliancy of Origen's Trinitarian formula. By contrast with the first group I mentioned, they tend to emphasise the importance of the Spirit's work in Origen's thought. Among these, it is worth mentioning von Balthasar and Kannengiesser, who defines the treatise *On First Principles* as mainly focused on the Trinity.<sup>10</sup> In the last two decades it is possible to enumerate an increasing number of scholars among the latter group. In 1994, McDonnell wrote an ambitious article in order to demonstrate the pivotal role and function of the Spirit in Origen's conception of the Trinity, underlining the high influence it had on the Cappadocian Fathers.<sup>11</sup> In 2005, Marksches challenged Hauschild's view by stressing the Spirit's importance in the work of sanctification of the redeemed creatures.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, in 2009, Greggs proposed a comparison between the Holy Spirit's works of sanctification in Origen and Barth.<sup>13</sup> Many more scholars could be quoted in this regard.<sup>14</sup>

Among this second group of scholars there is a consolidated tendency to smooth Origen's Trinitarian subordinationism and to elevate the Holy Spirit to the same rank of the Son.<sup>15</sup> They claim that Origen's subordinating language should not be interpreted strictly from an ontological perspective, suggesting that one should interpret Origen's language either in terms of the economic function of the Spirit or in terms of the relation of origin between the Spirit and the other persons of the Trinity. Hence, when they admit a kind of subordinationism among the persons of the Trinity, they usually speak of a *logical*, rather than *ontological* subordinationism, stating that the Father is not

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<sup>10</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Origen: Spirit and Fire: A Thematic Anthology of His Writings*, Washington D.C. 1984; Charles Kannengiesser, 'Divine Trinity and the Structure of *Peri Archôn*', in Charles Kannengiesser and William Lawrence Petersen (eds), *Origen of Alexandria: His World and His Legacy*, Notre Dame IND 1988, p. 231-249.

<sup>11</sup> K. McDonnell, 'Does Origen Have a Trinitarian Doctrine of the Holy Spirit?'

<sup>12</sup> C. Marksches, 'Der Heilige Geist im Iohanneskommentar des Origenes'.

<sup>13</sup> T. Greggs, *Barth, Origen, and Universal Salvation*, p. 152-170.

<sup>14</sup> Among the others, M. Edwards refers to the Spirit as an extremely important marker in order to distinguish Origen's speculation from the Platonic and middle Platonic philosophy. See: M. Edwards, *Origen against Plato*, p. 74-76. On the role of the Spirit in Origen's Trinity see also: Christoph Bruns, *Trinität und Kosmos. Zur Gotteslehre des Origenes*, Munich 2013.

<sup>15</sup> See in particular: K. McDonnell, 'Does Origen Have a Trinitarian Doctrine of the Holy Spirit?', p. 10.

*ontologically superior* to the Son or to the Spirit.<sup>16</sup> The problem of this approach, firstly undertaken by Crouzel, is that it results in the annihilation of the ontological and soteriological differences between the Son and the Spirit, thus transforming the Spirit in a useless duplicate of the Son. Consequently, this approach fails to comprehend both the need and reasons for Origen's pneumatology. Therefore, by contrast with both McDonnell and Greggs, I will show that the particularity of the Spirit's role in Origen's soteriology comes exactly from his peculiar essence, that is, from his subordination to the Son, which allows him to perform his mediating role between God and creation.

The presentation of the role of the Spirit in this chapter will proceed alongside the consideration of the significance of the Johannine text in Origen's Trinitarian thought. Moreover, I shall show the extent to which the text of the Gospel influences and shapes his understanding of the role of the Spirit and how crucial the *Commentary on John* is in understanding his theological intentions. Some of the most important considerations of the relations between Father, Son and Spirit come from his exegesis on the prologue of the Gospel, particularly *Jn.* 1:1 – 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God' – and *Jn.* 1:3 – 'Through him all things were made'. I will show that both the role of the ontological status of the Spirit and the relation between Father and Son derives directly from Origen's reflection on this Johannine movement of procession and derivation. Regarding the Son, Origen's speculation is presented as a synthesis between those passages that affirm the oneness and equality of the Son to the Father with those that affirm subordination, like *Jn.* 14:28 'the Father who sent me is greater than I'. Equally important are the passages of *Jn.* 8, particularly *Jn.* 8:19; 8:42, where the Father-Son relation is expounded, and of *Jn.* 13, where the glorification of the Son is presented.<sup>17</sup> Regarding the role of the Spirit, the entire argumentation proposed by Origen is based on *Jn.* 1:3. As 'all things were made through him (the Logos)', Origen proposes a complicated doctrine which allows to the Spirit

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<sup>16</sup> See in particular: H. Crouzel, *Origen*, p 103.

<sup>17</sup> See in particular: *Jn.* 8:19: 'You do not know me or my Father,' Jesus replied. 'If you knew me, you would know my Father also'. *Jn.* 8:42: 'If God were your Father, you would love me, for I have come here from God. I have not come on my own; God sent me'. *Jn.* 13: 31-32 'Now the Son of Man is glorified and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once.'

both the role of God and creature.<sup>18</sup> In his *On First Principles*, Origen affirms that the Spirit is the only member of the Trinity which could not be known without the help of the revelation.<sup>19</sup> Origen's speculation on the text of John represents the boldest and most complete attempt to unravel his nature and role.

As I acknowledge that tackling the relationship between the three hypostases means trying to unravel the question about Origen's subordinationism, this shall be my research question in this chapter. In order to answer this question, I will firstly enquire about the Trinity as a whole (II.1.2); then, I will analyse the relation between the Father and the Son (II.1.3) and only finally will I investigate the status and functions of the Spirit, focusing on his intermediate status of God (II.2.1) and creature (II.2.2).

### **II.1.2 To What Extent Does Origen Have a Doctrine of the Trinity?**

First, it is worth spending few words on Origen's reference to God as triune: does Origen have a constructive doctrine of the Trinity? As I have already stated, together with *On First Principles*, the *Commentary on John* is the most relevant text for Origen's pneumatology. From a philological perspective, a major discrepancy can be found between Origen's Greek terminology and the Rufinus' Latin translation. The Greek word τριάς (Trinity) occurs only three times in Origen's entire corpus; whereas, the term *trinitas* (Trinity) is constantly used by Rufinus in his translation of *On First Principles*. For this reason, F. H. Kettler suggested that the term *trinitas* should always be considered an interpolation by Rufinus, who changed the wording 'Father, Son and Spirit' into the term *trinitas*.<sup>20</sup> Out of the three mentions of the Greek term τριάς, two occur in the *Commentary*.<sup>21</sup> In particular, in the sixth book it is used in relation to baptism. It

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<sup>18</sup> See also the very important passage of *Jn.* 4:24: 'God is Spirit'.

<sup>19</sup> *On First Principles*, I.3.1.

<sup>20</sup> See: Franz Heinrich Kettler, *Der ursprüngliche Sinn der Dogmatik des Origenes*, Berlin 1966, p. 36; See also: Georg Kretschmar, *Studien zur frühchristlichen Trinitätstheologie*, Tübingen 1956, p. 127, who holds the same opinion. What Kretschmar fails to notice is the equivalence of the occurrence of *Mt.* 28:19 in *On First Principles* I.3.2 and in *ComJn*, VI.166, where God is equally named 'Trinity'. In this regard see: M. Simonetti, *Origene: I Principi*, p. 166 n. 10.

<sup>21</sup> *ComJn*, VI.166 and *ComJn*, X.270. The other occurrence is in *Commentary on Matthew*, XV.31. Other possible occurrences are found in *Fragments on John*, XX and XXXVI.

is possible then to reach two partial conclusions: the first one is that Origen rarely uses the term Trinity; the second one relates to the use of the word *trinitas* in reference to the baptism in *On First Principles* I, 3.2.<sup>22</sup> Since the quotation of *Mt. 28:19* is the same, we must rule out the possibility of Rufinus' manipulation. Anyhow, the first book of *On First Principles* is entirely dedicated to the analysis of God as threefold: in the preface, Origen clearly affirms that God is one, explaining that the Father, the Son and the Spirit are one God.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, given that in Origen's time the theological vocabulary was not yet settled as it was in the fourth century, I deem Kettler's observation theologically weak. Even if the *term* was interpolated by Rufinus, the theological *concept* of the Trinity is still present in Origen's text. Therefore, it would be difficult to deny that Origen has a constructive doctrine of the Trinity.

Anyway, studying the doctrine of God in the *Commentary on John* gives us the privileged perspective of engaging with a work preserved in Greek. Because I am enquiring about God-in-himself, the passages of the *Commentary* shown in this chapter are mainly taken from the commentary on the prologue of the Gospel, where Trinitarian reflection is largely developed. Therefore, it is possible to work directly with Origen's text without worrying about the possible misunderstandings or alterations of the Latin translator. To this end, the sixth book of the *Commentary* gives us certainty about Origen's use of the word Trinity. Moreover, even if the word is rarely used, it is possible to find further evidence of this concept in the thirty-second book of the *Commentary*. Here, commenting on *Jn. 13:19* – 'you may believe that I am' – Origen proposes a short creed. Discussing the basic rule of faith, Origen states one has to agree with some essential beliefs in order to be called Christian:

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Nevertheless, the authenticity of these fragments is disputed. However, it is interesting to note that also *Fr. XXXVI* uses the word Trinity in a baptismal context.

<sup>22</sup> See: *On First Principles* I, 3.2: *Ex quibus omnibus didicimus, tantae esse et auctoritatis et dignitatis substantiam Spiritus sancti, ut salutare baptismus non aliter nisi excellentissimae omnium Trinitatis auctoritate, id est Patris et Filii et Spiritus sancti cognominatione compleatur, et ingenito Deo Patri, et unigenito eius Filio nomen quoque sancti Spiritus copuletur* (From all these quotations we learn that the person of the Holy Spirit is of so great authority and dignity that saving baptism is not complete except when performed with the authority of the whole Trinity, that is, by the naming of Father, Son and Holy Spirit (*Mt. 28:19*); and that the name of the Holy Spirit must be joined to that of the unbegotten God the Father and his only begotten Son).

<sup>23</sup> See: *On First Principles*, I.Praef.4.



First of all believe that God is one, who created all things, and fashioned them (Πρῶτον πάντων πίστευσον ὅτι εἷς ἔστιν ὁ θεός, ὁ τὰ πάντα κτίσας καὶ καταρτίσας καὶ ποιήσας) and made all things to exist out of what does not exist. And one must also believe that Jesus Christ is the Lord, and believe in all the truth about him in relation to his divinity and humanity (κατὰ τὴν θεότητα καὶ τὴν ἀνθρωπότητα ἀληθείᾳ). And one must also believe in the Holy Spirit (Δεῖ δὲ καὶ εἰς τὸ ἅγιον πιστεύειν πνεῦμα), and must believe that, because we possess free will (καὶ ὅτι αὐτεξούσιοι ὄντες), we are chastened for our sins and rewarded for our good actions (*ComJn*, XXXII.187-189).<sup>24</sup>

First, it is necessary to explain that Origen clearly sets up this creed in opposition to the Gnostics – who ‘do not believe that the God of the law and of the Gospel is one’ – and the Monarchians – who ‘reject the substantive existence (ὑπόστασιν) of the Only Begotten and Firstborn of all creation’.<sup>25</sup> The Trinitarian shape of this creed is self-evident, as is the unity of God, who is said to be ‘one’. This short creed ought always to be borne in mind in tackling Origen’s doctrine of God in the *Commentary*. Furthermore, the passage also reveals the ambiguity of Origen’s conception of God, precisely regarding the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is said to be something Christians ‘have to believe in (δεῖ πιστεύειν)’, while no additional indication is given about his nature and role. Notwithstanding the lack of clarity, it appears that every part of the Trinity has a substantive existence (ὑπόστασιν) that is different from the others.<sup>26</sup> This becomes clear in a pivotal passage for the analysis of Origen’s pneumatology, where he states: ‘We, however, are persuaded that there are three hypostases (ὑποστάσεις), the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit’ (*ComJn*, II.75),<sup>27</sup> adding later that nothing we can say about the Trinity and its hypostases is to be taken as a chronological discourse. There is no time in God (*ComJn*, II.131).<sup>28</sup> The three hypostases, together with the unity and uniqueness of God, are the main themes of Origen’s conception of the Trinity. As a matter of fact, he constantly insists on the uniqueness and unity of God; God is said to be ‘altogether one

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<sup>24</sup> Translations of the *ComJn* proposed in this thesis are broadly based on: R. Heine, *Origen: Commentary [...] Books 1-10*, and R. Heine, *Origen: Commentary [...] Book 13-32*. Nevertheless, I frequently change and adjust Heine’s translation. These adjustments are not reported in the footnotes. Translations from *On First Principles* are mine.

<sup>25</sup> *ComJn*, XXXII.190 and XXXII.193.

<sup>26</sup> See the aforementioned refutation of the Monarchians in *ComJn*, XXXII.190 and XXXII.193.

<sup>27</sup> *ComJn*, II.75: ‘Ἡμεῖς μέντοι γε τρεῖς ὑποστάσεις πειθόμενοι τυγχάνειν, τὸν πατέρα καὶ τὸν υἱὸν καὶ τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα’.

<sup>28</sup> On the absence of time in the Trinity see also: *On First Principles*, I.3.4 and IV.4.1.

and simple', 'immutable and unchangeable' and 'the only one who possess immortality'.<sup>29</sup>

So far, I have shown evidence of the Trinitarian shape of God in Origen's thought. The next subsection will focus on explaining the relationship between the Father and the Son within the *Commentary*, thus focusing on subordinationism. The choice of tackling the relationship between the Father and the Son before the Spirit is due to the shape of Origen's theology. In fact, the kind of relation between Father and Son highly influences his pneumatology.

### II.1.3 The Father and the Son: Subordinationism

It is worth noting that Origen usually discusses the unity of God when he speaks of the relationship between the Father and the Son. Analysing the first two verses of the Gospel 'Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ Λόγος, καὶ ὁ Λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν Θεόν, καὶ Θεὸς ἦν ὁ Λόγος, Origen proposes a clear distinction between the Father and the Son. Origen claims that the use of the article in the first sentence (ὁ Λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν Θεόν) must be taken as a reference to the power and divinity of the Father alone. Saying that the Logos was with *the* God (τὸν Θεόν) implies that only the Father can be properly called *the* God, while the Logos is only called *God* (Θεὸς) without the article. Origen thinks that the Father is the only being who possesses predicates in a proper sense. The predicate of "immortality" (ἀθανασίαν) occurs in relation to God the Father alone.<sup>30</sup> Origen pushes his analysis further, saying that, just as there is only one of whom it is possible to say 'he is *the* God', there is only one Logos who can be properly called *the* Logos. Therefore, the difference between the Father and the Son comes from the derivation of the second from the first. The only "very God" is the Father (αὐτόθεος ὁ θεός ἐστι), who is the only self-sufficient God, God-by-himself, while the Son is God because of participation in Him. This poses the problem of unity between the Father and the Son, since it is not Origen's intention to deny

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<sup>29</sup> *ComJn*, I.119; II.75; II.123-125; XIII.219. However, these passages show that these attributes can be properly predicated only of the Father. The Son and the Spirit possess them only by participation.

<sup>30</sup> See *ComJn*, II.123; II.163-170.

the uniqueness of God. Has the Son an individual nature and an essence (τὴν ἰδιότητα καὶ τὴν οὐσίαν)<sup>31</sup> that is different from the Father? Origen replies:

We must say that at one time *the* God, with the article, is *the* God-in-himself (αὐτόθεος ὁ θεός ἐστι). [...] On the other hand, everything besides *the* God-in-himself, which is made God by participation in his divinity, would more properly not be said to be *the* God, but *God* (πᾶν δὲ τὸ παρὰ τὸ αὐτόθεος μετοχῇ τῆς ἐκείνου θεότητος θεοποιούμενον οὐχ «ὁ θεός» ἀλλὰ «θεός»). [...] *The* God therefore is the true God (Ἀληθινὸς οὖν θεός ὁ θεός). The others are gods formed according to him as images of the prototype (οἱ δὲ κατ' ἐκείνον μορφούμενοι θεοὶ ὡς εἰκόνες πρωτοτύπου). But, again, the archetypal image of the many images is *the* Word with *the* God (ὁ πρὸς τὸν θεὸν ἐστι λόγος) who was in the beginning. By being with *the* God he always continues to be God (*ComJn*, II.17-18).

God the Logos is therefore God by derivation and participation. In this way Origen tries to solve the problem of the uniqueness of God and the individual existence of each person of the Trinity. In the passage preceding the aforementioned one (*ComJn* II.16), Origen uses the words 'individual nature' and 'essence' (τὴν ἰδιότητα καὶ τὴν οὐσίαν) both for describing what is *proprium* to each person of the Trinity – therefore, the real individual essence of each person – and for underlining the unity between Father and Son. Furthermore, I would argue that the radical subordination of the Son to the Father is quite clear from this passage.<sup>32</sup> This is because the Son is God only insofar he eternally contemplates the Father, for he entirely derives his divinity from the Father.<sup>33</sup>

Does that mean that the Son is not divine by nature but only by participation? Has the Son another nature apart from participation in the Father? The passage cannot entirely solve these problems. What is not clear in this passage is the way in which we have to understand the subordination of the Son to the Father. Is it to be understood as an *ontological* subordination or as a *logical* one? That

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<sup>31</sup> *ComJn*, II.16.

<sup>32</sup> I agree with: M. Edwards, *Origen against Plato*, p. 70, when he states that: 'There is no doubt that in his Trinity the second and third hypostasis are the servitors of the first'. It is also true that subordinationism was not considered a heresy in the first three centuries, for the large majority of theologians used to deny even a hypostasis to the Son. See *ibidem*, p. 84 n. 136.

<sup>33</sup> Regarding the contemplation of the Father by the Son see, among the others: *ComJn*, II. 126; II.131. See also: *ComJn*, XX.153-159, which I will analyse later in this section.

is, is it related to the nature of each person or is it just an expression of economic functions and relation of origin? It is worth spending few more words on where the difference between ontological and logical subordinationism lies. We can speak of ontological subordinationism only if the Father and the Son are two different *ontological* entities, each one with an individual reality (*hypostasis*) and essence (*ousia*). If, on the contrary, the Father and the Son are just different aspects of the same ontological entity, than it is possible to speak of a *logical* subordinationism. Moreover, it is necessary to define the ideas of *priority* and *superiority*. Saying that an entity is *superior* to another one means that they both possess the same attributes – e.g. goodness – but that one possesses the attributes in a more perfect way than the other. On the contrary, saying that an entity is *prior* to another one means that they both share the same attributes *at the same level*, but the attribute of the second are completely *derived* from the first. The idea of *priority* and *superiority* can be present both in an *ontological* and in a *logical* subordinationism. My work will prove that Origen conceived an *ontological subordinationism of priority* in the intra-relationship between Trinitarian hypostases, an *ontological subordinationism of both priority and superiority* between God and the creatures and a *logical subordinationism of both priority and superiority* between the different aspects (ἐπίνοιαί) of the Son.

In general, the possibility of ontological or logical subordinationism lies in the individual natures of the Father and the Son. In order to solve this problem, we must establish which are the predicates of each person. For sure, each person has his own substantive existence (ὑπόστασις), as Origen states many times in the *Commentary*.<sup>34</sup> The Father is the only one who possesses divinity *per se* (according to himself), that is, who originates divinity as well as everything that exists. He utterly possesses all predicates of God. He is the only one to be really immortal (*ComJn*, II.123 II.166) invisible, bodiless<sup>35</sup> and good (*ComJn*, I.251-253).<sup>36</sup> In fact, the Father is mainly identified with the Good.<sup>37</sup> In addition,

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<sup>34</sup> See: *ComJn*, I.151; I.243; II.75; X.246; XX.174.

<sup>35</sup> The attribute 'incorporeal' refers to the Trinity by derivation from the Father. See: *On First Principles*, I.6.4; II.2.2; IV.3.15.

<sup>36</sup> In this passage Origen refers to the goodness of the Father which, at the end of the world, will fill every creature with his goodness. In this way Origen interprets the refusal of Christ to call himself 'good' in *Mk.* 10:18: 'Why do you call me good? No one is good except one, God the

Origen defines the Father not only as the one who possesses in a full sense all predicates, but even as the one who surpasses every possible definition, for his power and nature is beyond any nature and predicate (*ComJn*, I,149-151; XIX.37).<sup>38</sup>

On the other hand, the Son is His Image. He is eternally generated by the Father (*ComJn*, I,204; XX.140) and he is the one who reveals the Father to the creation (*ComJn*, I.34; I.201; I.277). There was not a time when the Son was not.<sup>39</sup> Therefore, it is not possible to speak of any kind of *chronological* or *temporal* subordinationism in Origen. The nature of the Son is to be *The Wisdom-Word*, the only begotten and firstborn of all creation (*ComJn* I.245; I.291).<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless he needs the Father just as every other being needs him (*ComJn*, XIII.151). The first book of the Commentary is entirely focused on the relation between the Father and the Son and on the aspects (ἐπίνοιαι) of the Son, particularly in relation to the spiritual world (κόσμος νοητός).<sup>41</sup> Here, the Son is defined as ‘many good things’ (πολλὰ ἀγαθὰ), in contrast with the Father who is the Good (*ComJn*, I.51-52). He is life, light, light of the world, true light and light of men, truth, way, resurrection, door, Wisdom and power. All these aspects and many others are called ἐπίνοιαι. They represent the different levels of understanding the rational creature (λογικὸς) can gain of the Saviour. Some

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Father’. The justice of the Son is therefore a means through which he prepares unjust creatures to receive the Father, that is, the Good.

<sup>37</sup> See also: *On First Principles*, I.2.13; I.4.3; I.8.3; IV.4.8, where the Father is depicted as the Good always effusing his goodness.

<sup>38</sup> Jon M. Robertson, *Christ as Mediator: A Study of the Theologies of Eusebius of Caesarea, Marcellus of Ancyra, and Athanasius of Alexandria*, Oxford 2007, p. 24-28, presents the ontological role of the Son as mediator between the Father and the world as a result of the ‘continuity of nature’ between the Father and the Son. Nevertheless, Robertson’s argument lacks an appropriate evaluation of the beyond-essence nature of the Father (*ComJn*, XIX.37). How is it possible to affirm the consubstantiality between the Father and the Son if the Father is beyond essence? Moreover, the fact that the Son is ‘light’ as well as the Father (see p. 27) does not absolutely prove an equal essence between the Father and the Son, for Origen clearly states in *ComJn*, II.149-151 the difference in οὐσία between the Father who is both ‘light’ and who ‘transcends the light’, and the Son who is just ‘light’.

<sup>39</sup> Reference to this statement can be found in *On First Principles*, I.2.9 and IV.4.1 and in the *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, I.5. The eternal generation of the Son from the Father shows the difference between Origen’s and Arius’ readings of Origen’s theology.

<sup>40</sup> The quotation of Colossians 1:15: ‘He is image of the invisible God and firstborn of all creations’ appears many times in other works as well. In *Against Celsus* it appears fourteen times. See for example *Against Celsus*, 3.34.

<sup>41</sup> See amongst others: *ComJn*, I.52-56; I.161-168; I.191-200; I.209-219; I.222-228; I.243-258. See in this regard T. Greggs’ interpretation of the ἐπίνοιαι as the means through which Origen combines universalism and particularity. The ἐπίνοιαι, insofar they stand for the various degree of participation in Christ, are necessities in the process of ascent of every rational creature to God: ‘The fuller participation of our reason in the *Logos* is the means by which the *logika* are transformed into the *logikoî*’. See T. Greggs, *Barth, Origen, and Universal Salvation*, p. 81.

of them represent the Son in-himself; some others are ways through which the Son helps irrational beings to understand him (*ComJn*, I.203; VI.100-108; VI.222). Even the name 'Logos' is an ἐπίνοια of the Son (*ComJn*, I,52-60). Nevertheless, Origen warns the reader not to consider these aspects as related to the essence of the Son. In fact, the Son has one essence that is the same in all his aspects: 'No one takes offence when we distinguish the aspects (ἐπινοίας) of the Saviour, thinking that we also do the same with his essence (τῆ οὐσίᾳ)' (*ComJn*, I.200). Therefore, the Son is one-in-himself. The ἐπίνοιαι do not have any substantial existence, but they are only the way through which the Son makes the Logos – that is, himself insofar he is Logos – manifest to the world. As a consequence, the ἐπίνοιαι are multiple aspects through which the Logos acts in the world. By contrast with the Father, whose nature is one and simple, the Son can become many things. The only aspect which can claim to have a substantial existence is Wisdom (*ComJn*, I.243-251). The reason for this privileged status is that Wisdom is the name of the Son-inside-the-Father, apart from the relation with any other created being. In this regard, Origen writes:

[Wisdom] does not have a hypostasis (proper existence) merely in the mental images of *The* God and Father of the universe (Οὐ γὰρ ἐν ψιλαῖς φαντασίαις τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ πατρὸς τῶν ὅλων τὴν ὑπόστασιν ἔχει ἡ σοφία) in a way analogous to the images in human thoughts (κατὰ τὰ ἀνὰ λόγον τοῖς ἀνθρωπίνοις ἐννοήμασι φαντάσματα). If someone is able to comprehend an incorporeal hypostasis (existence) comprised of the various ideas which embrace the principles of the universe, an existence which is living and animate (ἐστὶν ἀσώματον ὑπόστασιν ποικίλων θεωρημάτων περιεχόντων τοὺς τῶν ὅλων λόγους ζῶσαν καὶ οἰονεὶ ἔμψυχον ἐπινοεῖν), as it were, he will understand the Wisdom of God who precedes the whole creation (ὑπὲρ πᾶσαν κτίσιν σοφίαν τοῦ θεοῦ) (*ComJn*, I.243-244).

Wisdom is therefore the proper name of the Son which, before every creation, always was *with* the Father and *in* the Father. Digging deeper in the ἐπίνοιαι of the Son, Origen divides the aspects of the Son in two categories. On the one hand, there are four ἐπίνοιαι which belong to the Son-in-himself. These are: Wisdom, Logos, Truth, Beginning.<sup>42</sup> On the other hand, some ἐπίνοιαι only refer

<sup>42</sup> The dependence of Origen's theology of the ἐπίνοιαι on the gnostic – in particular Valentinian – aeons and syzygies has been already proved in G. Lettieri, 'Il nous mistico. Il superamento

to the relation between the Son and the fallen creatures. Anyway, Origen believes it is impossible for the creatures to know all the *ἐπίνοιαι* of the Son from the beginning (*ἀρχή*) to the end (*ComJn*, I.222-224). For this reason, he asks if it is possible that:

since there is a system of ideas in Him, [the Son] (*συστήματος θεωρημάτων ὄντος ἐν αὐτῷ*) insofar he is “Wisdom” (*σοφία*), there are some ideas that are incomprehensible to all begotten nature except himself (*ἐστί τινα θεωρήματα ἀχώρητα τῇ λοιπῇ παρ’ αὐτὸν γεννητῆ φύσει*), which he knows for himself (*ἄτινα οἶδεν ἑαυτῷ*) (*ComJn*, II.126).

The question Origen is asking here is: is it possible that there are some things – therefore, some attributes – known only by the Father and the Son? For now, I would leave the question unanswered in order to clarify this point later on in this very section. Nevertheless, I would like to point out that the passage clearly states the superiority of the Son to every other existing being.

So far, I have shown the many aspects of the Son. Moreover, I have shown the close dependence of the Son on the Father. There is no doubt that, among all the beings, the Son is the closest to the Father. In commenting on *Jn*. 1:1 ‘in the beginning was the Word’ and ‘all things came into being (*ἐγένετο*) through him (the Logos)’, Origen says:

As, therefore, ‘all things *came into being* (*ἐγένετο*) through him,’ not, all things *were* (*ἦν*) through him, and, ‘without him nothing *came into being* (*ἐγένετο*),’ not, without him nothing *was* (*ἦν*), so ‘what *came into being*

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origeniano dello gnosticismo nel *Commento a Giovanni*<sup>7</sup>, p. 177-275. It is particularly interesting to note how Origen structured his system of *ἐπίνοιαι* according to the Valentinian Ogdoad (see Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, I.1-8), quoted in *ComJn*, I.56. In *ComJn* II,155 Origen quotes Ptolemy (see Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, I.1.1) referring to: ‘those who have invented the mythology concerning aeons in pairs (*περὶ αἰώνων ἐν συζυγίαις μυθολογίαν*), and who think that Logos and Life have been produced by Intellect and Truth (*ὑπὸ νοῦ καὶ ἀληθείας προβεβλήσθαι λόγον καὶ ζωὴν*)’. Origen dismisses this opinion proving that Life (*ζωή*) has its origin in the Logos, therefore cannot be its consort. The Valentinian myth, in connection with Heracleon, is quoted in many other passages both in relation to the *ἐπίνοιαι* and to the doctrine of the three natures. See for example *ComJn*, XIII.73 and XIII.120. Origen’s theology of the *ἐπίνοιαι* can therefore be interpreted as the successful attempt at a demythologization of Gnostic speculation through a theology which applies the ontological role of the gnostic aeons to the logical aspects of the single Son. Since the *ἐπίνοιαι* lack a proper essence different from that of the Son, they are merely logical steps leading the creatures from material ignorance to immaterial knowledge, like the saints who ‘live a completely immaterial and bodiless life in blessedness (*ἄυλον πάντη καὶ ἀσώματον ζῶντων ἐν μακαριότητι τῶν ἀγίων*)’ (*ComJn*, I.97).

(γένονεν) in him,' not what *was* (ἦν) in him, 'was life'. And again, not what *came into being* (ἐγένετο) in him was the Word, but what *was* (ἦν) in the beginning was the Word (*ComJn*, II.131).

The difference between the Logos and any other being lies in the eternal generation of the Son from the Father without any mediation. The close connection between the Son and the Father makes the Son the Perfect Image of the Father and the means through which everything that exists *came into being*.<sup>43</sup> The Son is the only one who *is* eternally with the Father. Therefore, the Son is the only one who needs no mediator to know the Father. In the same way Origen explains the depiction of the Son as μονογενής (only begotten) in the Gospel of John (*Jn.* 1:18 and 3:16) (*ComJn*, I.276; II.73-77). This privileged status makes the Son the only true Image. Nevertheless, it still remains to investigate what it means for the Son to be 'image' (εἰκῶν). While the quotations presented so far come from the commentary on the Gospel's prologue, where the Son is presented in his closeness to the Father, Origen has also to deal with other passages of the Gospel where Christ is said to be inferior to the Father, for 'the Father who sent me is greater than I' (*Jn.* 14:28). In one passage – where the influence of Platonic thought is particularly strong – <sup>44</sup> Origen reflects on the nature of this image:

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<sup>43</sup> My translation of ἐγένετο with 'come into being' is due both to the lack of difference in Origen's language between the verb γίνομαι and γεννάω and to my intention to differentiate the ways in which different things came into being. Origen uses this expression to indicate the coming-into-being of both the Spirit, which is fully divine, and all other fallen creatures. To this end see *infra*, II.2.2. In this particular passage, I use this translation in order to underline the difference between the Son, who *is* eternally in God, and all other beings, which necessitate the Son to contemplate the Father.

<sup>44</sup> The relationship between Origen and Platonic tradition is highly debated within scholarship. I have already quoted some works about this. I would merely observe here that the passage I will quote, the authenticity of which is beyond doubt, is found almost word by word in the *Chaldean Oracle*, 3-4. Being a text of the second century, the *Chaldean Oracles* antedate Origen – for sure, they antedate Porphyry. See: M. Edwards, *Origen against Plato*, p. 75. Even if Origen did not know the *Oracles*, the similarities between the two passages remain a witness of his closeness to the Platonic tradition. See also Albinus, *Epitome*, 14,3, who speaks of the rising of the soul of the world and its ruling over the universe in place of the Father, for his impossibility of facing the multiplicity (an idea which resembles the one expressed in *ComJn*, II.31). J. Daniélou, *Origen*, p. 90-92 traces in Origen's reference to the Father as αὐτόθεος an echo of Numenius. Numenius' system is based on three gods: The Father, the Son and the Grandson or, alternatively, the Father, the Creator and the Cosmos. The Father is the only one who can be rightly called αὐτοάγαθος, (see Eusebius of Caesarea, *Preparation for the Gospel*, 11.22) for the Son – which is the demiurge and the creator of the world, just as in Origen's system – receives all from the Father. M. Edwards denies this correspondence 'as Numenius' appellation for the First God is *autoagathon* (Good itself), not *autotheos* (God itself)'. Nevertheless, I find quite hard to maintain this objection, for in the whole *Commentary* (*ComJn*, II. 152-153) God the Father is presented as the only one who possesses the real Goodness in himself. See also:



But, although the Saviour transcends in his essence (ὑπερέχων οὐσία), rank, power, divinity (πρεσβεία καὶ δυνάμει καὶ θειότητι) – for the Word is living – and Wisdom (σοφία) beings that are so great and of such antiquity, nevertheless, he is not comparable with the Father in any way. For he [Christ] is an image of the goodness and brightness not of God, but of God's glory and of his eternal light (Εἰκὼν γὰρ ἔστιν τῆς ἀγαθότητος αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀπαύγασμα οὐ τοῦ θεοῦ ἀλλὰ τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ καὶ τοῦ αἰδίου φωτὸς αὐτοῦ), and he is a breath, not of the Father, but of his power; and he is a pure emanation of God's almighty glory, and an unspotted mirror of his activity (ἀτμὶς οὐ τοῦ πατρὸς ἀλλὰ τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἀπόρροια εἰλικρινῆς τῆς παντοκρατορικῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ καὶ ἔσοπτρον ἀκηλίδωτον τῆς ἐνεργείας αὐτοῦ) (*ComJn*, XIII.152-153).<sup>45</sup>

Just a few lines before these, Origen stated that 'The Father exceeds (ὑπερέχει) the Saviour as much, or even more, as the Saviour himself and the Holy Spirit exceed the rest' (*ComJn*, XIII.151). The passage seems to suggest a strong *ontological* subordinationism of the Son to the Father. The essence of the Father is so transcendent that the Son is not even his image, but the Image of his Power. This peculiar position is exactly the same of the sequence Father-Dunamis-Son traceable in the *Chaldaean Oracle*.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, this is not the only passage where the Son is called image not of *the* God but of His power.<sup>47</sup> In *ComJn*, XXXII.350-357 he says only the Son is the reflection of the glory of God the Father, anticipating the partial reflections on the rest of the rational creation (τὴν λογικὴν κτίσιν), for nobody except the Son contains the whole reflection of the full glory of God. The Son is therefore the reflection and image not of the Father, but of his glory. Moreover, Origen asks if, in addition to being glorified in the Son, God (the Father) is glorified in a greater manner in himself, when he is engaged in self-contemplation 'on the basis of the knowledge and contemplation of Himself (ἐπὶ τῇ ἑαυτοῦ γνώσει καὶ τῇ ἑαυτοῦ θεωρίᾳ) which

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*ComJn*, I.251-253 and *On First Principles*, I.2.13; I.4.3; I.8.3; IV.4.8, where the Father is depicted as the Good that always effusing his goodness.

<sup>45</sup> Regarding the idea of 'glory' and 'mirror' see: *Wis.* 7:25-26 and *Heb.* 1:3. Origen uses these biblical quotations in order to show the subordination of the Son to the Father.

<sup>46</sup> See Mark Edwards, 'Being Life and Mind: A Brief Inquiry', in *Syllecta Classica* 8 (1997), p. 191-205. See in particular p. 198.

<sup>47</sup> See: *On First Principles* II.8.5 and I.2.10-12 Origen stresses how the action and the power of the Son corresponds to that of the Father only in the sense that the Son acts as a minister of the Father. See also: I.*Pref.*4.

surpasses the contemplation of the Son'(ComJn, XXXII.350-357). In this contemplation, he is gladdened with satisfaction and joy and pleased with himself and rejoices. Origen stresses that these terms are used improperly, since it is impossible to explain this issue in human terms.

In general, I think it is possible to affirm that Origen presents two tendencies. On the one hand, he tends to exalt the Only-Begotten nature of the Son above every other being. On the other hand, Origen wants to defend the absolute transcendence of the Father above every other being, including the Son.<sup>48</sup> Nevertheless, it could seem that the ineffable nature of the Father makes him incomprehensible to every being with the exception of the Son (ComJn, I.187).<sup>49</sup> A good example of this ambiguity is the relation between the Father and the truth. Origen defines the Son as truth, for 'according to the will of the Father he has embraced the whole principles of the universe' (ComJn, I.186). Origen adds that, insofar as the Saviour is the truth, he must understand everything of the Father, for, 'if the truth is complete, he must be ignorant of nothing true' (ComJn, I.187). Therefore, one must refute the doctrine that there is *something* of the Father that the Son does not know. But, in the same passage, Origen admits also the possibility of the existence of 'things which do not belong to the appellation "truth", but are beyond it' (ComJn, I.187), which is exactly the case of the Father. In fact, in other passages, where Origen defines the Son as 'true light', Origen declares that:

Now, to the extent that God the Father of the truth (ὁ πατήρ τῆς ἀληθείας θεός) is more than (πλείων) and greater than (μείζων) the truth and, being the Father of Wisdom, is greater than and surpasses Wisdom (ὁ πατήρ ὧν σοφίας κρείττων ἐστὶ καὶ διαφέρων ἢ σοφία), to this extent he transcends (ὑπερέχει) being true light (ComJn, II.150).

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<sup>48</sup> It is impossible not to connect the ineffable nature of the Father in Origen's thought to the Valentinian reference to the Father as the unknowable Abyss (βυθός). See: Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, I.1.1 and I.2.1. See for example what Origen says in ComJn, II.18 about the Son who 'would not remain God if he did not continue in unceasing contemplation of the depth of the Father (οὐκ ἂν μείνας θεός, εἰ μὴ παρέμενε τῇ ἀδιαλείπτῳ θεῷ τοῦ πατρικοῦ βάθους)'. This contemplation exactly corresponds to that of the Intellect (νοῦς) towards the Father/Abyss (πατήρ/βυθός) in Ptolemy (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, I.1.1). In this respect, the Father of Origen is the same as the incomprehensible Pre-Father (προπάτωρ) of the Valentinians. See: H. De Lubac, *History and Spirit* p. 265 and H. U. von Balthasar, *Origen: Spirit and Fire*, p. 7, who states that Origen's subordinationism is dependent on the Greek-Gnostic substratum. In this sense it is interpreted as a means to bridge the gap between God and the world.

<sup>49</sup> The same concept is expressed in *On First Principles*, I.1.5; I.1.8; IV.4.1, where Origen states that even the most perfect creature cannot completely understand the Father.

Therefore God, insofar he is the Father, is more and greater than all the principles of the universe, including the Son.<sup>50</sup> In fact, the declaration that God is more and greater than Wisdom – that is, the Son-in-himself – states a clear *priority* of the Father to everything else. The depiction of the Father as the agent which is greater than the truth, as compared to the Son which is the absolute truth, is pivotal in order to understand the way in which, in Origen's thought, the subordination of the Son to the Father can be ontologically described only as a *subordination of priority*. Indeed, in this passage, the Father is not said to be "truer" than the Son. On the contrary, the Son is fully true, thus possessing truth to the maximum level. Nevertheless, the Father is "greater than the truth" for his very essence surpasses not only the human possibility of language to describe it, but also the truth itself. Nevertheless, the Father cannot be said to be truer than the Son because, from an ontological point of view, they both fully possess truth. The same can be said of the relation between the Father and the being. On the one hand, the Father is the only one who fully possess Being. On the other hand, the Father is said to be beyond essence and Being. This majesty of the Father is due to his ineffable nature, his being beyond every possible definition, even beyond any essence (τῆ ὑπερέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας) (*ComJn*, XIX.37). In two other extremely important passages of the *Against Celsus* Origen affirms that the Father not only transcends Being and is 'beyond essence', but he is also 'beyond mind and essence' (ἐπέκεινα νοῦ καὶ οὐσίας εἶναι).<sup>51</sup> For this reason, even if the Son can be aware of the ineffable nature of the Father, he cannot *be* ineffable himself. Indeed, this ineffability does *not* refer to an *ontological* condition of the Father, but rather to the fact that God the Father in-himself falls beyond the very notion of *Being* and, consequently, of ontology. As such, in Origen's thought, by contrast with his Platonic counterparts, "ineffability" cannot be considered an ontological attribute. Indeed, just as it has been noted by Tzamalikos, the Father 'is beyond any notion of essence. It is God who attributes to *essence* its ontological significance, if any'.<sup>52</sup> As such, the fact that the Father surpasses Being, thus being "ineffable", is not regarded by Origen as a flaw in his ontology according to which the Father and the Son possess the same ontological properties at the same level.

<sup>50</sup> Origen adds in *ComJn*, II.149 that the Father is also different in essence (οὐσία).

<sup>51</sup> See: *Against Celsus*, VI.64; VII.38.

<sup>52</sup> Panayiotis Tzamalikos, *Origen: Cosmology and Ontology of Time*, Leiden 2006, p. 88.

Therefore, even if the Son is not ineffable, it is not possible to say that he lacks an ontological attribute, for ineffability is not an *ontological* characteristic.<sup>53</sup> Therefore, Origen still can affirm that the Son is the perfect *ontological* image of every attribute, of every power, of every glory of the Father, but he lacks ineffability, for he cannot be above Being. Only to this extent, it is possible to affirm that the Son is the perfect image of the Father. Following this line of thought, Origen defines the Father as the *per se* (according to which) of the Son and the Son as the *per se* (according to which) of the creatures. Therefore, while the Father is the perfect God *in se* (in-himself) and *per se* (according-to-himself), the Son is God *in se* (in-himself) but is not God *per se* (according-to-himself). This is how Origen explains the expression Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ Λόγος, referring ἀρχή both to the Father and the Son:

For if human beings are *according to the image* (Εἰ γὰρ οἱ ἄνθρωποι «κατ' εἰκόνα»), and the image (that is, the Son) is *according to the Father* (ἡ εἰκὼν δὲ κατὰ τὸν πατέρα), it follows that the *according to which* and beginning of Christ, on the one hand, is the Father (τὸ μὲν «καθ' ὃ» τοῦ Χριστοῦ ὁ πατὴρ ἀρχή), but, on the other hand, Christ is the *according of which* of human beings (τὸ δὲ «καθ' ὃ» τῶν ἀνθρώπων ὁ Χριστός) (*ComJn*, I.105).

The Son is the perfect derivation from the Father, according to which he exists, while the creatures are made through the Son, that is to say, they are images of the Image.

I have already defined the Father and the Son as two different hypostases, but I would like to take the analysis further. The term “hypostasis”, in Origen’s language, indicates a reality with a proper and individual existence; nonetheless, besides the different individual reality, do the Father and the Son

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<sup>53</sup> I completely agree with R. Williams, ‘The Son’s Knowledge of the Father in Origen’, p. 146-153, who traces in the *Commentary of John* an ambiguity regarding the Son’s knowledge of the Father. He rightly interprets *ComJn*, I.187 and II.150 as references to the impossibility of the Son to have the entire knowledge of the Father. He realised that ‘what the Father knows, however, are not some extra facts unknown to the Son, but the simplicity of his own Nature’ p. 147. Therefore, Williams recognises that it is unthinkable that the Son might fail to embody a perfect and total contemplative union with the Father. ‘Yet, logically, the Son cannot know the Father in his simplicity, but only as an infinite depth never to be fully sounded’.

have the same essence (οὐσία)?<sup>54</sup> This problem is far from having been solved, for many scholars have affirmed that Origen depicted the Father and the Son as being consubstantial.<sup>55</sup> For this reason, some of them claim there is not an “ontological”, but a “logical” subordination between the Father and the Son.<sup>56</sup>

First of all, I think that the question is misplaced. Insofar as both the Father and the Son are ontological entities, their subordinationism cannot be anything but ontological.<sup>57</sup> The derivation of the Son from the Father is an ontological derivation, not a logical one. If it was only logical the Son would not have a proper distinct existence (like the ἐπίνοια). For this reason, I disagree with scholars who affirm a logical subordinationism of the Son to the Father.<sup>58</sup> What they failed to notice is that any kind of subordinationism between two ontological entities, which possess a distinctive existence (being hypostases), necessarily implies an ontological subordinationism. Nevertheless, it is worth reminding the reader once more that, Origen’s thought, the *ontological subordinationism* between two entities should not be understood as a

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<sup>54</sup> It is worth remembering that Origen considers ‘of the same essence’ two beings that are ‘co-ordinate members of a single class, beings sharing the same properties’. See: Rowan Williams, *Arius: Heresy and Tradition*, London 1987, p. 134.

<sup>55</sup> The question over the possible use of the word *homoousios* (of the same substance) by Origen in reference to the Father and the Son is highly debated. See among the others: Manlio Simonetti, ‘Ancora su homoousios a proposito di due recenti studi’, in *Vetera Christianorum* 17 (1980), p. 85-98. See also the debate between Richard P. C. Hanson, ‘Did Origen Apply the Word Homoousios to the Son?’, in Richard P. C. Hanson (ed), *Studies in Christian Antiquity*, London 1983, p. 53-70 and Mark Edwards’ reply: ‘Did Origen Apply the Word Homoousios to the Son?’ in *The Journal of Theological Studies* 49 2 (1998), p. 658-670. The only reference we have comes from a fragment of his lost *Commentary on Hebrew*, quoted and maybe altered by the translator. In this regard, I agree with the opinion of R. Williams, *Arius: Heresy and Tradition*, p. 134-138. Anyway, even if the passage was authentic, the word *homoousios* is used by Origen in an analogical way, not to indicate a dogmatic formula, as stated by M. Edwards, ‘Did Origen Apply the Word Homoousios to the Son?’, p. 670.

<sup>56</sup> See for example: H. Crouzel, *Origen*, p. 188. Crouzel claims that ‘The subordination of the Son to the Father does not bring into question either identity of nature or equality of power. The Son is both subordinate and equal to the Father. [...] The subordination arises in the first place from the fact that the Father is Father, origin of the two other Persons and initiator of the Trinity. The latter role concerns the economy [...] denotes the activity of the Trinity externally, in the creation and in the Incarnation- Redemption’. I disagree with Crouzel on this point. This view will be challenged later in this chapter. On Crouzel’s wavelength see: K. McDonnell, ‘Does Origen Have a Trinitarian Doctrine of the Holy Spirit?’ and Ilaria Ramelli, ‘Origen’s Anti-Subordinationism and its Heritage in the Nicene and Cappadocian Line’, in *Vigiliae Christianae* 65 (2011), p. 21-49.

<sup>57</sup> I agree here with George Leonard Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought*, London 1952 and E. J. Fortman, *The Triune God*, p. 56. Nevertheless, although the ontological subordination of the Son to the Father affects the status of the Spirit, I do not think his role in soteriology is diminished.

<sup>58</sup> See for example: K. McDonnell, ‘Does Origen Have a Trinitarian Doctrine of the Holy Spirit?’, p. 34. He writes: ‘Origen’s subordinationism language is either an expression of a relation of origin, or of an economic function, and is not ontological’.

subordination of one hypostasis over the other *at an ontological level*, thus implying the loss of ontological properties. By contrast, Origen's subordinationism is an ontological subordinationism *of priority*. On the contrary, a logical subordinationism can be affirmed only of the *epinoiai* of the Son; in that case it is possible to state that, for example, the aspect of 'Light' is *logically* subordinated to that of the Logos.

Secondly, in spite of some passages that may apparently suggest the contrary, Origen never claims in the *Commentary* that Father and Son are consubstantial. On the contrary, he states there is an *ontological* difference, a difference in οὐσία:<sup>59</sup>

Now, since the Saviour here is 'light' in general and in the catholic epistle of the same John, God is said to be 'light' (ὁ θεὸς εἶναι φῶς) (*1Jn.* 1:5) one could think that it is confirmed from this source too that the Father is not distinct from the Son in essence (τῆ οὐσίᾳ μὴ διεστηκέναι τοῦ υἱοῦ τὸν Πατέρα). But another, who speaks more accurately (ἀκριβέστερον) and speaks more soundly (ὑγιέστερον) will say that the light which shines in the darkness and is not overcome by it (*Jn.* 1:5) and the light in which there is no darkness at all are not the same (οὐ ταὐτὸν εἶναι) (*ComJn.* II.149-151).

The one who 'speaks more accurately' sees that it is impossible to affirm that the Father and the Son have the same essence, for not only does the former cause the existence of the latter, but the Son can be surrounded by darkness – although he cannot be overcome – whereas the Father, is ontologically too transcendent to see any darkness at all. The Father, being all one and simple, is light without darkness, while the essence of the Son allows Him to deal with the multiplicity through his ἐπίνοιαι. The Logos is the ontological mediator who guarantees the connection between God-Father and the World-Creature (*ComJn.* II.199-209; VI.88-92; XX.46-64).<sup>60</sup> In the next section I will show how Origen also rebuts the idea that the Holy Spirit has the same essence of the Father and the Son in *ComJn.* II.74-75.<sup>61</sup> Moreover, in *ComJn.* X.246 Origen

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<sup>59</sup> I agree with L. Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy*, p. 24-28 who states that Origen clearly presents the Father and the Son as different ousiai.

<sup>60</sup> In this regard see: *On First Principles*, I.Praef.4; I.7.1; II.6.1; II.9.4; IV.4.3.

<sup>61</sup> The passage was misread by both K. McDonnell, 'Does Origen Have a Trinitarian Doctrine of the Holy Spirit?', p. 12 n. 46 and I. Ramelli, 'Origen Anti-Subordinationism and its Heritage in

rebutts some wrong readings of the passage of the casting out of the merchants from the temple in *Jn. 2:14-17*. This is how Origen describes these heretics:

Those who are confused on the position of the Father and the Son (οἱ συγχεόμενοι ἐν τῷ περὶ πατρὸς καὶ υἱοῦ τόπῳ) think that these statements prove that the Son does not differ from the Father in number, but that both being one, not only in essence but also in substance (μὴ διαφέρειν τῷ ἀριθμῷ τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ πατρὸς, ἀλλ' ἐν οὐ μόνον οὐσίᾳ ἀλλὰ καὶ ὑποκειμένῳ τυγχάνοντας ἀμφοτέρους), they say they are the Father and the Son in relation to certain different aspects (κατὰ τινὰς ἐπινοίας), not in relation to their hypostasis (οὐ κατὰ ὑπόστασιν) (*ComJn*, X.246).<sup>62</sup>

Therefore, Origen deems belief in the consubstantiality of the Father and the Son to be an error to avoid; equally, the belief that Father and Son are only different aspects (ἐπίνοιαι) of one existing reality (hypostasis) is considered heresy.<sup>63</sup> The real distinction between them stands in the fact that they are different hypostases, but the essence of the saviour is not comparable with that of the Father (*ComJn*, XIII.152-153).<sup>64</sup> Moreover, the passage shows that it

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the Nicene and Cappadocian Line', p. 27-28. They refer to this passage as an assertion of consubstantiality, while Origen openly rebuts this idea, stating that this is absurd for it would make the Spirit the same of the Father. Ramelli even takes the above-mentioned quotation of *ComJn* II.149 as a reference to consubstantiality between the three hypostases of the Trinity. In doing so, she equalises Origen's conception of God to the one of the Cappadocian fathers.

<sup>62</sup> Origen is using here the difference 'in number' to point out the different individual existence (hypostasis) of Father and Son. Regarding the different ὑποκείμενον of the Son and of the Father see: Origen, *On Prayer*, XV. In that passage, Origen recognises that the difference between Son and Father concerns both the οὐσία and the ὑποκείμενον. It seems to me that the different ὑποκείμενον should be understood here not as a reference to a different substratum between the two, but rather as related to a difference in subject. Thus, the Father has a different ὑποκείμενον from the Son because they are two different ontological subjects.

<sup>63</sup> This was the position of the Monarchians, widely refuted by Origen.

<sup>64</sup> For this reason, I do not find convincing the statement of H. Crouzel, *Origen*, p. 187-188: 'Origen is expressing the equivalent of the Nicene homoousios'. Knowing the impossibility of a merely *logical* subordination of the Son to the Father but lacking textual evidence to affirm the consubstantiality, Crouzel tries to use *ComJn*, XX.153-159 in order to prove that the Son (the begotten) never comes out of the Father (the begetter). Therefore, he concludes that they have the same *ousia*. Moreover, he affirms that Origen does not present the problem of their relationship in an ontological way. The problem is that *ComJn*, XX.153-159 does not say that. In the passage Origen writes: 'When the Son is in the Father (ὁ υἱὸς ἐν τῷ πατρὶ ἔστιν), being in the form of God before he empties himself (ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων πρὶν ἑαυτὸν κενῶσαι), *the* God is his place, as it were (οἶονεὶ τόπος αὐτοῦ ἔστιν ὁ θεός). And if indeed one considers him who, before he has emptied himself, is in the original form of God (ἐν τῇ προηγουμένῃ ὑπάρχοντα θεοῦ μορφῇ), he will see the Son who has not yet proceeded from God himself (ὄψεται τὸν μηδέπω ἐξεληλυθότα ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ υἱὸν αὐτοῦ), and the Lord who has not yet proceeded from his place (καὶ κύριον τὸν μηδέπω ἐκπορευόμενον ἐκ τοῦ τόπου ἑαυτοῦ)'. Keeping in mind the difference between *the* God (ὁ θεός, the Father) and God (θεός, the Son), the passage affirms that the Son has his proper *place* (τόπος), not his proper essence (οὐσία), in the bosom of *the* God (ὁ θεός, that is, the Father). There is no reference to the essence of the

would be incorrect to speak of a *logical* distinction between Father and Son: being two distinct ontological entities, there is an *ontological* difference between them, for they are not different aspects (ἐπίνοιαι) of the same essence.

It is worth mentioning here a controversial passage of *On First Principles*, which apparently contradicts what stated here. In *On First Principles* 1,3.7 Origen says that: *Nihil in Trinitate maius minusve dicendum est.*<sup>65</sup> However, this statement only *apparently* contradicts Origen's subordinationism. Here, Origen refers to the common *work of sanctification* of the believers by the three Persons of the Trinity, which does not mean that he denied subordinationism, rather that the work of sanctification belongs to the entire Trinity for the source of divinity is one.<sup>66</sup> Therefore, it does not express any consubstantiality between the persons of the Trinity,<sup>67</sup> for the Son and the Father can be said to be One only insofar they possess one will. Nevertheless, for the Son's will is the mirror of the Father's will (*ComJn*, XIII.228), the only source of will is the Father.

## Conclusions

In the *Commentary* Origen presents the Father and the Son as two different ontological entities. They are both God, for they possess one deity that flows from the Father to the Son. The Father, insofar he is Father is ontologically

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Son, but only to the fact that the Son-in-himself is eternally *in the form* (ἐν μορφῇ) of God (θεοῦ, without the article). Therefore, the Father is the *place* of the Son, where the Son gains his divinity, his original being God (without the article), Son of *the* God. Firstly, the fact that the proper place of the Son is the Father does not prove any consubstantiality. Secondly, the reason why the Son-in-himself never comes out of the Father is that he does not possess divinity as οὐσία but as μορφή. Thirdly, the fact that the Son is always with the Father is an ontological statement, for they have different hypostases.

<sup>65</sup> *On First Principles* 1,3.7: 'Nothing in the Trinity can be called greater or less'. Some scholars, following the text of Karl Fr. Schnitzer, *Origenes über die Grundlehren der Glaubenswissenschaft*, Stuttgart 1835, and Koetschau, (*Origenes Werke*, vol. 5: *De principiis. Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller* 22, ed Paul Koetschau, Leipzig 1913), believed this passage to be interpolated by Rufinus. I personally agree with M. Simonetti, *Origene: I Principi*, p.177 n. 51, who claims the passage to be authentic. In fact, the passage follows a quotation of *Ps.* 36:6. The same interpretation of *Ps.* 36:6 related to the work of sanctification of the Trinity is found in *On First Principles*, IV,4.3 and in *Homily of Leviticus*, 5,2. Moreover, in *ComJn*, I.42 Origen admits the possibility that *Ps.* 36:6 refers both to the Father and the Son.

<sup>66</sup> The fact that the source of divinity is one in the Trinity is not questioned in this work. In fact, the source is always the Father, and the divinity flows from Him to the Son and through the Son to the Spirit.

<sup>67</sup> The only place where Origen speaks of one substance in three hypostases is the *Scholia in Matthew*, XVII.309. Nevertheless, the paternity of the work is still to prove, thus it cannot be trusted.



more than the Son, in the sense that there is an ontological – not temporal – relation of *priority* of the Father to the Son. Moreover, insofar the Father is more than Wisdom he is ineffable. In a pivotal passage of the *Commentary* Origen says that the same essence of God is transcended by the power and the nature of *the* God that is beyond essence (τῇ οὐσίᾳ ἢ τῇ ὑπερέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας δυνάμει καὶ φύσει τοῦ θεοῦ) (*ComJn*, XIX.37). So the Son *in se* (in-himself) is Wisdom, Logos etc, but the Father is Wisdom, truth and any other attribute *in se* (in-himself) and *per se* (according to himself). There is an ontological subordination, but it is a subordination of *priority*, not of *superiority*.<sup>68</sup> In fact, in order to exist, a subordination of superiority would imply that one entity – namely the Father – possesses some attributes in a more perfect way than the second entity – namely the Son. According to Origen, this cannot be the case, for the Son is the perfect image of the Father, who possesses every attribute in the most perfect way. Indeed, As I have explained above, the majesty of the Father toward the Son is not related to the fuller possession of ontological attributes, but to the fact that, by contrast with the Son, the Father in himself cannot be fully encapsulated in neither an ontological discourse nor in the category of Being. As such, the Father is beyond being and beyond mind, thus being ineffable. In addition to this *meta-ontological* nature, the Father is also the fullness of every possible attribute that we see in the Son. Thus, according to Origen, the transcendence of being and thought, proper only of the Father, *falls beyond the reign of the ontological attributes*.<sup>69</sup> Nevertheless, the priority of the Father to the Son does not only mean an ontological *precedence* of the Father. Indeed, not only the Father comes first, but he is the only one who performs the acts of will in-himself and according-to-himself. So, while the Father acts in the Son and the Son needs the Father to be God, the Father does not need the Son to be God. But the Son is the only means through which the will of the Father is active in the world, for the perfection of the Father does not allow him to deal

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<sup>68</sup> Origen does not use the vocabulary of ‘priority’ and ‘superiority’. Nevertheless, as I hope to have shown in this section, it can be a good means in order to understand his complex thought.

<sup>69</sup> See also *Against Celsus*, VI.64. These statements resemble the Platonic idea of ‘Good beyond being’. See: Plato, *The Republic*, 509b. However, it is interesting to note here that in both in *Against Celsus* VI.64 and VII.38, Origen claims that God (the Father) not only transcends *being*, but he also transcends *mind* (ἐπέκεινα νοῦ καὶ οὐσίας εἶναι). This is also why Origen considers the father and the Son to possess the same attributes at the same level. This fact represents an innovation with respect to the platonic tradition, as already noted by Whittaker and Tzamalikos. See: John Whittaker, ‘ΕΠΕΚΕΙΝΑ ΝΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΟΥΣΙΑΣ’, in *Vigiliae Christianae* 23 (1969), p. 91-104. P. Tzamalikos, *Origen: Cosmology and Ontology of Time*, p. 87-88.

with the multiplicity. Therefore, the Son does not lack the attributes of the Father. The majesty of the Father towards the Son is to be found in the Father's will and power. As a matter of fact the Father acts in the Son, but the Son does not act in the Father; equally, while the will of the Father is the will of *the* God, the will of the Son is the will of the Father.<sup>70</sup> The Son acts, wants and does what the Father acts, wants and does *for necessity*, for the Son's actions and will are completely derived from the Father.<sup>71</sup>

This paragraph has shown that subordinationism is crucial in understanding Origen's doctrine of God, especially regarding the relation between Father and Son. Notwithstanding what some scholars might say, I deem it wrong to believe that the idea of subordinationism is inappropriate before the fourth-century Arian controversy.<sup>72</sup> On the contrary, it is the duty of every scholar to understand what kind of subordinationism Origen presented without any apologetic intent. As I have tried to prove, speaking of a *logical* subordinationism is methodologically incorrect in the case of Father and Son. Scholarship often used the idea of *logical subordinationism* in order to 'defend' Origen from the accusation of being Arius' predecessor. In truth, I think that such an accusation is sufficiently proven to be wrong by the analysis depicted so far. Moreover, it is worth keeping in mind that subordinationism as such is not an Origenian distinctive trait, but it rather represented the norm in Trinitarian thought of the theologians of the first three centuries.<sup>73</sup> However, I think that speaking of logical subordinationism is

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<sup>70</sup> Thus, Origen can say that 'it is only the Son who has comprehended all the complete will of the Father and does it (Μόνος δὲ οὐιὸς πᾶν τὸ θέλημα ποιεῖ χωρήσας τοῦ πατρὸς)' (*ComJn*, XIII.231). Origen's reference to the unity of will and action in the Trinity (see: *On First Principles*, I.3.7) must not be misunderstood: the actual source of the will is always the Father.

<sup>71</sup> L. Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy*, p. 27 states that Origen's account for the Father's eternal will 'gives to the result of that will a quasi-necessity, and the paradigmatic example of the Father's eternal will is the Son's eternal existence'. Nevertheless, speaking of the Father's necessity for something but himself does not make sense in Origen's theology, for it would imply a lack of something in the Father. While the Son necessitates the Father, it is not true the other way around. The only circumstance in which the Father necessitates the Son is the relation to the rational creatures.

<sup>72</sup> Among many scholars quoted so far, see: M. Edwards, *Origen against Plato*, p. 70, where he defines as 'anachronistic' to speak of subordinationism in Origen. See also: L. Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy*, p. 21. I agree with Ayres about the differences between Origen's and Arius' subordinationism.

<sup>73</sup> For sure, Origen's subordinationism is not that of Arius, for no temporal subordinationism is possible in Origen's Trinity. See for example what is written by Mark Edwards, *Catholicity and Heresy in the Early Church*, Ashgate 2009, p.113: '*Subordinationism* is almost a synonym for *Arianism* in modern historiography, but in the Church of the first five centuries it was not a recognized category of error'. Nevertheless, I think it is clear that even if subordinationism was not recognised as an error and most early theologians used it, this does not mean that Origen was not subordinationist. Rather, I believe that it proves the contrary.

ontologically wrong and misleading for the reader. In fact, speaking of logical subordinationism means to deny the individual existence of the Son, as well as his being a different entity from the Father. For these reasons, I propose here a distinction between *priority* and *superiority*, hoping it will cast some light on the Father-Son ontological relationship.

What about the Spirit? How does he fit in the *binitarian* relation showed so far? For sure we know he is part of the perfect and divine Trinity. The next section will analyse his ontological status inside the Trinity.

## II.2: The Spirit as One of the *All Things Made Through the Logos*: According to Origen, Is the Spirit a Creature?

### II.2.1 The Spirit as God in God

In my previous analysis of the ontological relationship between the Father and the Son in Origen, I have shown that subordinationism is not an incidental element; rather, it is necessary for understanding not only the functions, but also the ontological significance of each Trinitarian hypostasis. I defined the relationship between the Father and the Son as a *subordinationism of priority*, that is, a subordinationism that is not related to the perfection of the attribute (goodness, truth, etc), but rather to 1) the ontological precedence of the Father, 2) the ineffable meta-nature of the Father (his being ineffable and over every essence), 3) the act of will and power which is properly located in the Father and only mirrored in the Son. Applying the same scheme to the Spirit can be tricky. As noticed by many scholars,<sup>74</sup> Origen's conception of the Holy Spirit fluctuates between a clear affirmation of equality in rank to the other two hypostases and a strong subordinationism. This fluctuation has led to many misunderstandings about his ontological role and function.<sup>75</sup> I have already presented evidence that Origen considered the Holy Spirit as a fundamental part of the Trinity.<sup>76</sup> The aim of this section is to analyse the full significance of this statement. In *On First Principles*, I.3.1, starting the first methodological dissertation on the Holy Spirit in the history of Christianity, Origen says that, while the Greek and barbarian philosophers could hold a certain knowledge of the existence of the Father and the Son, *de subsistentia vero Spiritus sancti ne suspicionem quidem ullam habere quis potuit praeter eos, qui in lege et prophetis versati sunt, vel eos, qui se Christo credere profitentur.*<sup>77</sup> Therefore, by contrast with the being of the Father and of the Son, knowledge of the Spirit is only accessible by means of revelation, not by means of reason. Of course, this does not mean that, after having acquired by revelation a certain vague

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<sup>74</sup> See, in particular, T. Greggs, *Barth, Origen, and Universal Salvation*, p. 152-170.

<sup>75</sup> See the short literature review about the Holy Spirit in *supra*, II.1.1.

<sup>76</sup> See among the many *ComJn*, II.75-86 and XXXII.187-189. Against the accusation of *binitarianism* in Origen's theology see: C. Marksches, 'Der Heilige Geist im Iohanneskommentar des Origenes'. Nevertheless, Marksches' work is more focused on the role of the Spirit in soteriology than on his immanent status in the Trinity.

<sup>77</sup> 'No one except those who are familiar with the law and the prophets, or those who profess the belief in Christ, could have even a suspicion of the subsistence of the Holy Spirit'.

knowledge of the existence of the Spirit and of his works, a rational investigation on his role and essence should not be undertaken. Some of the most important considerations regarding pneumatology in the *Commentary on John* come from Origen's exegesis of *Jn.* 1:3: 'All things came into being through him (the Logos) (πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο)'. Origen declares that this expression clearly indicates that everything was made by God. Therefore, everything was not made by (ὑπὸ) the Logos (the Son), but through (διὰ) the Logos 'by one better (κρείττονος) and greater (μείζονος) than the Logos. And who would this other one be except the Father?' (*ComJn*, II.72). Hence, Origen asks whether the Holy Spirit is to be considered as one of the all things that came into being through the Logos. First of all, Origen rejects two different solutions to the problem: he says that the Spirit cannot be unbegotten (ἀγέννητον) for the Father is the only ἀγέννητον one (*ComJn*, II.74); secondly, he discharges the opinion of those who think 'the Spirit has no distinctive essence different from the Father and the Son (δογματίζων μηδὲ οὐσίαν τινὰ ἰδίαν ὑφ' ἑστέον τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος ἑτέραν παρὰ τὸν πατέρα καὶ τὸν υἱόν *ComJn*, II.74);<sup>78</sup> thirdly, he rejects the opinion of those who believe that 'the Spirit is the same with the Father (τὸ αὐτὸ αὐτὸ τυγχάνειν τῷ πατρὶ)', adding that the commonly-acknowledged distinction between the Holy Spirit and the Son is revealed in *Mt.* 12:32 and *Mk.* 3:29 (*ComJn*, II.74).<sup>79</sup> Then Origen gives his solution:

We, however, are persuaded that there are three hypostases, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, (Ἡμεῖς μέντοι γε τρεῖς ὑποστάσεις πειθόμενοι τυγχάνειν, τὸν πατέρα καὶ τὸν υἱὸν καὶ τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα) and we believe that only the Father is unbegotten (ἀγέννητον μηδὲν ἕτερον τοῦ πατρὸς εἶναι πιστεύοντες). We admit, as more pious and true, that the Holy Spirit is the most honoured of all things made through the Word (τὸ πάντων διὰ τοῦ λόγου γενομένων τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα πάντων εἶναι τιμιώτερον) and that he is [first] in rank of all the things which have been made by the Father through Christ (<πρῶτον> πάντων τῶν ὑπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς διὰ Χριστοῦ γεγενημένων) (*ComJn*, II.75).

<sup>78</sup> K. McDonnell, 'Does Origen have a Trinitarian doctrine of the Holy Spirit?' p. 12, misreads the passage, saying this proves that the Spirit is ranked equally with the Father and the Son.

<sup>79</sup> 'Whoever speaks a word against the Son of man shall be forgiven, but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not have forgiveness in this world or in the world to come'. This statement is very important in understanding Origen's pneumatology. It will be analysed both in this chapter and in *infra*, IV.2.4.3. Here, it is used only to prove beyond doubt the ontological difference between the Son and the Spirit.

The ontological status of the Spirit as part of God is thus confirmed. Indeed, in this passage the Spirit is indicated as one of the three hypostases of the Trinity. On one hand, it is possible to state that every accusation of *binitarism* in Origen's theology collides with the letter of his text; on the other hand, the evident subordination of the Spirit to the Father and the Son is absolutely undeniable. The Spirit is immanent in the Godhead, but he is inferior to the Son in dignity because of his ontological origin. While the Son is directly derived from the will and power of the Father, the Spirit comes from the will and power of the Father through the operation of the Son. Moreover, Origen discharges the opinion of those who states an equality of essence (οὐσία) between the Father and the Spirit, or even between the Son and the Spirit. Since 'through Him (the Logos) all things were made', Origen focuses himself on understanding the specific meaning of 'all things' (πάντα) and 'through Him' (δι' αὐτοῦ):

Must we understand the statement *all things come into being through Him* to exclude the aspects (ἐπίνοιαί) which were in Him (the Son)? The latter seems me better. [...] Consequently, apart from the things which are observed in Christ (χωρὶς τῶν ἐπινοουμένων τῷ Χριστῷ), all things were made through the Word of God, since the Father made them in Wisdom (ποίησαντος ἐν σοφίᾳ αὐτὰ τοῦ πατρὸς) (*ComJn*, II.89-90).

According to this passage, the Spirit appears to be not only inferior to the Son, but even to all his ἐπίνοιαί. However, this suggestion is erroneous, because the ἐπίνοιαί, insofar they are aspects of the Son, do not possess neither a proper hypostasis nor a proper essence (*ComJn*, I.200). Because they do not have a proper existence, they did not *come into being*. On the contrary, the Spirit is certainly a hypostasis.<sup>80</sup> Nevertheless, his dependency on the Son is absolute:

The only-begotten alone (μόνου τοῦ μονογενοῦς) is by nature (φύσει) Son from the Beginning (υἱοῦ ἀρχῆθεν). The Holy Spirit seems to have need of the Son ministering to his hypostasis (οὗ χρήζειν ἔοικε τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα διακονοῦντος αὐτοῦ τῇ ὑποστάσει), not only for him to exist (εἶναι), but also for him to be wise (σοφὸν), and rational (λογικὸν) and just (δίκαιον), and

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<sup>80</sup> For the use of the term 'hypostasis' and its connection to the Middle and Neo-Platonic speculation and the Gnosticism see: Alastair H. B. Logan, 'Origen and the Development of Trinitarian Theology' in L. Lies (ed), *Origeniana Quarta*, p. 424–429.

whatever other things we ought to understand him to be by participation in the *epinoiai* of Christ, which we mentioned previously (πᾶν ὅτιπτοῦν χρῆ αὐτὸ νοεῖν τυγχάνειν κατὰ μετοχὴν τῶν προειρημένων ἡμῖν Χριστοῦ ἐπινοιών) (*ComJn*, II.76).

The Spirit's existence is indeed subordinated to the Son, from whom he receives all attributes. In this sense, the Spirit is more dependent on the Son than the Son is on the Father. Therefore, on the one hand, the Father is the only one worthy of owning predicates in a proper sense;<sup>81</sup> on the other hand, the nature of 'beginning' and 'Wisdom' that characterizes the Son leads to an ontological – not chronological for there is no time in God – coexistence between the Father and the Son. In other words, while the Son *is* in the Father who grants him all his knowledge, the Spirit *came into being* (ἐγένετο) by the Father through the Son (*ComJn*. II.75).<sup>82</sup> Moreover, being one of the 'all things', the Spirit is considered to be part of the creation operated by the Father through the Son.<sup>83</sup>

So far, it is clear that there is an ontological subordinationism of the Spirit to the Son.<sup>84</sup> It is for sure a subordinationism of *priority*, for the Son is ontologically – never chronologically – before the Spirit. Therefore, the Spirit needs the Son in order to possess attributes (rationality, truth, etc.). Thus, the relationship between the source of the divinity (the Father) and the Spirit can also be defined as a relationship of *double-priority*, for the Spirit is in need of the Son who is in need of the Father.

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<sup>81</sup> See for example: *ComJn*, II.123; II.163-170.

<sup>82</sup> Nevertheless, the fact that the Spirit came into being does not imply the idea that he is not God. Indeed, As I indicate further on (section II.2.2), Origen understand the coming into being as meaning the *derivation* of the Spirit through the Son, *not* than his *creation* out of nothing.

<sup>83</sup> As I will discuss in the next paragraph, Origen does not mean the term 'creation' as *creation ex nihilo*, but only that the Spirit is one of the all things that *came into being* through the Son. See *ComJn*, II.131: 'As, therefore, "all things *came into being* (ἐγένετο) through him", not, all things *were* (ἦν) through him, and, "without him nothing *came into being* (ἐγένετο)", not, without him nothing *was* (ἦν), so "what *came into being* (γένονεν) in him", not what *was* (ἦν) in Him, "was life". And again, not what *came into being* (ἐγένετο) in him was the Word, but what *was* (ἦν) in the beginning was the Word'.

<sup>84</sup> I think that McDonnell's statement: 'the subordinating texts are concerned with the hierarchy of origin, and are economic rather than ontological' is sufficiently challenged by the texts I have shown so far. See K. McDonnell, 'Does Origen have a Trinitarian doctrine of the Holy Spirit?', p. 19. Origen's commentary on *Jn*. 1:1-2 is clearly an ontological text. Origen is not speaking of the economy, but of the ontological status of the Spirit.

Moreover, Origen stresses the ontological difference between the Son and the Spirit, stating that the Son is the only one to be Son *by nature* (υιοῦ ἀρχῆθεν φύσει *ComJn*, II.76.), while the Spirit is not. This must imply an ontological difference in nature between the two entities not only related to an ontological precedence of the Son to the Spirit, but also to the very essence of the two entities. The Father, the Son and the Spirit are not of the same substance. Origen clearly states it when commenting on the episode of the Samaritan woman at the well. Discussing the statement ‘God is Spirit’ in *Jn*. 4:24, Origen says that the appellative ‘Spirit’ cannot be interpreted as a reference to the essence of God. God is Spirit in the same way in which he is said to be light and fire. He is light insofar he enlightens the noetic eyes (νοητός), and is fire insofar he burns and consumes everything that is material (ὕλικός) (*ComJn*, XIII.132-139). Equally, God is said to be Spirit insofar the breath of the Spirit gives us life. On the contrary, Origen states that ‘The Father exceeds (ὑπερέχει) the Saviour as much as the Saviour and the Holy Spirit exceeds the rest’ (*ComJn*, XIII.151). However, by contrast with ‘light’ and ‘fire’, the Holy Spirit has a proper existence, which means he is not simply an attribute of the Son. Nevertheless, it is clearly impossible to consider him as being of the same essence of the Father.<sup>85</sup>

Being the Only Begotten, the Son has a privileged status inside the Trinity. The Son is therefore the only means through which every other being, including the Holy Spirit, can contemplate the Father (*ComJn*, I.104-105). Therefore, only the Son is the true image of God, while everything else is an image of the image. This statement is highly problematic, for it can be easily misunderstood: saying that the Spirit is one of ‘all things’, consequently an image of the image, means to downgrade him to a creature level. Thus, we have to investigate whether, besides a subordinationism of *priority*, one can trace a subordinationism of *superiority* in Origen’s Trinity. While the Son is said to partake perfectly in the

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<sup>85</sup> In this regard, I disagree with both Orbe and Rius-Camps who understood the Spirit as the generic *hypokeimenon* of the Father and of the Son, thus making of the Spirit the Father’s and the Son’s substratum. I think that Origen’s exegesis of the passage of *Jn*. 4:24 definitely proves this opinion to be inconsistent with Origen’s texts. Orbe’s and Rius-Camps’ opinion has been already rebutted by Simonetti, who understood the divinity of the Spirit as coming from his being generated *sub specie aeternitatis* from the Father through the Son. See: Manlio Simonetti, ‘Note sulla teologia trinitaria di Origene’, in *Vetera Christianorum* 8 (1971), p. 273-307, in particular p. 284; A. Orbe, *Estudios Valentinianos I: Hacia la primera teología*, p. 431; J. Rius-Camps, *El dinamismo trinitario en la divinización*, p. 49.



attributes of the Father, it is possible that the hypostasis of the Spirit does not partake perfectly in the attributes of the Son. We have already seen how in *ComJn*, XXXII.350-357 Origen admitted the possibility that the Father can be engaged in self-contemplation 'on the basis of the knowledge and contemplation of himself (ἐπὶ τῇ ἑαυτοῦ γνώσει καὶ τῇ ἑαυτοῦ θεωρίᾳ) which surpasses the contemplation of the Son'. Nevertheless, because the Son is the only perfect image of the Father, he seems to conclude that it is impossible to predicate any ontological attribute of the Father of which the Son is not partaker. The only exception to this idea is the idea of ineffability. Nevertheless, according to Origen's reasoning, this idea is not an ontological predicate as this very idea falls beyond the realm of ontology. In a similar way, in another passage Origen seems to admit the possibility that the Son-in-himself – that is, when he is engaged in the primordial contemplation of the Father – possesses some attributes that are unintelligible to any other being:

We must enquire, since there is a system of ideas (συστήματος θεωρημάτων ὄντος ἐν αὐτῷ) in him [the Son] insofar he is "Wisdom" (σοφία), if there are some ideas that are incomprehensible to all begotten nature except himself (ἐστὶ τινα θεωρήματα ἀχώρητα τῇ λοιπῇ παρ' αὐτὸν γεννητῇ φύσει), which he knows for himself (ἅτινα οἶδεν ἑαυτῷ). We must not leave this matter unexamined because of reverence for the Holy Spirit. For that the Holy Spirit also is instructed by him is clear [...]. Now we must enquire if the Spirit, by being instructed, contains all things which the Son, who is from the beginning, knows by contemplating the Father (τῷ πατρὶ ἀρχόμενος ὁ υἱὸς γινώσκει) (*ComJn*, II.126-127).

Origen essentially leaves the question unanswered.<sup>86</sup> Nevertheless, the doubt that the Spirit could not know all aspects of the Son – that is, to participate in a perfect way in all his attributes – is still present in Origen's conception of the Trinity. In fact, the reason why Origen never fully investigates this problem is most likely due to the logical trap it causes in his system. On the one hand, Origen cannot openly affirm that the Spirit has less knowledge than the Son, for this would imply that the Spirit lacks of the fundamental characteristic of God, that is, the perfect possession of all attributes, although in a mediated form. On

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<sup>86</sup> Moreover, in *ComJn*, I.222-224, Origen states the impossibility of understanding all the *epinoiai* of the Logos, as some of them are comprehensible only to the Father and the Son.

the other hand, Origen cannot say that the Spirit has the perfect knowledge of the Father, because his knowledge of the Father is mediated by another hypostasis – namely the Son – and therefore it is not immanent. While the Son is immanent in *the* God, for his proper place is the Father, the Spirit, as an immanent hypostasis, dwells in the Son.

### II.2.2 The Spirit as a Creature in God

In trying to resolve the set of problems presented in the last paragraph, it would be methodologically inexact to force Origen's speculation on the Holy Spirit in a monolithic system that does not leave any room for ambiguities. On the contrary, it is the duty of an historian to acknowledge them and act accordingly. However, I think the problem can be partially solved by enquiring about the nature or the essence of the third hypostasis. In fact, the Spirit maintains a clear difference from the Father and the Son: while the Father is called *Father* insofar he has a Son, and the Son is called *Son* because of his relation to the Father, the Spirit is not called Spirit because of his relation to the Father and the Son, rather because of his relation to the created world. If the Spirit is one of 'all things' that came into being through the Logos, it means the Spirit is out of the privileged *binitarian* relationship between the Father and the Son. Origen writes:

These things have been examined extensively [...] to see how, if all things came into being through him [the Son], and the Spirit came into being through the Word (τὸ πνεῦμα διὰ τοῦ λόγου ἐγένετο), the Spirit is one of the "all things" considered to be inferior to him through whom he came into being (ἐν τῶν πάντων τυγχάνων ὑποδεέστερον τοῦ δι' οὗ ἐγένετο νοούμενον) (*ComJn*, II.86).

This passage seems to distance the Spirit from the Godhead and draw him nearer to the creation. How to explain the special prominence given by Origen to the fact that God is 'one and simple' (*ComJn*, I.119)?<sup>87</sup> How does he explain statements as: 'The Savior and the Holy Spirit transcend all created beings not only by comparison, but by their exceeding preeminence (πάντων μὲν τῶν

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<sup>87</sup> See also: *On First Principles*, I,1,6. In truth, a close examination of *ComJn*, I.119 shows that in depicting God as 'one and simple' Origen refers only to the Father (Ὁ θεὸς μὲν οὖν πάντη ἓν ἐστὶ καὶ ἀπλοῦν). On the contrary the Son is many things (τὰ πολλά).

γενητῶν ὑπερέχειν οὐ συγκρίσει ἄλλ' ὑπερβαλλούσῃ ὑπεροχῇ φαμέν τὸν σωτῆρα καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον)' (*ComJn*, XIII.151)? Does he not contradict himself when in *On First Principles* I.3.3 he affirms *usque ad praesens nullum sermonem in scripturis sanctis invenire potuimus, per quem Spiritus sanctus factura esse vel creatura diceretur?*<sup>88</sup>

The key is to be found in the concept of 'creation'. In fact, the word 'creation' (κτίσις) and its cognates are used by Origen to indicate different things. On the one hand, he uses 'create' in reference to *Pr.* 8:22: 'The Lord created me *beginning* of his work (Ὁ θεὸς ἔκτισέν με ἀρχὴν ὁδῶν αὐτοῦ εἰς ἔργα αὐτοῦ)'. This text is referred to Wisdom, that is, to the Son-in-himself, the one eternally contemplating the Father as 'Wisdom' (*ComJn*, I.111). In this sense, the word 'creation' (κτίσις) must not be taken – as it was after Nicaea – in the usual meaning of *creatio ex nihilo*, but in that of something derived from something else.<sup>89</sup> However, Origen never refers to the Son or to the Spirit as a creature (κτίσις) in the *Commentary*. Moreover, it is commonly agreed that Origen used to label with the name of 'creation' (κτίσις) everything that is derived (γενητός) by something else, with the exception of the Son who is the only one to be begotten directly from the unbegotten (ἀγέννητος) Father. Moreover, we already quoted a passage where Origen refers to the Son as the only one who *is* in the beginning and was not made/derived/begotten (ἐγένετο) in the beginning (*ComJn*, II.131), for he eternally *was* with the Father. It is worth remembering here that in the third century the double consonant was no longer pronounced in Greek. Hence, Origen uses γενητός/ἀγέννητος and γεννητός/ἀγέννητος interchangeably, since the terminological distinction between the past participles of the verb γίγνομαι (with a single v) to indicate coming into existence

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<sup>88</sup> 'Up to the present we have been able to find no passage in the holy Scriptures in which the Holy Spirit was said to be made or created'. I do not think that there is any contradiction between this passage and the one in *ComJn*, II.75 and II.86. In fact, here Origen does not deny the possibility that the Spirit is a creature, but only that the Spirit is not called with the name κτίσις in the Scriptures. Nevertheless, in the *Commentary*, Origen inserts the Spirit in the 'all things' made through the Son, thus treating him as a creature. My interpretation is confirmed by the fact that, immediately after the quotation proposed, Origen refers to *Pr.* 8:22: 'The Lord created me beginning of His work (Ὁ θεὸς ἔκτισέν με ἀρχὴν ὁδῶν αὐτοῦ εἰς ἔργα αὐτοῦ)'. Since the passage in the Proverbs is referred to the Son, it is clear one has to intend the word 'creature' in its broad meaning, as I explain further ahead.

<sup>89</sup> Henri Crouzel and Manlio Simonetti, *Origène. Traité des Principes*, Paris 1980, p. 40-41 maintain that Origen considered the word κτίσις as 'taking origin from'. In this sense Origen refers to Wisdom as a creature. (*ComJn*, 90-109). This interpretation is now broadly accepted by the scholarship. See also: H Crouzel, *Origène*, p.198-204 and T. Greggs, *Barth, Origen, and Universal Salvation*, p. 154.

and of the verb γεννάω (with double v) to indicate begetting was made long after Origen, during the Arian controversy.<sup>90</sup> To sum up, it is possible to say that, on the one hand, *sometimes* – not often – Origen uses the word κτίσις (creation) to indicate both ‘creation’ and ‘derivation’; on the other hand Origen often uses the term γενητός to indicate everything that *came into being*. Hence, the Spirit is part of the *creation* only insofar we intend the term *creation* as *everything that came into being*, for the Spirit is begotten and is made by the Father through the Logos.<sup>91</sup> the Holy Spirit and creation are alike in *having been brought into being* by the Father through the Son. Nevertheless, the Spirit is said to be God and part of the Godhead. His distinctive nature, by contrast with that of the Son, is to be ‘the most honoured of all things made (brought-into-being) through the Word (τὸ πάντων διὰ τοῦ λόγου γενομένων τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα πάντων εἶναι τιμιώτερον)’ and to be ‘[first] in rank of all the things which have been made (brought-into-being) by the Father through Christ (<πρῶτον> πάντων τῶν ὑπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς διὰ Χριστοῦ γεγενημένων)’ (*ComJn*, II.75). Consequently, one must admit that the Spirit is both God and creature, in the sense that his essence and nature is both of being God and generated. The ontological role of the Spirit is to stand between God and the creation, being both God and a generated being. Nevertheless, the Spirit is the only being made through the Logos that can be properly said to be God.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> See: H. Crouzel, *Origen*, p. 174-175.

<sup>91</sup> Most problems raised in Origen’s conception of the Trinity – subordinationism, eternity of the Son and, more generally, the idea of creaturely in God – were highly debated in the Arian controversy in the fourth century. The influence Origen had on both sides (anti-Arian and Arian) is undeniable. See on this: Manlio Simonetti, *La crisi ariana nel IV secolo*, Roma 1975. On the same wavelength see: Basil Studer, *Trinity and Incarnation: The Faith of The Early Church*, Edinburgh 1993. See also: Elizabeth A. Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate*, Princeton 1992. Nevertheless, it is worth remembering, as L. Ayres does, that the partisan use of Origen of both sides occurred on an already revised version of his theology. Moreover, the fluctuating vocabulary Origen used increased the misunderstanding of his theology. See: L. Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy*, p. 20 n. 24.

<sup>92</sup> Regarding the role of the Spirit in the creation of the world see the interesting remarks by Francesca Cocchini, ‘Dalla *regula fidei* riflessioni origeniane sullo spirito santo’, in Lorenzo Perrone, (ed), *Origeniana Octava*, Leuven 2003, p. 593-603. Through the passage of *On First Principles*, I.3.3 Cocchini suggests that the passage of *Gen.* 1.2 offered to Origen the scriptural proof that the Spirit is *not* a creature, because he was present in the creation of the world. Unfortunately, since we do not have the *Commentary on Genesis*, this idea remains quite speculative. In a very recent article on the newly discovered *Homilies on Psalms*, Lorenzo Perrone supports Cocchini’s idea. See: Lorenzo Perrone, ‘La pneumatologia di Origene alla luce delle nuove omelie sui salmi’, in Francesco Pieri and Fabio Ruggiero (eds), *Il divino in/quieto: lo Spirito santo nelle tradizioni antiche*, Brescia 2018, p. 101-117. See also: Francesca Cocchini, ‘Note sulla dottrina pneumatologica origeniana’, in Francesca Cocchini (ed), *Origene: teologo esegeta per una identità cristiana*, Bologna 2006, p. 33-56. I think the

It is now time to explain the many times where Origen speaks of the majesty of the Spirit. 1) Why does Origen in *On First Principles* and even in the *Commentary*, seem to suggest that the Spirit may be considered more majestic than the Son for the reason that sins against the Holy Spirit are unforgivable, while those against the Son are forgivable?<sup>93</sup> 2) Why, if the Spirit is subordinate to the Son, is the Spirit involved in sending Christ into the world? How can an entity, which is ontologically subordinated, influence a more important and superior one?<sup>94</sup> 3) Does the fact that only the saints partake in the Holy Spirit, while every human being partakes in the Son and in the Father, make the Spirit more important than the other two hypostases?<sup>95</sup>

These *apparent* contradictions can be solved by acknowledging a difference between the ontological status of the hypostasis of the Spirit and his function in the economy of salvation. It is my intention to prove here that, in the above-mentioned passages, Origen never refers to the ontological hypostasis of the Spirit, but always to his function in the economy of redemption of the fallen creatures. In fact, Origen explicitly affirms that ‘the Saviour was made less than him (the Spirit) not because of his nature (οὐχ ὡς φύσει), but because of the plan of the incarnation (οἰκονομίαν τῆς ἐνανθρωπήσεως) of the Son of God that was taking place’ (*ComJn*, II.81). The Son was sent in the world by the Holy Spirit because he willingly – it would be better to say: ‘according to the will of the Father’ – decided to empty himself and become less than he is. Consequently, being sent by the Spirit only shows the humility of the Son, who is ready to become less than the Spirit for the sake of fallen creatures. Anyway, the economic process does not imply any ontological diminishing in the Son, for Origen says that even in the moment of the incarnation the Son is fully in the Father as well as in Christ (*ComJn*, XX.153-159).

Regarding the other two questions, it is worth noting that the work of the Spirit is always ontologically different from that of the Son, for the Spirit, being one of

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interpretation I have proposed in this chapter on the meaning of the term ‘creature’ is extremely useful for this debate.

<sup>93</sup> See: *ComJn*, XIX.88 and XXVIII.54-55. See also: *On First Principles*, I.3.2.

<sup>94</sup> See: *ComJn*, II.81 and XXXII.187-189. See also: *On First Principles* I.Praef..4.

<sup>95</sup> See: *On First Principles* I.3.5-7.

those things which ‘came into being through the Son’, acts in a different way towards the fallen creatures. The difference between the economic functions of the two will be the subject of chapter IV of my thesis. For now, it is worth underlining that the fact that only the saints partake in the Spirit does not imply that the Spirit is greater than the Son. Origen refers to the Father as the one who *is*, therefore possessing being, and to the Logos as the one who *is rational*, therefore possessing reason.<sup>96</sup> Therefore, the participation of the rational creature (λογικός) in the Father and in the Son is not undermined by the sin of the creature, for it is a natural participation.<sup>97</sup> Consequently, a creature can participate in a less perfect way in the Logos of the Son, but cannot stop participating at all (*ComJn*, II.20). For this reason, even the Devil is called λογικός by Origen (*ComJn*, XX.198-210).<sup>98</sup> On the contrary, the nature of the Spirit is to sanctify other creatures. For this reason, only blessed creatures can participate in the Holy Spirit (*ComJn*, XXXII.75).<sup>99</sup> This does not imply an ontological priority of the Spirit towards the Son; on the contrary, it indicates his ontological dependence on the Son. For the same reason, Origen says that the sins against the Holy Spirit cannot be forgiven. Origen writes:

And maybe, we ought to say that the creation (κτίσις) - but also the human race - in order to be set free from the slavery of corruption, was in need of an incarnate, blessed, and divine power (μακαρίας καὶ θείας δυνάμεως ἐνανθρωπούσης) which would also restore the things on earth to order. This activity fell, as it were, in some way to the Holy Spirit (ἐπέβαλλέ πως τῷ ἁγίῳ πνεύματι ἢ πρᾶξις αὐτή). Since the Spirit cannot bear it (ὑπομένειν), he sends forth the Saviour, because he alone is able to bear such a great conflict. Although it is the Father, as leader, who sends the Son, the Holy Spirit joins in sending him in advance (συναποστέλλει καὶ συμπροπέμπει), promising to descend to the Son of God at the right time (ἐν καιρῷ) and to cooperate in the salvation of man (συνεργῆσαι τῇ τῶν ἀνθρώπων σωτηρίᾳ) (*ComJn*, II.83).

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<sup>96</sup> See also: *Against Celsus*, VIII.15.

<sup>97</sup> This means that the nature of every rational creature is to *be* – therefore, to participate in the Father – and to be *rational* – therefore, to participate in the Logos.

<sup>98</sup> See also: *ComJn*, II.91-99, where the devil is said to be ‘creation of God’ insofar it is an existing being, but to be not creation of God insofar it is the devil, for every evil is a negation of being.

<sup>99</sup> See also: *Fragments on John*, fr. XXXVII; *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, III.213; *On First Principles*, I.1.3 and II.2.5; *Homilies on Numbers*, III.1 and VI.3; *Homilies on Leviticus*, VI.2; *Homilies on Ezekiel*, VI.5.

Insofar as the Holy Spirit is the first being of all creation, he was supposed to set creation free from sins after the fall, but could not bear such a great activity because of his created (generated) nature. At first sight this passage might be seen as an indication of the Spirit's inferiority toward the Son, thus representing a flaw in Origen's reasoning. Indeed, one could say that the Spirit lacks the ontological property of saving creatures. Nevertheless, I think such a conclusion would not be fair to Origen. Indeed, the abovementioned passage does not imply an ontological lack in the Spirit's essence, but it is rather an indication of its specific soteriological role which is different from that of the Son. Indeed, as I will show in chapter IV Origen regards the Spirit to be a fundamental soteriological agent. Indeed, participation in the Spirit is necessary to obtain salvation. The reason why he is not the *principal* soteriological agent is that this role is better performed by the Son, *who is the one through which all creation, including the Holy Spirit possess their attributes*. However, just as the Son's essence is fully understood in his relation to the Father, so the Spirit's essence regards his relation to the Son from which he derives all his *properties*. As such, the Spirit derives from the Son also the *property* of saving the world. Therefore, the reason why the Spirit is not the *principal* agent of salvation, but only a secondary one comes from the fact that his properties are derived from that of the Son. On one hand, this passage shows the difference between the fallen creation (κτίσις), which is mutable and not divine in its essence and the Holy Spirit, which is generated but divine.<sup>100</sup> On the other hand, this is the perfect indication of the ontological subordination of the Spirit towards the Son. This view is very consistent with Origen's remarks on the forgiveness of sins against the Holy Spirit (Mt. 12:32). Commenting on Jesus' words 'you will die in your sin' (Jn. 8:21),<sup>101</sup> Origen says that: 'even if (εἰ μὴ), however, there is no forgiveness already in the coming age (ἐν τῷ μέλλοντι αἰῶνι ἤδη), of course this does not mean (οὐ μέντοι γε) that there is not any forgiveness (οὐδὲ) even in the ages to come' (ComJn, XIX.88).<sup>102</sup> The same views are expressed

<sup>100</sup> In this case the term κτίσις is only used in reference to the fallen creation.

<sup>101</sup> There Origen argues that, although in Matthew it is written that 'anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven' (Mt. 12:32), this does not mean there will be no forgiveness forever.

<sup>102</sup> I suggest here a different translation of the text from that proposed by R. Heine, *Origen: Commentary [...] Book 13-32*, p.188. This is the Greek text: 'Οἶδα δὲ τινὰς οὐ μόνον ἐν τῷ αἰῶνι τούτῳ, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν τῷ μέλλοντι κρατουμένους ὑπὸ τῆς ἰδίας ἀμαρτίας, ὡς τούτους περὶ ὧν φησὶν ὁ λόγος· «<Ὁς> ἐὰν βλασφημήσῃ εἰς τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον, οὐκ ἔχει ἄφεσιν οὔτε ἐν τούτῳ τῷ αἰῶνι οὔτε ἐν τῷ μέλλοντι»· οὐ μέντοι γε εἰ μὴ ἐν τῷ μέλλοντι αἰῶνι ἤδη, οὐδὲ ἐν τοῖς αἰῶσιν

commenting on Lazarus' resurrection. Origen is clearly suggesting a deeper meaning for the Lazarus episode: all kinds of sins, even those against the Holy Spirit, are forgivable by the Son's work. Lazarus is the type of a dead soul – that is, a sinner's soul – saved by the power of Christ and therefore restored to its proximity to God (*ComJn*, XXVIII.54-55).<sup>103</sup>

The complex relationship between the Spirit and the world will be the matter of chapter IV. For now, it is interesting to note that, despite what some scholars say, the ontological subordinationism of the Spirit does not make him less useful in the salvation process. On the contrary, it is exactly the ontological difference between the Son and the Spirit that makes the Spirit a key character in the redemption of fallen creatures. Affirming the perfect ontological equality of the Spirit with the Son is not only wrong, but even damaging for the role of the Spirit. If the Spirit had the same essence as the Son, he would be a useless duplicate of the Logos.<sup>104</sup> On the contrary, I think the significance of the Spirit in soteriology comes from his ontological subordination. Stating this means to postulate a difference between Origen's discourse on the Spirit as part of the immanent Trinity – that is, the Spirit in God – and the economic function of the Trinity. For this reason, I disagree with Greggs, who tends to unify these two aspects, minimalizing Origen's ontological speculation about the immanent hypostases inside the Trinity in favour of the 'economy of salvation'.<sup>105</sup> On the contrary, I have shown that the Spirit cannot bear the task of restoring the fallen

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τοῖς ἐπερχομένοις' (*ComJn* XIX.88). Heine translates: 'But I know that some are overcome by their own sin not only in this age, but also in the age to come, as those of whom the Word says: *If everyone blasphemes against the Holy Spirit he has forgiveness neither in this age nor in the ages to come.* If, however, there is no forgiveness in the coming age, neither there is any in the ages which come after it as well'. I suggest changing the translation of the last phrase: 'Even if (εἰ μὴ), however, there is no forgiveness already in the coming age (ἐν τῷ μέλλοντι αἰῶνι ἤδη), of course this does not mean (οὐ μέντοι γε) that there is not any forgiveness (οὐδέ) even in the ages to come'. I find this translation more convenient both from a textual and from a hermeneutical point of view. In fact, the expression οὐ μέντοι γε is always used by Origen in a strong adversative sense. See also: *ComJn*, XIII.231. The best punctuation for the expression οὐ μέντοι γε is found in C. Blanc, *Origène: Commentaire sur saint Jean. Sources chrétiennes* 290, p. 100-101.

<sup>103</sup> I refer to the problem of the forgiveness of post baptismal sins in Origen also in *infra*, IV.1.2; IV.2.3.2; IV.2.4.3. In this regard, see my own article: Giovanni Hermanin de Reichenfeld, 'Resurrection and Prophecy: The Spirit in Origen's Exegesis of Lazarus and Caiaphas in John 11', in Markus Vinzent (ed), *Studia Patristica* 94, Leuven 2017, p. 143-153.

<sup>104</sup> K. McDonnell, 'Does Origen have a Trinitarian Doctrine of the Holy Spirit', has exactly this problem. This thesis will prove that affirming an ontological immanent subordinationism of the Spirit inside the Trinity does not diminish his soteriological role.

<sup>105</sup> T. Greggs, *Barth, Origen, and Universal Salvation*, p. 155 n. 23.



creature in God, for he lacks the ontological power of the Son, but he is still an essential means by which fallen creature achieve Salvation.<sup>106</sup>

Finally, it is worth noting that the majesty of the Spirit towards the rest of the creation is due to the ontological status of the Spirit and to that of the other created beings. Being the Spirit in the Godhead and possessing all the attributes of God by participation in the Son, he was generated God by nature and participation. For this reason, it is impossible for the Spirit to sin or change or diminish his nature of God. There is a subordination of *double priority* of the Spirit in Origen's Trinity, but Origen never affirms that the Spirit lacks some attributes of the Son. Therefore, the Son is *prior* to the Spirit but is not *superior* to the Spirit, for the *superiority* would imply the possession of the attributes in a more perfect way.<sup>107</sup> On the contrary, the rest of the creation is subordinated to the Trinity according to a subordination of *both priority and superiority*. Indeed, each of the creatures possesses the divine attributes in a different way. The very difference between creatures depends on the different levels of perfection they gain. In *ComJn*, II.140-148, Origen speaks of the whole created world as a system of rational beings (λογικοί) made according to the image and likeness of God. The differences among these beings must not be found in their 'nature', inasmuch as they are all rational, but in their 'logical orders' (οὐχὶ φύσεων ζώων ἔστιν ὀνόματα ἀλλὰ τάξεων) in which the rational nature (λογικὴ φύσις) has been prepared by God according to the sin of each creature. In this sense, there is no difference in Origen's language between 'rational creature (λογικός)' and 'human being (ἄνθρωπος)', since every human being is a rational creature. Because the ruling principle of the whole creation is the Logos, there is no

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<sup>106</sup> See in particular *ComJn*, II.77. This passage will be deeply analysed in *infra*, IV.2.4.1.

<sup>107</sup> In this way, one has to understand the passage in *On First Principles*, I.3.4, where Origen says that the Holy Spirit does not know the Father through the Son: *Neque enim putandum est quod etiam Spiritus Filio revelante cognoscit* ('indeed, it is not to be supposed that the Spirit has knowledge through the revelation of the Son'). In fact, the passage does not negate that the ontological attributes of the Spirit are not derived from the Son, but merely that this derivation is out of time. Origen goes on saying: *Si enim revelante Filio cognoscit Patrem Spiritus sanctus, ergo ex ignorantia ad scientiam venit: quod utique et impium pariter et stultum est* ('For if the Holy Spirit knows the Father by this mean, he passes from ignorance to knowledge; this is certainly as impious as foolish'). Therefore, the passage is only concerned about affirming the eternity of the Spirit and the eternity of his knowledge of the Father. A similar passage can be found in *ComJn*, XIII.147-153, where Origen rebuts Heracleon's attempt to equalise the knowledge of God held by the spirituals and the knowledge of God held by the Holy Spirit on the base of their consubstantiality (ἡ πνευματικὴ φύσις, ὁμοούσιος οὐσα). On the contrary, Origen states that the Holy Spirit always had the perfect knowledge, while the other creatures committed sin and fell away from God. The Spirit is the only one who always possessed the fullness of knowledge. Therefore, by contrast with the creatures, he cannot sin.

difference in nature between different types of rational creatures. Dissimilarities between creatures should not be found in nature, but in activity. This is how one should interpret the hierarchical scale of beings made by Origen in gods, thrones, dominions, powers, angels etc. (*ComJn*, I.209-219; II.11-18; II.21-24; II.30-33).<sup>108</sup> On the contrary, as Radde-Gallwitz has noticed, the divinity and perfection of Holy Spirit must not be understood only as an activity.<sup>109</sup> The Holy Spirit is an active agent, who possesses a distinctive existence that is always the same, for the Spirit is eternal in God.<sup>110</sup> For the same reason, in a pivotal passage, Origen speaks of the incapacity of the creature to comprehend the complete will of God and act in accordance with it. In fact, only the Son and the Spirit are able to comprehend and do the exact will of *the* God – namely the Father – while every other creature can act ‘in accordance with God’s will (κατὰ τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ)’. Origen adds that: ‘this does not suffice, however, in order to be formed according to the complete will (οὐ μέντοι γε διαρκεῖ πρὸς τὸ κατὰ τὸ πᾶν θέλημα τυπωθῆναι)’ (*ComJn*, XIII.231-232). On the contrary, the will of the Father perfectly flows from the Father to the Son and from the Son to the Spirit. As well as the Son, the Spirit perfectly operates and does the will of the Father, while the Father remains the ruling agent of the divinity. The subordination of the Spirit towards the Father and the Son is evident, but this should not be confused with a loss of attributes in this descending Trinity.

## Conclusions

In the *Commentary on John* Origen depicts a double image of the Spirit. The Spirit is a divine hypostasis made *by* the Father *through* the Son and he contemplates the unknowable ineffability and simplicity of Father *through* the Son. He can be called a creature only insofar he needs the Son and is generated through the Son. The difference between God-the-Spirit and all the other creatures is that, while the other creatures partake in God at many levels

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<sup>108</sup> Regarding the interpretation of Origen’s anthropology and his partition of rational creatures see: Emanuela Prinzivalli, ‘L’uomo e il suo destino nel *Commento a Giovanni*’ in E. Prinzivalli (ed), *Il Commento a Giovanni di Origene*, p. 361-379.

<sup>109</sup> See: A. Radde-Gallwitz, ‘The Holy Spirit as Agent, Not Activity: Origen’s Argument with Modalism’, p. 229-235. Radde-Gallwitz analyses *Fragments on John XXXVII*, pointing out that the Spirit is not only an activity (ἐνέργεια) of God, but an active agent with a distinctive essence (οὐσίαν εἶναι τὸ πνεῦμα). Therefore, the Spirit is an active substance, but not merely an activity (οὐσία γοῦν ἐστὶν ἐνεργητική, ἀλλ’ οὐκ ἐνέργεια).

<sup>110</sup> See: *On First Principles*, I.3.4.

– thus the difference between different kinds of creatures must be understood as different levels of participation to the perfections of God, for they are all *logikoi* (λογικοί) – the Spirit partakes utterly in God, hence is God. Therefore, the Spirit, through the mediation of the Son, possesses all the *attributes* of the Son in their perfection – although Origen admits that he *may* lack some of them. The perfect possession of the attributes results in his divinity; consequently, the Spirit is able to perfectly conform himself to the will of the Father. As well as the Son, the unity in the divinity of the Spirit comes from the fact that he shares the same perfect will: the will of the Father. Therefore, the Spirit is divine and has always been divine.

To sum up, in Origen's Trinity is traceable an ontological subordinationism of *priority* between the Father and the Son, and an ontological subordinationism of *double priority* between the Father and the Spirit. The difference between the three hypostases of the Trinity relates both to their individual existence and their essence. The difference is not only in hypostases, but also in essence, for the Spirit needs the Son and he is not ontologically capable of functioning as a redeemer. Hence, the Spirit needs the Son, for the Spirit alone is not able to save the world. Additionally, he is not able to be wise and rational nor he possesses any *epinoiai*. Essence and hypostases are indeed different, but the divinity remains one. This entire system rest on Origen's interpretation of *Jn.* 1:1-3.

Thus, this chapter proposes a clear difference between *ontological/logical* and *priority/superiority* subordinationism. I hope this could clarify the numerous misunderstandings between the role of Spirit and the one of *epinoiai*. Moreover, I have attempted to outline the importance of separating Origen's consideration of the Holy Spirit as an immanent hypostasis within the Trinity and his thought about the Spirit's role in soteriology. So far scholarship tended to fluctuate between those who affirm a strong ontological subordinationism, denying a primary role to the Spirit in soteriology and those who underline the soteriological importance of the Spirit, denying a strong subordinationism. I have tried to show here that affirming a strong ontological subordinationism does not diminish the soteriological role of the Spirit. On the contrary, it saves him from the role of duplicate of the Logos that some scholarship gave him. An

entirely different argument must be built referring to the creatures; in fact, as I will explain in the chapter IV, Origen establishes a subordinationism of both *priority* and *superiority* between them and God, for creatures possesses the divine attributes at different levels.

# III. The Spirit in God: Augustine

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## Introduction

In this chapter, I will discuss and analyse Augustine's doctrine of the Trinity, with a particular focus on the Holy Spirit, as it is explained and discussed in the *Tractates on John*. In addition, I will detect and expose Augustine's use of the Gospel of John as one of the most important biblical texts in the developing of his doctrine of the Trinity. Indeed, the chapter will show the extent to which Augustine's Trinitarian speculation is patterned after his understanding of the fourth Gospel. Enquiring about the nature of God the Trinity from an ontological perspective, this chapter will be particularly focused on the two main ontological issues regarding the Spirit: his onto-relational nature of love and the doctrine of the double procession.

Therefore, I do not want here to analyse the Spirit's role in the construction of human identity – thus, the relationship between the Trinity and the human being – but rather I will examine what Augustine thinks humankind can grasp of the real nature of the immanent Trinity on the basis of the revelation of the fourth Gospel. This chapter is divided into five sections. The first (III.1) proposes an account of some trends in Augustine scholarship; the second (III.2) discusses a few methodological and hermeneutical problems related to the study of the Trinity in Augustine's *Tractates on John*. The last three sections address the main issue of the chapter: the Spirit in the Trinity. In the first (III.3), I analyse Augustine's account of God as ontological stability and *idipsum*; in the second (III.4), I discuss the ontological relationship between Father and the Son and the problem of God's attributes. In the last (III.5), I focus on the procession of the Spirit, which will be shown to be the crowning element of Augustine's Trinitarian architecture.

The division between the analysis of God as Being/*idipsum* and God as a relational Trinity proposed in this chapter might seem odd – or even wrong – to

some among Augustine scholars.<sup>1</sup> Augustine himself would probably have rejected a strict distinction, for the two topics are inseparably interwoven. Nevertheless, I have proposed it in order to help the reader to understand the way in which Augustine himself reflected upon the nature of God *according to* and *led by*, the text of the Gospel of John. Anyhow, it must be clear that this choice does not entail the idea that Augustine's presuppositions about the divine nature undermine his own Trinitarian speculation. On the contrary, this chapter demonstrates that the identification between God and Being is employed by Augustine as a means to better understand the Trinitarian logic that is at the core of his investigation. In other words, it is the Trinity and the struggle to give an intellectual account of the relationship between the Trinitarian persons which is the main objective of Augustine's investigations. The aforementioned identification between God and Being is therefore used by Augustine as the logical starting point in trying to understand the mystery of the One-which-is-Three.<sup>2</sup> I would add that, in doing so, Augustine's intention is that of being driven by the very logic he found in the Gospel of John. The Gospel itself is indeed much more focused on the relationship between the Father and the Son – and, in a more nuanced way, the Spirit – rather than on giving a clear answer to the problem of God's essence. In the course of this exposition, I will show how Augustine patiently works at harmonizing the different sayings of the Gospel according to his pro-Nicene perspective. While *Jn.* 1:1: 'In the beginning was the Word [...] and the Word was God' is repeated throughout the entire commentary, I will show that the real cornerstones of Augustine's exegesis are to be identified in *Jn.* 5:26: 'for as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself' and in *Jn.* 16:13 'he (the Holy Spirit)

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<sup>1</sup> As Michel Barnes notes in his review of Ayres' book on Augustine's *On the Trinity*, two different interpretations of Augustine's Trinitarian theology are extant in the scholarship. The first, identified with the works of Alfred Schindler, Michael Schmaus, or Edmund Hill tend to see Augustine's Trinity as mostly concerned with philosophy and metaphysics. The second, exemplified by T. J. van Bavel, Goulven Madec, Basil Studer and Lewis Ayres himself 'put Trinitarian theology squarely in the realm of faith'. See Michel René Barnes, 'Review of *Augustine and the Trinity*. By Lewis Ayres', in *Modern Theology* 29 1 (2013), p. 181-184. However, the distinction I am proposing in this chapter between *idipsum* and relational Trinity does not aim at affirming a superiority of metaphysics over faith in Augustine's Trinitarian theology. Rather, this division is only a means for a better understanding of the intimate relation between the concept of *idipsum* and the Trinitarian procession.

<sup>2</sup> This principle is explicitly stated by Augustine in a letter to Nebridius regarding the Trinity and incarnation. There, Augustine states that, in studying any substance, one has to define the essence first, then its specific identity, and finally its relation to time. See *Epistle XI.3: Nulla natura est, Nebridi, et omnino nulla substantia quae non in se habeat haec tria, et prae se gerat: primo ut sit, deinde ut hoc vel illud sit, tertio ut in eo quod est maneat quantum potest.*

will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears'. As these three verses are used throughout the whole commentary on John, this chapter will also be particularly focused on the exegesis of the fifth, eighth and tenth chapter of the Gospel. The analysis of the most significant passages will show how, while Augustine is mainly concerned to avoid any interpretation that can lead to a subordinationist view of the Trinity, he finds in the person of the Holy Spirit the ontological gift of God which reveals God as the eternal mystery and communion of love.

### III.1 Augustine's Trinity in Contemporary Scholarship

Rivers of ink have been spilled by scholars of all ages on Augustine's doctrine of the Trinity, while a myriad of theologians and historians faced Augustine's doctrine of the Trinity from different perspectives: some of them were moved by historical interest, others from a dogmatic perspective, some others by confessional intent.<sup>3</sup> Obviously, it is not my intention to give here a full account of the scholarship on Augustine and the Trinity, but merely to highlight some trends which are of some interest for the present work.

In general, all scholars agree that Augustine's influence is extremely important for western understandings of the Trinity. On the one hand, while the debate on the introduction of the *filioque* still tears apart eastern orthodox and western catholic theologies,<sup>4</sup> Augustine is still seen by some scholars as the initiator of the 'evil trend' that led to the separation of eastern and western churches.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, since the beginning of the twentieth century, Augustine's Trinitarian concern has been interpreted by scholarship mainly under the light of his Neoplatonic background. This position is entirely justified by quantity of references to the 'platonic books' traceable in Augustine's works.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, different positions are held not only regarding the extent to which Augustine's Trinitarian thought is dependent on Neoplatonic speculation, but mainly on the significance of this influence on his thought.

One of the main criticisms of Augustine's Trinitarian theology, concerns the relationship between the immanent and economic Trinity. This critique is based on the so-called psychological analogy – that is, the Augustinian analogy between human mind and the Trinity – which has been the centre of attention for some of the most influential scholars of the twentieth century, such as

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<sup>3</sup> It goes without saying that the present work aspires to belong to the former category.

<sup>4</sup> In truth, Augustine was not the first theologian who introduced the idea of the *filioque* in Latin theology. Rather, he seems to gather this element from previous Latin tradition. One obvious example is that of Ambrose of Milan, *On the Holy Spirit*, I.11, who affirms that the Spirit 'proceeds both from the Father and from the Son'. For a thorough history of the *filioque* controversy see: Peter Gemeinhardt, *Die Filioque-Kontroverse zwischen Ost- und Westkirche im Frühmittelalter*, Berlin 2002.

<sup>5</sup> In this regard see: Edward Sieciensky, *The Filioque: History of a Doctrinal Controversy*, New York 2010. See also Dongsun Cho, 'An Apology for Augustine's *Filioque* as a Hermeneutical Referent to the Immanent Trinity' in M. Vinzent (ed), *Studia Patristica* 70 (2013), p. 275-283.

<sup>6</sup> See *Confessions*, VII.9(13); VII.20(26).



Michael Schmaus.<sup>7</sup> The focus on the psychological analogy led some scholars, in particular, Karl Rahner, followed by others such as LaCugna<sup>8</sup> and Gunton,<sup>9</sup> to accuse Augustine in various ways of separating the Trinity in itself – the so-called ‘immanent Trinity’ – from the ‘economic Trinity’. In particular, Rahner denounces Augustine’s Trinity for being substantially unrelated to creation, thus creating an unbridgeable distance between the immanent life of God and the economic Trinity in the creation.<sup>10</sup> This accusation is based on the idea that Augustine’s main mistake was that of basing his Trinitarian speculation on a misleading analogy between the Trinity and human soul.

O’Leary makes a similar argument when he comes to the point of defining Augustine’s work *On the Trinity* as a ‘disappointing conclusion to the great period of Trinitarian thought’.<sup>11</sup> Against the opinion of scholars like Arnold and Studer, who both detected in Augustine’s Trinitarian theology an integrated link between economy and immanence, O’Leary’s criticism is again based on Augustine’s alleged incapacity to link economic and immanent Trinity together.<sup>12</sup> According to O’Leary, this incapacity is due to his persistent tendency to think of the economy according to a Platonist schema of image and archetype. Therefore, Augustine’s schema of sign/signified interprets the relation between immanent and economic Trinity in a dualistic way, hardly allowing an integration of the two, not even in the person of Christ.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Michael Schmaus, *Die psychologische Trinitätslehre des heiligen Augustinus*, Münster 1927. The book is focused in its entirety on the psychological analogy. For a study specifically on Augustine’s understanding of human mind see: Gerard O’Daly, *Augustine’s Philosophy of Mind*, London 1987.

<sup>8</sup> See Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life*, San Francisco 1991, in particular the third chapter: ‘Augustine and the Trinitarian Economy of the Soul’. For a critical evaluation of LaCugna’s work see: Alex Juguilon, ‘The Relational Ontology of Augustine’s and LaCugna’s Trinity’ in *Obsculta* 9 1 (2016), p. 83-95.

<sup>9</sup> Colin E. Gunton, ‘God the Holy Spirit: Augustine and his Successors’ in *Theology through the Theologians: Selected Essays, 1972-1995*, Edinburgh 1996, p. 105-128. See also the sharp critique to Gunton’s thesis by: Neil Ormerod, ‘Augustine and the Trinity: Whose Crisis?’, in *Pacifica* 16 1 (2003), p. 17-32.

<sup>10</sup> See: Karl Rahner, *The Trinity*, New York 1970. In this regard, see also the critical evaluation on the relationship between Rahner and Augustine by Drayton C. Benner, ‘Augustine and Karl Rahner on the Relationship between the Immanent Trinity and the Economic Trinity’, in *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 9 1 (2007) p. 24–38. Rahner was highly influential for LaCugna’s work as well.

<sup>11</sup> Joseph O’Leary, ‘The Invisible Mission of the Son in Origen and Augustine’, p. 621.

<sup>12</sup> Johannes Arnold, ‘Begriff und heilsökonomische Bedeutung der göttlichen Sendungen in Augustinus’ *De Trinitate*’, in *Recherches Augustiniennes et Patristiques* 25 (1991), p. 3-69; Basil Studer, *Augustins De Trinitate. Eine Einführung*, Paderborn 2005.

<sup>13</sup> In this regard, see: Joseph O’Leary, *Questioning Back: The Overcoming of Metaphysics in Christian Tradition*, Minneapolis 1985.

Another view that was broadly accepted in the past but has been criticised by recent scholarship can be traced back to the influence on twentieth century scholarship of De Régnon's work, written at the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>14</sup> According to this trend of scholarship, Augustine is the initiator of a Trinitarian tendency in the West that, contrarily to the eastern traditions, tends to emphasize the unity of God at the expense of the reality of the three divine persons. This perspective was held by many critics of Augustine in the past century. For many years, scholars like Prestige, Gilson and TeSelle held the common opinion that one of the main differences between Augustine's and the Greek Fathers' doctrine of the Trinity can be traced back to the focal point from which the research begins.<sup>15</sup> According to this view, Augustine, highly influenced by Neoplatonism, started his research on the Trinity by reflecting on God's simplicity and on the identification between God and Being, explaining the persons only in a second phase. On the contrary, the Greek Fathers put their emphasis more on the persons than on God's unity.

All the accounts presented so far have been criticised and partially dismissed by more recent scholarship. In 1995 M. Barnes published an influential article, claiming Theodore De Régnon's work as one of the most influential regarding the interpretation of Augustine's Trinitarian doctrine.<sup>16</sup> It initiated a change of perspective and a new trend of scholarship, mainly represented by Lewis Ayres and Michel René Barnes.<sup>17</sup> Instead of focusing on Augustine's philosophical debts, these authors aim at studying Augustine's doctrine of the Trinity in the living context of post Nicaean Latin theologians. In particular, Barnes points out that 'recourse in Trinitarian doctrine to a philosophical analysis of being is typical of Nicene and pro-Nicene argument of reasoning, and such recourse is

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<sup>14</sup> See: Théodore de Régnon, *Études de théologie positive sur la Sainte Trinité*, Paris 1898.

<sup>15</sup> See: George L. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought*, London 1949, p. 235-237; Étienne Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine*, New York 1960, p. 200-205. Eugene TeSelle, *Augustine the Theologians*, New York 1970, p. 138-140.

<sup>16</sup> See: Michel René Barnes, 'De Régnon Reconsidered', in *Augustinian Studies* 26 2 (1995), p. 51-79. In the wake of M. Barnes' article, L. Ayres accused also De Régnon of being the forefather of this alleged wrong way of interpreting Augustine, especially 'in setting the agenda even for those who reversed or adapted his categories'. See: Lewis Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity*, Cambridge 2010, p. 1-2.

<sup>17</sup> See in particular: Michel René Barnes, 'Rereading Augustine on the Trinity', in Stephen Davis, Daniel Kendall, and Gerald O'Collins (eds), *The Trinity: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Trinity*, Oxford 2002, p. 145-176, and L. Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity*. See also L. Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy*.

not in itself distinctive to Augustine, nor, obviously, is it an innovation'. Therefore, Augustine's insistence on simplicity and on its identification with Being does not come from Neoplatonism or from an alleged difference between East and West, but rather from the distinctive Christian cultural milieu of the pro-Nicene era.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, far from denying the influence of Platonism on Augustine,<sup>19</sup> this new trend in scholarship intends to problematize Augustine's dependence on non-Christian (also platonic) texts. First, these scholars aim at differentiating various influences of different traditions on Augustine in different periods of his life. Secondly, through an accurate analysis of pro-Nicaean authors, they point out the deep engagement Augustine had with different Nicaean interpretations by 'a number of different pro-Nicene parties', especially in developing his doctrine of the Trinity.<sup>20</sup> Thirdly, they tend to read Augustine's Trinitarian thought focusing more on its relation to Christology and, generally speaking, the realm of faith rather than on its metaphysical or philosophical implications. This is particularly true in the case of Ayres, who gives the 'psychological analogy' a lesser role in his monograph, compared to the importance given to Augustine's Christian predecessors and his Christological epistemology.<sup>21</sup>

In regard to the trends of scholarship cited so far, so far as this work is concerned, I will not discuss here Augustine's dependence on Neoplatonism directly.<sup>22</sup> Nor do I intend to propose here a detailed study of the psychological analogy. Nevertheless, this chapter will reject the allegation of the lack of relation between the immanent Trinity and the creation in Augustine's thought. Indeed, this chapter will show that, far from being a blemish in his theology, the metaphysical abyss which separates God and creation is fertile ground on which Augustine built his pneumatology. The same Holy Spirit, which is the mystery of God's communion, works at the salvation of human creatures.

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<sup>18</sup> M. R. Barnes, 'Rereading Augustine on the Trinity', p. 159.

<sup>19</sup> Indeed, influences of both specific themes and of a "general way of reasoning" are undeniable. Ayres, for example, maintains that: 'Augustine adopted and adapted themes from non-Christian Platonic texts in three areas: his account of the character of divine existence as immaterial, omnipresent and simple; his account of the Father's role as *principium* in the Trinity; his account of the Son as *intellectus*'. See: Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity*, p. 37.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 43.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 43.

<sup>22</sup> It would be here impossible to discuss exhaustively Augustine's debts to Neoplatonism. Anyway, while I find much commendable the effort to put Augustine's theology in dialogue with the other pro-Nicene fathers, I find undeniable the enduring influences of Neoplatonism in Augustine.

Therefore, the ontological distance between Creator and creature reveals God as loving giver of the gift of grace, which the Holy Spirit is.<sup>23</sup> In this sense, the distance between Trinity and creation is functional for Augustine's existential understanding of evil and salvation. In particular, I will show how Augustine's understanding of the text of John – particularly *Jn. 5* – shape his understanding of Trinitarian relationship according to what I will call a *paradigm of identity*.<sup>24</sup>

Finally, it is worth giving an account of the so called onto-theological interpretation of Augustine's Trinity. The very idea of onto-theology is often related in modern scholarship to the critique of Greek metaphysics carried out by Heidegger and his later followers. According to this 'Heideggerian' perspective, this term signifies the pernicious metaphysical objectification of the mystery of Being. However, in this chapter, I will merely use it to point to the historical process – in which Augustine is a fundamental actor – which led to the identification of God with Being. However, this term, which Gilson connected to the so-called 'metaphysic of the Exodus',<sup>25</sup> (with reference to the alleged identification between God and Being in *Ex. 3:14*) is used in different ways and according to different perspectives by authors like Beierwaltes, Madec and Dubarle.<sup>26</sup> However, all these scholars agreed in considering Augustine's onto-theological metaphysic very similar to the Neoplatonic one, thus assuming that Augustine's most important achievement was the ability to connect the Plotinian *henology* with the biblical revelation centred on Christ and creation.<sup>27</sup> Whilst a similar position – though with some differences, especially regarding the relationship between Augustine and Aristotle – is held by Bradshaw,<sup>28</sup> this trend

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<sup>23</sup> The fact that the gift of the Holy Spirit is not given to all human beings does not diminish, rather increase his value. The problem of the dispensation of the Spirit is not matter of this chapter, for it will be addressed in *infra*, V.3.3.

<sup>24</sup> In this regard, see particularly *infra*, VI.

<sup>25</sup> See Étienne Gilson, *L'esprit de la philosophie médiévale*, Paris 1932, trans. *The Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy*, Notre Dame IND 1991. Gilson maintained that the identification between God and the Being was the most important contribution to the western thought operated by the Father so of the Church, particularly Augustine.

<sup>26</sup> See in particular: Werner Beierwaltes, "Deus est esse - esse est Deus". Die onto-theologische Grundfrage als aristotelisch-neoplatonische Denkstruktur', in W. Beierwaltes (ed), *Platonismus und Idealismus*, p. 4-82. Goulven Madec, *L'onto-theo-logie patristique*, Paris 1979. Dominique Dubarle, *Dieu avec l'être. De Parménide à Saint Thomas. Essai d'ontologie théologique*, Paris 1986, in particular p. 167-258.

<sup>27</sup> For a critical discussion of strengths and weaknesses of this trend of scholarship, see G. Lettieri, *L'altro Agostino*, particularly the section named 'Nota IX- L'agostiniana metafisica dell'Esodo come ontoteologia', p. 524-526.

<sup>28</sup> See in particular: David Bradshaw, 'Augustine the Metaphysician', in George E. Demacopoulos and Aristotle Papanikolaou (eds), *Orthodox Readings of Augustine*, New York

of scholarship, mainly focused on the Augustinian identification between God and Being, is strongly criticised by Marion, whose ultimate goal is that of de-ontologising Augustine's thought.<sup>29</sup> This debate will be taken into account in the present chapter. Indeed, I will be shown that, while it would be very unjust to reduce Augustine's theology to an onto-theology, the very concept of onto-theology is a very useful historical category when examining Augustine's doctrine of the Trinity. Therefore, against Marion's position, I will show that Augustine's Trinitarian thought is based on the identification of God with Being.

Lastly, due to its proximity to the present research, Kuehn's article on the Johannine logic in Augustine's Trinity deserves a particular mention.<sup>30</sup> This article aims at investigating Augustine's use of the Johannine corpus in his Trinitarian theology to find the 'Johannine logic in his articulation of a fundamentally pro-Nicaean trinitarianism'.<sup>31</sup> Despite the author's claim of a strong exegetical logic in Augustine trinitarianism, the article is mainly focused on Augustine's *On the Trinity*, while *Tractates on John* are barely used to clarify some obscure passages.<sup>32</sup> Contrarily to Kuehn's work, this chapter will be mainly focused on the *Tractates* in order to understand not only the logic underneath Augustine's Trinity, but also the way in which Augustine discloses his theological doctrines while dealing with an exegetical text. This analysis will show the Holy Spirit as the most crucial character in Augustine's doctrine of the Trinity.<sup>33</sup>

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2008, p. 227-251; See also: David Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West: Metaphysics and the Division of Christendom*, Cambridge 2004.

<sup>29</sup> In particular, see Marion's remarks about Augustine's use of *idipsum*: Jean-Luc Marion, 'Idipsum: The Name of God according to Augustine', in G. E. Demacopoulos and A. Papanikolaou (eds), *Orthodox Readings of Augustine*, p. 167-189; Jean-Luc Marion, *God without Being*, Chicago 2012.

<sup>30</sup> Evan F. Kuehn, 'The Johannine Logic in Augustine's Trinity: A Dogmatic Sketch', in *Theological Studies* 68 (2007), p. 572-594.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*, p.575. On this Johannine logic see the following footnote.

<sup>32</sup> Kuehn maintains this Johannine logic can be detected in 'three stages, each corresponding to a "movement" in John's Gospel. The first movement consist of the Son's procession from the Father in eternity and his incarnation in time'. The second 'involves the Pater-Filius relationship' focusing particularly on the incarnate Son in his equality and inferiority with the father. Regarding the third he writes that 'the foundational binitarianism essential to the Johannine Trinitarian logic is completed with the pneumatological ministry of enlightening love'. See *Ibidem*, p. 576-577.

<sup>33</sup> This brief section of bibliography does not pretend to be exhaustive. It had only the purpose of presenting some of the trends in contemporary scholarship which will be faced in different ways during this chapter.

### III.2 Hermeneutical Problems in Studying the Trinity in the *Tractates on John*

Before starting the analysis of Augustine's *Tractates*, three methodological considerations are in order, because the very nature of the text under analysis makes it easy to fall into methodological errors and hermeneutical difficulties.

1) The first one regards the unity of these tractates. Indeed, the *Tractates*, which we treat as a whole, were written over a long period of time, from 406 to 423.<sup>34</sup> Therefore, one should always consider the possibility that Augustine changed his mind over time.

2) The second one concerns the very genre of these tractates, written in form of sermons to be preached to Augustine's own congregation.<sup>35</sup> One could argue that they might lack both unity and theological depth, unlike his more systematic work – e.g. *On the Trinity*.

3) The third and more general remark regards Augustine's hermeneutic. In particular, it is concerned with the problem of apophaticism,<sup>36</sup> that is, whether it is correct or not to understand Augustine's doctrine of the Trinity as related to what modern theologians call the 'immanent Trinity'. Does Augustine really believe that it is possible to understand how the Trinity works in-itself or, on the contrary, should his Trinitarian doctrines be taken merely as a human account of the highest Trinity, the logic of which is unknown to humans?

Concerning the first objection I would argue that, although Augustine's theological discussion of the Trinity and on the Spirit does show some developments, it nonetheless does not seem to change drastically in the course of these years. In particular, this chapter makes clear that the underlying 'generative logic' – which one can describe as roughly based on the exegesis of *Jn.* 1:1, 5:19, 5:26, 8:24, 16:13 and 20:22 – at the core of Augustine's speculation remains the same. From an ontological perspective, the pillars of

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<sup>34</sup> The problem of the chronology of *Trloh* have been already exposed in *supra*, I.2.2.

<sup>35</sup> In truth, the last group of *Tractates* (*Trloh*. LV-CXXIV) was possibly never preached to Augustine's own congregation, as they were written by Augustine and sent to Carthage directly, as testified by the *Epistle XXIII*\*A,3. In this regard, see *supra*, I.2.2.

<sup>36</sup> The term apophatic is, of course, used improperly. Indeed, this term belongs to a different period of Christian speculation, and it cannot be used properly before the Pseudo-Dionysus in the late fifth century. I use it here only to indicate a certain kind of negative theology which denies to human beings the possibility of knowing God in his own essence.

Augustine's speculation are three: the identification of God as *idipsum* and Being; the acknowledgment of the *quod habet hoc est* – that is, the idea that in the Trinity each person's essence corresponds to his attributes; the double procession of the Spirit from both the Father and the Son. All these doctrines appear from the first tractate and are consistently presented in the whole work, although with different degrees of speculation.<sup>37</sup>

In regard to the second consideration, I would claim that, far from being a methodological weakness, the fact that these *Tractates* were preached has a surplus value. First of all, the very text at hand shows that Augustine is not afraid to deal with difficult-to-grasp theological and philosophical questions in his preached *Tractates*. Augustine himself, according to his hermeneutical principles, assumes there are different levels of interpretation of his own *Tractates*.<sup>38</sup> Nevertheless, far from giving up in explaining the most complex theological doctrines, Augustine often exhorts his congregation to strive to understand his words.<sup>39</sup> Secondly, the possibility of seeing how Augustine deals with these topics in his everyday duties as a preacher gives us more hints as to what his real focus was. Indeed, preaching to his congregation is neither an intellectual divertissement nor an unwanted obligation for Augustine. On the contrary, it is the marker of his own mission as a shepherd: that of saving souls. Therefore, the doctrines presented in the homilies should not be considered to be "inferior" to those expressed in his systematic treaties, because they represent the quintessence of what is necessary for Christians to be saved. In this regard, it is worth reminding the reader that, in Augustine's own hermeneutic, striving for understanding the Trinity is not an act of intellectual triviality, but rather a means of salvation. Therefore, Augustine's explicit intention is to build up a consistent commentary on the fourth Gospel that can be useful both to the 'simple' believers and to the 'more advanced'.

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<sup>37</sup> See respectively *Trloh*, II.2; XL.5-6; IX.7. The conclusion of this chapter will show an extremely advanced and mature doctrine of the Spirit in the last *Tractates*. See in particular the whole *Trloh*. XCIX and CXXI.4. Nonetheless, what is written at the end is not conflictual with the rest of the *Tractates*.

<sup>38</sup> By the use of the Pauline metaphor of milk (simple faith) and solid food (grown faith mediated through reason), Augustine shows he is perfectly aware of the different level of understanding his audience used to have. Thus, his words can be interpreted as milk by the simple believers or as food by the more advanced. On the use of this metaphor in the text see: *Trloh*, VII.23; XCVII.5; XCVIII.1-2; CII.4; CXVIII.3.

<sup>39</sup> See: in particular: *Trloh*, XXIII.6; XXVII.7; XXIX.6; XXXVI.7.

Furthermore, it is worth spending some words on the relationship between this work and Augustine's *On the Trinity*. Most of the *Tractates on John* were written during the same years in which Augustine wrote *On the Trinity*. Scholarship has already recognised some debts and intersection – sometimes even quotations – between the two works.<sup>40</sup> This chapter will therefore be in dialogue with *On the Trinity*, but does not want to draw its conclusions from there. Indeed, this approach would frustrate its own purpose, that is, to detect Augustine's Trinitarian pneumatology in the living context of its exegesis of John.

The third consideration – regarding apophaticism – is the most challenging one. In tackling it, it can be of some use to analyse Augustine's preaching on the man who, more than anyone else, was able to grasp the mystery of the Trinity: John the evangelist. The author of the Gospel is compared to a great mountain and to an eagle, which is able to transcend the whole created world in order to set his eyes on the immutable and eternal reality of God (*Trloh*, I.7).<sup>41</sup> By means of the grace of God, John was able to detach himself from the created order and have a glimpse of the eternal reality of the immutable Trinity. By contrast with the fullness of God, human beings are described as *nihil* (nothing), for they not only do not possess the fullness of being, but they are even in danger of losing the portion of being they have (*Trloh*, I.4). Even John is not able to speak with clear words what he saw in the eternal reality of God, for human being needs symbols and shadows to have even only a partial understand of God's reality (*Trloh*, I.8). Therefore, in order to understand correctly the Gospel which is about to be commented upon, Augustine exhorts the listeners to raise themselves to a spiritual understanding (*spiritalem intellectum*, *Trloh*, I.1). According to Augustine, the first consequence of this spiritual elevation consists in the acknowledgment of the impossibility for a finite and temporal creature to understand the immutable essence of God (*Trloh*, I.8) perfectly. It is worth noting briefly that, according to Augustine's 'hermeneutic of the grace',<sup>42</sup> human understanding does not only originate from human capacity or knowledge, but

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<sup>40</sup> M.-F. Berrouard, *Introduction aux homélies de Saint Augustin*.

<sup>41</sup> On the figure of John the Evangelist see also: *Trloh*, XVI.2. XVIII.1; XXXVI.1; XXXVI.5; XLVIII.6; LXI.6.

<sup>42</sup> See: G. Lettieri, *L'altro Agostino*, p. 205-231.



mainly from the gift of God.<sup>43</sup> Augustine's long introduction is a very useful means for modern scholars to understand his notion of ontology and the basic notions of the *Tractates on John*. The first idea regards the limitation of human knowledge, in opposition to the fullness of God's substance. The second one concerns the general principle according to which it is possible for human beings to gain a *certain* knowledge of God in his reality – the aforementioned 'immanent Trinity' – but only a *partial* one. Indeed, the pervasive presence of God makes him the only Being who is always present, for he does not suffer any alteration in time or space. Consequently, Augustine maintains that God is more present (*praesentior*) and actual than every other being, for he is an immutable substance, while 'every created being is changeable' (*Trloh*, I.8).<sup>44</sup> Regarding the Trinitarian relationships, even the very procession of the Spirit stands as the practical sign of the impossibility for human being of gaining a perfect knowledge of the Trinity:

Quid autem illic intersit inter procedere et nasci, et longum est quaerendo disserere, et temerarium cum disserueris definire: quia hoc et menti utcumque comprehendere, et si quid forte mens inde comprehenderit, linguae difficillimum est explicare, quantuslibet praesit doctor, quantuslibet adsit auditor (*Trloh*, XCIX.4).<sup>45</sup>

While this passage seems to draw Augustine nearer to the line of so-called apophatic theology, his scepticism on the possibility of gaining perfect knowledge of the Trinity does not exempt the exegete, nor indeed every Christian, from looking for the Truth. On the contrary, it seems to point to the

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<sup>43</sup> Augustine often reassures those who are unable to understand, exhorting them to believe in what he is preaching, for the capacity of intellectual understanding of the Word of God is a gift which is not given to everybody. See *Trloh*, I.6-7 and the whole *Trloh*, CV.

<sup>44</sup> Speaking of God as the one who is 'more present', Augustine is here playing with the two meanings of the word *praesens*. On the one hand, it indicates the act of presence (to be, here and now). On the other hand, it has the temporal meaning of being present, in contrast with the past and the future. In both ways God transcends human being, for he both contains all creation (thus being *everywhere* present) and has not change in time – thus being *always* present. See also: *Trloh*, II.8-10; XII.5-6; XXXV.1-5; XXXVIII.10; LXIV.1-4; XCII.1; XCIV.5.

<sup>45</sup> 'About what difference there is between proceeding and being born, it is both large a task to discuss it through enquiry and rash to define it once you have discussed it. For this is most difficult both for the mind to comprehend in any way at all and, even if the mind perchance comprehends something of it, for the tongue to explain it, however great a teacher is leading the discussion, whatever great a listener is present'.

impossibility of knowing God without being in communion with him.<sup>46</sup> In other words, enquiring about the Trinity does give to the interpreter a solid knowledge of how the Trinity works. Nevertheless, the Trinity remains a mystery, for it is only through the perfect communion in the Holy Spirit that its being is understandable. Therefore, this chapter will show that the very understanding of the Trinity is not only a matter of reasoning, but primarily a *spiritual gift*, that is, a gift of the Holy Spirit, which is simultaneously the giver and the gift.

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<sup>46</sup> On Augustine's hermeneutical circle in interpreting the Scriptures see, among the others: Carol Harrison, *Augustine: Christian Truth*, in particular chapter 2: 'Res non verba: Christianity and pagan literary culture', p. 46-78. On *Trilog* in particular, see: J. Norris, 'The Theological Structure of St. Augustine's Exegesis', p. 385-394.

### III.3 God as Ontological Stability: Being and *Idipsum*

*'If you do not believe that I am you will die in your sin'* (Jn. 8:24)

The very start of the Gospel poses the identity of the Word-Christ and God the Father as a crucial theme. In this section, I do not intend to enquire about the relationship between the Father, the Son and the Spirit,<sup>47</sup> but rather about their identification as one God, one essence and one *principium*. Through a close examination of Augustine's exegesis of John, this section aims at showing both the extent to which Augustine's speculation on God and the Being is dependent on Johannine material and Augustine's ontological reinterpretation of this material.

The discussion of the very nature of God – its *essentia* or *substantia* – is foundational for defining and understanding the intra-Trinitarian relationship. In his *Tractates on John*, Augustine does not draw the same difference between *essentia* and *substantia* as he does in his *On the Trinity* VII.5.10.<sup>48</sup> In the latter, he states that God is called substance improperly, for the idea of *subsistere* (subsist) points to something that constitutes the underlying nature of a subject (like colours or form in a body). On the contrary, the word *essentia* comes from *esse*, thus referring to the proper nature of God, 'for he alone truly is, because he is unchangeable'.<sup>49</sup> Nevertheless, since Augustine seems to use *essentia* and *substantia* interchangeably in most of his other writings including, of course, the *Trloh*, I will use essence and substance as synonymous.<sup>50</sup>

The most detailed discussion of the nature of God is undertaken in the commentary on *Jn.* 1:1 and *Jn.* 8:25. These two texts set the scriptural field for the two main themes of Augustine's doctrine of God's essence: the identification

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<sup>47</sup> This is the subject of the next section.

<sup>48</sup> See also Augustine's remarks on the word *essentia* as the best translation of the Greek term *ousia* in *The City of God*, XII.3: *Essentia, novo quidem nomine, quo usi veteres non sunt latini sermonis auctores, sed iam nostris temporibus usitato, ne deesset etiam linguae nostrae, quod Graeci appellant οὐσία; hoc enim verbum e verbo expressum est, ut diceretur essential; 'Essentia is a new word, indeed, which was not used in the Latin speech of old, but which has come into use in our own day so that our language should not lack a word for what the Greeks call ousia for this expressed very exactly by essentia'.*

<sup>49</sup> *On the Trinity*, VII.5.10

<sup>50</sup> However, I will make clear that, when speaking of God's substance, Augustine actually means God's essence. On the use of *essentia* and *substantia* in Augustine see: Roland J. Teske, 'Augustine's Use of "Substantia" in Speaking about God', in *Modern Schoolman* 62 3 (1985), p. 147-163. See also: L. Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity*, p. 199-203.

of God as the *idipsum* and the applicability of the concept of *Being* to the Father, the Son and the Spirit. Commenting on *Jn.* 1:1, Augustine writes:

*Et Deus erat Verbum. Hoc Verbum idipsum est, unde hesterno die multum locuti sumus [...] In principio erat Verbum. Idipsum est, eodem modo est; sicut est, semper sic est; mutari non potest: hoc est est. Quod nomen suum dixit famulo suo Moysi: Ego sum qui sum; et: Misit me qui est (Trloh, II.2).<sup>51</sup>*

Augustine is here referring to *Expositions on the Psalms* 121.5-11, which he preached to his congregations some days before preaching *Trloh* II. There Augustine provides a longer discussion of what should be understood with the term *idipsum*, which appears to be the most appropriate descriptor of God.<sup>52</sup> This passage has been taken by many scholars as one of the most explicit times Augustine refers to God as Being itself. For this reason many scholars, such as Chadwick and Boulding, have translated the word *idipsum* as 'Being itself'.<sup>53</sup> Others, like Marion, have criticised this translation, proposing a translation which is much closer to the original meaning of the word, that is, the idea of self-sameness.<sup>54</sup> Accordingly, this word would not indicate Being itself, but would rather express a general principle of identity within God.<sup>55</sup> This debate is extremely significant, for it gives to modern scholars evidence regarding the extent to which is possible to speak of onto-theology in Augustine.

First of all, it is worth noting that Augustine interprets the phrase 'the Word was God' in light of another passage of the Gospel, that is, *Jn.* 8:24: 'for if you do not

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<sup>51</sup> "And the Word was God". This word is the self-sameness about which we spoke at length yesterday [...]. "In the beginning was the Word". He is the self-sameness; he is always in the same way. As he is, so he always is. He cannot be changed. He is this: he is. And he said this, his name to his servant Moses: "I am who I am", and: "He who is sent me".

<sup>52</sup> See: *Expositions on the Psalms* 121.5-11: *Quid est idipsum? Quod semper eodem modo est; quod non modo aliud, et modo aliud est. Quid est ergo idipsum, nisi, quod est? Quid est quod est? Quod aeternum est. Nam quod semper aliter atque aliter est, non est, quia non manet: non omnino non est, sed non summe est. Et quid est quod est, nisi ille qui quando mittebat Moysen, dixit illi: Ego sum qui sum? Quid est hoc, nisi ille qui cum diceret famulus eius: Ecce mittis me: si dixerit mihi populus: Quis te misit? quid dicam ei? nomen suum noluit aliud dicere, quam: Ego sum qui sum; et adiecit et ait: Dices itaque filiis Israel: Qui est, misit me ad vos. Ecce idipsum: Ego sum qui sum: Qui est, misit me ad vos.*

<sup>53</sup> This translation is strongly criticised by J. L. Marion, 'Idipsum', p. 175. See in particular the English translations of Confessions by Henry Chadwick, *Saint Augustine: Confessions*, Oxford 1991, and Maria Boulding, *The Confessions*, New York 1997.

<sup>54</sup> Although I agree with Marion regarding the translation of the word *idipsum*, I will show in this chapter that I do not think it is possible to deny that God is depicted as the Being itself by Augustine.

<sup>55</sup> J. L. Marion, 'Idipsum', p. 167-189.

believe that *I am*, you will die in your sin'.<sup>56</sup> Secondly, the first verse of the Gospel is explicitly linked with *Jn. 8:57-58*: 'before Abraham came to be, *I am*'. In interpreting these passages, Augustine clearly describes the word *sum* (I am) as the most adequate word the Bible uses to define the substance of God ("*sum*" *vero ad divinam pertinere substantiam*, *Trloh*, XLIII.17). Finally, all these passages are connected to the revelation of God to Moses in *Ex. 3:14* 'I am who I am'. There is no doubt, then, that the phrase 'I am' is interpreted by Augustine as the most appropriate word with which God is described. Reflecting on the word *sum* Augustine asks why God chose only this word to indicate himself:

Quid est: *Si non credideritis quia ego sum? Ego sum*, quid? Nihil addidit; et quia nihil addidit, multum est quod commendavit. [...] Non ait et ibi: *Ego sum Deus*; aut: *Ego sum mundi fabricator*; aut: *Ego sum omnium rerum creator*; aut: *Ego sum ipsius populi liberandi propagator*: sed hoc tantum: *Ego sum qui sum* (*Trloh*, XXXVIII.8).<sup>57</sup>

To the modern reader, this passage is not only interesting for its ontological contents – that is, the affirmation of the multiplicity of the names of God – but also for the methodology used by Augustine to discuss the essence of God in his *Tractates*. When facing the problem of God's substance, Augustine systematically opposes the true essence of God with the inadequate essence of his creatures. The very essence of God, which Augustine biblically indicates as *sum*, is always explained, commented and defined in comparison with the inadequacy of the created world to fit into this category.<sup>58</sup> The radical opposition between God and the world,<sup>59</sup> which Augustine draws from the very text of the Gospel of John, does not only regard the post-lapsarian relationship between God and the corrupted creatures, but is even related to the ontological structure of the created world. The difference between God and creatures stands particularly in the stability of God's substance, as opposed to the mutability of

<sup>56</sup> See Augustine's interpretation in the whole *Trloh*, XXXVIII.

<sup>57</sup> 'What does it mean: "if you do not believe that I am"? "I am" what? He added nothing, and because he added nothing, what he brought to our notice is much. [...] He did not say, I am God, or, I am the builder of the world, or, I am the creator of all things, or, I am the propagator of the freeing of this people. But he said only this: "I am who I am".'

<sup>58</sup> In particular, Augustine insists on the immutability of God as opposed to the mutability of the soul which, therefore, is not able to perfectly grasp God. In this regard see: *Trloh*, II.2; XIX.11; XX.11; XXIII.9-10; XXXVIII.4-6; XXXIX.6-7; LV.1-2; XCIX.4.

<sup>59</sup> Which will be the core of the second part of this thesis (part B).

the created world. Therefore, the concept of God's *stabilitas* plays a primary role in defining God as the one who is always eternal stability (*aeternam stabilitatem*, *Trloh*, XL.8-9), as opposed to this instable world of perdition (*instabile saeculum perditionis*) where God came to establish his solid kingdom (*fundatissimum regnum*, *Trloh*, LV.1-2). This relationship between God and created beings establishes the very possibility for the ontological existence of the created word, which owes its ontological status to the unending stability of truth (*perpetua stabilitas veritatis*), that is, the Trinity (*Trloh*, XXXVI.10-13). Therefore, the investigation and exegesis of the Scriptures is interpreted by Augustine as a never-ending search for the mystery of the Trinity hidden in the pages of the Gospel. This search leads human beings to the knowledge of the inadequacy of everything which is created, when compared to God:

Praesens quaero, nihil stat; quod dixi iam non est. [...] Quod vixi iam non est, quod victurus sum nondum est. Praeteritum et futurum invenio in omni motu rerum: in veritate quae manet, praeteritum et futurum non invenio, sed solum praesens, et hoc incorruptibiliter, quod in creatura non est. Discute rerum mutationes, invenies Fuit et Erit: cogita Deum, invenies Est, ubi Fuit et Erit esse non possit (*Trloh*, XXXVIII.10).<sup>60</sup>

Time and mutability are therefore signs and evidence of the ontological instability of the created order. On the other hand, the absence of time, that is, the eternal *est*, constitutes the very substance of God.

From the passages analysed so far, it is possible to draw one conclusion: Augustine clearly indicates the most appropriate characterisation of God as both *idipsum* and *sum/est/esse*. It is not clear whether this identification is sufficient for the modern interpreter to define Augustine's Trinitarian theology as an onto-theology, that is, a theology in which an ontological identification between God and Being is traceable. Is Augustine speaking of God as Being in an ontological sense, or is he only using a biblical name (derived from *Ex.*

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<sup>60</sup> 'I look for the present, but nothing stands still (*stat*). [...] What I have lived no longer is; what I am going to live is not yet. I find past and future in every motion of things. In the Truth which abides I do not find past and future, but only the present, and what is without corruption, something which does not exist in a created being. Analyse changes in things: you will find "it was" and "it will be". Think about God: you will find "he is" (*est*), where "he was" and "he will be" cannot be'.

3:14)? Is Augustine's tendency to speak of the true substance of God in opposition to the created world a sign of his biblical, rather than metaphysical commitment? According to Marion, Augustine professes a definitive apophatic theology. Having no interest in giving ontological statements about God, he uses the word *esse* and *idipsum* only because he found those names in the Bible, but he has no intention to speak metaphysically about God. Contrariwise, I would say that Augustine's exegesis on *John* clarifies that Augustine speaks of God in a metaphysical manner, interpreting him as Being itself. Indeed, the commentary on the fourth Gospel clearly shows the intention of linking the generative logic expressed by the text of *Jn.* 1:1 with the affirmation of the full divinity of Jesus. This link is obtained through the identification of both Father and Son with Being. This is particularly evident in Augustine's exegesis of Jesus' speech to the Jews in *Jn.* 8, which is commented on at length. Augustine interprets it in eleven tractates,<sup>61</sup> most of which are dedicated to two themes: the nature of God – with particular focus on his being *esse* – and the intra-Trinitarian relationship between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. In these tractates, Augustine exposes the *ego sum* as the expression of *identity* in God. The same interpretation is given to the identification of the Son as *principium* in *Jn.* 8:25: 'They said to him, "Who are you?" Jesus said to them: "The Beginning"'.<sup>62</sup> The word *principium* (beginning) is as fit as the word *esse* to describe the nature of God insofar it is an indication of his eternal stability and immutability:

Deus autem hoc est quod est; ideo proprium nomen sibi tenuit: *Ego sum qui sum*. Hoc est Filius, dicendo: *Nisi credideritis quia ego sum*: ad hoc pertinet

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<sup>61</sup> *Trloh*, XXXIII-XLIII.

<sup>62</sup> The text of *Jn.* 8:25 has always been a conundrum for exegetes. The Greek text runs: Ἔλεγον οὖν αὐτῷ· σὺ τίς εἶ; εἶπεν αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς· τὴν ἀρχὴν ὃ τι καὶ λαλῶ ὑμῖν. Difficulties arise in the interpretation of τὴν ἀρχὴν. Modern scholarship tends to interpret it in its adverbial meaning, although even in this case the translation is not always clear. On the contrary, Augustine follows the Latin translation which makes τὴν ἀρχὴν substantive: *Tu quis es? et ait: Principium, quia et loquor vobis*. Augustine was aware of the Greek text, for in *Trloh* XXXVIII.11 he states that, on the basis of the Greek text, the word *principium* must be interpreted as an accusative, not as nominative. Therefore, he thinks the meaning of the phrase is: 'Believe that I am the Beginning'. For a recent study on this verse with particular focus on the manuscript tradition see: Hans Förster, 'Überlegungen zur Grammatik von Joh 8,25 im Lichte der handschriftlichen Überlieferung', in *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 107 1 (2016), p. 1–29. On the Latin text of the Gospel of John Augustine was using see: Hugh Houghton, *Augustine's Text of John. Patristic Citations and Latin Gospel Manuscripts*, Oxford 2008. See in particular p. 107-120 and p. 264.

et: *Tu quis es? Principium*. Deus igitur incommutabilis est, anima mutabilis  
(*Trloh*, XXXIX.8).<sup>63</sup>

Saying that 'God is this which is', Augustine is firstly pointing out the immutability and self-sameness of God. That is exactly the first characteristic of God *insofar he is Being*:

*Tu quis es? Non enim cum dixisti: Nisi credideritis quia ego sum, addidisti quid esses. Quis es, ut credamus? Et ille: Principium. Ecce quod est esse. Principium mutari non potest: principium in se manet, et innovat omnia; principium est, cui dictum est: Tu autem idem ipse es, et anni tui non deficient* (*Trloh*, XXXVIII.11).<sup>64</sup>

Being itself is such insofar as it cannot change. He always and eternally is the *principium* in which everything that has being in a derivative sense – that is, the creation – subsists. Therefore, Augustine is not basing a distinction between God and creation on a vague affirmation of the superior majesty of God over the creation, rather he is collecting from the Gospel the scriptural material to justify ontologically and metaphysically the difference between God and his creatures. Creatures are defective in the sense that they lack the fullness of Being, which is also why they need to participate in God to truly *be*:

Res enim quaelibet, prorsus qualicumque excellentia, si mutabilis est, non vere Est; non enim est ibi verum Esse, ubi est et non esse. Quidquid enim mutari potest, mutatum non est quod erat: si non est quod erat, mors quaedam ibi facta est; peremptum est aliquid ibi quod erat, et non est  
(*Trloh*, XXXVIII.10).<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> 'But God is this which is. Therefore, he kept for himself as his proper name: "I am who I am". The Son is this, in saying "if you do not believe that I am"; to this also belongs: "who are you? The Beginning". Therefore, God is immutable, the soul is mutable'.

<sup>64</sup> "Who are you?" For when you said "if you do not believe that I am," you did not add what you were. Who are you that we may believe? And he said: "the Beginning". See what the Being is. The Beginning cannot be changed, the Beginning abides in itself and renews all things. He is the Beginning to whom it was said: "But you are the self-same and your years will not fail" (*Ps*. 101.28)'.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>65</sup> 'For anything at all, absolutely of whatever excellence, if it is changeable does not have true being; for true Being is not there were non-being also is. For whatever can be changed, when it has been changed is not what it was. If what it was is not, a kind of death has occurred there. Something there which was has been completely taken away, and is not'. Augustine goes on saying: *Nigredo mortua est in capite albescentis senis, pulchritudo mortua est in corpore fessi et incurvi senis, mortuae sunt vires in corpore languentis*.



It is hard not to trace a metaphysical intent in this quotation. Augustine is here making a coherent exegesis of three attributes which the Gospel refers to the Son: 1) the fact that he *is* (Jn. 8,24); 2) the fact that he is *the truth* (Jn. 8,27; 14.6 et al.); 3) the fact that he is *principium* (Jn. 8.25). These attributes are reinterpreted in a metaphysical fashion as referring one to another: God is truth because he undergoes no change whatsoever; he is beginning because he has no beginning; he is Being because he is the fullness of himself. Being without need of participation in anything else but himself is thus the fullness of Being and Being itself.

At the end of this short section, it is possible to propose some remarks on Augustine's speculation on the nature of God. First, Augustine unquestionably describes God as Being itself. In doing so, Augustine uses the text of the Gospel as the authoritative basis from which his reasoning on God originates. To this end, Augustine seems particularly interested in defining God as immutable and unchangeable. The *idipsum*-which-God-is is the unchangeable self-sameness of God, who does not know time of difference in its own being. In this way Augustine understands the *identity* or self-sameness of God. God is simple, and this utmost simplicity is expressed by the concept of *idipsum* and Being. The true Being – Augustine reasons – must be one and simple. Therefore, the next section will be devoted to understanding in which way the self-sameness of God represents the ontological basis for the affirmation of his simplicity and, most of all, how this is related by Augustine to the intra-Trinitarian relation of Father, Son and Spirit.

### III.4 Trinitarian Relationships: The Son, the *Quod Habet Hoc Est* and the Problem of God's Attributes

*'The Father has granted the Son also to have life in himself' (Jn. 5:26)*

The previous section mainly investigated the textual references used by Augustine to account for the identification between God and Being, thus highlighting also the constant juxtaposition between the perfect nature of God and the deficiency of the created world. I tried to make clear how the real focus of Augustine's discourse on the nature of God lies in the principle of its self-identity. This principle derives from a genuine interpretation of one of the most important foci of the Johannine text, that is, the affirmation of the identity of will and mission of Father, Son and even Spirit. In Augustine's account, the self-sameness of God, which *is* its perfect nature, marks the difference between its eternal incorruptibility and the precarious mutability of everything that does not possess True Being. Moving forward to the investigation of the relationship between the Father, the Son and the Spirit, Augustine applies the category of true Being to all of them.

This section is focused on the identification between knowing and being in God, particularly on the reasons why it is so significant for the present research. The way in which this metaphysical formula is both applied to and derived from the text of the fourth Gospel is remarkably important for Augustine's *Tractates*. In general, Augustine is interested in reconciling two lines of thought found in the fourth Gospel. The first is related to the affirmation of the total unity between the Father and the Son, best exemplified by *Jn. 10:30*: 'I and the Father are one'.<sup>66</sup> The other is related instead to *Jn. 8:28*: 'I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me', that is, Jesus' description of the Father as the one who sent him, having authority over him.<sup>67</sup> I will demonstrate that Augustine finds the solution in interpreting *Jn. 5:26* – 'For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself' – and *Jn. 5:19* in an anti-subordinationist way.<sup>68</sup> Augustine is mostly concerned with the problem of

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<sup>66</sup> On this line of thought, of course, the Prologue of the Gospel plays a major role.

<sup>67</sup> See among others, *Jn. 4:34*; *5:23*; *6:38*; *7:28*; *8:29*; *12:44*; *14:24*.

<sup>68</sup> *Jn. 5: 19*: 'Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, the Son can do nothing on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise"'. Ayres believes the verse of *Jn. 5:19* to be the most important verse for Augustine's speculation on the Trinity. See: L. Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity*, p. 233-250. Ayres states that Augustine

subordinationism in the Gospel of John, so much so that he pays particular attention in refusing every kind of subordinationism in the interpretation of the Scriptures, as also proven by the first four books of his *On the Trinity*.<sup>69</sup> In particular, Augustine's interpretation of these two verses marks the real difference with Origen's Trinitarian speculation: while Origen understands these verses as implying the existence of two irreducible realities (the Father and the Son) by subordinating the latter to the former, Augustine explains that the Son's dependence on the Father does not imply a subordination of the former to the latter.<sup>70</sup> Thus, the use of *Jn.5:26* is pivotal in many tractates (*Trloh*, XIX.11-13; XXII.9-10; XXV.19; XLVII.14; LIV.7; LXX.1; XCIX.4). In all of them, Augustine understands the passage as indicating the fact that by the very act of begetting, the Father granted the Son to have life in himself. As such, Augustine's understanding of the Trinity as existing in reality as a unity is based on the idea that the Son and the Spirit does not participate in the Father, but they are as the Father:

Dedit ei ut Filius esset, genuit ut vita esset: hoc est: *Dedit ei habere vitam in semetipso*, ut esset vita non egens vita, ne participando intellegatur habere vitam [...] Non quasi mutuatur vitam, nec quasi particeps fit vitae, eius vitae quae non est quod ipse; sed *habet vitam in semetipso*, ut ipsa vita sibi sit ipse (*Trloh*, XIX.11-13).<sup>71</sup>

Therefore, Augustine grounds the relation of identity in God in that "granting" which the Father gives to the Son by begetting him. This begetting is very different from the idea of 'participation' because, by contrast with the other

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held four different interpretation of this verse, while also affirming that 'at the heart of his preaching and teaching is an attempt to draw attention to the logic of the scriptural text' (p.145).

<sup>69</sup> These books are keen on founding Augustine's doctrine of the Trinity on the ground of scriptural interpretation. In this regard, in the summary of the whole work he does in the fifteenth chapter, Augustine states that his main goal was to prove that the Son is not 'less than He who sends, because the latter sends and the former is sent, since the Trinity, which is equal in all things, and is also equally unchangeable in its nature, invisible, and present everywhere, works inseparably'. See: *On the Trinity*, XV.3.5.

<sup>70</sup> See *ComJn*. X.246-247; *On First Principles* I.2.6; I.2.12. In this regard see: L. Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity*, p. 233-234.

<sup>71</sup> 'He has given to him to be Son; he begot him to be life, that is, "He granted him to have life in himself" that he might be life, not needing life, that he not be understood to have life by participation. [...] He does not, as it were, borrow life, nor does it become, as it were, a sharer of life, in that life which is not what he is, but "he has life in himself", so that life itself is for him, he himself.

creatures, by being begotten the Son *is* in-himself (and not by participation) life, just as the Father and eternally coexist in perfect unity with the Father.

Notwithstanding that the Gospel is much more interested in justifying Jesus' salvific role by means of his proximity with the Father rather than in defining the ontological relationship between the Father and the Son, Augustine's exegesis strives for harmonising the different sayings of the Gospel in a Nicaean-compatible way.<sup>72</sup> His first step in this direction explains the generation of the Son from the Father through the doctrine of the *idipsum*. Before giving an in-depth explanation of Augustine's thought, it is worth underlining that Augustine speaks of the identification between the Being of God and His Knowledge, His Will and His Power, always in relation to the Trinity.

#### III.4.1 The Relation of Identity

At the very start of his investigation into the Gospel, we have seen Augustine referring to the Son as the *idipsum* that God is (*Trloh*, II.2), thus marking the absolute identity between the Word in God and God. By contrast with Origen, who locates the unity of the Father and the Son in the possession of the same attributes at the same ontological level, Augustine uses the concept of Being to establish the identity of the two.<sup>73</sup> In order to do so, he needs to investigate in which way it is possible to speak of *attributes* or *actions* with regard to the True Being. The answer is anything but straightforward, for it is logically impossible to ascribe – at least in an absolute way – any attribute or *action* to God where that involves a change of status in him. However, Augustine finds himself needing to explain why the Bible constantly refers attributes to God. Indeed, human beings can rightly call God right, just, light, life and, of course, Being. Augustine concludes that, although these attributes can be predicated of God from a

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<sup>72</sup> Rather than interpreting it as a philosophical work, contemporary scholarship tends to see the fourth Gospel as belonging to the genre of "lives" or "biography". Therefore, the genre of the Gospel of John is much closer to historiography. For a strong defence of the historiographical characteristics of the Gospel of John see: Richard Bauckham, *The Testimony of the Beloved Disciple: Narrative, History, and Theology in the Gospel of John*, Grand Rapids MI 2007, p. 93-112. On the Father-Son relationship in John, Ramsey Michaels states: 'The first contribution of John's Gospel to the Theology of the New Testament [...] is the notion of Jesus as God's unique Envoy or messenger, simultaneously claiming for himself both Deity and obedient submission to Deity'. See J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, Grand Rapids MI 2010, p. 39.

<sup>73</sup> In this regard see *infra*, VI.2.

human point of view, it would be improper to think them as a different substance from the infinite and unchangeable essence of God.<sup>74</sup> Hence, in itself, God is one essence, that is, his Being itself, and he does not allow any separation between the different attributes.

A formula frequently used in the *Tractates* explains that, in God, *to be* is the same as *to be life*, *to be right*, or *to be just*, or even *to know*. There cannot be a learning process in God, for God is without time. Therefore, commenting on *Jn.* 16:13: 'he (the Spirit) will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come', Augustine has difficulty explaining in what sense it is possible to speak of God in the future tense:

Et ideo illi tantum convenerat dicere: *Ego sum qui sum*. Tamen propter mutabilitatem temporum in quibus versatur nostra mortalitas et nostra mutabilitas, non mendaciter dicimus, et fuit, et erit et est. [...] quia, sicut iam diximus, hoc est illi audire quod scire, et scire illi hoc est quod esse (*Trloh*, XCIX.5).<sup>75</sup>

The problem of time in God is connected with the *Ego sum* in such a way that it makes possible for Augustine both to explain the text of the Gospel, which speaks of God in future and past tenses, and to give a metaphysical answer to the problem of God's knowledge and essence.<sup>76</sup> Augustine gives his solution by explaining that, just as *essence*, *existence* and *life* are one thing in God (as proven by his exegesis of *Jn.* 5:26), so the learning process through which the Spirit 'speaks what he hears' is grounded in its identity with the Father and the Son:

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<sup>74</sup> In this regard, see the explicit remarks at the end in *On the Trinity*, XV.5.7: 'He has not obtained the wisdom by which He is wise, but He Himself is wisdom. And this life is the same as this strength or this power, and the same as this beauty by which he is called powerful and beautiful [...] Or again are goodness and justice also different from each other in the nature of God, as they are different in their works, as if they were two different qualities of God, one his goodness and the other his justice? Certainly not!'

<sup>75</sup> 'Therefore, it was proper for him to say: "I am who I am". Nevertheless, on account of the changeableness of the times in which our mortality and our changeableness are involved, we do not falsely say "was" and "will be" and "is". [...] For as we have already said, for him to hear is the same as to know and for him to know is the same as to be'. In this regard, see also the similar passage of *On the Trinity*, V.8.9, and *The City of God*, VIII.6.

<sup>76</sup> On the same issue see also: *On the Trinity*, XV.7.13.

Mutabilis quippe est mens nostra, quae percipit discendo quod nesciebat, et amittit dediscendo quod sciebat [...] Et ideo non est ista substantia verissime simplex, cui non hoc est esse quod nosse: potest enim esse, nec nosse. At illa divina non potest, quia id quod habet est. [...] *Sicut habet Pater vitam in semetipso*, nec aliud est ipse quam vita quae in ipso est; et *dedit Filio habere vitam in semetipso*, hoc est, genuit Filium qui et ipse vita esset (*Trloh*, XCIX.4).<sup>77</sup>

The absence of time in God makes it impossible to speak of past and future, therefore Augustine postulates that God must be active in the sense that God's actions are God's own being. The identity between actions (such as the begetting of the Son) and being is the key concept on which Augustine bases his metaphysic of the Trinity. Since God is Being, Augustine postulates perfect equality between the Being of God and all the actions he is said to perform, which is possible only insofar we admit the perfect self-identity of God with Being-itself. This consideration is extremely important as it seems to hint at the idea that the deepest essence of God, insofar as it is Trinity, is found in the relational process of *generation* (of the Son) and *procession* (of the Spirit). In this sense, God's own actions are not only his relations to the world, but mainly the generation of the Son and the procession of the Spirit, thus leading to the definition of the self-sameness of God as the *relational process* that reconciles identity and relationality.<sup>78</sup>

In the quotations before the one I am analysing, Augustine was commenting on a passage in which the Spirit is said to be derived from the Father and the Son. In the following examples, Augustine uses the identity of knowing and being in God to explain both the derivation of the Son from the Father and the self-sameness of the two. The oneness of God's will, power and being is therefore always related by Augustine also to the Son and the Spirit. Just as in *Trloh*, II the Word was identified with the *idipsum*, in the other *Tractates*, the Son is identified with the fullness of God, which consequently 'has what he is' (*quod*

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<sup>77</sup> 'For indeed our mind is mutable, and it acquires by learning what it did not know, and loses by forgetting what it knew [...] And therefore this substance is not most truly simple because for it *to be* is not the same as *to know*, for it can be and yet not know. But that divine substance cannot do this, because it is what it has. [...] "As the Father has life in himself" and he himself is not something other than the life that he is in himself, so "he granted to the Son to have life in himself", that is, he begot the Son who also himself was life'.

<sup>78</sup> This problem will be discussed in much more details in *infra*, III.5.

*habet hoc est*, XLVIII.6-7). This is to say that the Son does not only possess an intellectual ability that is always actual in his being, but even that his own actions and will are one. Therefore, Augustine states the equality between the Son's *substantia* and his *potentia* (substance and power). For him, *to be* and *to be able*, *to will* and *to do*, are one thing (*esse, posse, velle, facere*), for his power is his substance (*Trloh*, XX.4-7). Given the Aristotelian language adopted by Augustine, it is worth underlining the absence of any unexpressed *potentia* in God. Everything that God is – thus, logically, everything at all – is always and eternally present and actual. The same can be said of the Spirit, which *is* the plenitude of Being. Therefore, according to Augustine, it would be quite incorrect to say that the Son and the Spirit both *possess* being just as the Father does, for they *are* Being just as the Father is. The Son and the Spirit *are* each and every possible attribute at the maximum level. Once again, Augustine understands this identity to be 'locked up' as a 'precious secret' in the words of the text of *Jn. 5:26* according to which the Father *granted* to the Son not only to have life, but to have life *in himself*:

'Haec sunt enim illa verba quae parvum intellectum perturbant. Quare addidit, *in semetipso*? [...] Et hic secretum in verbo hoc clausum est [...] Ergo quod dicitur, *dedit Filio*, tale est ac si diceretur, genuit filium: generando enim dedit. [...] Quid est, *in semetipso* vita esset? Non aliunde vita indigeret, sed ipse esset plenitudo vitae' (*Trloh*, XXII.9-10).<sup>79</sup>

Thus, every possible attribute we can speak of God is in God in such a way that it is impossible to distinguish them in his own being, for the Being of God is itself the wholeness of every possible attribute. This is true both for the Father, who is the one who generates, and for the Son and the Spirit who are generated and proceed in such a way as to be fully God in themselves. In this regard, it is worth remembering the difference between essence and substance in God of which I spoke in section III.3. God does not have a substance (*substantia*) insofar as He does not possess underlying qualities that determine his own being. On the contrary, his nature is an essence (*essentia*) insofar as it can only

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<sup>79</sup> 'These are words which trouble our meagre understanding. Why did he add "in himself"? [...] And a secret is locked up here in this word [...] Therefore, what is said "He has given to the Son" is such as if it was said, "He begot the Son"; for he gives by begetting. [...] What does it mean, he might be "life in himself"? He would not need life from another source, but he would be the fullness of life'

be described with the most general characterisation of *Being*, of which all the attributes are derivative substances.

Within this framework, Augustine explains the idea of God as simple. The idea of simplicity is based precisely on the coincidence between God's knowledge and God's Being. In this regard, the Gospel of John is the scriptural text which informs the main characteristic of the Trinitarian relationship between the Father and the Son. On basis of *Jn.* 5:26: 'For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself', Augustine states that the Son is equal to the Father insofar as the Father eternally provides the Son with the same Being that he has, by begetting him. The attribute of *life* is here taken by Augustine as exemplifying the very essence of God. Thus, when commenting on *Jn.* 10.18 ('This commandment I received from my Father') Augustine connects this verse with the verse of *Jn.* 5:26, expressing the idea that the Son does not *participate* in the attributes of the Father, but he receives *substantially* from him to be what he is:

*Cum autem dicitur Filius a Patre accipere quod substantialiter habet, quomodo dictum est: Sicut habet Pater vitam in semetipso, sic dedit Filio habere vitam in semetipso, cum Filius ipse sit vita; non potestas minuitur, sed generatio eius ostenditur [...] Ei quem perfectum genuit, omnia gignendo dedit' (Trloh, XLVII.14).<sup>80</sup>*

In another passage, Augustine describes the Son's descent as the Father's sending of his other self (*se alterum misit*, *Trloh*, XIV.10-13). Both the Father and the Son have life and being, each one in himself; nonetheless, they differ in their relation to each other, for the Son was begotten by the Father and not vice versa. Therefore, the Father is said to be Father only insofar he has a Son, while the Son is Son insofar he was begotten by a Father (*Trloh*, XIX.12-13). Nevertheless, their qualities and attributes are the same. In being born, the Son has – one should say, with Augustine, that the Son *is* – every attribute in

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<sup>80</sup> 'But when the Son is said to receive what he has substantially from the Father, as it was said "As the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself", since the Son in himself is life, his power is not lessened, but his generation is shown [...] He gave all things to him whom he begot as a perfect being'.



himself. He is not God because he participates in Father, but he is God in himself (*Trloh*, XIX.13).

### III.4.2 Generation, Arianism, Subordinationism

While the fifth chapter of the Gospel of John is to be identified as the Scriptural basis on which Augustine bases the *relation of identity* between the Father and the Son, the eighth chapter (in particular *Jn.* 8:26-32) is the locus for the explanation of the mutual relationship between Father and Son. Here, Augustine states that the Father spoke to the Son by begetting the Son. In fact, the nature of the Truth is simple (*simplex*), thus for God to be is the same as to know (*hoc est filio esse quod nosse*, *Trloh*, XL.5). So, by begetting the Son, that is, by giving Being to the Son, the Father gave him knowledge. In the same way, the Father sends the Son and is with the Son always (*Trloh*, XL.6). Therefore, it is not possible to distinguish the Father, the Son and the Spirit according to their power or to their being, but only according to the order of generation and mutual relation.<sup>81</sup> While the Father is God, and the Son is God, and the Spirit is God, the Father is *Father* only in relation to the Son, just as the Spirit is *Spirit* in respect to Father and the Son (*Trloh*, XXIX.5). As far as the essence of God is concerned, it is not possible to establish difference or distinctions between the three Trinitarian hypostases. The only distinction between them is to be found in their relation of origin. Thus, as it was made clear in previous quotations, Augustine explains in which sense it is possible to describe God as simple: the simple essence of God does not allow any difference between the three persons. Moreover, the perfect unity of being, will and power between the three persons of the Trinity stands as the marker of the ontological difference between the true Being and the creation.

In the *Tractates*, the argumentation delineated so far is mainly used by Augustine in opposition to Arianism, which functions as opponent *par*

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<sup>81</sup> In this regard, Augustine's interpretation does not differ much from the doctrine of the *perichoresis* of the Cappadocian fathers. For further details on the doctrine of *perichoresis* see: Daniel F. Stramara, 'Gregory of Nyssa's Terminology for Trinitarian Perichoresis', in *Vigiliae Christianae* 52 3 (1998), p. 257-263.

*excellence* of Augustine's exegesis of the Gospel.<sup>82</sup> Interestingly, Augustine's boldest attacks on Arianism are launched in the exegesis of the fifth and the eighth chapter of John.

Commenting on the former, Augustine presents two anti-Arian accusations, of which one seems to be the opposite of the other: the first is that they have a carnal interpretation of the Scriptures, the second is that they are pagans. Having a poor understanding of the unity of will and power between the Father and the Son (*Trloh*, XIX.4-5), Arians tear apart the perfect unity of the Trinity, thus interpreting Word of God according to the flesh and gaining a carnal understanding of the Son of God – that is, an interpretation which accounts only for the created part of Christ. Indeed, they fail to acknowledge that the Trinity is absolutely simple (*Trloh*, XXIII.7-9). Regarding the accusation of paganism, Augustine explains that by separating the Father, the Son and the Spirit, Arians essentially believe in three gods (*Trloh*, XVIII.2-4).

Commenting on the eighth chapter of the Gospel, Augustine has another polemical target besides Arianism: the Sabellians.<sup>83</sup> This group was accused of regarding the Father and the Son as one person under two names. On the contrary, Arians do profess the Son as begotten, but they deny the equality of the Son with the Father, saying that the Son is a different thing – that is, a different substance – (*aliud*) from the Father (*Trloh*, XXXVII.6-7). The Sabellians are accused of destroying two persons of the Trinity (*Trloh*, XXXVI.9), by believing that the Father and the Son are two names, but one reality (*duo nomina unam rem*, *Trloh*, XXIX.7). The Arians are accused of interpreting the Son as a different substance (*substantia*, *Trloh*, XXXVII.6-7) and nature (*natura*,

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<sup>82</sup> Augustine explicitly refers to Arians among the members of his congregation in *Trloh*, XL.7 and, in a much more hypothetical form, in *Trloh*, XVIII.4. On the Arian crisis see: M. Simonetti, *La crisi ariana nel IV secolo*, and L. Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy*. Scholars are not sure of Augustine's first-hand engagement with Arian doctrines. For example, Hill and other scholars think that Augustine's references to Arians in the book five of *On the Trinity* should be taken as referring to the doctrine of Eunomius. Barnes argues against this conclusion, saying that the 'anti-Nicene doctrines Augustine reports in Book V have their origins in Latin Homoian theology, and not in Eunomian theology' (p. 185). He also adds that what Augustine knew of these Homoian doctrines has been probably learned from Ambrose, *On Faith*. See *Saint Augustine: The Trinity*, ed. Edmund Hill, Brooklyn 1991, p. 49; Michel René Barnes, 'The Arians of Book V, and the Genre of De Trinitate', in *The Journal of Theological Studies* 44 1 (1993), p. 185–195.

<sup>83</sup> This group was not a real target for Augustine, as no Sabellian ideas were circulating among his congregation.

*Trloh*, XXXVI.9) from the Father. Augustine presents his solution as the *via media* between the two heresies: the Father is Father, the Son is the Son; they are two persons but not a different essence (*alius, non aliud*, *Trloh*, XXXVII.6-7). Hence, both the Son and the Father are the very same thing (*hoc ipsum*, *Trloh*, XXXVI.9), without any dissimilarity of nature (*Trloh*, XXXI.1-4).<sup>84</sup> It is worth noting that the most significant charges against Arianism are moved by Augustine through the mitigation of the text of *Jn.* 8:28 – ‘I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me’ – by *Jn.* 10:30 – ‘The Father and I are one’.

Leaving aside the accusation of having a carnal interpretation of the Scriptures,<sup>85</sup> it is particularly interesting that Augustine accuses Arians of tearing the unity of the Trinity apart (*Trloh*, XXIII.7-9) and believing in three gods (*Trloh*, XVIII.2-4) particularly since Augustine has to fight the Arians by means of a text which offers many footholds for a subordinationist interpretation of the Son towards the Father. Therefore, Augustine addresses primarily the Arian belief that the Son is less than the Father – that is, their subordinationism – and only secondarily their carnal understanding of the Son as a creature.<sup>86</sup> In Augustine’s opinion, the Arians failed to understand the inseparability between the Father and the Son, because they did not acknowledge the unity of will and power in God. Not accepting the *idipsum*, the Arians think of the Son as performing the same works as the Father – according to *Jn.* 5:19 – but not having the same *essence* of the Father. Using once again the language of ‘life’ and of ‘granting’ of *Jn.* 5:26, Augustine explains that *quia et Pater habet vitam, et quod habet est: nec accepit tamen, quia non ex aliquo est. Filius autem accepit vitam, dante Patre a quo est: et ipse quod habet, est; habet enim vitam,*

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<sup>84</sup> References to the Arians and the Sabellians are found also in *Trloh*, LXXI.1-2, commenting on *Jn.* 14:10: ‘I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work’.

<sup>85</sup> This accusation must be taken as a rhetorical tool to dismiss the adversaries’ opinions. In *Trloh*, XVIII.1 Augustine states that all heresies are born for a misunderstanding of the Scriptures, that is, are born of a carnal reading of them. On the contrary, the orthodox interpretation is the spiritual one. This accusation is, of course, a commonplace among ancient theologians.

<sup>86</sup> The accusation of making the Son of God a creature is obviously present in Augustine’s refusal of Arianism, especially in the commentary on the prologue. See *Trloh*, I-10-14. Nonetheless, it does not seem to be the main ‘error’ on which Augustine insists in his polemical account of Arians’ beliefs.

*et vita est.*<sup>87</sup> Therefore, Augustine states that performing the same work is not an accidental characteristic of the Son, nor something that happens to the Son by participation, but it is rather based on its ontological equality with the Father. Moreover, by admitting subordinationism between Father, Son and Spirit, Arians deny the unity of the Trinity. This account of the errors of the Arians had been preached in the first group of tractates (*Trloh*, I-LV) and it was reinforced some years later when he dictated the last group of tractates (*Trloh*, LV-CXXIV). Here, Augustine directly refers to Nicaea's pronouncements regarding the *homoousios*:

Adversus impietatem quoque Arianorum haeticorum novum nomen Patris Homousion condiderunt: sed non rem novam tali nomine signaverunt; hoc enim vocatur Homousion, quod est: *Ego et Pater unum sumus*, unius videlicet eiusdemque substantiae (*Trloh*, XCVII.4).<sup>88</sup>

Besides the obvious meaning of proving the scriptural basis for the “new” term,<sup>89</sup> Augustine is here implementing his doctrine, according to which the *unum* (one thing, neuter singular) and *sumus* (we are, plural) can only be explained through the perfect equality of substance between the begetter and the begotten. It does not suffice then that the Father, the Son and the Spirit share the same attributes or perform the same works. Rather, perfect unity must entail perfect ontological equality between the three hypostases. Differently from Origen, who indicates the unity of the divine Trinity in the sharing of the same deity – that is, in the possessing of all the attributes at the maximum level – Augustine professes that sharing the same true Being is necessary for understanding God as one and simple. Therefore, while in Origen the Son is said to participate in the attributes of the Father, Augustine states that the Son *is* the same Being as the Father. This view held by Augustine is

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<sup>87</sup> ‘The Father has life and is what he has. Yet he has not received it because he is not from anyone. The Son, however, has received life and the Father from whom he is gave it; and he himself is what he has, for he has life and he is life’

<sup>88</sup> ‘And also against the ungodliness of the Arian heretics they instituted a new name, the Homousion of the Father, but they did not signify a new reality by such a name; for they called Homousion this which is, “I and the Father are one thing”, namely of one and the same substance’. Regarding the use of the word *homoousios* in reference to the Father and the Son see also Augustine, *Epistle* 423.

<sup>89</sup> In *Trloh*, XCVII.4 Augustine quotes many examples of new words being introduced in Christian terminology. Regarding these ‘novelties of words in agreement with the doctrine of religion’ Augustine states that ‘the realities themselves existed before their names’. Therefore, these words are not contrary to the true essence of Christian beliefs.

thus based on the aforementioned generation of the Son from the Father in *Jn.5:26* as a generation which eternally grants Being itself to the Son, without any need for the Son to participate further in the substance of the Father in order to be what he is: *ipse existendo vita habet vitam, et ipse est quod habet, et quod vita est in ipso, ipse est in seipso: nos autem non ipsa vita, sed ipsius vitae participes sumus (Trlöh, LXX.1)*.<sup>90</sup> This view does not allow any sort of subordinationism in Augustine's interpretation of the *homoousios*, since 'of the same substance' means also 'the same thing'. Similarly, in a fictitious conversation with an Arian opponent, Augustine accuses every subordinationist doctrine of "smelling of paganism":

Tenes nobiscum quia *in principio erat Verbum*. Teneo, inquit. Et quia *Verbum erat apud Deum*? Et hoc, inquit, teneo. Sequere ergo, et hoc fortius tene, quia *Deus erat Verbum*. Et hoc, inquit, teneo: sed ille Deus maior, ille Deus minor. Iam nescio quid paganum redolet: cum christiano me loqui arbitrar. Si est Deus maior, et est Deus minor; duos deos colimus, non unum Deum. Quare, inquit? et tu non duos deos dicis aequales sibi? Hoc ego non dico: aequalitatem enim istam sic intellego, ut ibi intellegam etiam individuum caritatem; et si individuum caritatem, perfectam unitatem. Si enim caritas quam misit hominibus Deus, de multis hominum cordibus facit cor unum [...] quanto magis Pater Deus et Filius Deus in fonte dilectionis Deus unus est? (*Trlöh, XVIII.4*).<sup>91</sup>

This passage shows the problem that Augustine holds to be implicit in any subordinationist doctrine. If the Son is not equal to the Father, then the unity of God is broken. Augustine cannot accept the possibility of grounding the unity of God simply in the Son's participation in the Father, otherwise the former would not be perfect without the other and He would be in need of the Father to

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<sup>90</sup> 'By existing he (i.e. the Son), the life, has life and he is what he has, and what life is in him, he is in himself; but we are not life itself, but partakers of life itself'.

<sup>91</sup> 'You hold with us that "in the beginning was the Word". "I do hold it", he says. And that "the Word was with God"? "I do hold also this", he says. Continue, therefore, and hold this more boldly, that "the Word was God". "And I hold also this", he says, but the one God is greater, the other God is lesser". Now I can detect a certain pagan smell; I thought I was talking with a Christian. If there is a greater God and there is a lesser God, we worship two gods, not one God. "Why?" he says, "do you not say that two gods are equal to one another?". This I do not say; for I understand this equality in such a way that I understand also undivided love there, and if undivided love, perfect unity. For if the love which God sent to men makes one heart from many hearts of men (*Acts 4.32*) [...] how much more are God the Father and God the Son one God in the source of love?'

manage his own being. In this way, Augustine can rightly profess God to be simple, for God is the True Being, and every person of the Trinity has true Being as his own essence, thus lacking nothing not by participation, but by being born. On the other hand, urged by the question of the fictitious Arian, Augustine needs to explain *why* and *how* God is said to be one. Differently from Origen, Augustine cannot accept a definition which applies to the Father alone the unity and self-sameness of God. In the third century, Origen could freely speak of the Father as the only one to be truly immortal (*ComJn*, II.123; II.166) invisible, bodiless, good (*ComJn*, I.251-253) and all the other attributes which can be worthily predicated of God; whereas the Son and the Spirit, though divine, participate of these attributes in different ways. Thus, the unity and simplicity of God were properly found in the Father only. Nonetheless, in Origen, God can be said to be one insofar the three hypostases share the same attributes at the same level. Contrariwise, after three centuries of theological debates, the two oecumenical councils of Nicaea (325) and Constantinople (381) and, most of all, the Arian crisis, Augustine has a very different mind-set. His solution is neither based on the common participation of the three hypostases in the same attributes, nor only on the fact that the three persons of the Trinity work together – for this is an effect, not a cause of his Trinitarian doctrine.<sup>92</sup>

In the passages quoted above, Augustine makes clear his critique of any Trinitarian speculation which allows a subordination of one hypostasis to another. We do not know what Augustine would have said had he known Origen's Trinitarian doctrine. It seems likely, however, that he would have accused it of collapsing into Arianism, for in his interpretation every kind of subordination is at risk of breaking the unity of substance in the Godhead. Lastly, regarding the logical problem of God's oneness, Augustine identifies in the undivided love (*individuum caritatem*) the source of unity and of oneness according to which God is said to be one. This love is instantiated and personified by one of the three Trinitarian persons: the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the answer to the question of how God can be One-and-Tree lies in the ontological relationship between hypostases; more specifically, it is the proper work of the Holy Spirit. Thus, the next section will deal with the problem of the

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<sup>92</sup> This is particularly clear in *Trloh*, XX.3, which will be analysed in the following section.

procession of the Spirit from the Father and the Son, which is indeed the main marker of Augustine's Trinitarian doctrine.

### III.5 The Holy Spirit: The Procession, the *Filioque* and their Ontological Implications

*'He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears' (Jn. 16:13)*

In the previous section, it has been shown how Augustine's argumentation on the unity and self-identity of God has been based on the foundational ground of *Jn. 5:26*, according to which the Father 'granted the Son also to have life in himself'.

This final section of this chapter will focus more specifically on the metaphysical function of the Holy Spirit in Augustine's Trinity. In particular, it aims at showing Augustine's use of the depiction of the Spirit he finds in the Gospel and how crucial the doctrine of the Spirit is in understanding Augustine's Trinity. Here, Augustine's pneumatology will be analysed in its Trinitarian characterisation, whilst the crucial role of the Holy Spirit in the relationship between God and the world will be the object of chapter V.

As *Jn. 5:26* set the ground for Augustine's speculation on the Son, *Jn. 16:12-15* is the text on which Augustine based his discourse about the Spirit.<sup>93</sup> The Holy Spirit, who does not 'speak on his own' belongs to the Trinity according to a different derivation from that of the Son. If the Son is derived from the Father in such a way that he is born *of* the Father, thus being called the Only Begotten (*unigenitus*), the Spirit is said to proceed; therefore, while the Son is said to be 'of the Father', the Spirit is described to be 'of the Father and of the Son'.

The Spirit is first mentioned in the *Tractates* during the narration of the wedding at Cana. Commenting on *Jn. 2:6*: 'There were six water jars there, holding two or three measures each', Augustine interprets the two or three measures as a symbol of the divine nature. According to Augustine, the reason why the Gospel speaks of two or three measures is that the number two represents the Father and the Son, while three is a symbol of the Trinity:

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<sup>93</sup> *Jn. 16:12-15*: 'I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you'.



Quia nominato Patre et Filio, consequenter et Spiritus sanctus intellegendus est. Spiritus enim sanctus non est Patris tantummodo, aut Filii tantummodo Spiritus; sed Patris et Filii Spiritus. [...] Idem autem Spiritus Patris et Filii. Nominato itaque Patre et Filio, intellegitur et Spiritus sanctus; quia Spiritus est Patris et Filii. Cum autem nominatur Pater et Filius, tamquam duae metretae nominantur. Cum autem ibi intellegitur Spiritus sanctus, tres metretae. (*Trloh*, IX.7).<sup>94</sup>

This passage is worth a special mention not only for its theological content, but also because it is possibly the first time that Augustine speaks of the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of both the Father and of the Son. There is a similar passage found in *On the Trinity* IV.29: *Nec possumus dicere quod Spiritus Sanctus et a Filio non procedat; neque enim frustra idem Spiritus et Patris et Filii Spiritus dicitur.*<sup>95</sup> However it is unclear which of them Augustine wrote first.<sup>96</sup> Anyhow, the pivotal point is that both passages are shaped according to the exegesis of Johannine passages of *Jn.* 14:26; 15:26 and 20:22. Indeed, Augustine's interpretation of the Spirit is driven by the same Johannine logic that led Augustine to understand the whole *binitarian* relationship between the Father and the Son as a unity of the same substance according to the generation of an identical being from an identical being.<sup>97</sup>

Furthermore, in the same *Tractate* IX, Augustine proclaims the equality between love and the Holy Spirit, since '*fortasse scrutatae Scripturae indicant quod*

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<sup>94</sup> 'For since the Father and the Son have been named, it follows that the Holy Spirit must also be understood. For the Holy Spirit is not the Spirit of the Father only, or of the Son only, but is the Spirit of the Father and the Son. [...] But the Spirit of the Father and of the Son is the same. Thus, since the Father and the Son have been named, the Holy Spirit is understood too, because he is the Spirit of the Father and the Son. Indeed, since the Father and the Son are named, so two measures are named. But, since the Spirit is understood there, there are three measures'.

<sup>95</sup> *On the Trinity* IV.29: 'Nor we can say that the Holy Spirit does not proceed from the Son as well. Indeed, it is not without point that the same Spirit is called Spirit of the Father and of the Son'.

<sup>96</sup> Whether Augustine inserted this section on the Spirit in his *Tractates* because of his Trinitarian reflection in *On the Trinity* or, whether he developed his doctrine in *On the Trinity* due to his close examination of the Gospel of John is a dilemma which is impossible to tackle here.

<sup>97</sup> In this regard, it is worth noting the perfect compatibility between Augustine's assertion at the beginning of the *Tractates* (*Trloh*, IX.7-8) and what he says commenting on the Jesus' breathing of the Spirit on his disciples (*Jn.* 20:22) in *Trloh*, CXXI.4.

*Spiritus sanctus caritas est*.<sup>98</sup> While the definition of the Spirit as love is not new to Augustine's theology, the passage is of great importance due to the description of the Spirit not only as the bond of love between God and humanity, but between Father and Son as well. In other words, the Spirit is here depicted as the *ontological* bond of love between Father and Son, the eternal gift of both in the immanent Trinity: *Quisquis itaque nominat Patrem et Filium, oportet ibi intellegat tamquam caritatem invicem Patris et Filii, quod est Spiritus sanctus*.<sup>99</sup> Even before reaching the point of commenting on the three chapters of John specifically dedicated to the Holy Spirit (*Jn.* 14-16, *Trloh*, LXXIV-CV), Augustine does mention and discuss the role of the third hypostasis in the Trinity many times in relation to the Father and the Son. The Spirit is the means by which Augustine explains the unity of the Father and the Son. Because the Spirit is love, he is depicted and subsists as the bond of unity between Father and Son:

Deus misit Deum. lunge ambos, unus Deus, Deus verax missus a Deo. De singulis interroga, Deus: et de ambobus interroga, Deus. Non singuli Deus et ambo dii, sed singulus quisque Deus et ambo Deus. Tanta enim ibi est caritas Spiritus sancti, tanta pax unitatis, ut de singulis cum interrogatur, Deus tibi respondeatur; de Trinitate cum interrogatur, Deus tibi respondeatur (*Trloh*, XIV.9).<sup>100</sup>

With this quotation, Augustine aims at resolving the problem we have set in the previous section regarding God's unity and oneness. The most significant passage in this regard comes – not surprisingly! – from Augustine's comment on the fifth and the eighth chapter of the Gospel (*Trloh*, XVIII.2-4), where he identifies undivided love (*individua caritas*) – namely, the Holy Spirit – as the cause of unity between the Father and the Son. Alongside the two Johannine chapters, Augustine often quotes or mentions *Acts* 4:31-33, where the Spirit is depicted as the bond of love which caused the perfect unity of the first Christian

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<sup>98</sup> *Trloh*, IX.8: 'Perhaps a thorough investigation of the Scriptures does show that the Holy Spirit is love'.

<sup>99</sup> *Trloh*, IX.8: 'Therefore, whoever names the Father and the Son ought to understand therein their mutual love, as it were, of the Father and the Son, which is the Holy Spirit'.

<sup>100</sup> 'God sent God. Unite both, you have one God, the truthful God sent by God. Ask about each one, there is God; ask about both, there is God. They are not God as individuals and gods together, but each single one is God and both together are God. For so great is the love of the Holy Spirit there, so great the peace of unity that, when it is asked about each one, let your answer be: God; when it is asked about the Trinity, let your answer be: God'.

community (*Trloh*, XXXIX.5). The episode from *Acts* is taken as an example of the kind of unity the Spirit creates. Since the nature of the immutable and inseparable Trinity is *to be what it has*, the unifying power of the Spirit in the first community is used as a symbol of the perfect bond of unity between the Father and the Son in the Trinity. The same reasoning is present in *On the Trinity*, where Augustine states the equivalence between the paradigm of Spirit/love and that of Spirit/communion. The very nature of the Spirit is that of being love because that love is the instantiation of the ontological communion between the three hypostases.<sup>101</sup> Interestingly, when this section of the *Tractates on John* – that is, the comment on the fifth chapter of the Gospel – was firstly preached, *Trloh*, XX-XXII were missing, therefore they are most likely a later addition.<sup>102</sup> This is particularly interesting for, evidently, Augustine felt the need to repeat and deepen what he had already stated about the inseparability of the works of the Trinity:

Quomodo Pater et Filius inseparabiles sunt? Quia ipse dixit: *Ego et Pater unum sumus*. Quia Pater et Filius non sunt duo dii, sed unus Deus, Verbum et cuius est Verbum, unus et Unicus, Deus unus Pater et Filius caritate complexi, unusque caritatis Spiritus eorum est, ut fiat Trinitas Pater et Filius et Spiritus sanctus. Non ergo tantum Patris et Filii, sed et Spiritus sancti, sicut aequalitas et inseparabilitas personarum, ita etiam opera inseparabilia sunt. [...] sed quod fecit Pater, hoc et Filius fecit, hoc et Spiritus sanctus fecit (*Trloh*, XX.3).<sup>103</sup>

The equality and inseparability of the persons stand not only on the unity of God's substance, but also on their relational qualities, as this unity is understood with regard to both the essence of the Trinity and its works. The unity of the divine actions is a recurrent theme in the *Tractates*, where the principle according to which the works of the Trinity are inseparable is very

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<sup>101</sup> See: *On the Trinity* XV.19.37: 'And if the love whereby the Father loves the Son, and the Son the Father, reveals in an ineffable manner the union between both, what more fitting than that he, who is the Spirit, common to both, should be properly called love?'. See also: *On the Trinity* XV.18.32.

<sup>102</sup> In this regard, see the chronology of *Trloh* in *supra*, I.2.2.

<sup>103</sup> 'How is it possible that the Father and the Son are inseparable? Because he himself said: "I and the Father are one" (*Jn.* 10:30). For since the Father and the Son are not two gods, but one God, the Word and him who is of Word is one and only one, then we have one God, Father and Son joined in Love, and the one of their love is the Spirit, so that there is the Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Therefore, as there is an equality and inseparability of the persons, not only of the Father and the Son, but also of the Holy Spirit, so also the works are inseparable'.

often stressed (*Trloh*, LXXIV.3-5; LXXVIII.1-3; XCI.4). Therefore, in relation to the Father, the Son is depicted as ‘immutable, coeternal, immortal, without time, equally creator and disposer of time’ (*Trloh*, XXIX.8). Equally, the Trinity itself is depicted as ‘one substance, one divinity, one coeternity, perfect equality, no dissimilarity at all’ (*una substantia, una divinitas, una coeternitas, perfecta aequalitas, dissimilitudo nulla, Trloh*, XXXVI.9). Therefore, the Trinity as a whole is one eternity, one power, one majesty (*una aeternitas, una potestas, una maiestas, Trloh*, XXXIX.1-4). While the Father is God and the Son is God and the Spirit is God, the Father is Father only in relation to the Son and the Spirit is Spirit in respect to Father and the Son (*Trloh*, XXIX.5). The relational nature of the three hypostases does not change their essence, for they are always the same thing, but does impact their denominations as Father, Son, and Spirit. It then follows that, ontologically, the Trinity exists only as a unity. If the Father or the Son or the Spirit have existence as separate entities, the unity between the three would be ontologically broken. Contrariwise, inasmuch as each one of them is the fullness of Being, they can exist only as one Being. Therefore, Augustine admits the possibility of speaking of Father, Son and Spirit as separate entities, maintaining nonetheless that they exist *in reality* only in unity.

As I mentioned previously, the unity of essence and works in the Trinity is particularly stressed in the comment on the “pneumatological section” of the Gospel of John (*Jn.* 14-16), since it has a special relevance to the Holy Spirit. Commenting on *Jn.* 14:26: ‘the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things’, Augustine stresses the commonality of teaching, learning and reminding among the three persons:

Omnis igitur et dicit et docet Trinitas: sed nisi etiam singillatim commendaretur, eam nullo modo humana capere utique posset infirmitas. Cum ergo omnino sit inseparabilis, nunquam Trinitas esse sciretur, si semper inseparabiliter diceretur: nam et cum dicimus Patrem et Filium et Spiritum sanctum, non eos utique dicimus simul, cum ipsi non possint esse non simul (*Trloh*, LXXVII.2).<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> ‘Therefore, all the Trinity speaks and teaches; but unless it were also made known one by one, in no way could human weakness grasp it at all. Although, therefore, it is altogether without separation, the Trinity would never be known to exist if it were always spoken of as to its non-separation. For indeed, when we speak of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, we do not speak of them together in unity, although they cannot exist except together in unity’.

According to the economy of the divine revelation, it was necessary for the individual persons of the Trinity to be known as distinguished one from the other, but they must be understood ontologically without any separation. The Trinity was made known in separate persons only so that the human weak minds could grasp it (*Trloh*, LXXVII.2 and XCV.1). Therefore, where any person is present, we have to understand the one Trinity, one God (*Trloh*, XCIV.5).<sup>105</sup>

Nonetheless, Augustine's insistence on the fact that the Trinity is one *in reality* and that every work ascribed to one person can rightfully be said to be done by the whole Trinity has exposed him to accusations of having a quasi-modalist account of the Trinity. In this sense von Harnack declared that 'Augustine only gets beyond modalism by the mere assertion that he does not wish to be a modalist'.<sup>106</sup> Moreover, in the course of the twentieth century, many critics of Augustine accused him of stressing too much the *unity* of the Trinity at the expense of its relationality.<sup>107</sup> The account of God as the eternal *idipsum*, its identification with Being and the affirmation of the absolute equality of the three hypostases supposedly respond more to a neo-platonic logic than to a biblical one. In response to this observation, I would argue that the analysis proposed so far has sufficiently shown the extent to which Augustine's account on the Trinity is highly dependent on the text of the fourth Gospel. In this sense, the fact that Augustine's Trinitarian investigation is concerned about excluding any possible subordinationist interpretation of the Gospel of John – through his

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<sup>105</sup> Interestingly, the same argument is brought forth in Gregory of Nyssa, *On "Not Three Gods." To Ablabius*. For a thorough analysis of Gregory's work see: Giulio Maspero, *Trinity and Man: Gregory of Nyssa's Ad Ablabium*, Leiden 2007. Maspero agrees with Jaeger in defining Gregory's pneumatology as one of the most complete form of 'Christian humanism'. See: Werner Jaeger, *Gregor von Nyssa's Lehre vom Heiligen Geist*, Leiden 1966, p. 1-4. In this regard, he states that 'the Cappadocian Fathers reached the summit of Trinitarian reflection, with the distinction, on the level of the purest immanence, between essence and hypostasis' (p. 151). This would be particularly true for Gregory of Nyssa, 'who developed all of his theology and pneumatology based upon the connection between immanence and economy' (p. 151). Unfortunately, it is not possible to propose here a thorough comparison of the two authors. It is nevertheless very interesting to note – as Maspero does at p. 183 – the close similarity between Augustine's idea of the Spirit as *nexus amoris* expressed in *On the Trinity* XV.17 and Gregory's understanding of the Spirit as συνδαικικόν who unites the Father and the Son.

<sup>106</sup> A. von Harnack, *History of Dogma* IV, p. 131.

<sup>107</sup> In this regard, see *supra*, III.1.

doctrine of the *idipsum* – seems to respond more to a genuinely pro-Nicene concern.<sup>108</sup>

At this point of my investigation, there is one last problem worthy of further exploration. Those who are interested in Augustine’s legacy in the subsequent history of Christianity should keep in mind what the goal of his Trinitarian doctrine is: it aims primarily at proposing a coherent account of the Trinity that does not rely only on the sharing of a common “essence” or “deity” among the three persons – which is the Origenian solution – but it also tries to preserve the perfect unity and equality of the hypostases.<sup>109</sup> Thus, the last part of this chapter aims at disclosing Augustine’s solution to what can be properly predicated of the Trinity as a whole and what can be said of every single hypostasis.

The distinction between the existence of the Trinity *in reality* only as a unity and the attribution of the entirety of God’s substance to every single person of the Trinity is pivotal in understanding the relationship between relationality and identity in Augustine’s Trinity, and has been the battleground of different ideas among scholars. According to Lewis Ayres, Augustine proposes a paradigm according to which ‘each person is the essence of the other’, thus reconciling relationality and identity in his Trinitarian thought.<sup>110</sup> Therefore, Ayres states that the Spirit in Augustine’s Trinity is the very essence of the Father and of the Son.<sup>111</sup> This perspective is highly criticised by O’Leary, who points out that book 7 of Augustine’s *On the Trinity* opposes this idea as it would imply that Father and Son are not holy without the Holy Spirit.<sup>112</sup> My analysis will tackle this problem demonstrating that, at least in his *Tractates on John*, Augustine’s distinction between the existence of the Trinity *in reality* only as one and that of the hypostases separately is indicated by Augustine as the answer to this problem. While through the use of the concept of *idipsum* every hypostasis is

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<sup>108</sup> See both Barnes and Ayres: M. R. Barnes, ‘Rereading Augustine on the Trinity’, and L. Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity*. See also L. Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy*.

<sup>109</sup> In this regard, I completely agree with Lewis Ayres, ‘Sempiternus Spiritus Donum: Augustine’s Pneumatology and the Metaphysics of Spirit’, in G. E. Demacopoulos and A. Papanikolaou (eds), *Orthodox Readings of Augustine*, p.127-152.

<sup>110</sup> L. Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity*, p. 259.

<sup>111</sup> Ayres bases this idea on Augustine’s wavering suggestions in *On Faith and the Creed* and on *Epistle 11*; See: L. Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity*, p. 88; 91; 61.

<sup>112</sup> Joseph Stephen O’Leary, ‘Review of *Augustine and the Trinity*. By Lewis Ayres’, in *The Journal of Theological Studies* 62 2 (2011), p. 755–759.

fully taken to be God, the very unity of the Trinity is grounded on the fact that it is the eternal process of generation and communion, of which the Holy Spirit is the most perfect expression. The true essence of the Trinity is therefore relational, as its very existence is the mutual process of relation between the three persons, each one of which exists in reality, but never exists as separated one from the other two.

As previously stated, Augustine holds that it is impossible to distinguish the Father, the Son or the Spirit by their substance, since they only differ in their generation and relation. This is the principle that makes it possible to state that while both the Father and the Son are God, the Father is *Father* only in relation to the Son and vice versa (*Trloh*, XXIX.5). Equally, the Spirit is said to be *Spirit* only in relation to the Father and the Son. However, there is an essential difference between these two cases: while *Father* and *Son* are relational terms, *Spirit* is not. Such a peculiarity is not overlooked by Augustine, who states that when the Gospel attributes something as a proper signification (*proprie*) of the Spirit, it also underlines that the work of one person is the work of the entire Trinity. What is then the proper signification of the Spirit? And, most of all, what is there that can be preached *proprie* of the Spirit?

Augustine attempts to give his answer by commenting on *Jn.* 16:13-14: 'He (the Spirit) will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will glorify me (Christ) because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you'. Here, the problem Augustine has to tackle is why the Spirit is said not to speak of himself. When similar passages are preached about the Son, Augustine usually explains them by referring to the human part of Christ, which is obedient to the divine nature of the Word.<sup>113</sup> The unity of the person (*unitate personae*) of Christ makes possible the coexistence of human and divine substance (*Trloh*, XXVII.1-4).<sup>114</sup> A similar solution is, however, inapplicable to the Holy Spirit, for there is no human

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<sup>113</sup> This is how Augustine interprets the verse of *Jn.* 7:18: 'Whoever speaks on their own does so to gain personal glory, but he who seeks the glory of the one who sent him, he is from the truth'. Augustine maintains that there are two ways of understanding this statement. The first is in relation to the human nature of Christ, since the man Christ gives glory to God by unifying his will with that of the Word. The second is in relation to the Word itself, which eternally has glory with the Father. See: *Trloh* XXIX.8 and XXXIX.6-7.

<sup>114</sup> On the unity of the person in Christ see: *Trloh*, XIX.14-15; XXV.1-7; XLVII.10-13; XLVII.7; LXIII.3; LXIX.1-4; LXX.1; LXXIV.3-5; LXXXII.3-4; LXXVIII.1-3; XCIX.1-3; CV.4-5.

nature to take into account (*Trloh*, XCIX.1-3). Thus, the sentence is taken as a reference to the ontological origin of the Spirit, which proceeds from the Father, according to *Jn.* 15:26.<sup>115</sup> It is in this context that Augustine discusses his hypothesis according to which the Spirit proceeds also from the Son. The first evidence of this possibility is found in *Jn.* 4:24, where the *proprium* of the Spirit is identified in the fact that his name does not indicate a one-way relationship to another person (like Father and Son), but rather a commonality of nature between the three persons:

Nec ob aliud existimo ipsum vocari proprie Spiritum: cum etiamsi de singulis interrogemur, non possumus nisi et Patrem et Filium spiritum dicere; quoniam *spiritus est Deus*, id est, non corpus est Deus, sed spiritus. Quod ergo communiter vocantur et singuli, hoc proprie vocari oportuit eum qui non est unus eorum, sed in quo communitas apparet amborum. Cur ergo non credamus quod etiam de Filio procedat Spiritus sanctus, cum Filii quoque ipse sit Spiritus? Si enim non ab eo procederet, non post resurrectionem se repraesentans discipulis suis insufflasset dicens: *Accipite Spiritum sanctum* (*Trloh*, XCIX.7).<sup>116</sup>

Connecting *Jn.* 4:24 and *Jn.* 20:22, Augustine points to the fact that the proper name of the third person is the common name between Father and Son; therefore, ontologically, the name refers to the commonality of the same essence of the Father and Son. The very essence of God makes it impossible to consider the Holy Spirit – that is, the bond of love between the Father and the Son – merely as a contingent attribute of the first two hypostases. Admitting an extrinsic bond between Father and Son would negate the simplicity of their own essence, leaving their nature hostage to an attribute – that is, the Spirit – which instantiates a property that is not their own essence. Nor it is possible for Augustine to postulate the idea that the Spirit is a universal of which Father and

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<sup>115</sup> 'When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father – the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father – he will testify about me'.

<sup>116</sup> 'And for no other reason I think that he is properly called "Spirit", since, even if we are asked about them individually, we can only say that Father and Son are spirit. For "God is Spirit (*Jn.* 4:24), that is, God is not body, but spirit. What, therefore, they are called in common or even as individuals, this he ought to be called, I mean the one who is not one of them, but in whom the community of nature of both is evident. Why, therefore, should we not believe that the Holy Spirit also proceeds from the Son since he is also the Spirit of the Son? For if he did not proceed from him (the Son), after the resurrection, showing himself anew to his disciples, he would not have breathed upon them, saying: "Receive the Holy Spirit" (*Jn.* 20:22)'.



Son are particulars.<sup>117</sup> The only way to get away from this problem would be to postulate the existence of two spirits: that of the Father and that of the Son. Since this would turn the Trinity into a quaternity, Augustine formulates the doctrine of the procession of one Spirit from both Father and Son. Augustine identifies in Jesus' breathing of the Spirit on the disciples in *Jn.* 20:22 the scriptural place where the procession of the same Spirit from the Father and the Son is clearly indicated: *Insufflando significavit Spiritum sanctum non Patris solius esse Spiritum, sed et suum* (*Trloh*, CXXI.4). Moreover, the double procession of the Spirit both from the Father and the Son gives Augustine the metaphysical means of explaining to what extent the procession of the Spirit is different from the generation of the Son. Just as Origen, Augustine has to defend the idea that the Son is the Only-Begotten, that is, the only entity to be born of the Father, according to *Jn.* 1:18 and 3:16-18. While Origen resolves this conundrum by stating the procession of the Spirit from the Father through the Son, Augustine places the solution in the fact that the Son was begotten as the one who has 'life in himself'. As such the Son has in himself not only the attributes, but also the very generative nature of the Father. Therefore, according to the same act of generation which provided the Son with 'life in himself', the Father granted that the Holy Spirit might proceed from the Son as well:

A quo autem habet Filius ut sit Deus (est enim de Deo Deus), ab illo habet utique ut etiam de illo procedat Spiritus sanctus: ac per hoc Spiritus sanctus ut etiam de Filio procedat, sicut procedit de Patre, ab ipso habet Patre. Hic utcumque etiam illud intellegitur, quantum a talibus quales nos sumus, intellegi potest, cur non dicatur natus esse, sed potius procedere Spiritus sanctus. [...] Filius quippe nullus est duorum, nisi patris et matris. [...] Spiritus autem sanctus non de Patre procedit in Filium, et de Filio procedit ad sanctificandam creaturam; sed simul de utroque procedit: quamvis hoc Filio Pater dederit, ut quemadmodum de se, ita de illo quoque procedat. Neque enim possumus dicere quod non sit vita Spiritus sanctus cum vita Pater, vita sit Filius. Ac per hoc sicut Pater cum habeat vitam in semetipso,

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<sup>117</sup> The same reasoning is shown by Augustine in *On the Trinity*, VII.1.2; VII.2.3.

dedit et Filio habere vitam in semetipso; sic ei dedit vitam procedere de illo, sicut procedit et de ipso (*Trloh*, XCIX.8-9).<sup>118</sup>

This passage could be rightly considered a summa of Augustine's exposition on the Trinity in his *Tractates on John*; even more, it could be considered the formulation of Augustine's mature Trinitarian theology. Augustine refers here to the common understanding of human generation in late antiquity, according to which the seed of the father goes inside the mother who then generates the offspring.<sup>119</sup> Therefore, differently from every human generation, in which the seed of life proceeds from the father into the mother and then from the mother into existence, the mystery of the procession of the Spirit consists in the instantiation of the commonality between Father and Son – that is, their love – into a third entity with a proper existence. This solution not only allows Augustine to preserve the title of Only-Begotten for the Son alone, but it allows him to give a logical account of the reason why the Trinity is also a unity. Besides the commonality of nature that makes them *the same thing*, the three hypostases know, one in each other, their relational nature. While the Father knows the Son by begetting him, at the same time, he knows in the Son what it is to be begotten. The Son knows the Father by being begotten and knows from

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<sup>118</sup> 'But of him of whom the Son has it that he is God (for he is God from God), he has it, of course, that the Holy Spirit also proceeds from him. And because of this the Holy Spirit has it from the Father himself that he proceeds also from the Son, just as he proceeds from the Father. Here, to some extent, it is understood, as far as it possible to understand for someone such as we are, why the Holy Spirit is not said to have been born, but rather to proceed. [...] For indeed no one is the Son of two except of a father and a mother. [...] But the Holy Spirit does not proceed from the Father into the Son, and from the Son proceed to sanctify the creature; but he proceeds from both at the same time, although the Father has given this to the Son, that the Holy Spirit proceeds as from himself, so also from him. And we cannot say that the Holy Spirit is not "life", when the Father is "life" and the Son is "life". And for this reason, just as the Father, although he has life in himself, has also given to the Son to have life in himself, so he has given to him that life proceed from him as it also proceeds from himself.'

<sup>119</sup> Most of ancient physicians, believed that both the father and the mother produced a different seed – where the female is usually considered the defective one – which then combines in the mother's womb. Galen says that the combination of seeds results in the sex and physical characteristics of the offspring. See: Galen, *On the Usefulness of the Parts of the Body*, 14.6. Aristotle, on the contrary, worried of the possibility that a female could generate on her own if producing any kind of seed, admits as intellectually more satisfying the idea that the female does not produce any seed. Therefore, human generation depends only from male seed while the female works as receptacle. See: Aristotle, *On the Generation of Animals*, I.18. Augustine seems to refer to this second possibilities in his passage, as he refuses the hypothesis that the Father could generate through the Son as if the Son was the receptacle – that is, the mother – of the Spirit. On ancient theories of generation see: Helen King, 'Making a Man: Becoming Human in Early Greek Medicine', in Gordon Reginald Dunstan (ed), *The Human Embryo Aristotle and the Arabic and European Traditions*, Exeter 1990 p. 10-19; Ann Ellis Hanson, 'Conception, Gestation, and the Origin of Female Nature in the Corpus Hippocraticum, in *Helios* 19 (1992), p. 31-71.

the Father what begetting means. The Spirit knows both Father and Son by proceeding from both, thus being their bond of love, the production of the mutual self-sameness of Father and Son. In them, he knows what begetting and being begotten are.<sup>120</sup> Therefore, the difference between Origen's and Augustine's solution of the problem of the procession of the Spirit lies in the metaphysical premises of the concept of *idipsum*. While Origen postulates the Spirit as an entity that has its attribute by participation in the Son and is brought into being through the Logos, Augustine rejects this position, for the Father and Son possess the same attributes and they *are* one, because of the *idipsum*, and they are united in the eternal process of self-penetration instantiated in the Spirit.

Hence, on the basis of the passages in the Gospel of John where the Spirit is said to be administered by the Son, Augustine conceives the doctrine of the double procession. While this procession is somehow described as mysterious by Augustine – as we have already noted at the beginning of this chapter – it is nonetheless the cornerstone for understanding not only the 'immanent Trinity', but also the way in which God relates to human beings. Far from being an intellectual *divertissement*, Augustine believes that enquiring about the Trinity leads the faithful to reach and touch the mystery of the infinite love and eternal communion that is God.<sup>121</sup> Anyway, to put it with Augustine's words at the very end of the last *Tractate* on the Gospel, *capacitate legentium comprehendere fortasse non possent*.<sup>122</sup> As much as we can comprehend the procession of the Spirit, we will never comprehend what this Spirit *is*. Unless, perhaps, that this very Spirit would come to us to 'speak of what he hears' (*Jn.* 16:13).

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<sup>120</sup> On this interpretation of Augustine's Trinity see the brilliant analysis carried out in L. Ayres, 'Sempiternae Spiritus Donum: Augustine's Pneumatology and the Metaphysics of Spirit'.

<sup>121</sup> In this regard, see: Joseph Ratzinger, 'The Holy Spirit as Communio: Concerning the Relationship of Pneumatology and Spirituality in Augustine', in *Communio* 25 (1998), p. 324-337.

<sup>122</sup> *Trloh*, CXXIV.8: 'Perhaps these things could not be comprehended by the capacity of the reader'.

## Conclusions

This chapter has shown to what extent Augustine's doctrine of the Trinity, particularly the double procession, is shaped according to his exegesis of the fourth Gospel. By investigating Augustine's exegesis of the most important passages of the Gospel, it has been shown how Augustine not only uses the Gospel to support his own Trinitarian doctrine, but he is actually led by the Gospel's logic in systematising his findings.

First, this chapter has enquired about Augustine's understanding of the essence of God as the eternal self-sameness, the absolute essence which does not admit any changing in his own essence. It has been highlighted how the identification of God as one Being, one *idipsum* and one *principium* became the hermeneutical principle that led Augustine's reading of the whole Gospel, thus transforming the letter into spirit.

Secondly, it has been made explicit (*supra*, section III.4) how the entire doctrine of the Trinity is built upon the Johannine denomination of the Son as the one who has 'life in himself' (*Jn.* 5:26). As such, the Son enjoys the same eternal self-sameness of the Father who generated him. Out of this *binitarian* relationship, the Holy Spirit proceeds not only as the product of the same eternal will that the Father communicates to the Son through his generation, but also as eternal *love* and eternal *gift*. As such, the Holy Spirit does not only possess the holiness of his Parents, but he *is* the everlasting generative communion between the three persons of the Trinity. While the Father is identified as the undefiled source of the Trinitarian communion, he gives to the Son *as a gift* to generate the Spirit. This generative act is, as it were, intrinsic to the Being of the Godhead. Therefore, the constant link made by Augustine between the role of the Spirit in Christian community and the role of the Spirit in the Trinity is not extrinsic to the divine communion. While the Trinity is said to operate together as one active actor, the sanctification of the creatures is said to be the *proprium* of the Spirit. Just as the perfect Trinitarian communion ought to be found in the Spirit, it is through the Spirit that God manifests himself as the eternal giver of grace and redemption. Paraphrasing the text of the Gospel, 'that

is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you': that you may know that God is communion and communion is love, and love is Spirit.

Nevertheless, it remains impossible for the human mind to understand utterly what this love is. The Spirit, which knows everything of God due to his nature of eternal communion of God and in God is therefore the only means through which and in which human beings can have a glimpse of God's reality. The dispensation of the Spirit will be therefore the core of chapter V of this thesis.



# **PART B. THE SPIRIT AND THE WORLD**





## The World and the Spirit in the Gospel of John

From its very beginning, the fourth Gospel presents the incarnation of Jesus Christ as the divine act that radically changes the relationship between God and his creation. The Logos which eternally is *in* and *with* God appears on the earth as the 'light of all humankind' (*Jn.* 1:3) coming down from heaven to bring salvation to the world. Nevertheless, from the Prologue onward, the Gospel dualism is revealed in the radical rejection of God's salvific message by the world. Therefore, 'the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him' (*Jn.* 1:10-11). The world's refusal to accept the salvific message of God stands as the cause which leads to the radical separation – found in the whole Gospel – between "the chosen", that is, between the small and marginalised portion of the those who accepted the coming of God, and the rest of the world that, because of its nature, hates Jesus and his disciples: 'Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God – children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God' (*Jn.* 1:12-13). The radical dualism between God and the world, that is, the dualistic framework ruling the fourth Gospel, has been recognised by scholars throughout the last century.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, scholars from all kind of backgrounds, like Ramsey Michaels, Reinhartz and Gundry have agreed on that.<sup>2</sup> However, differently from other forms of cosmic dualism of the antique world – such as Manichaeism and at least some forms of Gnosticism – the same world which is depicted as corruption and darkness is nevertheless the object of God's love, so much so that he sent his only begotten Son to redeem it. For this reason, 'God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him' (*Jn.* 3:17). To put it with the words of Pétrement, 'the author of the Johannine writings teaches *both* faith in a world created by God, which might be said to be monist, *and* faith in two

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<sup>1</sup> For an introduction on the differences between the various scholarly trends on the interpretation of the fourth Gospel in the last century see: Mark Edwards, *John Through the Centuries*, Oxford 2004, p. 1-14.

<sup>2</sup> See: J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John*; Adele Reinhartz, *Befriending the Beloved Disciple: A Jewish Reading of the Gospel of John*, New York 2002; Robert H. Gundry, *Jesus the Word according to John the Sectarian*, Grand Rapids MI 2002. In this regard, see *infra*, VI.3.1, where I address these scholars' opinions directly.

fundamentally divided natures, one of which is God, the other the world, which might be called dualist'.<sup>3</sup>

The very concept of the world appears therefore in all its ambiguity. On the one hand, it can mean the totality of God's creation, produced and brought forth by the goodness of God through the Logos (*Jn.1:3-4*); despite its corruption, the world is still the object of God's salvific love, the place where the Son came to save his creatures (*Jn. 1:29; 4:42; 6:51; 8:12; 12:46-47*). Even the disciples are said to be sent to the world in order to show to the world the light which comes from the Father (*Jn. 17:18*). On the other hand, the world is both the opposite and the opponent of Jesus' message. Rejecting the salvation which came from God (*Jn. 1:10-11*), the world is depicted as the place of darkness, ruled by the devil, who is prince of the world, and by demonic powers, incapable of any conversion and alienated from God (*Jn. 1:10; 12:31; 14:17-30; 16:11; 17:9-25*). Thus, since the beginning of the Gospel, the theoretical possibility of the world's being good is stripped out in a favour of a completely negative view of the world, seen as the perverse opponent of Jesus and his community (*Jn. 7:7; 15:18; 16:20; 17:14*).<sup>4</sup> Such a dire place is the battleground of Jesus and his disciples who, after the enlightenment, are no longer part of the world. Indeed, not only Christ, but even his disciples are no longer said to be "from" the world, but "in" the world (*Jn. 8:23; 13:1; 16:28; 17:16; 18:36*). This radical distinction between a small portion of chosen and the world, which is present since the beginning of the Gospel in the opposition between 'the world' and 'his own', finds its completion in Jesus' denial to pray for the world in *Jn. 17:9*: 'I am not praying for the world, but only for those you have given me, for they are yours'. Finally, for the power of God, the world is conquered and defeated by the cross of Christ (*Jn. 16:33*).

The opposition between God and the world reaches its apex in Jesus' farewell discourse in chapters 14-17 of the Gospel. There, the figure of the world is put in direct opposition to the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit.<sup>5</sup> The Spirit is both the marker

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<sup>3</sup> S. Pétrement, *A Separate God*, p. 175.

<sup>4</sup> On the concept of the world in the Gospel of John see: Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, Peabody MA 2003, p. 329-330. References to the Gospel quoted so far are not meant to be exhaustive. Much more loci could be quoted.

<sup>5</sup> On the possible reasons for the absence of any reference to the Spirit in chapters 8-13 of the Gospel of John see the interesting remarks by T. G. Brown, *Spirit in the Writings of John*, p. 166-167. She suggests that this absence could be explained by the fact that, in these chapters, the

of the love of God for the community and of the self-identification of the community. God, who gives the “new commandment of love” (*Jn.* 15:12-17) grants knowledge of his divine message to the disciples by the pouring of the Spirit (*Jn.* 14:16-17; 14:25-26; 15:26-27 16:7-8; 16:13-14) that transforms sinners disciples into holy community. By contrast with the world which hates Jesus and his community (*Jn.* 15:18-25), the Spirit creates bonds of love among the chosen believers: ‘If the world hates you, be aware that it hated me before it hated you. If you belonged to the world, the world would love you as its own. Because you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world—therefore the world hates you’ (*Jn.* 15:18-19). Therefore, the text of the Gospel presents the opposition between the world and the Spirit as structural: ‘He will give you another Paraclete, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you’ (*Jn.* 14:16-17). According to the participation in the Spirit, the disciples, just as Jesus, do not belong to this world: ‘I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world’ (*Jn.* 17:15-16). In the pneumatological chapters (*Jn.* 14-17) the Spirit is depicted as the distinctive possession of Jesus’ followers, in contrast with “the world” and “the Jews” who do not possess the Spirit.

Both the theme of the relationship between “the world” and “the Jews” in the fourth Gospel, and that of the identification of the Spirit as the marker of Christian identity in the historical construction of the Johannine community would deserve a separate dissertation.<sup>6</sup>

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Gospel’s attention ‘is more on the smouldering opposition to Jesus than on his offer of benefits from God’.

<sup>6</sup> Raymond E. Brown regarded the replacement of “the Jews” with “the world” in chapters 13-17 of the Gospel as a testimony of a later period in the life of Johannine community when, after having completely rejected Judaism, the community was facing new troubles in the relationship with the Gentile world. Therefore, the two dictions of “the Jews” and “the world” can be interpreted as testimonies of two different chronological stages of the primitive Johannine community. A very different interpretation is given by Lars Kierspel. This author does not envisage a strong difference between the two terms, arguing that they were used almost interchangeably in order to generally describe Jesus’s opponents. See: Lars Kierspel, *The Jews and the World in the fourth Gospel: Parallelism, Function, and Context*, Tübingen 2006; Raymond E. Brown, *An introduction to the Gospel of John*, edited, updated and revised by Francis J. Moloney, New York-London 2003, p. 170-171.

Unfortunately, it is not possible to propose it here. Nonetheless, it is worth remembering that the aim of this short introduction is not to analyse the historical emergence of these theological themes in the Johannine community – a process which eventually led to the production of the text of the Gospel as we know it today – but rather to understand in which ways these themes were read and interpreted by Origen and Augustine. Differently from modern scholars, who read the Gospel as an historical source from which it is possible to extrapolate useful information on the life and development of the Johannine community in the first two centuries of Christianity, both Origen and Augustine read the text as a consistent Spirit-inspired work written by the beloved disciple John.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, when analysing Origen's and Augustine's exegesis of the text, it is useful to bear in mind that the category of "the world" was understood by Augustine in its *universal* meaning, that is, a meaning that is not only related to the vicissitudes of the community which produced the text, but rather to the universal and salvific value inscribed in the Gospel's message. Chapters IV and V will deal with the interpretation of the relationship between the Spirit and the world in Origen's *Commentary on John* and Augustine's *Tractates on John*.

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<sup>7</sup> See Origen's and Augustine's remarks on John the evangelist in: *ComJn*, I.19; I.21; I.44; *Trloh*, I.4-8; XVI.2. XVIII.1; XXXVI.1; XXXVI.5; XLVIII.6; LXI.6. For modern debate on the authorship of the Gospel see: R. E. Brown, *An introduction to the Gospel of John*, p. 189-220. See also: C. S. Keener, *The Gospel of John*, p. 81-138. For a full bibliography on the authorship of the fourth Gospel see: Stanley E. Porter and Andrew K. Gabriel, *Johannine Writings and Apocalyptic: An Annotated Bibliography*, Leiden 2013, p. 36-40.

# IV. The Spirit and the World in Origen

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## Introduction

The dualism between the world and the Spirit is one of the most peculiar traits of the Gospel of John. The Spirit is the gift of God which is poured upon the chosen, transforming sinners into holy ones, whilst the world (*Jn.* 14:16-17; 14:25-26; 15:26-27 16:7-8; 16:13-14) stands in contrast as the portion of the cosmos which refuses the redeeming action of the Saviour. Using the renowned light/darkness imagery, the author describes the world as the “darkness” into which the Saviour comes to convert those whom he has chosen. By rejecting the light brought by the Saviour, the world is separated from communion with God, a communion instantiated in the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the fourth Gospel’s dualism is represented metaphorically through a series of binary oppositions, such as holy community/world, light/darkness, elect/rejected, Spirit/world.<sup>8</sup> Hence, the first aim of this chapter is to detect how Origen represents the relation between the Spirit and the world, thus also exploring his interpretation of the Johannine dualism. In order to prove my point, I have designed two sections.

First, this chapter will analyse Origen’s interpretation of “the world” (κόσμος), tackling the issue of Origen’s understanding of the *theological* concept of ‘the world’, as found in the Scriptures.<sup>9</sup> The “world” of the Gospel of John is interpreted by Origen as the perceptible world (αἰσθητὸς κόσμος), composed of creatures at different levels of perfection. According to Origen, the level of perfection of the creatures in this perceptible world depends on their level of participation in the noetic world (κόσμος νοητὸς), regardless of the fact that they will all return to highest possible perfection eventually.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, I will explain in detail the

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<sup>8</sup> On the fourth Gospel’s binary oppositions and on modern scholarship regarding the Gospel of John see the section at the beginning of part B of this thesis: ‘The World and the Spirit in the Gospel of John’.

<sup>9</sup> Therefore, this chapter does not aim at presenting a full account of Origen’s cosmology, but only at discussing Origen’s understanding of “the world” as a theological concept.

<sup>10</sup> It is not coincidental that, in the *Commentary on John*, the question of the eschatological destiny of the devil is debated at length. Representing the last possible level of the cosmos, the devil is

difference between the perceptible and noetic worlds, particularly challenging Tzamalikos' interpretation of Origen's understanding of this concept.<sup>11</sup>

Secondly, this chapter wants to analyse the role that Holy Spirit plays in the salvation of human beings that are said to be 'of this world'. In this regard, Origen's understanding of how the Spirit works in the process of restoration of the creatures in their final state is extremely interesting. While recognising that Origen's soteriology is mainly constructed on the salvific role of Christ, nonetheless this work aims to show that Origen envisioned a soteriological role for the Holy Spirit which is quite different from that of the Son. Although, as already noticed by Martens, a certain 'overlapping of Christology and Pneumatology' is detectable in Origen's work, this chapter will show that the two hypostases play very distinctive roles in Origen's soteriology.<sup>12</sup> The soteriological difference between the Son and the Spirit can be exemplified in the difference between Origen's λογικοὶ and πνευματικοὶ. I will argue that Origen uses this terminology to indicate different types of participation in God: while the term *pneumatikos* indicates one's participation in the Spirit, the word *logikos* indicates one's participation in the Logos. As the process of salvation in Origen can be explained with the concept of the participation in God, it seems reasonable to assume that creatures participate to a different extent in both the Logos and in the Spirit. While Origen considers the participation in the Logos as a permanent possession of every rational creature, which is accordingly called λογικός (*logikos*) regardless of its cosmological state, the attribute of πνευματικός (*pneumatikos*) belongs only to the saints, who achieve such status as a temporary possession. Nevertheless, the two conditions are intertwined for the more a creature is participant in the Spirit, the more it understands the Logos. In the process of ascent, the Spirit is the one who provides the different λογικοὶ with the spiritual *substratum* – the *spiritual matter*, as Origen would say – which allows creatures to pass from a cosmological status to another, until their final reunification in the Logos. The more spiritual a soul becomes, the more it is

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indeed the ultimate example of the redeeming action of God toward creation. See: *ComJn*, I.95-100; I.236; XX.171-181; XXXII.19-40. This issue will be analysed later in the chapter. See: *infra*, IV.2.2.2.

<sup>11</sup> P. Tzamalikos, *Origen: Cosmology and Ontology of Time*, p. 65-175.

<sup>12</sup> Peter Martens, 'Holy Spirit', in John Anthony McGuckin (ed), *The Westminster Handbook to Origen*, Louisville KY 2004, p. 125-128, 126.

detached from “this world”, that is, the perceptible world (αἰσθητὸς κόσμος), and becomes participant in the Logos, that is, in the noetic world (κόσμος νοητὸς). So far as I am aware, none of the previous investigations on such topic has ever provided a constructive explanation for Origen’s use of this diverse terminology.

By analysing the kind of relation existing between the perceptible world and the noetic world together with the one between the participation of the rational creatures in the Logos and in the Spirit, this chapter will also propose a slight difference between the *spiritual* and the *noetic* in Origen’s exegesis. Finally, it will show that it is exactly the liminal – that is, subordinated – nature of the Holy Spirit, that is, the fact that he is both God and creation which makes the Holy Spirit such a necessary tool in Origen’s soteriology. By the use of the terminological and ontological framework built on chapter II, this chapter will show how the Holy Spirit’s *ontological subordination of priority* to the Son is the very key to understand his soteriological role. While the Spirit is both God and creature, his pre-eminence towards the rest of creation is based on the *ontological subordination of superiority* which Origen envisions between him and the creatures. This ontological status is the key for understanding his role as the one who provides the rest of creation with the spiritual matter necessary to be sanctified and to gain a perfect participation in the Logos.

By studying the relation and the difference between the soteriological roles of the Spirit and the Son, this work aims also at casting a new look on the topic of Origen’s pneumatology. Modern scholarly researches can be divided in two categories:<sup>13</sup> on the one hand, some scholars deny the crucial soteriological role of the Spirit, thus claiming Origen’s pneumatology to be of secondary importance in the study of Origen’s soteriology.<sup>14</sup> This thesis takes a different direction from this line of scholarship. On the other hand, a few scholars have affirmed the soteriological importance of the Holy Spirit in Origen, especially Marksches, McDonnell and Greggs.<sup>15</sup> Nonetheless, among these scholars there is a

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<sup>13</sup> For a more complete scholarship review see *supra*, II.1.1.

<sup>14</sup> See, for example: Benjamin Drewery, *Origen and the Doctrine of Grace*, London 1960, p. 156-157.

<sup>15</sup> C. Marksches, ‘Der Heilige Geist im Iohanneskommentar des Origenes’; T. Greggs, *Barth, Origen, and Universal Salvation*. K. McDonnell, ‘Does Origen Have a Trinitarian Doctrine of the Holy Spirit?’.

tendency to smooth Origen's Trinitarian subordinationism and to elevate the Holy Spirit to the same rank of the Son. If so, one annuls the ontological and soteriological differences between the Son and the Spirit, thus transforming the Spirit into a useless duplicate of the Son. Consequently, this approach fails to comprehend both the need and reasons for Origen's pneumatology. Unlike previous research on Origen's pneumatology, my investigation will show that the Holy Spirit and the Son possess two different soteriological roles. The need of the Holy Spirit in the process of salvation comes from his created nature. The Spirit's "creation" must be understood as an *ontological subordination of priority* towards the Son, as I have explained in chapter II.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, I will suggest that the differences between the two can be understood only if one admits the subordination of the Spirit to the Son, since the Spirit's soteriological role exists *because of* his subordination to the Son.

The task I am proposing here is complicated by textual problems that cannot be overlooked. The main issue is represented by the fact that we do not possess the entirety of Origen's *Commentary on John*; indeed, at the current state of research, it appears likely that Origen never finished his *Commentary*, leaving this work after having written the 32<sup>nd</sup> book.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, out of the 32 books of the *Commentary*, only nine of them are preserved and available for us to study.<sup>18</sup> So far as my research is concerned, this poses a serious issue because it seems likely that the so-called pneumatological books of the Gospels – *Jn.* 14-16 – were never commented on by Origen. While we can only speculate on the reasons why Origen never finished his masterpiece – reasons that are probably to be found in the lack of time and energy of the author rather than in new theological concerns – my research will – hopefully! – prove that the material in our hands is still more than enough to answer the previously outlined research questions. Reading Origen's *Commentary*, it is clear that he is well aware of the Johannine dualistic structure, which he smooths out through a carefully constructed exegetical

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<sup>16</sup> See particularly *supra*, II.2.2.

<sup>17</sup> Therefore, Origen originally commented on a portion of the text which goes from the Prologue to *Jn.* 13:33.

<sup>18</sup> For information on the textual transmission of the *ComJn* see *supra*, I.2.1.



work.<sup>19</sup> In other words, Origen's exegesis aims at bridging the distance between God and the world rather than reinforcing the distance.

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<sup>19</sup> This thesis, following the work of Dively Lauro and Dawson, will work on the broad assumption of the consistency of Origen's exegesis. These two authors have already proven it is reasonable to work from an assumption that Origen's exegetical practice is broadly consistent with his exegetical principles expounded in the fourth book of *On First Principles*. I will not address this problem directly. However, I will show that Origen's exegesis is both legitimate and consistent with the exegetical rules that he sets out at the beginning of the *Commentary*. Henceforth, this chapter will show the way Origen deals with the fourth Gospel, partially drawing from and partially applying his own theological doctrines to the text. On the internal consistency of Origen's exegesis see: Elizabeth Dively-Lauro, *The Soul and the Spirit of Scriptures within Origen's Exegesis*, Boston 2005. See also: David Dawson, *Christian Figural Reading and the Fashioning of Identity*, Berkeley 2002.

## IV.1 Noetic and Perceptible Cosmos: The Concept of the World in the *Commentary on John*

In this section, I will present Origen's twofold interpretation of the Johannine concept of "the world". On the one hand, Origen uses this concept to indicate the perceptible world, formed by those creatures which, although being participant in the Logos, are mingled with materiality. On the other hand, he uses it to indicate the noetic world, which can be broadly defined as the *locus rationalis* shared by the Logos and the *logikoi*. As such, the noetic world is interpreted by Origen as the representation of the noetic aspects of the Son (the *epinoiai*), in whose participation the perceptible world subsists.

To better illustrate this opposition, I will firstly deal with Origen's hermeneutic of the Gospel, with particular regard to Origen's opposition between the perceptible and the spiritual Gospel. Secondly, I will analyse in detail the most important passages of the *Commentary* where Origen deals with "the world", focusing in particular on the salvation of the cosmos and on the soteriological role of the Son. Lastly, I will explain the radical opposition between noetic and perceptible world in Origen's theology by means of the distinction, proposed by the author, between κτίσις and καταβολή.

### IV.1.1 Turning the Perceptible into the Noetic: The World in the Spiritual Gospel

As I have already pointed out in the introduction of this work, the *Commentary on John* should be considered as one of the most – if not the most – important pieces of work Origen ever wrote.<sup>20</sup> Even before starting his comments on the Prologue, Origen asserts that all four gospels should be taken as the "first fruits" (ἀπαρχή)

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<sup>20</sup> See *supra*, I.1.1. For this reason, I disagree with T. Greggs, who states that Origen's assertions on the role of the Spirit in this work 'may well be a result of the genre of Origen's work'. See T. Greggs, *Barth, Origen, and Universal Salvation*, p. 153 n. 9. On the contrary, I think that, since Origen indicates the Gospel of John as the most important and profound book of the Bible, it should be taken as one of the most important piece of writing in trying to reconstruct or, so to speak, systematise his thought. This consideration is particularly true when considering the extraordinary importance of biblical exegesis in Origen's thought. In this regard see: P. W. Martens, *Origen and Scripture*.

of the Scriptures as a whole (*ComJn*, I.12). Indeed, Since the gospels have first been proclaimed, the treasures of spiritual knowledge that have been hidden in the Old Testament have been made manifest to those who are able to read the noetic and spiritual meaning of the Gospel. Consequently, even the Old Testament, after the coming of Christ, has become “Gospel”: ‘Since the Saviour has come, and has caused the Gospel to be embodied in the Gospel, (ὁ δὲ σωτὴρ ἐπιδημήσας καὶ τὸ εὐαγγέλιον σωματοποιηθῆναι ποιήσας τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ) he has made all things Gospel, as it were (πάντα ὡσεὶ εὐαγγέλιον πεποίηκεν)’ (*ComJn*, I.33). Origen explains the “gospelisation” of all Scriptures by affirming that, just as the law of Moses used to be the shadow of the things to come, so the Gospel is the shadow of the mysteries of Christ (*ComJn*, I.39). In other words, Origen understands the Gospel as the place where all mysteries concerning noetic realities are written.<sup>21</sup> As such, its body is a collection of symbols that points out the superior realities,<sup>22</sup> called the eternal gospel: ‘And that which John calls an eternal Gospel (εὐαγγέλιον αἰώνιον), which would properly be called a spiritual Gospel (πνευματικόν), clearly presents both the mysteries presented by Christ’s words and things (ὑπὸ τῶν λόγων αὐτοῦ τά τε πράγματα) of which his acts were symbols” (*ComJn*, I.40). The task of the exegete consists therefore in the effort of turning the perceptible Gospel into the noetic and spiritual Gospel (εὐαγγέλιον νοητοῦ καὶ πνευματικοῦ) (*ComJn*, I.45). By understanding the spiritual Gospel one gets to understand the many aspects (*epinoiai*) of Jesus, thus gaining salvation.<sup>23</sup> This process has its culmination in the Gospel of John, which is indeed declared by Origen to be the ‘firstfruits of all the Gospels’ (τῶν δὲ εὐαγγελίων ἀπαρχὴν τὸ κατὰ Ἰωάννην) as it reveals the more divine and hidden mysteries of Jesus’s divinity (*ComJn*, I.23).<sup>24</sup> In order to understand this Gospel

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<sup>21</sup> In this regard, Origen describes the Scriptures as a field which has been sown with the seeds of the Logos (λογικοῖς σπέρμασιν) by the prophets and the apostles, see *ComJn*, XIII.305. The idea appears similar to the stoic notion of ‘seminal principles’ (σπερματικοὶ λόγοι), representing the rational principles that permeate and control matter, organizing it in a rational way. Nevertheless, this idea is not ascribed by Origen to the world, but rather to the Gospel, which here represents the “material substratum” out of which the interpreter draws the noetic meaning. In this regard, I disagree with P. Tzamalikos, *Origen: Cosmology and Ontology of Time*, p. 116.

<sup>22</sup> On the body of the text in Origen see Morwenna Ludlow, ‘Anatomy: Investigating the Body of the Text in Origen and Gregory of Nyssa’ in Morwenna Ludlow and Scot Douglass (eds), *Reading the Church Fathers*, London 2011, p. 132-153.

<sup>23</sup> This process is operated by the help of the Holy Spirit, as I will show in sections IV.2.3 and IV.2.4.

<sup>24</sup> For a thorough investigation of the meaning of the term “Gospel” in the *Commentary on John* and on the pastoral usefulness of Origen’s exegetical method see: Sarah Spangler, “The Firstfruits of our Activity”: Examination of the Gospel and Pedagogical Function of Scripture in Origen’s Prologue to the *Commentary on the Gospel according to John*’ in György Heidl and

one has to become like John, to whom it has been granted to be called “son of Mary”, just like Jesus (*ComJn*, I.23). Therefore, the coming of the Saviour is the act through which all the Scriptures became Gospel, and the Gospel itself will be preached to the whole world (*ComJn*, I.86-87).

Among the many hermeneutical implications of Origen’s understanding of the Gospel, I find particularly worth noting both the use of the adjective ‘spiritual’ and that of the term ‘world’.<sup>25</sup>

On the one hand, Origen identifies the true Gospel with the *spiritual* Gospel, inspired by the Spirit and understood by those who are able to grasp its true meaning by participation in the Holy Spirit: ‘Let us now ask God to work with us through Christ in the Holy Spirit (διὰ Χριστοῦ ἐν ἁγίῳ πνεύματι) to explain the mystical meaning (μυστικοῦ νοῦ) stored up like a treasure in the words’ (*ComJn*, I.89). Therefore, it is his degree of participation in the Holy Spirit, which makes the exegete able to explain the mystical meaning. In this regard, it is worth noting Origen’s interpretation of the ‘fountain of water springing up into eternal life’ of *Jn.* 4:14. Origen explains that this fountain represents the things learned of the Spirit. The Scriptures represent a mere introduction, which ‘has not contained some of the more lordly and more divine aspects of the mysteries of God’ (*ComJn*, XIII.27). Therefore, once the Scriptures have been understood, one must ‘go up from them to Jesus, that he may freely give us the fountain of water that leaps into eternal life’ (*ComJn*, XIII.37). Nevertheless, the Scriptures remain necessary in order to rise up to the higher noetic things (*ComJn*, XIII.51-56).

On the other hand, the reason why the Gospel of John is said to be “firstfruits” comes from the fact that this Gospel, more than any other, traces the journey of the Son of God who descends in the world (κόσμος) in order to “take away the sins of the world” (*Jn.* 1:29) (*ComJn*, I.21). Finally, from an exegetical perspective, Origen’s understanding of the Scriptures as the perceptible body where the spiritual and noetic Gospel is hidden. The very same operation is done by Origen

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Róbert Somos (eds), *Origeniana Nona: Origen and the Religious Practice of his Time*, Leuven 2009, p. 337-344.

<sup>25</sup> Regarding Origen’s hermeneutics and the relationship between the exegetical principles expressed in *On First Principles*, IV and his exegetical practice see: Elizabeth Dively-Lauro, *The Soul and the Spirit of Scriptures*.

in the interpretation of the Gospel when he splits the interpretation of the Johannine concept of 'the world' into two separate categories. In some instances, 'the world' signifies the perceptible world, in some other, the noetic world.

To these two interpretations of the term "world" many others should be added. As already noticed by Tzamalikos, Origen takes the term to be a homonym (ὁμώνυμος) (*Commentary on Genesis* 3; PG 12:89; *Philocalia* 14.2).<sup>26</sup> In the same fragment, related to the interpretation of *1Jn.* 5:19 – 'the whole world is under the control of the evil one' – Origen takes the world to mean only 'earthly and human things'. Similarly, both in *Commentary on Matthew* XIII.20 and *On First Principles* I.5.5, he refers to the world as meaning the earth and its inhabitants. In other instances, he takes 'the world' to mean both the physical cosmos (both heaven and earth) and the earth and his inhabitants (see *On First Principles* II.3.6; *Against Celsus* VI.49; *Commentary on Matthew* XII.27). However, by contrast with the opinion of Tzamalikos, who claims that no qualitative difference should be found in Origen's manifold exegesis of the term 'world', concluding that this term always indicates the world as *material*,<sup>27</sup> I maintain that the most significant explanation of the term 'world' is that proposed by Origen in the *Commentary on John*. Indeed, in all the aforementioned instances Origen takes the world to mean the perceptible world. As such, the term can both indicate the entirety of the world and of its inhabitants or a single part of it (heavens, earth, etc.). Nevertheless, there is no *qualitative* difference between these parts, as they are all part of the *perceptible* world. On the contrary, the distinction spotted in this thesis between the *noetic* cosmos and the *perceptible* cosmos allows Origen to propose a qualitative difference between the *noetic* – thus, entirely immaterial and utterly perfect – world and the perceptible – thus, deficient and material in its own essence – world.

#### **IV.1.2 The 'Lamb of God Who Takes Away the Sins of the World': The Salvation of the Cosmos**

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<sup>26</sup> See: P. Tzamalikos, *Origen: Cosmology and Ontology of Time*, p. 100.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 99-110.

One of the key passages in the Gospel regarding the relationship between Christ and the world can be found in the comment on *Jn.* 1:29. 'Behold the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world'.<sup>28</sup> With regard to my present investigation, Origen's exegesis of this passage reveals two aspects of this key concept: firstly, 'the world' is said to consist of every created being residing in heaven and earth. Secondly, this entire world is the object of the Saviour's redemption. The importance of this passage in Origen's exegesis is testified to by its repetition throughout the entire *Commentary* in order to prove God's intention to save the cosmos in its entirety. In Origen's *Commentary*, this cosmos does not signify the physical earth only, nor the dwelling place of those human beings who are in need of redemption, rather the totality of existing beings in their different degrees of perfection:

Since whatever is called Gospel is spoken in the whole world (έν ὅλῳ τῷ κόσμῳ), we understand that it is proclaimed in the whole world, not only in the surrounding earth, but also in the whole system of heaven and earth (οὐ μόνον τῷ περιγεῖῳ τόπῳ ἀλλὰ καί παντὶ τῷ συστήματι τῷ ἐξ οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς), or of heavens and earth (*ComJn*, I.87).

When explaining the 'system of heavens and earth', Origen includes not only human beings and angels, but also principalities and powers and thrones and dominions (*ComJn*, I.88).<sup>29</sup> In this first definition of the concept of 'the world', Origen reveals his intention of widening the salvific function of the Son not only to human beings but to all created beings.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, in another passage in which he comments on *Jn.* 1:29 (*ComJn*, VI.301-305), Origen polemicizes against those who think that 'the world' should be taken as meaning the church alone. While Origen admits that it is possible, in some cases, to understand the church as 'the

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<sup>28</sup> In the *Commentary*, Origen deals particularly with these passages: *Jn.* 1:29: 'Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world'; *Jn.* 8:12 'Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life"; *Jn.* 8:23 'He said to them, "You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world'; *Jn.* 15:19 'I have chosen you out of the world—therefore the world hates you'; *Jn.* 17:24 'because you loved me before the foundation (καταβολή) of the world'.

<sup>29</sup> A similar definition of the term world as consisting of all heavens and earth is given by Origen in *Commentary on Matthew* XIII.20; *Against Celsus* VI.59; *On First Principles* II.4.3.

<sup>30</sup> Origen's understanding of the importance of this concept is found also in *On First Principles* II.3.6.

world', he also points out to the fact that the remissions of sins is meant to be universal.<sup>31</sup>

The remission of sins is operated by the lamb which, being the Logos-in-his-prime (λόγος ἀκμάζων), represents the perpetual noetic sacrifice (νοητὴ θυσία) offered by God to all beings partaking in the Logos (τῷ λογικῷ) (*ComJn*, VI.270). Therefore, the lamb represents the humanity of Christ (*ComJn*, VI.273), whose sacrifice permits the dissolution of the maleficent powers (δυνάμεων κακοποιῶν) of this world (*ComJn*, VI.281). As the death of Christ allows the evils of the world to be taken away, so the sacrifice of the martyrs frees the world from evil spirits.<sup>32</sup> In addition, the idea that Christ/Logos came to redeem the entire world is also reiterated in Origen's exegesis of the Christological prophecy spoken by Caiaphas (*Jn*. 11:50: 'it is expedient for us that a man should die for the people'). Here, Origen implies that even if Caiaphas understood only the literal meaning of his own prophecy, the skilled reader should be able to discern that the deeper meaning of his prophecy, which is inspired by the Holy Spirit. The deeper meaning of the prophecy consists in the belief of the eschatological redemption of the world in all its ontological levels, thus including the "evil" Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin (*ComJn*, XXVIII.160).<sup>33</sup> The inimitability of the sacrifice of Christ rests on the fact that, unlike anyone before him, he sacrificed himself for whole cosmos:

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<sup>31</sup> Indeed, this interpretation is indicated by Origen as providing only a partial understanding of the concept, thus not representing the deeper interpretation of this word. See also: *ComJn*, I.165-167.

<sup>32</sup> The ways in which the lamb takes away the sins are represented by the *epinoiai* of the Son which are known only to a few people (*ComJn*, VI.298).

<sup>33</sup> Regarding the interpretation of this episode see my own article: G. Hermanin de Reichenfeld, 'Resurrection and Prophecy: The Spirit in Origen's Exegesis', p. 143-153. There I show that, in interpreting this prophecy as spoken by the Holy Spirit, Origen comes to the point of stretching his own conception of prophecy, considering the prophecy of Caiaphas to be not only true, but even related to the deeper spiritual way (βαθύτερον) of interpreting the sojourn of Christ, that is, the universal salvation of the whole rational world, thus showing this doctrine as the very keystone of his theology. On prophecy in Origen see also: Enrico Norelli, 'La profezia nel *Commento a Giovanni*', in E. Prinzivalli (ed), *Il Commento a Giovanni di Origene*, p. 301-331; Antonio Orbe, 'La excelentia de los profetas según Orígenes', in *Estudios Bíblicos* 14 (1955), p. 191-221; M. Harl, *Origène et la fonction révélatrice du Verbe incarné*; Gunnar af Hällström, *Charismatic Succession: a Study on Origen's Concept of Prophecy*, Helsinki 1985; Enrique Nardoni, 'Origen's Concept of Biblical Inspiration', in *The Second Century* 4 (1984), 9-23; Caroline P. Bammel, 'Origen's Definitions of Prophecy and Gnosis', in *The Journal of Theological Studies* 40 (1989), p. 489-493; Giovanni Filoramo, 'Lo statuto della profezia in Origene', in Sandro Leanza (ed), *Ad contemplandam sapientiam: studi di filologia letteratura storia in memoria di Sandro Leanza*, Soveria Mannelli 2004, p. 239-251.

But never yet has a story been told of one who was able to take responsibility for the purification on behalf of the whole universe, that the whole universe might be cleansed (ὑπὲρ ὅλου τοῦ κόσμου, ἵνα πᾶς ὁ κόσμος καθαρῆ) [...]. Nor can such a story be told since Jesus alone has been able to take up into himself on the cross the burden of the sin of all (πάντων) on behalf of the whole universe (τῶν ὅλων) apart from God (*ComJn*, XXVIII.163).

The destruction of sins, which is operated in an orderly way by Christ, results in the final defeat of death (*ComJn*, VI.284-294) – that is, in the restoration of all things to their original status of divine contemplation in the perfect unification with the Son (*ComJn*, I.90).<sup>34</sup>

#### IV.1.3 The ‘Light of the World’: The Participation of the Son in the Cosmos

Another key passage in regard to ‘the world’ is found in Origen’s commentary on *Jn*. 8:12: ‘Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life”’. Putting this passage in relation with that of *Jn*. 1:29, Origen explains how the eating of the lamb in the Old Testament represents the eating of the Logos, that is, the desire of every λογικός to understand the spiritual aspects of the Logos (τὰ πνευματικὰ λόγου) (*ComJn*, X.103). The intellectual participation of the λογικός in the spiritual aspects of Christ leads the λογικός to understand the meaning of the lamb ‘for the duration of the night of darkness in this life, until the dawn of the day of things after this life’ (*ComJn*, X.108). Throughout the entire *Commentary*, day and light are therefore interpreted as gift of knowledge, that is, as the noetic light that marks the presence of the Logos in the mind of the believer to such an extent as to lead the λογικός to experience ‘the end of the age (τὴν τοῦ αἰῶνος συντέλειαν) in his intellect (τῷ νῷ)’ (*ComJn*, X.44). Origen’s interpretation of Christ as the “light of the cosmos” signifies the universal donation of rational light to creation. This appellative is compared with other titles attributed

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<sup>34</sup> Regarding Origen’s universalism and his affirmation of the universal salvation of all rational creatures, it is worth remembering that Origen’s doctrine changes significantly according to the type of audience he was teaching. Therefore, while he seems to deny the *permanent reality* of hell, thus admitting the possibility of a universal salvation of all creatures in works intended for spiritually mature Christians (like the *ComJn*), he also speaks of the *reality* of hell in other works. In this regard see: Mark S. M. Scott, ‘Guarding the Mysteries of Salvation: The Pastoral Pedagogy of Origen’s Universalism’, in *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 18 3 (2010), p. 347-368.



to the Saviour in the Gospel, such as those of 'light of man' (*Jn.* 1:4) and 'true light' (*Jn.* 1:9). Regarding the latter, Origen explains that, differently from any light perceived by the senses, the Saviour enlightens the totality of the noetic world:

The Saviour, on the other hand, is the light of the noetic world (νοητοῦ κόσμου) because he shines on those who are rational and on the ruling principles (τοῖς λογικοῖς καὶ ἡγεμονικοῖς), that their mind (νοῦς) may see its proper visions. Now I mean he is the light of those rational souls which are in the perceptible world (τῶν λογικῶν ψυχῶν τῶν ἐν τῷ αἰσθητικῷ κόσμῳ), of which the Saviour teaches us that he is the maker, being, perhaps, its directing and principal part, and, so to speak, the sun of the great day of the Lord (*ComJn*, I.161).

The noetic world stands here as the utterly incorporeal and perfect world composed by the *epinoiai* of the Son. As such, the noetic world is a purely rational realm, which furnishes to the perceptible world the rational principles thanks to which the latter subsist. Therefore, the appellative of 'light' ought to be understood as one of the aspects (ἐπίνοιαι) of the Saviour, thus not in such a way that implies a mingling with the perceptible world. On the contrary, the Son is said to be light because of the noetic dispensation of his gifts - that is, of the noetic theophanies represented by the Son's ἐπίνοιαι. As such, the ἐπίνοιαι are in no way mingled with the material nature of the world (that is, the 'system composed of earth and heavens') but only refer to those logical realities that are understandable by the mind alone:

The Saviour, however, being the light of the world, does not illuminate corporeal natures (σώματα). He illuminates the incorporeal mind with an incorporeal power (ἄσωμάτῳ δυνάμει τὸν ἄσώματον νοῦν) in order that each of us, being illuminated as though by the sun, may also be able to see the other noetic beings (τὰ ἄλλα νοητά) (*ComJn*, I.164).<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> The difference between the illumination given by the Saviour to every incorporeal mind (νοῦς) and that given by the saints, martyrs or even by the Church, stands in the fact that when one is illuminated by the Saviour one does not need any additional mediator; on the contrary, the saints provides a weaker light which is necessary for those who are not yet able to grasp the 'true light' (*ComJn*, I.165-167).

Therefore, the Saviour is the only one to be called 'light of the world', because being 'light of the world' is much more than being only 'light of humans', as 'the world' does not only include "humans", but all rational creation (*ComJn*, I.168). This is indeed the creation (κτίσις) that will return to its state of purity, being 'set free and released from the vanity of the bodies (τῆς τῶν σωμάτων ματαιότητος ἀπολυομένη) in the destruction of the world' (*ComJn*, I.177-178).

Hence, these passages present an alternative meaning of the term "the world". Thus far, all instances suggested that Origen used this term to refer to the 'system of heavens and earth'. Nonetheless, by contrast with Tzamalikos' opinion, the cosmos that Origen is discussing in the previous quotations should not be considered as the 'perceptible world' (αἰσθητὸς κόσμος), but rather as the noetic cosmos (κόσμος νοητὸς).<sup>36</sup> The difference between the two will be expounded later in more detail.

It is worth clarifying that, although the rational creatures belong ontologically to this higher noetic world, they still dwell in the perceptible cosmos. As light, the Saviour illuminates the 'ruling principle' of these creatures, whose location remains in the perceptible cosmos, but whose true ontological belonging is in the noetic. The double membership of rational creatures into the two cosmoses is underlined by Origen in his exegesis of the so-called testimonies of John the Baptist.<sup>37</sup> A particular mention deserves his interpretation of *Jn*. 1:26-27: 'He who comes after me has stood in your midst, whom you did not know, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to loose'. This passage is repeated many times in the surviving books of the *Commentary* as the testimony of the permeation of the cosmos by the Saviour:

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<sup>36</sup> References presented so far should suffice alone to dismiss Tzamalikos' claim that, in Origen's thought, "the terms "world" and "spiritual" (that is, incorporeal) are incompatible with each other". See P. Tzamalikos, *Origen: Cosmology and Ontology of Time*, p. 116. Besides speaking about the existence of the noetic world in *ComJn* I.161 and I.177-178, Origen also discusses it in *ComJn*, XIX.137-150.

<sup>37</sup> In the second book of the *Commentary* (*ComJn*, II.212-218), Origen analyses the speeches of John the Baptist into six testimonies. I testimony: *Jn*. 1:15-18; II testimony: *Jn*. 1:19-23; III testimony: *Jn*. 1:24-27; IV testimony: *Jn*. 1:29-31; V testimony: *Jn*. 1:32-34; VI testimony: *Jn*. 1:35-37. In the sixth book, Origen explains the second, the third and the beginning of the fourth testimony, that is, the section of the Gospel of *Jn*. 1:19-29. The first testimony was probably commented on by Origen in book five, now lost with the exception of seven fragments. However, before commenting on the second testimony, Origen makes a digression regarding his own interpretation of the first (*Jn*. 1:15-18), see *ComJn*, VI.32-55.

There is another testimony of the same Baptist about Christ, which teaches that his preeminent substance (προηγούμενην αὐτοῦ ὑπόστασιν) extends to all the world (ἐπὶ πάντα τὸν κόσμον) in relation to the rational souls (κατὰ τὰς ψυχὰς τὰς λογικάς). [...] And consider if the statement can be understood in relation to the rational principle (λόγον) in each person (*ComJn*, II.215).

According to this passage, the theological justification behind the Saviour's permeation of the whole universe as light ought to be found in the rationality of the souls that populates the perceptible world. The very characterisation of creatures as λογικοὶ points toward their ontological participation in the Logos of God, since every *logikos* owes its rationality to the ontological participation in the Son/Logos. To prove his point, Origen adds that, just as the Father is in the Son and permeates him with his essence, so the Son permeates the whole world, which is figuratively represented by the shoes: 'It is worthwhile to give attention to whether we must understand the words in relation to the fact that the Logos and Wisdom have permeated the whole cosmos, since the Father is in the Son, as we presented it (διαπεφοιτηκέναι δι' ὅλου τοῦ κόσμου, τὸν δὲ πατέρα ἐν τῷ υἱῷ εἶναι)' (*ComJn*, VI.202). In another passage, Origen explains that the power of Christ is such that, 'although he is invisible in his deity, he is present with every human being and is coextensive with everything, including the whole world (ὅλω τῷ κόσμῳ συμπαραεκτεινόμενος); This is revealed by the words: "He has stood in your midst"' (*ComJn*, VI.154). According to Origen's interpretation of this passage, the Baptist is here pointing out to the fact that the "midst" of humans is the logos that resides in them, allowing them to be called λογικοὶ (*ComJn*, VI.189; II.215). This midst is then located in the heart, where the ruling principle (τὸ ἡγεμονικὸν) of the body stands (*ComJn*, VI.189; II.215). Standing in the midst of human beings represents therefore noetic coming – one could say, the *noetic incarnation* – of the Son of God in every rational creature, even in those that are not aware of his presence (*Jn*. 1:26).<sup>38</sup> According to Origen, this is exactly what the gnostic teacher Heracleon failed to understand: he did not comprehend that the Logos has always been present in the world (*ComJn*, VI.194) for the Logos is 'in the

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<sup>38</sup> Regarding the soteriological role of Christ and noetic incarnation see: Anders-Christian Jacobsen, *Christ, the Teacher of Salvation: A Study on Origen's Christology and Soteriology*, Münster 2015, p. 320-322.

midst', that is, in human's rationality (*ComJn*, VI.197).<sup>39</sup> The incapacity to understand the noetic incarnation of the Saviour represents the incapacity to go "out of the world", which is interpreted, in this case, as the reign of perceptibility as opposed to the pure noetic cosmos of which the Logos is the ruler.

As a consequence, the identification of Christ as true light has been interpreted by Origen as representing the salvific mission of the Son, whose primary goal is to make God *understandable* for human beings.<sup>40</sup> As such, the noetic light of rationality shines in the noetic world, rather than in the perceptible one, although the rational souls in the perceptible world have the possibility of contemplating it because of their participation in the Logos.

#### **IV.1.4 'You Are of This World, I Am Not of This World': The Noetic and the Perceptible Cosmos**

As the term world has a double meaning, the Son's descent in the world has been interpreted by Origen as both a physical and noetic descent. The former can be identified with the coming of the Saviour in the man Jesus, whose physical appearance performs the pedagogical function of bringing knowledge to human beings. The latter happens in the *logikoi* which are able to perceive the noetic things about Christ. In addition, Origen's aforementioned hermeneutical principles according to which the Gospel is said to be the perceptible receptacle of its deeper noetic meaning is remarkably fruitful when Origen has to deal with the fourth Gospel's division between those who are said to be 'of this world' and those who are said not to be. Origen's interpretation of this Johannine dichotomy between the holy community and 'the world' is particularly stressed in his comments on one of the most important passages of the Gospel, that is, *Jn*. 8:23: 'And he said to them: "You are from below, I am from above. You are of this world, I am not of this world"'. In interpreting this passage, Origen firstly asks whether to be 'from the earth' (*Jn*. 3:31-32) is the same as to be 'from below', and whether to be 'from below' is the same as to be 'of this world'. In trying to untangle this conundrum, Origen first tackles the question of what 'from below' and 'from

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<sup>39</sup> Similarly, see *ComJn*, XIII.57-74, where Origen reports Heracleon's interpretation according to which the fountain of Jacob depicted in *Jn*. 4.13 was deficient because it was 'worldly' (κοσμική).

<sup>40</sup> In this regard see: A.C. Jacobsen, *Christ, the Teacher of Salvation*, p. 308.

above' mean. In regard to the former, he explains that to be 'from below' differs from being 'from the earth', since being 'from the earth' means to receive one's origin 'from material substance and bodies' (ἀπὸ ὕλης γένεσιν καὶ σωμάτων), thus 'forsaking the better things' (*ComJn*, XIX.130). As a consequence, one who is from the earth is for sure also 'from below'. Nevertheless, as far as the visible world is concerned, it is possible to be in the world and be either 'from' below' or 'from above', according to the relative cosmological position in this world:

But the visible world (δεικνύμενος κόσμος) too, since it is material (ὕλικός) because of those who need material life, has places that differ. Nevertheless, in relation to things that are immaterial (τὰ ἄϋλα), invisible (τὰ ἀόρατα) and incorporeal (τὰ ἀσώματα) these are all below. [...] But so far as places of the world being compared with places of the world is concerned [...] things of the earth (τὰ περίγεια) are below, but the things of heaven (τὰ δὲ οὐράνια) are above, so that the one from below is necessarily of this world (ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου τούτου), but the one who is of this world is not necessarily from below (*ComJn*, XIX.132-133).

Origen's distinction between being 'of the world' and 'from below' as expressed in this quotation reveals a double attitude towards the text. On the one hand, when the concept of 'below' is used in its absolute sense, everything which is 'of this world' – that is, belonging to the systems of heavens and earth – is 'from below', as it is not comparable to the complete immateriality and incorporeity of the noetic world. As a consequence, everyone of this world is from below. On the other hand, when the concept of below is used in a narrow sense as referred to the visible world, there are those who are 'from below' (that is, those who are 'from earth') and those 'from above' (that is, those who are 'from heaven').<sup>41</sup> This interpretation is also given by Origen regarding the mission of John the Baptist, who is said to be an Angel sent by the Saviour in order to give testimony to him. There, Origen clearly admits that John's soul pre-existed his body and that, being an emulator and imitator of Christ, he took a body out of his desire to minister his

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<sup>41</sup> This doctrine also allows Origen to postulate the lack of any injustice in God even in the case of Jacob and Esau, who were chosen before being born, as their merits and sins belong to their souls before they were born. See: *ComJn*, II.192. In this regard see also: *On First Principles* I.8.4; 2.9.1-8; III.1. For a deep analysis of the biblical scriptural passages supporting Origen's doctrine of pre-existence in Genesis see: Peter W. Martens, 'Origen's Doctrine of Pre-Existence and the Opening Chapter of Genesis', in *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum* 16 (2013): 516-549.

goodness to human beings (*ComJn*, II.187). Consequently, Origen states that 'according to the deeper meaning, he was sent into the world, world being taken here as the earthly place where human beings are' (*ComJn*, II.175). As such, John was sent 'either from heaven or from paradise' (*ComJn*, II.176). Therefore, just as the first Adam, John was sent from a higher place of 'the world' (heaven) into a lower place of 'the world' (earth). Among this category stand all those who are said to be the 'citizens of the heavens' (πολίτης τῶν οὐρανίων) who, although being from above in a local sense, are still 'from below when compared with the noetic beings (τῶν νοητῶν)' (*ComJn*, XIX.134), which are completely immaterial and incorporeal.

However, each soul's membership in one place of the cosmos is said to be temporary as, according to Origen, it is possible not only for one of the earth to become of heaven, but also for one 'of this world' of being no longer part of this world (*ComJn*, XIX.135).<sup>42</sup> In this regard, I find extremely interesting the connection Origen makes between this passage (*Jn*. 8:23) and the passage of *Jn*. 15:19: 'You were of the world and I chose you out of the world, and you are no longer of the world'. The quotation of this passage reveals Origen's attitude towards the so-called pneumatological books of the Gospel, where the concept of 'leaving the world' by means of the Holy Spirit is revealed as a key Johannine theme. Here, the exodus of souls from this perceptible world is accomplished by means of the Saviour, who 'descends in the lower parts of the earth' (*ComJn*, XIX.137) and even descends in Hades in order to save the lost souls (*ComJn*,

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<sup>42</sup> Regarding the possibility of transiting from one status to another according to the degree of one's sin, Origen takes the geographical location of the Bible to signify different places of the cosmos, according to the so-called topography of the soul. In this regard see my own article: Giovanni Hermanin de Reichenfeld, 'From Capernaum to Jerusalem: Noetic History and Historical Occurrences in Origen's Sacred Geography of the Holy Land', in *Origeniana Duodecima*, Forthcoming 2019. In this regard, it is particularly worth noting Origen's cosmological interpretation of the city of Jerusalem, which is said to represent the natural place of the saint's soul. However, this citizenship is not irreversible, as it can be undermined by sin: 'And this city, to which none of those on earth ascends or enters (ἀναβαίνει οὐδὲ εἰσέρχεται), is also called Jerusalem. And every soul (πᾶσά ψυχή) which has a natural exaltation (φυσικὸν ἔχουσα διάγραμμα) and sees noetic things (νοητῶν διορατικὴν) clearly and sharply is a citizen of this city. It is possible even for a resident of Jerusalem to be in sin, for even the best natural dispositions can sin (δυνατὸν γὰρ καὶ τοὺς εὐφροεστάτους ἀμαρτάνειν), destroying their goodness of disposition and not only sojourning in one of the foreign cities of Judea, but also being enrolled as a citizen there, unless they turn back quickly after the sin' (*ComJn*, X.132-133). On Origen's topography of the soul see: Eberhard Schockenhoff, *Zum Fest der Freiheit: Theologie des christlichen Handelns bei Origenes*, Mainz 1990, p. 79-80. See also: Dagmar Stoltmann, *Jerusalem - Mutter - Stadt: zur Theologiegeschichte der Heiligen Stadt*, Altenberge 1999, p. 185. Both studies are based on Origen's reflections in *On First Principles*, IV.3.8-10.

140-142). Therefore, Origen envisions a hierarchical structure in which there are multiple levels of being in the world: a) some, like the Devil, belong to the lower part of the world; b) others are in this world and are 'from earth', like the apostles; c) a few, like John the Baptist, are 'from heaven' but dwell nonetheless in this 'world'.

There is no doubt, however, that all these creatures 'from below' are destined to ascend to the higher places. This spiritual ascent has been already accomplished by the soul of Jesus which 'has leaped over all the heavens, already reached God himself' (*ComJn*, XIX.145). Due to the Saviour's example, all creatures have been made able to ascend, as he clarifies through the example of Jesus' disciples who will be led 'to the things that are above all the heavens (τὰ ὑπεράνω πάντων τῶν οὐρανῶν), that is to the things that are incorporeal (τὰ ἔξω σωμάτων)' (*ComJn*, XIX.137). The ascent of the soul by means of the Saviour is then said to produce fruits of the Spirit (*Gal.* 5:22) as opposed to the works of the flesh.<sup>43</sup> Hence, Origen's interpretation of the distinction between the holy community and 'those who belong to the world' does not correspond to the distinction between those 'of the earth' and those 'of the heaven', but between those who still have a body and those whose very essence has become purely *noetic*, that is, utterly intellectual and incorporeal.<sup>44</sup> The process of the soul of becoming *noetic* is accomplished by means of a noetic ascent that will eventually happen to all the souls residing in 'this world', even those in Hades, which will go 'out of the world' later than those of the earth (*ComJn*, XIX.141). The noetic ascent (νοητῆς ἀναβάσεως) that the soul will accomplish inversely resembles the noetic descent of the soul (τῆς νοητῆς καταβάσεως τῆς ψυχῆς) because of wickedness and evil thoughts (*ComJn*, XIX.144).

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<sup>43</sup> For the role of the Spirit, see *infra*, IV.2.4

<sup>44</sup> In this regard, it is again interesting to look at Origen's interpretation of the city of Jerusalem. In *ComJn*, XIII.77-85 Origen states that Jerusalem is the Church built of living stone, 'the place where spiritual sacrifices (πνευματικαὶ θυσίαι) are offered to God by people who are spiritual (ὑπὸ τῶν πνευματικῶν) and who have understood the spiritual law (τὸν πνευματικὸν νενοηκὸν νόμον)' (*ComJn*, XIII.84). Nevertheless, Origen adds that, when the fullness of time comes and 'one is no longer in the flesh but in the Spirit', then there will be no need to worship in Jerusalem, since 'the incorporeal worship (τὴν ἔξω σωμάτων προσκύνησιν) will begin at the time of perfection' (*ComJn*, XIII.87). Consequently, Origen deems the adoration in Jerusalem or in any place of the perceptible world – no matter how high – to be disregarded in favour of the truly noetic adoration taking place in the noetic and incorporeal world. This interpretation is confirmed a few lines later, when he explains that he who is perfect does not worship the Father in Jerusalem, but 'he worships the Father boldly because he has become a son' (*ComJn*, XIII.100).

Origen's depiction of the concept of 'the world' now clarifies the opposition between the 'perceptible world' and the 'noetic world', which Origen deduces from the very text of the Gospel of John. Nonetheless, it is now necessary to enquire about the relation between these two worlds. Addressing one of the main concerns of the Gospel, that is, the removal of the elect from 'this world' and their consequent participation in the noetic world, Origen provides further details about how the noetic world should be understood:

But there is also another world in which there are things that are not seen, besides the manifest and perceptible world (δεικνύμενον καὶ αἰσθητὸν κόσμον) that consists of heaven and earth, or of heavens and earth. Now this in its entirety is an invisible world (ὅλον τοῦτο κόσμος ἀόρατος) which is not seen, and a noetic world (νοητὸς κόσμος) on whose appearance the pure in heart will see [...] God, to the degree that God is disposed by nature to be seen (ὡς ὁρᾶσθαι πέφυκεν ὁ θεός) (*ComJn*, XIX.147).

The noetic world stands here as the place where those who will be worthy will see God to the maximum extent of their own capacity. Being purely and absolutely noetic, this world constitutes the principle that rules the whole universe, since it would not be possible for the perceptible world to exist without participating in the noetic world. For this reason, Origen explains that it is possible to understand the Son of God to be 'world', especially insofar as Wisdom is one of his *epinoiai*:

Since he is the principles (λόγοι) of absolutely everything according to which all things made by God in Wisdom have come to be [...] he would himself be in himself "a world" that surpasses the perceptible world (τοῦ αἰσθητοῦ κόσμου) in its diversity and excels it as much as the principle (λόγος) stripped of all the material of the whole world (γυμνὸς πάσης ὕλης τοῦ ὅλου κόσμου) differs from the material world (τοῦ ἐνύλου κόσμου), a world constituted not on the basis of matter, but on participation of the things that have been set in order in the Word and Wisdom, which set matter in order (ἀπὸ τῆς μετοχῆς τοῦ λόγου καὶ τῆς σοφίας τῶν κοσμοῦντων τὴν ὕλην κεκοσμημένου) (*ComJn*, XIX.147)



Since everything that exists is made by God in Wisdom – specifically, by God the Father through God the Son, who is both Logos and Wisdom – the principles that govern the world reside in the Son. Even the principles (λόγοι) that govern the perceptible world do not reside in the perceptible world. Rather, they reside in the noetic world by participating in the Son, here interpreted as the very Logos (Λόγος). Hence, the Son can be rightfully said to be the noetic world insofar as everything noetic belongs and finds its reason for existing in the Son. The Son himself *is* the *noetic world* and the sensible world subsists thanks to its participation in the noetic world, that is, the Logos. In other words, this noetic world ought to be intended as the highest possible level of participation in the Logos. On the basis of the interpretation of the Son of God as a ‘world’ Origen affirms further his interpretation of Jesus’ words ‘I am not of this world’ with reference to the soteriological role of the Son of man, that is, to Jesus’ soul: ‘And see if the one who says “I am not of this world” can be the soul (ψυχῆ) of Jesus which is a citizen of that whole world (ἐμπολιτευομένη τῷ ὅλῳ κόσμῳ ἐκείνῳ), traversing it in its entirety and leading his disciples to it’ (*ComJn*, XIX. 148). Given that the soul of Jesus brings his disciples out of the perceptible world, Origen interprets the unification between the soul of Jesus and the Logos as the capacity of this soul to transcend everything that is not noetic in its essence. Consequently, Jesus’ promise to bring his disciples with him represents the higher possible level of salvation which a soul can achieve.

Lastly, Origen corroborated his argument by explaining the ontological differences between ‘below’ and ‘above’, interpreted as the difference between κτίσις and καταβολή. While Origen admits the possibility that something in the perceptible world is ‘from above’ in a geographical sense – like the heavens are above the earth – he still deems it impossible to conceive anything in the perceptible world to be ‘from above’ in an absolute sense. Similarly, the noetic world does not know any degradation of being, because everything in the noetic world is ‘from above’. The reason for this interpretation should be found in the very nature of the perceptible cosmos which is considered to be a “fall” or a “throwing down” (καταβολή) rather than a “creation” (κτίσις):

That world (ἐκεῖνος ὁ κόσμος) has nothing below even as this world has nothing above, to one who examines it as to its exact nature. For how can

this world, whose creation is a throwing down (ἡ κτίσις καταβολή ἐστιν), have anything above? For one must not hear the phrase “before the throwing down of the world (πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου)” (*Jn.* 17:24) in an ordinary manner, because the saints coined the expression “throwing down” to express such a concept advisedly. Otherwise, they could have said “before the creation of the world” (πρὸ κτίσεως κόσμου) instead of using the expression “throwing down” (πρὸ καταβολῆς). The whole world, therefore, and the things in it are included in the “throwing down” (“Ὁλος οὖν ὁ κόσμος καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῷ ἐν καταβολῇ ἐστιν). But the genuine disciples of Jesus, whom he chose out of the world (ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου), that [...] they might no longer be of the world, come to be outside of the throwing down of the world in its entirety (*ComJn.* XIX.149-150).

It is absolutely crucial to notice that Origen’s interpretation of the whole perceptible world as a καταβολή does not come from anything other than the text of the Gospel of John, since Origen’s argument rests on the words of Jesus in *Jn.* 17:24: ‘Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the throwing down of the world (πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου)’.<sup>45</sup> Here, the word καταβολή is explicitly taken by Origen to mean ‘a descent of all alike from higher to lower condition’.<sup>46</sup> On the contrary, Origen commonly uses the word κτίσις to indicate everything that is derived or begotten by something else.<sup>47</sup> Therefore, everything that exists has been generated in Wisdom as belonging to the noetic cosmos. Nonetheless, insofar as the actual creation is now a καταβολή, it is part of the perceptible cosmos, which is indicated by the Gospel with the term ‘this world’. Thus, one could say that the difference between κτίσις and καταβολή resides in the very meaning of the words, as the former points out to the pure generation of

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<sup>45</sup> The same expression is found in the Epistles of Paul, especially *Eph.* 1:4: ‘For he chose us in him before the throwing down of the world (πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου) to be holy and blameless in his sight’. However, Origen’s interpretation of the Johannine and Pauline instances is the same, as both verses point out to a protological/eschatological time when the souls, begotten by God, join the perfect contemplation of the Son in the noetic world. The event of the “throwing down” (καταβολή) is taken as the same event that temporally transforms the creation (κτίσις) – that is, everything that is begotten – into “throwing down” (καταβολή) – that is, the fallen. Anyway, I think that Origen is here having in mind the Johannine instance, as the verse is more consistent with the reference to Jesus’ soul being a citizen of the noetic world.

<sup>46</sup> Origen gives this definition also in *On First Principles* III.5.4.

<sup>47</sup> I have already discussed this problem in the thesis in II.2.2. On the meaning of κτίσις in Origen see: H. Crouzel and M. Simonetti, *Origène. Traité des Principes*, 40-41; H. Crouzel, *Origen*, p. 198-204 and T. Greggs, *Barth, Origen, and Universal Salvation*, p. 154. See also *ComJn.* 90-109, when the word is attributed to the Son.

rational creatures, while the second to the fallen materiality of the perceptible world.

#### **IV.1.5 Reconstructed Dualism: The Two Worlds, Their Participation in God and the Body**

Having analysed in detail Origen's interpretation of the concept of 'the world' in his exegesis on the Gospel of John, it is now time to draw some conclusions.

First of all, it is worth underlining the consonance between Origen's hermeneutical principles expounded at the beginning of the *Commentary* and his actual exegesis of the Gospel. Origen's notion of two opposing worlds – a perceptible world and a noetic one – derives from his theory about the hermeneutical difference between the perceptible gospels, which need to be decoded by the interpreter, and a noetic and spiritual Gospel (εὐαγγέλιον νοητοῦ καὶ πνευματικοῦ) (*ComJn*, I.45), which is instead eternal. Just as the visible Gospel acquires its ontological principle in its participation in the noetic meaning it conveys, the perceptible world only exists by participating in the noetic one, which is said to furnish the principles (λόγοι) on which the perceptible world subsists. Thus, the same theological mechanism is used by Origen in both hermeneutical and metaphysical speculations. Leaving aside the question of the philosophical derivation of such an ontological framework,<sup>48</sup> it is worth noting that it is indeed the exegetical structure that allows Origen to hold together coherently the Gospel's dualism within a metaphysics whose final objective is to show the noetic-soteriological function of the coming of the Saviour in the world.

Secondly, this analysis suggests that Origen is fully aware of the dualistic structure of the text of the fourth Gospel and that he intentionally replicates this

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<sup>48</sup> Due to brevity, it is here impossible to discuss such topic further. On the embodiment of the souls and on similarities and differences between the doctrine of Origen and that of held by the Platonic tradition see the discordant opinions of: Peter W. Martens, 'Embodiment, Heresy, and the Hellenization of Christianity: The Descent of the Soul in Plato and Origen', in *Harvard Theological Review* 108 4 (2015), p. 594-620; M. Edwards, *Origen Against Plato*, p. 87-122 and Panayiotis Tzamalikos, *Origen: Philosophy of History and Eschatology*, Leiden 2007, p. 17-18. For two radically different assessments of Platonism and Philosophy in Origen see J. S. O'Leary, *Christianisme et philosophie chez Origène*; Mark Edwards, 'Origen's Platonism. Questions and Caveats', in *Zeitschrift für antikes Christentum* 12 1 (2008), p. 20-38.

dualism in his *Commentary*. In this regard, the verses of *Jn.* 8:23 – where the Johannine concept of ‘this world’ is fully operative – and the one of *Jn.* 17:24 – where the concept of ‘this world’ is defined as a καταβολή – have proven instrumental to his explanation of the meaning of the term ‘world’. Taking the move from that fact that Jesus and his disciples are said not to be ‘of this world’, Origen’s separation of the two worlds rests mainly on the concept of καταβολή (throwing down), for this allows him to explain that this world is not evil in its fundamental principles – as it is in Augustine’s interpretation – but rather in its imperfect participation (μετοχή) in the noetic principles that rule the universe. On the one hand, the world in which the elect participate is referred as κτίσις; on the other hand, ‘this world’ of darkness is the result of the καταβολή. Hence, Origen smooths the Johannine dualism since the ‘participation’ of ‘this world’ in the saved world partially eliminates the radical dualism between holy community and ‘world’, thus amending the radical irreconcilability presented by the Gospel. This operation should not, however, be intended as a lack of interest for – or even a betrayal of – the text, rather as the result of the participation of everything that exists in the generative principles that pose it into existence. From a soteriological perspective, this means that salvation is no longer interpreted as salvation *out of* the world, but rather as salvation *of the* world. Therefore, notwithstanding the fact that Origen’s dualism between noetic and perceptible world is less ‘dualistic’ than the Gospel of John itself, it is still a clear result of an authentic exegetical effort. In this regard, it is worth noting that Origen’s understanding of the double meaning of the world is systematically and consistently applied throughout the *Commentary*. In interpreting the ‘lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world’, Origen affirms the universal salvation for every creature since they participate by nature in the noetic cosmos. Similarly, in interpreting the Saviour as ‘light of the world’, Origen affirms the universal participation of every rational creature in the Logos.

Finally, this section has analysed the way in which Origen understands the noetic world. First, this world is assumed by Origen to coincide with the Son. In other words, this world is noetic insofar as it participates in the absolute reason (Logos) of the Son. Being entirely noetic, this world is depicted as completely immaterial and bodiless, since here things that are immaterial (τὰ ἄϋλα), invisible (τὰ ἀόρατα)

and incorporeal (τὰ ἀσώματα) are said to subsist.<sup>49</sup> The lack of any body or matter in the noetic world is recurrently underlined by Origen, thus marking a qualitative difference between the noetic world and the heavens. While heavens and paradise are depicted to be a better place than earth but, nonetheless, within the perceptible world, the noetic world does contain only things that are completely without body (τὰ ἔξω σωμάτων) (*ComJn*, XIX.137; XIII.87). Therefore, the noetic world is very different from the place where the angels or the celestial powers reside.<sup>50</sup> Even John the Baptist, who is said to be an angel, is supposed to be sent from heavens rather than from the noetic world. The difference between the two seems here to stand precisely in the fact that the heavens *are not* entirely noetic, thus allowing even to the more perfect creatures the presence of a body of some sort. On the contrary, the depiction of the noetic world rests in the bold assertion of the absolute absence of body and matter from it. However controversial this affirmation may be among Origen's scholars, it does seem to fit both the letter and the logic of Origen's understanding of the world in the *Commentary*. However, I do not wish to affirm here the absolute immateriality of *eschatological* creatures.<sup>51</sup> Indeed, this purpose is beyond the interest of this

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<sup>49</sup> Tzamalikos rightly points out to the fact that in *On First Principle* II.3.6 Origen makes a distinction between things which are invisible (τὰ ἀόρατα) and things which are incorporeal (τὰ ἀσώματα). According to Origen not everything that is invisible is also incorporeal, as there are things that cannot be seen but still have a body, albeit different from that of human beings. Tzamalikos deduces from this distinction the fact that Origen never speaks of the world as something incorporeal, but only invisible. See P. Tzamalikos, *Origen: Cosmology and Ontology of Time*, p. 110-112. On the contrary, I have pointed out the fact that the theological concept of 'the world' in Origen's thought is applied to the incorporeal (noetic) world just as to the perceptible one.

<sup>50</sup> In this regard, it is worth mentioning Origen's interpretation of *Jn*. 4:35. 'Don't you have a saying, 'It's still four months until harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest'. In *ComJn*, XIII.2709-284, Origen interprets the fields that are ready for the harvest as representing the entirety of existing material beings, even the celestial ones who reside in heaven. Accordingly, those who lift up their eyes are those who, being transformed into the same image and glory, have assumed the likeness of God. This kind of transformation is the one depicted in this chapter as the shift between the perceptible and the noetic world.

<sup>51</sup> Origen's wavering attitude on this specific problem makes this topic too long to be tackled here. Several scholars strongly deny that Origen admitted for any creature the possibility of existing at the end of time without a body. Among them see: Henri Crouzel, 'La doctrine origénienne du corps ressuscité', in *Bulletin de Littérature Ecclésiastique* 81 (1980), p. 175-200, 241-266; M. Edwards, *Origen against Plato*, p. 87-11; Mark Edwards, 'Origen's Two Resurrections', in *The Journal of Theological Studies* 46 2 (1995), p. 502-518; P. Tzamalikos, *Origen: Philosophy of History and Eschatology*, p. 309-328. On the other hand, other scholars maintain that, at the end of the world, creatures will be endowed with complete immateriality. See among them Franz Heinrich Kettler, 'Neue Beobachtungen zur Apokatastasislehre des Origenes', in Henri Crouzel and Antonio Quacquarelli (eds), *Origeniana Secunda*, Rome 1980, p. 339-348; H. Strutwolf, *Gnosis als System*, p. 334-356; Anders-Christian Jacobsen, 'Origen on the Human Body', in L. Perrone (ed), *Origeniana Octava*, p. 649-656. In the last Origeniana conference (*Origeniana Duodecima*, Jerusalem, 25-29 June 2017) an entire panel was devoted to this topic with two divergent relations held by Alfons Fürst and Anders-Christian Jacobsen, both entitled 'Body and Soul in Origen's Theology'.

thesis. What is at stake here is the idea that salvation is a process which is achieved by immaterial and bodiless means, that is, by the noetic participation in the noetic world. Whether or not a kind of body remains in eschatological times to furnish the material substratum which allows creatures to maintain their singularity is a different question from the one under discussion here.

However, it is worth noting that salvation is pointed out by Origen as consisting in the full incorporeal participation of Jesus' disciples into the noetic world. The soul of Jesus is said to be a citizen of that noetic world and, even more importantly, this world is said to be the dwelling place for the disciples of Jesus. The noetic world is therefore depicted as the highest possible level of salvation. There, after having reached the 'end of the age in his intellect' (τὴν τοῦ αἰῶνος συντέλειαν τῷ νῷ), the soul will stand in pure and immaterial contemplation of the fullness of the Logos. In this regard, it is worth underlining the difference between the Devil who, because of his fall, 'deserved to be bound to matter and body (ὑλῆ καὶ σώματι)', and the saints who 'continued to live a completely immaterial (ἄῤῥον) and bodiless (ἄσώματον) life in blessedness' (*ComJn*, I.97). Salvation is therefore understood by Origen as the intellectual participation in this noetic and bodiless world, to which the souls of Jesus' disciples will one day belong, whilst the soul of Jesus already does.

As this salvation is construed as participation in the Son and his *epinoiai* (aspects) – particularly the Logos – it is certainly worth asking what the role of the Holy Spirit is. If the end will coincide with the perfect participation of all rational creatures in the Logos, what role does Origen envision for the Spirit in the eschatological times? Where then does the soteriological role of the Spirit lie? The next section will deal with this problem.

## IV.2 The Holy Spirit in the Cosmos: the 'Matter' of the Noetic Ascent

The previous section of this chapter has focused on understanding Origen's interpretation of the concept of 'the world' in the Gospel of John. It has been shown that, as Origen's interpretation allows a double meaning of the term, the main significance of this concept points out to the existence of the noetic cosmos, which is also interpreted as the highest possible point of participation in God. Described as the fullness of logical and ontological participation of the soul in God, the noetic cosmos is the end toward which all λογικοὶ run. The aim of this new section is to understand the way in which this process is accomplished. In particular, it aims at understanding the role of the hypostasis of the Holy Spirit in the process of ascent, his relationship to the λογικοὶ and the soteriological role he plays in the perceptible world. In order to achieve this goal, the first subsection will propose a short description of the ontological differences between the Father, the Son and the Spirit in their relationship to the world, drawing partly from the conclusion of chapter II. The second subsection will analyse the relationship between λογικοὶ and Logos, with particular regard to the relationship between the Logos and the cosmos. After having analysed the kind of soteriological relationship between the Son and the world, the third section will analyse the relation between the hypostasis of the Holy Spirit and those who are called πνευματικοὶ because of their participation in him. Lastly, the fourth subsection will deal with the soteriological role of the Spirit in the cosmos, thus analysing the way in which the Holy Spirit works for the salvation of human beings. As the Spirit is part of creation – in the sense that has been generated by the Father through the Son – he works in creation as the ontological medium which provides the rational beings with the spiritual substratum that allows their growth in understanding of the mysteries of the Son. Hence, this work will show that the Holy Spirit is the soteriological agent who provides the spiritual place of growth for the noetic journey of every rational creature towards God.

#### IV.2.1 Father, Son and Holy Spirit: The Worldly Works of a Unified Trinity

Every investigation on Origen's understanding of the economic functions of the Trinity has to begin with the Father. Described by Origen as the only one who truly possesses immortality, the Father is also the only being who is completely unbegotten and self-sufficiently God (αὐτόθεος).<sup>52</sup> Although both the Son and the Spirit are said to be 'God', Origen grants the appellative of *the* God (ὁ θεός), that is, God *par-excellence* and source of all divinity (*ComJn*, II.17-18), only to the Father. As such, the Father is consistently depicted in the whole *Commentary* as that being which is impossible to define. Tackling Jesus' words regarding the 'fountain of water springing up into eternal life' (*Jn*. 4:25), Origen explains that, while the Son could be said to be *living* and to be life, the Father is 'beyond (ὑπὲρ) eternal life' because, being 'greater than the Son' (*Jn*. 14:28), he surpasses the very concept of life. Even more interesting is Origen's understanding of the Johannine dualism between light and darkness. While the Son is said to be 'light of the world' – the noetic light – the Father is deemed to be darkness, for he is completely unknowable to anything begotten, apart, maybe, the Son and the Holy Spirit:

For if someone should perceive the mass of speculations (θεωρήματα) about God and the mass of knowledge (γνώσις) which is incomprehensible (ἄληπτος) to human nature and to everything that is begotten too (γεννητοῖς) with the exception, perhaps, of Christ and the Holy Spirit, he will know how darkness surrounds *the Father* (τὸν θεόν) (*ComJn*, II.172).

Similarly, the Father is said not to be light, nor to be 'Logos' insofar as he cannot be contained by words or rational thoughts. As such, the Father is utterly inaccessible to everything that is begotten except, partially the Son and the Spirit.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> See also: *ComJn*, I.119; II.75; II.123-125; XIII.219.

<sup>53</sup> The reason for this 'partially' is explained in the second chapter of this thesis. See *supra*, II.1.3. Although Origen admits that the Son is the full reflection of his Father's glory he has to logically maintain the possibility that there is something of the Father's unknowability that is not known even to the Son. See: *ComJn*, I.187; II.150; II.172. Similarly, Origen has to account for the possibility that there might be some aspects of the Father who are known by the Son only and not by the Spirit. See: *ComJn*, II.126-127. Nevertheless, Origen maintains that the same knowable attributes of the Father are possessed by the Son and, similarly, the attributes of the Son are possessed at the same level by the Spirit, thus enhancing an ontological subordination of priority between the three. The reason for this apparent inconsistency stands in the fact that the



As a result of his incomprehensibility, the Father cannot have any direct contact with creatures, for they would not be able to understand him. Therefore, the communication of God's being and of his mysteries to the cosmos falls, as it were, on the Son and on the Spirit. In this regard, Origen explains that the pre-eminence of the Father over every other being is comparable with that of the Son and the Holy Spirit over other creatures: 'The Saviour and the Holy Spirit transcend all created beings (πάντων τῶν γενητῶν ὑπερέχειν) not only by comparison, but by their exceeding pre-eminence. The Father exceeds the Saviour as much, or even more, as the Saviour exceeds the rest' (*ComJn*, XIII.151).<sup>54</sup> Therefore, the exceeding power and majesty of the Father over the Son is mirrored in the majesty of the Son over creation. The ontological priority of the Father with regard to the other two hypostases is reflected in the ontological priority of the Son and the Spirit over the rest of creation. However, as the Son and the Spirit are different hypostases, they are regarded by Origen as having a different relationship to created natures.

One of the more interesting places of the *Commentary* where Origen tackles the problem of the relation between Son, Spirit and creation is the comment on Jesus's words to the Samaritan, particularly *Jn*. 4:24 – 'God is Spirit' – and *Jn*. 4:32 – 'I have food to eat that you know nothing about'. Discussing the description of God as Spirit, Origen states that this biblical statement should not be taken literally as a reference to God's essence (οὐσία) because, in other parts of the Bible, God is also said to be 'fire' or 'light' (*ComJn*, XIII.124).<sup>55</sup> Origen explains that, by admitting that God's οὐσία is Spirit, light or fire, it would also be possible to admit that God has a body, possibly made of ether, as some of his opponents say.<sup>56</sup> On the contrary, God must be understood as light insofar as he is

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unknowability of the Father stands in his ineffability, which *is not* an ontological attribute. In this regard, see *supra*, II.1.3. In this regard, I agree with D. Williams, 'The Son's Knowledge of the Father in Origen', p. 146-153.

<sup>54</sup> For a full account of the ontological implications of the relationship between the three hypostases of the Trinity see the second chapter of this thesis, particularly *supra*, II.1.3.

<sup>55</sup> Origen quotes here *Dt*. 4:24; *Heb*. 12:29; *1Jn*. 1:5.

<sup>56</sup> Origen is probably here polemicizing against the Stoic philosophers who used to speak of God as ether or fire. See: Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods* I.14-15. See also Porphyry as quoted in Eusebius, *Preparation for the Gospel* XV.16. A similar view was held by some influential Christians, such as Tertullian, *Against Praxeas* VII. Origen conducts the same kind of polemic against the idea of God's materiality in *On First Principles* I.1.1-9 and *Against Celsus* VI.70-71. For a full bibliography on Origen's discussion see: R. Heine, *Origen: Commentary, [...] Book 13-32*, p. 93-95 n. 123-131.

‘apprehended by the intellect (νοῦ), and is invisible and incorporeal (ἀόρατον καὶ ἀσώματον), because he is light of the mind’ (*ComJn*, XIII.137). Similarly, he is said to be fire as he ‘consumes everything material’ in the soul (*ComJn*, XIII.139). Finally, he is Spirit insofar as he is ‘breath (πνεῦμα) of life’. Being breath of life, the Spirit gives life to the soul, and prevents spiritual death, that is, ‘the separation of the soul from God and from the Lord himself and from the Holy Spirit’ (*ComJn*, XIII.140). Thus, while those who are separated from the Holy Spirit become earthly, those who receive the Spirit after the fall will be recreated and then will be saved (*ComJn*, XIII.141). Origen’s understanding of the πνεῦμα in this passage is twofold. On the one hand, the word ‘spirit’ indicates physical life – in the sense of ‘breath of life’. On the other hand, he is the force of God which prevents the soul from detaching from its fellowship of the Trinity. In this sense, the Holy Spirit is understood as the servant of the Son, who recreates human souls, so that they might be saved by the redeeming action of the Son.

In order to avoid misunderstandings, it is worth remembering here that Origen’s interpretation of the Johannine sentence ‘God is Spirit’ does not entail the idea that the Spirit is one of the *epinoiai* of the Son. The separation of the Holy Spirit from the soul is regarded as an *ontological* separation of the soul from the third person of the Trinity which results in – but is not caused by – a *lack of understanding* of God. On the contrary, fellowship with the Holy Spirit grants the soul the ability ‘to be saved’ by the Son. In this regard, it is worth mentioning Origen’s interpretation of *Jn*. 4:32 – ‘I have food to eat that you know nothing about’. Here, Origen explains that this food represents the noetic participation of every begotten in the begetter. Moreover, Origen affirms:

Not only do human beings and angels need noetic foods (τῶν νοητῶν τροφῶν), but so too does the Christ of God. He is always replenishing himself from the Father who alone is without need (ἀενδεοῦς) and self-sufficient (αὐτάρκους). [...] And it is also not out of place to say that the Holy Spirit is nurtured (*ComJn*, XIII.219-221).

In other words, as the Son has everything by participation in the Father, who is the only self-sufficient God, so the Holy Spirit exists in participation in the Son. It is only through this participation that the rest of creation participates in God to the

extent it participates in the Son and in the Spirit. Every other being apart from the Son is therefore called λογικός and acquires different degrees of perfection by being nurtured by the Son and by the Spirit: ‘the higher parts [of the soul] that are higher than the physical body, are nurtured by incorporeal thoughts and words (ἀσωμάτοις νοήμασιν καὶ λόγοις) and sound actions. These higher parts will not be dissolved into non-being if they should not be nurtured, [...] but they lose their distinctive character’ (*ComJn*, XIII.204). The first characteristic of created beings is, therefore, their inability to lose their nature of λογικοὶ, as this trait belongs to their natural status. However, other λογικοὶ do not comprehend the Father’s will – that is, participate in the Father – as much as the Son and the Spirit do (*ComJn*, XIII.231). The differences between λογικοὶ are therefore determined by their levels of noetic ascent: ‘on the one hand, there is a certain grassy spiritual food (πνευματικὴ ποώδης τροφή) for the more unreasonable souls (τῶν ἀλογωτέρων ψυχῶν) [...] on the other hand, if someone is more rational (λογικώτερος) and for this reason is also noetic human being (νοητὸς ἄνθρωπος), he eats noetic bread’ (*ComJn*, XIII.212-213). A clear difference is here proposed by Origen between the food needed by those λογικοὶ which have a lesser participation in the Logos (ἀλογώτεροι) and those who have a higher participation (λογικώτεροι). In the first case, the food is said to represent a spiritual comprehension (πνευματικὴ), whereas in the other to have a noetic (νοητὸς) one. This difference, between *spiritual* and *noetic* seems to correspond in this passage to a difference in understanding of God resulting from a different degree of participation in the Son (noetic) and in the Spirit (spiritual).<sup>57</sup> It is worth pointing out that, no matter what level of comprehension a λογικός may achieve of the Logos, it still does not fully partake in the totality of his attributes. Therefore, Origen understands the relationship between λογικοὶ and the Son as one of *ontological subordination of superiority*:

It is only the Son who has comprehended the complete will of the Father (πᾶν τὸ θέλημα τοῦ πατρός) and does it, for which reason he is also his image. We must also take in consideration the Holy Spirit. The remaining holy beings, however, do nothing contrary to the will of God; [...]

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<sup>57</sup> The difference between spiritual participation – that is, participation in the Spirit – and noetic participation – that is, participation in the noetic world – will be analysed later in this chapter, see *infra*, IV.2.4.2.

Nevertheless, this does not suffice in order to be formed according to complete will (*ComJn*, XIII.231).

Differently from the Father-Son-Spirit relation, where an *ontological subordination of priority* is found – that is, a subordination of generation in which the Father is prior to the Son but they both possess the *same attributes at the same level*, the relationship between the Son and the λογικοὶ is defined as an *ontological subordination of superiority/inferiority*. This means that, while the Son and the λογικοὶ possess the same attributes, the Son possesses them more fully – that is, to a greater extent – than the λογικοὶ that participate in him. This passage shows that holy λογικοὶ may comprehend much of God, but they maintain nonetheless a kind of subordination toward the Son and the Holy Spirit. Therefore, differently from the Spirit, the λογικοὶ not only are made *through* the Son, but are also *inferior* to the Son.

The relation between the *spiritual* and *noetic* participation of the λογικοὶ in the Logos and in the Holy Spirit stands as the key to understanding the relationship between God and the world. In this regard, this short subsection has shown that God's action toward the world in Origen's thought should be understood as both one and multifaceted. While the Trinity works as a whole, every person of the Trinity performs a different role according to his ontological characteristics. Therefore, before tackling the way in which Origen understands the participation of those λογικοὶ in the Holy Spirit, the next subsection will deal with the proper definition of the λογικοὶ and with their place in the noetic and perceptible world.

## **IV.2.2 The *Logikoi* and the Son**

### **IV.2.2.1 Participation and Contemplation**

Right from the first book of the *Commentary*, the relationship between God and the *logikoi* is presented by Origen as the ontological correlation between the Logos and the entirety of the rational cosmos. Consequently, the relation between the cosmos and the Son is not regarded as something external to the Son's substance, but it is rather rooted in his very essence, especially insofar as the

Son is regarded as 'Logos'. Therefore, commenting on the first line of the prologue – 'in the beginning was the word' – Origen inserts a difference between 'beginning' and 'Logos', according to which the Son-in-the-Beginning is identified with Wisdom, while the Son in his relation to the world is identified with Logos:

It is Wisdom which is understood, on the one hand, taken in relation to the structure of the contemplation and thoughts of all things (περι τῶν ὅλων θεωρίας καὶ νοημάτων), but it is the Logos which is received, taken in relation to the communication of the things which have been contemplated to all rational beings (τὰ λογικὰ) (*ComJn*, I.111).

Therefore, Origen defines the Son as Wisdom, insofar as he contemplates the eternal plan of creation in the Father, and Logos, insofar as this plan comes into being (*ComJn*, I.113).<sup>58</sup> As the Logos is the communication of all things to the *logikoi*, he is also regarded as the one who 'removes everything irrational (πᾶν ἄλογον) from us and make us truly rational beings (κατὰ ἀλήθειαν λογικοῦς)', so that 'we become rational in a divine manner (ἐνθέως λογικοὶ) when he destroys in us all that is irrational and dead, insofar as he is the Logos' (*ComJn*, I.267-268). The same interpretation is given commenting on the episode of Jesus' casting out of the merchants from the temple (*Jn*. 2:13-20). Origen takes this image to mean the casting out of the irrational elements (τὰ ἄλογα) from every soul (*ComJn*, X.233-245). The ontological proximity between the Son and the *logikoi* results in the interpretation of salvation as the noetic contemplation of God by the holy souls, symbolised by the 'harvest' of *Jn*. 4:35-36,<sup>59</sup> where it is said to happen in the mind (τῷ νῷ) and to be distinctive to the rational souls (τῇ λογικῇ) (*ComJn*, XIII.298).<sup>60</sup> This contemplation is achieved by rational beings through knowledge, which is the unification of one's soul with the object of knowledge: 'those who have been made one with and united with something (τοὺς ἀνακεκραμένους τινὶ καὶ ἐνωθέντας) know that with which they have been made

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<sup>58</sup> In this regard see: Sarah Spangler, 'Christology as the basis of metaphysics in Origen's Commentary on John', in J. Baun, A. Cameron, M. Edwards and M. Vinzent (eds), *Studia Patristica* 46, p. 247-251.

<sup>59</sup> *Jn*. 4:35-36: 'Don't you have a saying, "It's still four months until harvest"? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. Even now the one who reaps draws a wage and harvests a crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together'.

<sup>60</sup> In this regard, I completely agree with Jacobsen who states: 'revealing God to human beings is thus not about making the invisible God visible, but about making him understandable'. See: A. C. Jacobsen, *Christ, the Teacher of Salvation*, p. 308.

one' (*ComJn*, XIX.22).<sup>61</sup> As knowledge means 'to be made one with and united with (ἀνακεκρᾶσθαι καὶ ἡνωσθαι)' it follows that it is possible to know neither the Son nor the Father before that 'unity and participation' is achieved.<sup>62</sup> Origen explains in this way the verses of *Jn*. 8:19 'you know neither me nor my Father; if you knew me you would know the Father'. God's relation to human beings is therefore represented as a unification between the rational soul and the Logos of God, which provides the soul with 'a share of his own divinity (θειότης)' (*ComJn*, XIX.25). By living in the Son's divinity, the soul finally 'come to behold the essence, or the power and nature of God beyond the essence (ἐνιδεῖν τῆ οὐσία ἢ τῆ ὑπερέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας δυνάμει καὶ φύσει τοῦ θεοῦ)' (*ComJn*, XIX.37).

The brief analysis of the relation between Logos and creation reveals three main aspects of Origen's Christological soteriology. First, the Son is the only means through which rational creatures can contemplate God, as he is the source of rationality. Secondly, God's contemplation consists in the noetic contemplation of the Son's essence, especially in his *epinoia* of 'Logos'. Thirdly, the Father's essence is not known by rational creatures insofar as the Father is 'beyond essence'. Consequently, rational creatures can only have a glimpse of him through the contemplation of the Son.

#### IV.2.2.2 The Son in the Cosmological Order

In the previous section, it has been argued that the Saviour performs his redeeming action on the rational elements present in the perceptible world, transforming the creatures living in the perceptible world by means of their noetic participation in him. Therefore, commenting on the fact that Jesus 'knew what is in each human being' (*Jn*.2:24), Origen provides a double meaning for the term 'human being'. On the one hand, human being might signify 'everyone who is according to the image of God, or every rational being (παντὸς τοῦ κατ' εἰκόνα θεοῦ ἢ παντὸς λογικοῦ)' (*ComJn*, X.316); on the other hand, the term can also

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<sup>61</sup> In this regard see John M. Dillon, 'The knowledge of God in Origen', in Roelof Van den Broek, Tjitze Baarda and Jaap Mansfeld (eds), *Knowledge of God in the Graeco-Roman World*, Leiden 1988, p. 219-228. Here, the author focuses his research on the question of the knowledge of God on the metaphor of 'light'.

<sup>62</sup> See *ComJn*, XIX.22-24.

be restricted ‘to the mortal rational being alone (ἐπὶ τοῦ θνητοῦ λογικοῦ ζώου μόνου)’ (*ComJn*, X.317). Accordingly, Origen explains that the world is constituted by rational creatures which are hierarchically disposed according to the order dictated by their degree of noetic participation in God. The highest rational creatures are unified with God to the point of being defined themselves as “gods”: ‘There are certain gods (θεοὶ) of whom God (ὁ θεὸς) is god [...] There are other beings besides the gods. Some of these are called “thrones”, other are said to be “principalities”, and others besides these are called “dominions” and “powers”.’ (*ComJn*, I.212-214). The descending hierarchy of rational beings goes down from the purest beings to human beings and to demons. Christ is said to be Saviour of this entire rational world, as Origen plainly states that ‘he has clearly become human being to human beings and angel to angels’ (*ComJn*, I.217). The same interpretation of the cosmic salvific role of the Saviour is attested in the second book. Here, discussing the Saviour’s role as the ‘light of men’, Origen explains that it is possible to call ἄνθρωπος every rational creature of the world, especially since the names of higher powers, such as “thrones”, “principalities”, etc, ‘are not names of the natures of living beings, but of orders (οὐχὶ φύσεων ζώων ἐστὶν ὀνόματα, ἀλλὰ τάξεων) of which this or that rational nature (λογικὴ φύσις) has been prepared by God’ (*ComJn*, II.146). Therefore, it is possible to call ἄνθρωπος every rational being, because the nature of everything that is rational is the same. This nature is that of being generated according to the image of God, that is, in participation with the rationality of the Son-Logos.

Further reflecting on the relation between Logos and *logikoi*, Origen defines the relationship between human rationality and the Logos as equal to the one between the Son and the Father:

The logos which is each *logikos* has the same position in relation to the Logos-in-the-Beginning-with-God, which is God-the-Logos, which God-the-Logos has with God [the Father]. For as the Father is the very-God and true God in relation to the image [...] so is the very-Logos in relation to the logos in each one’ (*ComJn*, II.20).<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> The Greek text runs: Ὁ γὰρ ἐν ἐκάστῳ λόγος τῶν λογικῶν τοῦτον τὸν λόγον ἔχει πρὸς τὸν ἐν ἀρχῇ λόγον πρὸς τὸν θεὸν ὄντα λόγον θεόν, ὃν ὁ θεὸς λόγος πρὸς τὸν θεόν· ὡς γὰρ αὐτόθεος καὶ ἀληθινὸς θεὸς ὁ πατήρ πρὸς εἰκόνα καὶ εἰκόνας τῆς εἰκόνας, [...] οὕτως ὁ αὐτόλογος πρὸς τὸν ἐν ἐκάστῳ λόγον.

The relation between the rational creatures, here defined by the plural λόγοι, and the source of their rationality (the Logos, at the singular) is equivalent to the one that subsists between the Father and the Son: 'For both hold the place of a source: the Father, that of divinity (θεότητος), the Son, that of reason (λόγου)' (*ComJn*, II.21). Once established the relation between Son and *logikoi* as the one between 'the image' and 'those according to the image', Origen further divides rational beings into four categories, since there are first, second or third ranks of *logoi*, depending on their participation in the Logos (*ComJn*, II.21-24).<sup>64</sup> The division of the cosmos according to different ranks of being, which differ according to the degree of participation in the Logos, rests on the ontological participation of the rational creatures in the Son, who is the source of rationality. In other words, the Son and the *logikoi* are just as inseparable as the Father and the Son. The Logos is naturally implanted inside each human's heart, 'the Word which exists in the nature of rational being (τῇ φύσει τῶν λογικῶν) is a teacher who is inseparable (ἀχώριστός) from the student' (*ComJn*, II.109), so much so that he is the Reason for their virtue and accountability (*ComJn*, XX.350-357). In short, Origen's understanding of the relationship between the Son and the cosmological order of *logikoi* rests on the principles of generation and participation. As the Father generates the Son, the Son participates in the Father. Similarly, as the Son generates the rational creatures, they participate in him. Therefore, even the Devil, is said to be a *logikos* (*ComJn*, XX.237-252).<sup>65</sup> Nevertheless, because the Father is the only one who possesses the fullness of every possible attribute, no *logikos* is said to possess blessedness *by nature*, that is, as an inseparable attribute (ὡς ἀχώριστον συμβεβηκὸς τὴν μακαριότητα) (*ComJn*, II.124). The degree of blessedness depends on the level of participation in the Son, thus revealing their relationship to the Logos as one of *ontological subordination of inferiority*.

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<sup>64</sup> Similarly, Origen describes four forms of logical adoration (*ComJn*, II.24-31) and four orders in relation to the name 'God' and to the Logos (*ComJn*, II.32-33).

<sup>65</sup> See in particular *ComJn*, XX.237-252, where the devil is explicitly defined as a *logikos*, which finds its own deepest nature in its rationality, just as every other *logikos*. In another passage, (*ComJn*, II.91-99) Origen affirms that, to the extent the devil is the devil, he is not a creation of God; nonetheless, to the extent he is a rational being he is considered to be creation (κτίσις). The same concept is expressed again in *ComJn*, XX.171-181. For the very same reason, Origen alludes more than once to the fact that the devil, just as the entirety of the cosmos, will be eventually saved when Christ will destroy the death. See: *ComJn*, I.236; XX.220-236. This view is explicitly stated in *ComJn*, XXXII.19-40. On the salvation of the devil see: M. Scott, 'Guarding the Mysteries of Salvation: The Pastoral Pedagogy of Origen's Universalism', p. 347-368.



The difference between the divine participation of the Son (and, consequently, of the Spirit) in the Father and that of the *logikoi* in the Son rests on the possibility of fall. Origen does not allow this possibility for the Son and Spirit, which, consequently, participate fully in every attribute of the Father. On the contrary, the fallen state represents the cosmological reality of every rational creature. Every *logikos* who used to partake in deity before the fall, become part of the cosmological order after the fall, thus assuming different forms (*ComJn*, XXXII,229-239).<sup>66</sup> However, every rational creature maintains a substance (οὐσία) which is shaped according to the image of the creator, regardless of the fact that it can become 'image of the earth' (*ComJn*, XX.182-197). The ontological subordination of inferiority results therefore in the possession of the same attributes of the Son at an inferior level. Despite this subordination, the possibility of participating in the noetic world, thus contemplating the Word-in-the-Beginning, is given to human beings by the knowledge of the Saviour. There are human beings that now see the Word-in-the-Beginning. The Saviour's soul is one of them, but one day even the angels are said by Origen to see the Father without a mediator and servant, just as the Son sees the Father. This outcome is perceived by Origen as the end of times, when the Son will deliver the kingdom to the Father (*ComJn*, XX.46-64) for, through the perfect contemplation of the Son, everyone will see the Father (*ComJn*, XXXII.358-367). The ultimate redeeming action of the Son toward his creatures appears, therefore, to be directed to the whole cosmos of *logikoi*, which will be finally restored to the kingdom of the Father by means of their participation in the Son (*ComJn*, I.254-258).<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> This doctrine clearly refers to Origen's doctrine of the pre-existence of the soul. In this regard, see: *ComJn*, II.175-185, where Origen refers to the doctrine of pre-existence as 'our own opinion'.

<sup>67</sup> Regarding the delivering of the kingdom to the Father and the doctrine of *apokatastasis* in the Commentary on John see: E. Prinzivalli, 'L'uomo e il suo destino nel *Commento a Giovanni*' p. 361-379. See also: Ilaria Ramelli, *The Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis: A Critical Assessment from the New Testament to Eriugena*. Leiden, Brill, 2014, p. 1-222; Emanuela Prinzivalli, 'Apocatastasi', in A. Monaci Castagno, *Origene. Dizionario*, p. 24-29.

### IV.2.3 The *Pneumatikoi* and the Spirit

Thus far, the relationship between creatures and God has been presented as the ontological bond between the Son, particularly insofar as he is Logos, and the *logikoi*, which participate in him to different extents. For many years, Origen's scholars have understood this relation to be the only one that truly matters in Origen's soteriology.<sup>68</sup> However, other scholars have recognised a preeminent role to the Holy Spirit in Origen's soteriology. Among them, it is worth quoting scholars like McDonnell and Greggs,<sup>69</sup> whose analyses are mostly based on Origen's *On First Principles* and *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*. However, few scholars have proposed a deep analysis of Origen's pneumatology in his *Commentary* on the fourth Gospel. A significant exception are the studies of Marksches and Radde-Gallwitz.<sup>70</sup> The latter has analysed fragment 38 of the *Commentary*, concluding that Origen envisions the Holy Spirit as a substantial reality, rather than as an activity of the Son. The former, polemicizing against Ziebritzki and the German tradition which has interpreted Origen's pneumatology as 'a step in the air',<sup>71</sup> affirms the role of the Holy Spirit as necessary in the process of returning the upper part of human beings to God. Expanding on the works of these scholars, the following sections will be devoted to unfolding the soteriological role of the Spirit in Origen's thought. Like Greggs, I understand the Spirit as the soteriological agent which provides 'the place of growth towards God in salvation' in the period 'between creation and the eschaton'.<sup>72</sup> However, differently from both McDonnell and Greggs, I do not believe that this soteriological role entails a smoothing of Origen's subordinationism. On the contrary, the particularity of the Spirit's role in Origen's soteriology comes exactly from his peculiar essence, that is, from his subordination to the Son, which allows him to perform his mediating role between God and creation. In order to fully understand his soteriological role, this subsection will unfold what Origen means

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<sup>68</sup> As an example, see the latest – and one of the most complete – monograph on Origen's soteriology: A. C. Jacobsen, *Christ, the Teacher of Salvation*. This work barely mentions the role of the Holy Spirit.

<sup>69</sup> K. McDonnell, 'Does Origen Have a Trinitarian Doctrine of the Holy Spirit?'; T. Greggs, *Barth, Origen, and Universal Salvation*.

<sup>70</sup> See: C. Marksches, 'Der Heilige Geist im Iohanneskommentar des Origenes', p. 277-299; A. Radde-Gallwitz, 'The Holy Spirit as Agent, Not Activity', p. 229-235.

<sup>71</sup> Henning Ziebritzki, *Heiliger Geist und Weltseele: das Problem der dritten Hypostase bei Origenes, Plotin und ihren Vorläufern*, Tübingen 1994, p. 224.

<sup>72</sup> T. Greggs, *Barth, Origen, and Universal Salvation*, p. 151

when he uses the term *pneumatikos*, thus focusing on the relation between the very substance of the Holy Spirit and those who are called spirituals by participation in him. The second section will instead be focused on analysing what kind of mediating role the Spirit performs.

#### IV.2.3.1 The Participation in the Spirit

In the first lines of his *Commentary*, Origen addresses Ambrose, a former Valentinian Christian, as one 'eager to be a spiritual (πνευματικός), no longer a human being' (*ComJn*, I.9). The characterisation of Ambrose as a *pneumatikos* allows him to 'lean on Jesus' breast', that is, to understand the spiritual Gospel (*ComJn*, I.40). A few lines later, Origen explains that every Christian who is 'established in the Spirit' is able to understand 'the Word who was restored from being made flesh to what he was in the beginning' (*ComJn*, I.43). The ability to understand the spiritual Gospel is thus defined as the first characteristic of all those who are called *pneumatikoi* who, being spiritual persons, are able to interpret both New and Old Testament in a manner according to the Spirit (*ComJn*, XX.66-79).<sup>73</sup> So far, this definition might appear similar to the one of *logikoi*: just as a *logikos* is defined by his participation in the Son, so a *pneumatikos* is such by participation in the Spirit. Nevertheless, a strong distinction must be made: being a *pneumatikos* is not a permanent possession since, differently from the participation in the Logos, the participation in the Spirit can be lost and is not regarded as inherent to the natural condition of human beings. Commenting on the Saviour's description as 'light shining on the darkness', Origen struggles against the interpretation the gnostic teacher Heracleon gives of the word "spiritual". According to Origen, Heracleon deemed

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<sup>73</sup> In the entire *Commentary on John*, the ability of understanding the deeper meaning of the Scriptures is given by the participation in the Spirit. In *ComJn*, X.15-17 Origen states that the differences between Gospels should be explained by the fact that different evangelists were seeing God in the Spirit (βλέπουσι τῷ πνεύματι τὸν θεόν), reporting this in different ways according to the different mystical meanings they wanted to convey. Therefore, every Gospel is different according to the letter but similar according to the Spirit, as the source of inspiration is the Holy Spirit. In this regard see what I state in IV.1.1 regarding the existence of only *one* noetic Gospel. For this reason, Origen affirms that it is impossible to understand the Scriptures if one does not contemplate the meaning of the Holy Spirit in it (τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος νοῦν μὴ θεωρῶν) (*ComJn*, X.298-306). Therefore, the Spirit plays a crucial role both in the inspiration and exegesis of the Scriptures, for it is only by participating in the Holy Spirit that one can get the deeper meanings. In this regard see also: *ComJn*, XIII.361. A similar argumentation can be found in *On First Principles* I.3.

the spiritual nature to be one of the fixed natures of the Valentinian system.<sup>74</sup> Origen's critique of Heracleon is based on the idea that being *pneumatikos* is not a permanent possession (*ComJn*, II.133-136). Moreover, Origen points out that, when Paul speaks about 'spiritual' in 1*Cor.* 2:14-15, he does not say "spiritual human" (πνευματικὸς ἄνθρωπος), but only "spiritual one" (ὁ πνευματικὸς).<sup>75</sup> Consequently, Origen concludes:

It is no accident that he has not added the noun "man" in the case of the spiritual. For the spiritual (ὁ πνευματικὸς) is better than "human" (ἄνθρωπος), since human being is characterised either by soul or body (ἐν ψυχῇ ἢ ἐν σώματι) or both of these together, but not also by spirit, which is more divine than these (θειοτέρω πνεύματι). The spiritual receives this title in accordance with his predominant participation (κατὰ μετοχὴν ἐπικρατοῦσαν) in the Spirit (*ComJn*, II.138).

As the spiritual is described joining a predominant participation (μετοχή) in the Spirit, this description implies the fact that not only human beings are able to become spiritual, but also that every being in the Cosmos might participate, in different ways, to the Spirit. This condition is said to be that of John the Baptist,

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<sup>74</sup> See: *ComJn*, XX.147-150; XX.168-170; XX.210-218. On Origen's polemic with Heracleon on the idea of fixed nature see: Jeffrey A. Trumbower, 'Origen's Exegesis of John 8:19-53: The Struggle with Heracleon over the idea of Fixed Natures' in *Vigiliae Christianae* 43 2 (1989), p. 138-154. Origen's interpretation of Heracleon's *Commentary on John* has not been deemed trustworthy by some scholars, who think Origen has interpreted Heracleon's *Commentary* on the basis of the Valentinian speculation on the fixity of natures of his own time, rather than reporting Heracleon's view. See: Einar Thomassen, 'Heracleon', in Tuomas Rasimus (ed), *The Legacy of John: Second-Century Reception of the Fourth Gospel*, Leiden-Boston 2009, p. 173-210. See also: Ansgar Wucherpfennig, *Heracleon Philologus: Gnostische Johannesexegese im zweiten Jahrhundert*, Tübingen 2002. However, other scholars strongly criticise this line of scholarship, deeming Origen's account of Heracleon's *Commentary on John* to be trustworthy. See in particular: Manlio Simonetti, 'Un recente libro su Eracleone', in *Adamantius* 9 (2003), p. 193-208. Although it is impossible here to discuss these two positions in detail, I tend to agree with Simonetti for many reasons. First of all, it seems unlikely that Origen is deliberately making up part of Heracleon's text, since this very text was circulating at Origen's time. Indeed, Origen would have risked a great deal making up sections of Heracleon's text. Secondly, if we discard the idea that Origen was disingenuous, the only other option is to assume that Origen completely misunderstood the meaning of the whole *Commentary* by Heracleon, which he was reading in its entirety. If this is the case, I find highly unlikely that we, modern scholars, could be able to reconstruct the real meaning of Heracleon's word through some fragments wrongly quoted by a naïve author (Origen!). For this reason, I also do not find convincing at all Kaler's claim according to which Heracleon cannot even be deemed to be a Valentinian. See: Michael Kaler, 'Was Heracleon a Valentinian? A New Look at Old Sources', in *The Harvard Theological Review* 99 3 (2006), p. 275-289.

<sup>75</sup> See 1*Cor.* 2:14-15: 'The natural man (ψυχικὸς ἄνθρωπος) does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him. But the spiritual (ὁ πνευματικὸς) judges all things'.

who is regarded to be an angel coming from higher regions of the Cosmos, thus being filled with the Holy Spirit (*ComJn*, II.175-185).

#### IV.2.3.2 Human Spirit and Divine Spirit

In another passage, commenting on *Jn.* 13:21 – ‘Jesus was troubled in the Spirit’ – Origen further complicates the meaning of the term ‘spiritual’, by asserting that, according to the Scriptures, a division must be made between human soul, human spirit and divine Spirit:

I have observed that the soul (ψυχή) is something intermediate (μέσον) and capable of both virtue and evil, but the spirit (πνεῦμα) of human being which is in him is incapable of receiving things that are inferior, for the best things are fruits of the spirit, and not, as one might think, of the Holy Spirit, but of human spirit (*ComJn*, XXXII.218).

This statement might seem to contradict what Origen has said previously regarding human beings being made of body and soul. The difference between the two passages stands in the fact that, while in the first quotation Origen defines the ‘spiritual’ as the one who partakes in the Holy Spirit, like John the Baptist, in the second one he is speaking of the human spirit, which stands as the ontological ‘container’ of all spiritual things. On the basis of his understanding of *1Thes.* 5:23, Origen holds a threefold anthropology, as he states in *On First Principles* and *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*.<sup>76</sup> It is worth mentioning here that some scholars have deemed Origen’s threefold anthropology to be more functional than ontological.<sup>77</sup> My thesis affirms that, as Origen understands the Holy Spirit to be the ontological place of growth of human’s soul in its path

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<sup>76</sup> *On First Principles*, III.4.2: ‘It is plain that the will of this soul is something intermediate between the flesh and the spirit, undoubtedly serving and obeying one of the two, whichever it has chosen to obey’. A similar concept is expressed in the *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, I.18: ‘We frequently find in the Scriptures, and we have often discussed this topic, that human being may be said to be spirit, body and soul. And when it is said “the flesh desires contrary to the spirit and the spirit desires contrary to the flesh” (*Gal.* 5:17) the soul is undoubtedly placed in the middle’. In this regard, see also: *On First Principles*, I.8.3; II.6.5; II.8.4. On the other scriptural sources of Origen’s anthropology see: Anders-Christian Jacobsen, ‘Genesis 1-3 as Source for the Anthropology of Origen’, in *Vigiliae Christianae* 62 3 (2008), p. 213-232.

<sup>77</sup> See: Theresia Heither, *Translatio Religionis: Die Paulusdeutung des Origenes in seinem Kommentar zum Römerbrief*, Cologne 1990, p. 198. See also: H. U. von Balthasar, *Origen: Spirit and Fire*, p. 46.

toward God, it makes much more sense to interpret human spirit as an ontological place – or, maybe, as an ontological capacity of the soul – rather than as a logical function. In other words, Origen is here interpreting Jesus' being troubled 'in the spirit' by explaining that 'this experience had come to the realm of the spirit (ἐπικρατεία τοῦ πνεύματος)' (*ComJn*, XXXII.223). Differently from the soul, which is able of good and evil, the spirit is only capable of good things, thus representing the ontological capacity of the soul to grow towards God by means of participation in the Holy Spirit. This interpretation is corroborated by Origen's doctrine according to which 'the saint lives in the spirit (πνεύματι), [...] so everything he does, whatever it may be, he does it in the spirit, even to the extent that if he suffers, he suffers in the spirit' (*ComJn*, XXXII.224). As this is true for every saint, that is, for every *logikos* who have become also *pneumatikos*, it is even truer for Jesus.

Similarly, Origen explains the difference between believing and knowing according to the participation in the Spirit. Origen clarifies that 'to be in the flesh' means to please God in no way; contrarily, to be 'in the body' means to 'walk by faith' – that is, to believe without properly understanding – as simple Christians do. Those who do not understand 'the spiritual things of the Scriptures (τὰ πνευματικὰ τῆς γραφῆς)' are thus said to be 'present with the body' but 'absent from the Lord', since God is Spirit. The higher level of participation in God is then reached by the 'spiritual', as 'the one who compares spiritual things with spiritual (τὰ πνευματικὰ τοῖς πνευματικοῖς συγκρίνων), and who becomes spiritual, is absent from the body (ἐκ τοῦ σώματος) and present with the Lord' (*ComJn*, XIII.361). The 'spirit' inside human beings represents, therefore, the capacity of ascending towards God. This capacity is granted by the very nature of the *logikos* who possesses in his own soul the Logos of the creator. This logos is defined by Origen as a 'natural intelligent disposition (ἡ εὐφυῆς ἐν λόγῳ ψυχῆ)', possessed by the soul 'by nature (φύσει)', which allows it to worship God according to the 'laws that are spiritual and heavenly (τοὺς οὐρανίους καὶ πνευματικοὺς)' (*ComJn*, X.141). Similarly, Origen explains that, as the Holy Spirit came to Christ as a dove in *Jn*. 1:32, so it comes 'to every human being which has the lord inside (ἐν ἐκάστῳ κύριον)' (*ComJn*, X.173).

From what has been said so far, it appears that the role of the human spirit is that of providing the ontological capacity of receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit which is administered by the Son, thus allowing human beings to grow in contemplation of the Son. As such, it plays a very important role in the process of the ascent towards God:

I think that everyone who has once been illuminated and tasted the heavenly gift and has become a participant in the Holy Spirit (μέτοχόν τε γεννηθέντα πνεύματος ἁγίου), and tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and has fallen away again (παραπεσόντα πάλιν), renews himself to repentance. [...] The spiritual economy (πνευματικὴ οἰκονομία) related to Jesus has always been present with the saints (*ComJn*, XX.89-94).<sup>78</sup>

In the process of fall and ascent of rational beings towards God, the Holy Spirit plays a crucial role, for one acquires the spiritual capacity of leaning toward the Son only by participating in him. Human spirit furnishes to human beings the capacity of growing by participation in the Holy Spirit. This process is described by Origen as similar to the process that leads the human part of Christ to be united with the Logos. As Christ is an inseparable unity of Logos and *logikos*, so the human souls which fully participate in the Holy Spirit become one spirit in God: 'And I say "of both"<sup>79</sup> also in the case of human beings in whose case each human being's soul has been mixed with the Holy Spirit (ἀνακέκρται τῷ ἁγίῳ πνεύματι ἢ ἐκάστου ψυχῆ) and each of those who are saved become spiritual (πνευματικός)' (*ComJn*, I.197). By having been made one with the Holy Spirit, these souls became more rational than others, as they perceived the invisible realities of the Son (*ComJn*, I.200), which are the 'spiritual aspects of the Logos

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<sup>78</sup> Regarding the presence of the spiritual economy in the Old Testament and its relation to Origen's doctrine of prophecy in the *Commentary on John* see: E. Norelli, 'La profezia nel *Commento a Giovanni*', p. 301-331. See also my own article: G. Hermanin de Reichenfeld, 'Resurrection and Prophecy: The Spirit in Origen's Exegesis', p. 143-153. See also *ComJn*, XIII.320-321 and XIII.325-326, where Origen explains that the apostles and the prophets are said to rejoice together because they both participate in the same Holy Spirit. On the fellowship (κοινωνία) of the Holy Spirit as the force that allows the prophets to prophesy see *ComJn*, VI.119-126. On the Holy Spirit as the force which leads both prophets and apostles to the vision of truth beyond the types, that is, to the fullness of Christ, see *ComJn*, VI.15-20; II.199-209. On the difference between spirit, soul and power see: *ComJn*, VI.62-71.

<sup>79</sup> Paul says that Saviour has made 'of both one', see *Col.* 1:16; *Rom.* 1:20; *1Cor.* 4:18.

(τὰ πνευματικὰ λόγου)’ that allow the spiritual ones to get knowledge of every living being in the cosmos (*ComJn*, X.99-110).

From this brief presentation of the meaning of *pneumatikos* in Origen’s theology, three important aspects have arisen. First, Origen’s threefold anthropology<sup>80</sup> envisions a precise role for human spirit: to endow every rational creature with the ontological capacity of participating in the Holy Spirit. Being the recipient for the Holy Spirit, the spirit which is in humans is only capable of good things, differently from the soul, which is ontologically neutral and capable of both good and bad. Secondly, it has been highlighted that when Origen speaks of someone as ‘spiritual’ he refers to his predominant participation in the Holy Spirit. Thirdly, the participation in the Holy Spirit is not always achieved by human beings and, consequently, does not represent a natural possession as the participation in the Logos. Fourthly, it is only by participating in the Holy Spirit that the soul becomes able to contemplate the higher aspects of the Son. The next subsection will be focused on understanding in which way the Holy Spirit operates in human beings and what the differences between his role and that of the Son are.

#### **IV.2.4 The ‘Material of the Gifts from God’: The Holy Spirit as the Substratum of the Noetic Ascent**

##### **IV.2.4.1 The Spiritual Substratum**

In Origen’s *Commentary on John*, the Spirit is consistently presented as the first among created beings, generated through the Son by the will and power of the Father. In chapter II, I have described the relationship between Spirit and Son as an *ontological subordination of priority*, which makes the Spirit subordinated to the Son, but still participant in the most perfect way of all his attributes. In this sense, the Holy Spirit is defined as a *logikos*, being himself in need of the Son to be rational.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> See also: E. Prinzivalli, ‘L’uomo e il suo destino nel *Commento a Giovanni*’ p. 361-379.

<sup>81</sup> See: *ComJn*, II.76: ‘The Holy Spirit seems to have need of the Son ministering to his hypostasis (οὗ χρήζειν ἔοικε τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα διακονοῦντος αὐτοῦ τῇ ὑποστάσει), not only for him to exist (εἶναι), but also for him to be wise (σοφὸν), and rational (λογικὸν) and just (δίκαιον), and whatever other things we ought to understand him to be by participation in the *epinoiai* of Christ, which we



The entire argument presented by Origen about the Holy Spirit's involvement in the world derives from his interpretation of the verse of *Jn.* 1:3: 'Through him all things were made'. Nonetheless, he explains the soteriological role of the Holy Spirit in a very puzzling passage:

I think, if I may put in this way, that the Holy Spirit supplies the material of the gifts from God (ὑλην τῶν ἀπὸ θεοῦ χαρισμάτων) to those who are called saints (ἅγιοι) thanks to him (δι' αὐτὸ) and because of participation in him (τὴν μετοχὴν αὐτοῦ). This material gift that I mentioned (τῆς εἰρημένης ὑλης τῶν χαρισμάτων) is made effective from God (ἐνεργουμένης μὲν ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ); it is administrated by Christ (διακονουμένης δὲ ὑπὸ τοῦ Χριστοῦ); it subsists in accordance with the Holy Spirit (ὑφεστῶσης δὲ κατὰ τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα) (*ComJn*, II.77).

Origen's definition of the Spirit as the one providing the matter (ὑλην) of the gifts is extremely puzzling, especially considering Origen's repeated assertion, both in the *Commentary* and in other works, of the complete immateriality and incorporeity of the Trinity.<sup>82</sup> Accordingly, the reference to the material of the gifts from God should be interpreted as a metaphor underlining the different roles played by the three hypostases in the salvation of the cosmos. Indeed, each role is connected here to the very nature of the hypostasis which accomplishes it. Therefore, the Father is said to produce and make effective the gift. In this sense, the Father is the one who rules over the gift, which is a result of his own *energeia*.<sup>83</sup> This role utterly belongs to the absolute transcendence of the Father, who is the only true God and source of every will and action. This will of the Father is then administrated by the Son, in virtue of the eternal participation of the Son in the Father. Through his *epinoiai*, rational creatures gradually gain a noetic knowledge of God, until they achieve the utter contemplation of the noetic world.

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mentioned previously (πᾶν ὅτιποτοῦν χρή αὐτὸ νοεῖν τυγχάνειν κατὰ μετοχὴν τῶν προειρημένων ἡμῖν Χριστοῦ ἐπινειῶν). In this regard see *supra*, II.2.1.

<sup>82</sup> See, among the many, *On First Principles* I.1.6; IV.3.15.

<sup>83</sup> The description of the ruling aspects of the higher level of the divine as its own *energeia* is attested in Plotinus as well. See: *Enneads* VI.8.12. As Edwards points out, a difference between the two stands in the fact that the *energeia* of the One 'produces nothing but the One', differently from the *energeia* of the Father in Origen which is administrated by the Son as a gift to lower beings. See: M. Edwards, *Origen against Plato*, p. 76. The reference to the gifts comes from Paul, particularly 1 *Cor.* 12:4-6.

Finally, the gifts are said to *subsist* in the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is thus identified as the *spiritual substratum* in which every creature is said to rest in order to contemplate God.<sup>84</sup> Therefore, the participation in the Spirit is *necessary* in order to gain the perfect contemplation of God. The verb used by Origen (ὑφίστημι) to describe the works of the Spirit indicates the ‘hypostatisation’ and the act of giving substance to these gifts. Rather than being indicated as a soteriological being of secondary importance, the Holy Spirit is revealed as the divine agent in whom every rational creature has to participate in order to be called ‘saint’.<sup>85</sup>

#### IV.2.4.2 The Spiritual and the Noetic

Origen’s definition of the role of the Spirit as the one of providing the *spiritual substratum* that is necessary for rational creatures to gain salvation defines the domain of his soteriological agency. However, it is worth underlining once more that the role of the Holy Spirit *is not* revealing of an ontological pre-eminence – or even equality – of the Spirit towards the Son. On the contrary, Origen explains that the main soteriological agency is still carried on by the Son, by whom the very hypostasis of the Holy Spirit is administrated:

And maybe, we ought to say that the creation (κτίσις) - but also the human race - in order to be set free from the slavery of corruption, was in need of an incarnate, blessed, and divine power (μακαρίας καὶ θείας δυνάμεως ἐνανθρωπούσης) which would also restore the things on earth to order. This activity fell, as it were, in some way to the Holy Spirit (ἐπέβαλλέ πως τῷ ἁγίῳ πνεύματι ἢ πρᾶξις αὐτῆ). Since the Spirit cannot bear it (ὑπομένειν), he sends forth the Saviour, because he alone is able to bear such a great conflict. Although it is the Father, as leader, who sends the Son, the Holy Spirit joins in sending him in advance (συναποστέλλει καὶ συμπροπέμπει),

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<sup>84</sup> M. Edwards, *Origen against Plato*, p. 76 says that, with this interpretation, Origen is actually ‘foreshadowing Augustine and his medieval imitators’. I will discuss the difference of the participation in the Spirit for the two authors in *infra*, VI.

<sup>85</sup> For this reason, I disagree with Simonetti who claims that, even though Origen envisioned the Spirit as a soteriological agent, he nonetheless had difficulties in assigning a *specific* role for the Spirit which is different from that of the Son. In fact, I believe that this chapter has shown that the concept of *spiritual substratum* represents the specific operation of the Spirit in relation to creatures. In this sense, the role of the Spirit does differ from that of the Son. See: M. Simonetti, ‘Note sulla teologia trinitaria di Origene’, p. 296.

promising to descend to the Son of God at the right time (έν καιρῶ) and to cooperate in the salvation of man (συνεργῆσαι τῇ τῶν ἀνθρώπων σωτηρίᾳ) (*ComJn*, II.83).

In order for the κτίσις to achieve salvation after the καταβολή,<sup>86</sup> the Son has to intervene in the creation. This soteriological work cannot be performed by the Holy Spirit because, being generated by the Father through the Son, *he is part of that creation* (κτίσις). Nevertheless, the Spirit is said to perform an important soteriological role έν καιρῶ, that is, at the 'right time'. The 'right time' Origen is referring to, ought to be identified with the time of this world, that is, when the originally good κτίσις has committed sin and has become a καταβολή. According to the categories of *noetic* and *perceptible* world, the Spirit could be said to work in the *perceptible world* by furnishing the *logikoi* with the *spiritual substratum* that they need in order to gain the perfect contemplation of the *noetic world*, constituted by the Son and his *epinoiai*. By participating in the substance of the Holy Spirit, creatures become able to get the noetic contemplation of the eternal realities in the Son. This interpretation is further corroborated by the fact that, after having described the participation of creatures in the Holy Spirit, Origen starts speaking of the different *epinoiai* of Christ (*ComJn*, II.89ff.).

In addition, the analysis proposed so far allows us to delineate better the difference between the realm of the *noetic* (νοητῶς) and that of the *spiritual* (πνευματικῶς) in Origen's interpretation. On the one hand, *noetic* is used by Origen to indicate an immaterial and intellectual participation in the attributes of the Son.<sup>87</sup> On the other hand, *spiritual* is used to indicate a participation taking place in the realm (ἐπικρατεία) of the Holy Spirit - that is, while the soul is in the perceptible world. For the *logikos*, the first is a logical participation of attributes, whilst the second is an ontological participation of substance,<sup>88</sup> thus explaining

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<sup>86</sup> On the difference between κτίσις and καταβολή see subsection IV.1.4.

<sup>87</sup> Similarly, there is a difference between spiritual and noetic interpretation of the Bible: 'We must not suppose that historical events are types (τύπους) of other historical events (ἱστορικὰ) and corporeal things of corporeal things (σωματικὰ). On the contrary, corporeal things (σωματικὰ) are types of spiritual things (πνευματικῶν) and historical events (ἱστορικὰ) are type of noetic realities (νοητῶν)' (*ComJn*, X.110).

<sup>88</sup> This distinction that I am proposing here should not be interpreted rigidly. In all his works, Origen tends to use a fluctuating terminology, according to the literary genre and type of audience. However, I still think it is a useful tool in order to understand Origen's cosmology and pneumatology.

why Origen regards the participation of the *logikoi* in the Logos as different from that participation they have in the Holy Spirit. Since ‘all rational creatures (λογικά) have a share in Christ’ (*ComJn*, II.80) according to their degree of sin and knowledge, rational creatures participate in the noetic world at different levels, thus always remaining naturally participant in the Son. On the contrary, participation in the Spirit – and the very definition of *pneumatikoi* – could be completely lost with sin. This difference resides in the fact that this participation is not instantiated in the knowledge of noetic realities, but rather in the very substance of the Spirit. While participating in the Son means to progressively gain a higher understanding of the noetic *epinoiai* of the Son, – Wisdom, Truth, Light, Justice – participating in the Spirit provides the spiritual matter, that is, the spiritual substratum, that allows rational creatures to detach themselves from the perceptible world and start living in the noetic world.

#### **IV.2.4.3 The Spirit in the Cosmos**

After having explained the subtle difference between noetic participation in the Son and spiritual participation in the substance of the Holy Spirit, it is worth analysing some of the most significant passages of the *Commentary* where Origen further explains the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the cosmos. The three most important passages are Origen’s interpretation of the adoration ‘in Spirit and truth’ (*Jn*. 4), the interpretation of the temple (*Jn*. 8) and the washing of disciple’s feet (*Jn*. 13). Moreover, it is worth mentioning the role of the Spirit in the problem of the forgiveness of post-baptismal sins. In these episodes, the Holy Spirit’s relation to the cosmos presents these three features: 1) The Spirit is consistently presented as a soteriological agent which is administrated by and subordinated to the Son. 2) The Holy Spirit furnishes the ontological matter, that is, the *spiritual substratum*, which allows rational creatures to gain a higher participation in the Son. 3) The Spirit is said to operate in the present time and in the perceptible world, rather than in the eschatological times.

In regard to the last point, it is worth noting Origen’s interpretation of *Jn*. 4:23: ‘But the hour is coming, and it is now, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth’. In interpreting this passage, Origen refers to what Jesus

said some verses before (*Jn. 4:21*): ‘the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem you will worship the Father’. Origen points out that twice the Gospel says that ‘the hour is coming’, but only in the second it adds ‘and it is now’. According to Origen, this reveals a difference between the two hours: ‘I think the first means the incorporeal worship (τὴν ἔξω σωμάτων προσκύνησιν) that will begin at the time of perfection. The second, however, means, I think, the worship of those being perfected in this life so far as it is possible for human nature to progress’ (*ComJn, XIII.87*). The difference between the two hours is therefore indicated by the fact that, in the time of this world, it is possible to worship the Father in Spirit, but it is not possible to do it in an incorporeal way.<sup>89</sup> On the contrary, the eschatological adoration is envisioned as a complete participation in the Spirit: ‘They worship at present with the pledge of the Spirit. But when they shall receive the Spirit in his fullness, they will worship the Father in Spirit’ (*ComJn, XIII.112*).<sup>90</sup> Origen’s insistence on the presence of the Spirit in the present time is one of the most important markers of his relationship to the cosmos. Although the full eschatological adoration of the Father will happen when the participation in the Spirit will be full, the Spirit is still present in the perceptible cosmos as a pledge. Therefore, human beings can participate in the Spirit even in this life, to the extent it is possible for their natures.

A similar interpretation is given by Origen when commenting on the teachings given by Jesus in the temple court in Jerusalem. Here, Origen explains that the temple should be taken to represent the cosmos. As such, Jesus is appropriately speaking in it, as the Saviour has come to the perceptible world to preach about the noetic world. Therefore, according to Origen, the deeper meaning of Jesus’ words refers to the ‘noetic temple’ (νοητὸν ἱερόν) – that is, the noetic cosmos – to which every human being is conducted by the power of the Holy Spirit (τῷ πνεύματι χειραγωγῆσαι) (*ComJn, XIX.58*). Once again, the Spirit is indicated as the soteriological agent in whose participation every rational creature acquires

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<sup>89</sup> For an interpretation of the significance of the ‘adoration in spirit and truth’ in Origen, see: Gaetano Lettieri, ‘In spirito e/o verità: da Origene a Tommaso d’Aquino’, in *Annali di Storia dell’Esegesi* 12 1 (1995), 49-83.

<sup>90</sup> Origen takes the idea of the Spirit working inside humans’ hearts in the time of this world as a pledge from *2Cor. 1:21-22*: ‘But it is God who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us, by putting his seal on us and giving us his Spirit in our hearts as a pledge’.

the capacity of reaching the noetic world.<sup>91</sup> Being the most honoured of all things of the κτίσις, the Spirit provides the ontological means through which creatures are able to detach themselves from the perceptible world – the καταβολή – to reach the contemplation of the Father, through the Son, in the Spirit.

The last example comes from Origen's interpretation of the last supper and of the washing of disciples' feet. In interpreting this episode, Origen firstly refers to the difference between 'breakfast' and 'supper', explaining that, while the first 'is suited for catechumens and precedes the completion of the spiritual day in this life (ἐν τῷ βίῳ τούτῳ ἡμέρας πνευματικῆς), supper is the final nourishment and is served to those who have already advanced further in their rationality (κατὰ λόγον)' (*ComJn*, XXXII.5).<sup>92</sup> Therefore, Origen understands the last supper to represent the final teachings for those who are already participating in the Holy Spirit to the highest possible degree for human beings. Nevertheless, Jesus felt the need to wash their feet, because the disciples are said to be cleaned only so far as human beings can be clean, but not as God. After that, Origen explains that the cleanliness of the disciples derives from their participation in the Holy Spirit, as 'the Holy Spirit and the power of the Most High can dwell in those who are already become clean so far as human beings are concerned' (*ComJn*, XXXII.75). Nevertheless, they still needed their feet to be washed by Jesus, as this act represents the washing away of the 'dust from the earth and from worldly things (τῶν κοσμικῶν πραγμάτων)' (*ComJn*, XXXII.116). As in the case of the adoration in Spirit and truth, Origen is here presenting the participation in the Spirit as different from that of the Son, where the first is said to be preparatory for the second.<sup>93</sup> This participation in the Spirit is effective until the 'end of the spiritual days in this life'. After that, the teachings of the Son are needed in order to wash away from the soul any 'worldly thing', that is, any participation in the

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<sup>91</sup> Interestingly enough, Origen adds that 'Jesus did not speak all the words that he possessed while he was teaching in the treasury, but as many as the treasury could contain. For I do not think that the cosmos itself (τὸν κόσμον τὸν ὅλον) could contain the whole Logos of God' (*ComJn*, XIX.59).

<sup>92</sup> Origen affirms to have explained the difference between breakfast and supper in his *Homilies on Luke*. Nevertheless, the Latin translation of his homilies by Jerome does not report any investigation on the matter. Origen is therefore probably referring to a homily which Jerome did not feel useful to translate. In this regard, see: R. Heine, *Origen: Commentary, [...] Book 13-32*, p. 343 n. 8.

<sup>93</sup> This interpretation is further corroborated by Origen's quotation of *1Cor.* 12:3: 'No-one can say "Jesus is the Lord" except in the Holy Spirit'. Origen quotes this passage here to underline the necessity of the participation in the Spirit for salvation. See: *ComJn*, XXXII.187-197.

perceptible world. Just as the Spirit was previously said not to be able to free creation from sin without the help of the Son, so his actions are not sufficient here to provide salvation without the help of the Son (*ComJn*, II.83).

Interpreting the soteriological role in such way, I strongly disagree with those scholars who assert that, in Origen's thought, the Spirit is sometimes indicated as having a greater majesty compared to the Son.<sup>94</sup> Most of these analyses rely on Origen's interpretation of *Mt.* 12:32: 'Anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven'. Commenting on this phrase Origen seems to suggest that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is unforgivable.<sup>95</sup> However, in chapter II, I have already shown that this view is unsustainable, as Origen interprets this inexcusability as referring only to the present age and not to the age to come (*ComJn* XIX.88).<sup>96</sup> Moreover, Origen explains that the reason why the Gospel says 'there will be no forgiveness' is that all rational beings (λογικά) have a share in Christ and pardon will be granted to them when they turn away from their sins (*ComJn*, II.78-82). Forgiveness is given by the Son, since the Spirit is not able to supply that forgiveness, being less than the Son (*ComJn*, II.83). According to Origen, the nature and work of the Spirit is to sanctify other creatures. For this reason, only blessed creatures can participate in the Holy Spirit (*ComJn*, XXXII.75). Therefore, against this interpretation of Matthew's passage, I would argue that Origen interprets Jesus' words as referring to the Spirit's ontological dependence on the Son. The Spirit is not able to forgive, for only the Son has the power to do it (*ComJn*, II.83). Therefore, Origen interprets the phrase 'there will be no forgiveness' in the sense that *the Spirit is not able* to give forgiveness to those creatures that sinned after having received him.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> See in particular T. Greggs, *Barth, Origen, and Universal Salvation*, p. 154; See also K. McDonnell, 'Does Origen Have a Trinitarian Doctrine of the Holy Spirit?', p. 10-12.

<sup>95</sup> See: *ComJn*, XIX.88; XXVIII.54-55. See also: *On First Principles*, I.3.2.

<sup>96</sup> See *supra*, II.2.2.

<sup>97</sup> For a full discussion of the problem of the forgiveness of post-baptismal sins see my own article: 'Resurrection and Prophecy: The Spirit in Origen's Exegesis', p. 143-153.

## Conclusions

This chapter has shown the way in which the Johannine concept of ‘the world’ has been interpreted by Origen in his *Commentary on John* and, consequently, how Origen understands the soteriological role of the Holy Spirit in relation to ‘the world’.

Against the interpretation of scholars like Tzamalikos, the first section has investigated how Origen reinterprets the Johannine dualism by envisioning a strong dichotomy between the noetic and the perceptible world. First, I have underlined the consonance between Origen’s exegetical principles and his interpretation of the world. Just as the Gospel is the physical and perceptible *corpus* in which the noetic seeds of divine knowledge are hidden, so the perceptible world – which is addressed by the Gospel and Origen as ‘this world’ – represents the instantiation in matter of the principles subsisting in the noetic world. This distinction between the two worlds, which Origen draws from the Gospel of John, proves that, in his *Commentary*, Origen is fully aware of the dualistic structure of the fourth Gospel. In his interpretation, the Johannine dualism between light and darkness, world and holy community, is interpreted as the universal participation of the *logikoi* in the noetic principles of the cosmos. In the perceptible world, the Logos is the noetic Light that illuminates the rationality of the *logikoi*. Through this light, the Logos shows the way to the noetic cosmos to all rational creatures which dwell in the perceptible world. Moreover, as the principles according to which the perceptible world subsists do not reside in the perceptible world, but rather in the noetic, Origen envisions salvation as the intellectual act of pulling the rational creature out of the materiality, thus disclosing the possibility of a purely intellectual understanding of God.<sup>98</sup> At the end of this process, the *logikoi* will be in the Logos, who is therefore identifiable with the noetic world. Hence, far from negating the Gospel’s dualism, Origen transforms it according to his exegetical and theological principles. While a distinction between the perceptible and the noetic world remains, he does not resolve this

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<sup>98</sup> However, this does not necessarily entail the idea of the total absence of an eschatological body. Nevertheless, it implies that salvation is a purely noetic process.



opposition by postulating an eventual destruction of the perceptible world – as John did – rather he uses it to reaffirm his belief in the final apokatastasis and reunification into the noetic world that is the Logos. I have then illustrated how Origen envisions the difference between the two worlds as the difference between κτίσις, originally generated in a pure state by God and καταβολή, the fallen perceptible world mingled with materiality and incapable of gaining the pure and perfect understanding of noetic matters.

In the second section, I have firstly shown that, in Origen's Trinity, every hypostasis performs a different work according to his own nature: the utterly transcendent Father is the source of will for the salvation of the *logikoi*; the Son is the one who administrates this salvation by making himself known through the *epinoiai* and guiding the rational beings towards the noetic world; lastly, the Spirit is the hypostasis who provides the *material substratum* for salvation. Therefore, against the anti-subordinationist theses of Greggs and McDonnell, it has been shown that the soteriological importance of the Holy Spirit lies in his *ontological subordination of priority* to the Son. However, although the Spirit is subordinated to the Son, he does not present the *ontological subordination of inferiority* to the Son, which is instead proper of all other created beings. Unlike the *logikoi*, the Spirit maintains superiority over the rest of creation and in spite of his generated nature, for the Spirit is brought into being *by* the Father *through* the Son as the rest of creation.

In addition, the second section has enquired about the difference between the kind of participation the *logikoi* have in the Son and the one they have in the Spirit. I have shown that the Son is depicted as the only means through which rational creatures can contemplate God, as he is the source of rationality. Consequently, God's contemplation consists in the noetic contemplation of the Son's essence, especially in his *epinoia* of 'Logos'. This kind of participation has different levels according to each person's rationality and represents the true substance of every human being. As such, the participation in the Son is a natural possession of all rational creatures. Origen says that this possession is noetic, insofar as it is purely intellectual. Contrariwise, Origen presents the participation in the Holy Spirit as the sharing of the very substance of the Holy Spirit. This participation is made possible by the existence of a spiritual part in humans, that is, of an ontological

place in which the Holy Spirit dwells when the soul starts to participate in him. As such, being a *pneumatikos* is not a natural possession, but a status gained and maintained by the rational beings through constant effort. Most importantly, the acquisition of the *substratum* provided by the Holy Spirit is instrumental to achieve the pure noetic understanding of the Son. To the difference between the participation in the Son and that in the Spirit corresponds therefore a difference between spiritual and noetic participation in God. While the first refers to the ontological participation in the very substance of the Spirit, the second is interpreted as a logical advancement in understanding the many *epinoiai* of the Son.

In conclusion, this section has proven that Origen envisions a specific soteriological role for the Holy Spirit, one that is distinct from that of Son. Developing and interpreting the Johannine dualism, Origen understands the Spirit as the provider of the ontological *substratum* for the salvation of rational creatures. Because of its ontological characteristics, the Spirit's role in the economy of salvation is not depicted as an eschatological one, rather as a mundane one, as the Spirit provides the ontological place where the *logikoi* of 'this world' have the possibility of freeing themselves from the wretchedness of the perceptible world and grasp a glimpse of the noetic world, that is, the Son in his full rationality.





# V. The Spirit and the World in Augustine

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## Introduction

The opposition between God and the world is a major theme which forms and permeates the entire Gospel of John particularly shaping the character of the Holy Spirit.<sup>1</sup> This chapter aims at enquiring about Augustine's understanding of the dialectical opposition between the Spirit and the world. In particular, it will show how Augustine's use of the category of "worldly" and "spiritual" is patterned after his comprehension of the fourth Gospel. Both these categories are overwhelmingly present in Augustine's theology, and they stand as the ground on which Augustine builds some of his most controversial doctrines, such as the interpretation of God's relation to creation, the question of human beings made in the image of God and the problem of evil. Therefore, through the analysis of Augustine's exegesis of the fourth Gospel in the *Tractates on John*, it will be shown the extent to which Augustine's theology is not imposed on, but rather shaped by the text of the fourth Gospel.<sup>2</sup> By contrast with Origen, who patiently works to smooth and nuance the Gospel's dualism in an ontological system of different degrees of ontological participation in the Spirit and noetic participation in the Logos, Augustine proposes quite a literal interpretation which emphasises the differences between the elect – endowed by the Spirit of God – and the world – permanently corrupted and in the grip of demonic passions.

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<sup>1</sup> For references on these statements see the section in *supra*, part B.

<sup>2</sup> Scholarship has extensively debated Augustine's use of Scripture in building his theological system. In particular, different evaluations have been given on the extent to which Augustine tends to superimpose on the Scriptures theological concepts that he derives from the controversies he was involved into, such as the Donatist controversy and the Pelagian controversy. Regarding Augustine's use of Scripture against the Pelagians, see: Gerald Bonner, 'Augustine, the Bible and the Pelagians', in Pamela Bright (ed), *Augustine and the Bible*, Notre Dame IND 1999, p. 227–242. Bonner states that, in the Pelagian controversy, both Augustine and his Pelagian opponents were much more interested in using the Scriptures as a tool against the adversary rather than in understanding the exegetical meaning of the passages they were using. Although I recognise that, especially in the course of harsh controversies such the Pelagian one, Augustine might have used some passages of the Bible only to justify his own theological view, I still think that his understanding of the Gospel of John and doctrines that comes out of the *Tractates* are derived by a genuine understanding of the Gospel. This chapter will prove that this is particularly true regarding the doctrine of predestination and the understanding of the "world".

The problem of the significance of the concept of “the world” in Augustine is a multifaceted one. The complexity of the topic and, as it were, its vastness, explains why a systematic study on the subject is hardly traceable in Augustinian scholarship.<sup>3</sup> Before proposing my analysis of the relevance of the Johannine concept of the world in Augustine’s theology it is worth spending some words on what this chapter *does not* aim at doing.

Studying the Spirit and the world, this chapter does not want to propose a detailed study of Augustine’s *political theology*.<sup>4</sup> Most of the scholarly works on Augustine’s political theology in the *Tractates on John* are focused on the Donatist controversy.<sup>5</sup> Unlike these studies, this chapter will focus simply on the extent to which the opposition between the Holy Spirit and the world shapes and informs Augustine’s understanding of the relationship between creation and Creator.

This chapter does not even want to use the *Tractates on John* as a container from which to draw pieces of information on Augustine’s ‘controversial theology’, that is, on Augustine’s theological controversies: I am here particularly referring to the Donatist controversy, the struggle against Arianism and, most of all, the Pelagian controversy. Although it is undeniable that these controversies had a great influence in shaping Augustine’s theological research, this chapter shall show that the *Tractates on John* present a consistent and constructive

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<sup>3</sup> Rather than on Augustine’s interpretation of the world, scholarship has focused on his interpretation of the figure of “the Jews”. In this regard, very different evaluations of Augustine’s relationship to the Jews have been proposed by different scholars, mostly concluding Augustine’s responsibility for Christian anti-Judaism. See, among the others: James Carroll, *Constantine’s Sword: The Church and the Jews: A History*, Boston 2002. Other scholars have a different opinion, showing how Augustine challenged the anti-Jewish tradition of the Catholic Church. See: Paula Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews: A Christian Defense of Jews and Judaism*, New Haven CT 2008. For the relationship between the concept of ‘the world’ and that of ‘the Jews’ in the Gospel of John see *infra*, part B.

<sup>4</sup> Plenty of studies are present on this subject. Most of them are focused on Augustine’s *The City of God* and on his *Letters*. Among them, some are focused on the general aspects of Augustine’s political theology, some others on the main theological distinction between the two cities – that is, on the concept of *amor sui* and *amor Dei* – some others on Augustine himself as a political actor in his contemporary world. See: Paul Weithman, ‘Augustine’s Political Philosophy’, in Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, Cambridge 2001, p. 234-252. Specifically on *The City of God* see: Gaetano Lettieri, *Il senso della storia in Agostino d’Ippona. Il saeculum e la gloria nel De Civitate Dei*, Roma 1988.

<sup>5</sup> In this regard, see the recent book by Adam Ployd, *Augustine, the Trinity and the Church. A Reading of the Anti-Donatist Sermons*, Oxford 2015. This text also deals with some *Tractates on John* from an ecclesiological perspective.

interpretation of the concept of “the world” that cannot be reduced to an “effect” of the theological controversies Augustine is fighting. Rather it must be taken as the cause of his theological positions in the aforementioned controversies. Although some changes occurred in the course of the 15 years in which the work was produced, I will show that, rather than imposing on the Gospel his interpretation of “the world” according to his pastoral needs, Augustine derives this concept from his understanding of the Gospel. In this regard, I disagree with some influential scholars such as Bonner.<sup>6</sup>

Another methodological consideration regards the relationship between the text of John and Paul’s epistles. Very often in the *Tractates* relevant passages from Paul are quoted and expounded. No scholar of Augustine will be surprised by this fact. The scholarly literature has very heavily emphasised Paul as the most important – if not the only – biblical source on which Augustine built his doctrine of grace, although very different evaluations on Augustine’s so called “turning point” can be found in this regard.<sup>7</sup> While not denying the importance of Pauline influences on Augustine’s doctrine of grace, this chapter will show the significance of Johannine categories in his understanding of the relationship between God and creation. I will show that the very concept of “the world” leads Augustine to postulate a radical depreciation of the natural and created world as opposed to the gratuity of God’s grace/Spirit. In this regard, the rather sectarian attitude found in the fourth Gospel is of utmost importance. The Johannine oppositional dichotomies between light and darkness, elected and rejected, holy

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<sup>6</sup> G. Bonner, ‘Augustine, the Bible and the Pelagians’ p. 227–242, claims that Augustine tends to misread the Bible in favour of his theological positions. As far as the Gospel of John is concerned, although a certain degree of bias is always to be taken as granted, Augustine tends to shape his theological opinion from the text rather than imposing them on the Gospel. For a discussion of Bonner’s work see the beginning of this very section, n. 2. As a consequence of my claim, the chronology of the *Tractates* will be taken into due consideration in this chapter. Nevertheless, it is worth remembering the primary aim of this chapter is not to study the *evolution* of Augustine’s theology, but rather to give an account as accurate as possible of how his appreciation of the Spirit’s relationship to the world is drawn from his understanding of the fourth Gospel, thus giving an account of the way in which this relationship determines Augustine’s theology.

<sup>7</sup> The massive importance of Paul has also led to the scholarly debate on Augustine’s “turning point” regarding the doctrine of grace during the writing of the *To Simplician*, with different opinions on Augustine’s theological continuity between his first years as a convert and his late years as a bishop. In this regard see: *supra*, I.1.3. As representatives of this debate it is sufficient to quote here the different opinions of C. Harrison, *Rethinking Augustine’s Early Theology*, and G. Lettieri, *L’altro Agostino*. Insofar as this chapter will be mainly focused on the *Tractates on John*, written from 406 onward, this debate will not be addressed directly.

community and world, are as important for Augustine's theology as the Paulinian references to vessels of wrath and vessels of mercy in *Rom.* 9:23.

In particular, the chapter will show how the interpretation of "the world" is essential to the construction of the idea of the *massa damnata* as opposed to the portion of grace (*sorte gratia*) that God chooses out of the world (*Trloh*, CVI.5-6). The identification proposed by Augustine between the Spirit and the grace of God – meaning that the Spirit is himself both the giver and the gift – is constantly juxtaposed to the demonic defilement of the created world. In particular, the Spirit appears as the force who acts in the inner self of the chosen in order to re-create the image of God which was lost in the process of sinning. The theological concepts of *mundus creatus* (created world) and *mundus recreatus* (recreated world) are therefore put in constant dialectical opposition. As opposed to the communion realised by the inclusion of the chosen disciples in the Trinitarian life of God, the world represents the incarnate evil, neglected by God and thus forsaken in its perverse self-love.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, the role of the Spirit will emerge in his twofold nature. On the one hand, being the ontological communion of love that derives from the double procession from the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit is the only ontological means through which the human souls contemplate the Trinitarian communion, thus being the undefiled love of God who chooses the elect out of the world and justifies them with an act of omnipotent will. On the other hand, being the Spirit of love and communion in God, he is also the agent responsible for forsaking the world to its own destiny of depravity and death.

Therefore, this chapter will be divided in three sections, each one having some sub-sections. The first (V.1) will tackle the ambiguity of Augustine's interpretation of "the world" in the *Tractates on John*. The second (V.2) will deal with the problem of Augustine's dualism and its relation to the Gospel of John and Manichaeism (V.2.1). It will then show the difference between the created world, that is, the world created as the image of God (V.2.2), and the re-created world, the world which God chose out of this world (V.2.3). The third section (V.3) will define the extent to which it is possible to attribute a *proprium* – that is, a proper

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<sup>8</sup> Exploring the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the world in the *Tractates of John* means therefore to enquire about the radical novelty of the Spirit, which is the active force which tears off the elect from the deadly grip of this world.



work – to each person of the Trinity. In doing so, it will first analyse the inseparability of the works of the Trinity (V.3.1). Secondly it will distinguish between those works which are attributed to Christ (V.3.2) and those which are attributed to the Spirit (V.3.3). By analysing the difference between Christ's and the Spirit's *proprium* in their relationship to the world, this section will unfold not only the crucial importance of Augustine's pneumatology, but also the reasons why the Spirit and the elect are radically opposed to the world, which is therefore interpreted as the forsaken *massa damnata*.

## V.1 *Dilectores Mundi Mundus Dicuntur: The Ambiguity of the Concept of Mundus/Saeculum in the Tractates on John*

In all the *Tractates on John*, the theological concept of “the world” (*mundus*), as opposed to the Spirit, stands at the heart of Augustine’s investigation. From the first tractate, Augustine states the necessity for every Christian to gain a spiritual understanding of God. As opposed to the poor understanding of the carnal man who ‘does not perceive the things that are of the Spirit of God’ (1 Cor. 2:14), God’s mercy (*miser cordia*) provides spiritual understanding (*spiritalem intellectum*) to those who do not yet have the intellectual means to raise themselves in understanding the truth about God (*Trloh*, I.1-2).<sup>9</sup> The first step toward understanding and toward salvation is to realise that every human being, insofar as he is a human being, cannot claim anything for himself as a proper possession: *ne cum putamus nos aliquid esse, cum nihil simus, non solum non accipiamus quod non sumus, sed et amittamus quod sumus.* (*Trloh*, I.4).<sup>10</sup> This path of sanctification was first trod by John the Evangelist, who ‘had risen beyond all the mountain and peaks of the world’ (*Trloh*, I.5), thus rising beyond all things which were made in order to achieve the true vision of God: *Nisi enim transcenderet ista omnia quae creata sunt, non perveniret ad eum per quem facta sunt omnia* (*Trloh*, I.5).<sup>11</sup>

Even from this little section of the first *Tractate*, the dichotomy between the two possible interpretations of the “world” starts to emerge. On the one hand, the world is the entirety of everything that is created – not only the material world but also every spiritual being, no matter its level of perfection.<sup>12</sup> On the other hand,

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<sup>9</sup> Augustine here specifies that God’s mercy, acting through the eminent souls of the saints, urges human beings to become something more than human beings: *quia omnes sancti, angeli; quia annuntiatores Dei. [...] Ad hoc ergo vocat nos Deus, ne simus homines.* (*Trloh*, I.4). ‘For all holy men are angels because they are the messengers of God. [...] To this, then God calls us: not to be mere men’.

<sup>10</sup> ‘Whenever we think ourselves to be something, though we are nothing, we not only do not accept that we are not, but even lose what we are’.

<sup>11</sup> ‘Indeed, had he not transcended all these things that were created, he would not have reached Him through whom all things were made’.

<sup>12</sup> *Quaeris de spiritalibus creaturis, de Angelis, Archangelis, Sedibus, Dominationibus, Virtutibus, Principatibus? et ipsa facta sunt.* (*Trloh*, I.5). Augustine is possibly referring here to the ‘heaven of heaven’, the timeless created realm that the chosen has to reach in order to gain the maximum level of understanding of the Trinity by participation in it. See *Confessions*, XII.VIII(8); XI(14). In

the created world is meant to be transcended by the intellect which, through the help of God, aims at reaching the heights to which John the Evangelist was mystically taken when writing his Gospel. The necessity of overcoming and transcending the world is the main theme of the second tractate as well.<sup>13</sup> The affirmation of the ontological stability of God and its identification with Being proceed in this tractate alongside with the necessity of affirming the radical opposition between God and the world. Through a symbolic image, Augustine opposes the human soul, which is 'stretched and torn by diverse inclinations' (*Trloh*, II.2),<sup>14</sup> to the eternal stability of the *idipsum*. To reach the aforementioned stability, one has to cross the 'sea of this world', something which is possible only through the help of Christ:

Sic est enim tamquam videat quisque de longe patriam, et mare interiaceat; [...] Sic ad illam stabilitatem nostram ubi quod est est, quia hoc solum semper sic est ut est, volumus pervenire; interiacet mare huius saeculi qua imus, etsi iam videmus quo imus. [...] Et quid fecit? Instituit lignum quo mare transeamus. Nemo enim potest transire mare huius saeculi, nisi cruce Christi portatus (*Trloh*, II.2).<sup>15</sup>

The attitude of the Christian who, clinging to the cross of Christ, is able to cross the sea of this world (*saeculum*) to reach his homeland is contrasted with the pride of the philosophers of this world (*philosophi huius mundi*) who, with a haughty wisdom (*sapientia superba*), tried to enquire about the Creator through the creatures (*Trloh*, II.5). Therefore, the philosophers represent the wisdom of this world, a wisdom which attributes its findings to itself, rather than to the Creator, thus becoming proud: 'however, they became proud so that they might be crushed' (*ut autem eliderentur, superbierunt*) (*Trloh*, II.5). Augustine provides then the hermeneutical principles according to which the concept of "the world"

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this regard see: Donald L. Ross, 'Time, the Heaven of Heavens, and Memory in Augustine's Confessions', in *Augustinian Studies* 22 (1991), p. 191-205.

<sup>13</sup> In the previous chapter on Augustine, I have already shown how this tractate is foundational for understanding Augustine's metaphysic of God, as it is here that the concept of *idipsum* is firstly explain and discussed. See *supra*, III.3.1.

<sup>14</sup> *Cum videatis ipsas animas per affectum diversarum voluntatum distendi atque discindi.*

<sup>15</sup> 'For it is as if one could see his homeland from afar, and a sea lays in between. [...] To such an extent we want to go to that stability of ours, where that which is is, and it is always in the way it is. But the sea of this world lies in between where we are going, even if we see where we are going. [...] And so what has he done? He has provided the wood by which we may cross the sea. For no one can cross the sea of this world unless carried by the cross of Christ'.

must be interpreted in reading the Gospel of John. Commenting on *Jn.* 1:10: ‘the world was made through him, and the world knew him not’, Augustine clarifies what the Gospel means with the term “world”:

Quid est, *mundus factus est per ipsum?* Coelum, terra, mare et omnia quae in eis sunt, mundus dicitur. Iterum alia significatione, dilectores mundi mundus dicuntur. *Mundus per ipsum factus est, et mundus eum non cognovit.* [...] Sed qui non cognoverunt? Qui amando mundum dicti sunt mundus. Amando enim habitamus corde: amando autem, hoc appellari meruerunt quod ille ubi habitabant. [...] Sic et mundum, qui inhabitant amando mundum. Qui sunt? Qui diligunt mundum: ipsi enim corde habitant in mundo. Nam qui non diligunt mundum, carne versantur in mundo; sed corde inhabitant coelum (*Trloh*, II.11).<sup>16</sup>

First, Augustine points out the double meaning of *mundus*. The term might signify the good creation of God, who created not only the material world, but also all the spiritual beings who dwell in it. In other *Tractates*, this interpretation recurs as related to the common work of the Trinity, who created the world in a single inseparable act: *si unus Deus Pater et Filius et Spiritus sanctus, unus mundus factus est a Patre per Filium in Spiritu sancto* (*Trloh*, XX.9).<sup>17</sup> Alongside the affirmation of the commonality of the works of the Trinity, Augustine is also stressing here the actual existence of only one world. The so-called *spiritual world*, which owes its name to its privileged relationship to the Holy Spirit, does not originally belong to a different substance from that of the other world – that is, the forsaken one.<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, the interpretation of the world as the good creation of God is soon retracted by Augustine in favour of the most common interpretation of the world as ‘those who love the world’. Therefore, those who

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<sup>16</sup> ‘What does it mean: “the world was made through him”? The sky, the earth, the sea, and all the things which are in them are called the world. But the second time, in another sense, the lovers of the world are called the world: “The world was made through him and the world knew him not”. [...] But who did not know? Those who are called “the world” from their love of the world. Indeed, by our act of loving we dwell with our heart. By their act of loving they deserved to be called with the same name as that place where they were dwelling. [...] So too, we call the world those who love the world by their dwelling. Who are they? Those who love the world, for they dwell in the world with their heart. For those who do not love the world abide in the world with the flesh; but in their heart, they dwell in heaven’.

<sup>17</sup> ‘If God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is one, then one world was made by the Father, through the Son in the Holy Spirit’.

<sup>18</sup> Moreover, the spiritual regeneration of the chosen world is not visible but hidden in the hearts of the believers until the end of this age. See, in this regard, Augustine’s interpretation of the parable of the tares (*Mt.* 13:24-30) in Augustine, *Sermons on the New Testament* 23.

love the world are called with the same name of the place they love. Right from *Trloh*, II it appears clear that Augustine's interest in the Johannine category of *mundus* does not focus on its cosmological, but rather on its anthropological significance. To be *mundus* in a Johannine sense does not come from a cosmological membership in the created order, but from an act of will – that is, the *dilectio* – according to which the human subject belongs either to this world or to heaven.<sup>19</sup> Such difference is strongly stressed by Augustine in the pneumatological section of the Gospel, particularly in the comment on *Jn.* 14:17.<sup>20</sup> Augustine states that the world, which means the lovers of the world (*mundi dilectores*), cannot receive the Spirit, because the love of God poured out through the Holy Spirit is contrary to the love of this world. Indeed, the Spirit can only be seen by invisible eyes (*Trloh*, LXXIV.3-5).

Finally, it is possible to appreciate a third possible meaning of the term world in Augustine's interpretation. In this sense, this term is neither related to the world that was firstly created by God nor to the wretched world, but to the saved world as opposed to the damned. Such an explanation occurs in the comment on *Jn.* 17:21: 'May they (the saved) also be in us (the Father and the Son) so that the world (*mundus*) may believe that you have sent me'. In this section, Augustine makes a clear distinction between the elected world and the world which is damned according to predestination. On the one hand, there is a world for which Jesus does not pray at all, for he is not unaware that it has been predestined (*neque ignorant quo sit praedestinatus*); on the other hand, there is a world that Christ does not come to judge but to save (*Trloh*, CX.2). This good world, which is taken up and freed from sin by Christ, is the world not persisting as an enemy, such as the world predestined for damnation (*mundus damantioni praedestinatus*), but made friend from an enemy, for God chose (*elegit*) this world before the foundation of the world (*Trloh*, CX.4-5).

Therefore, it is possible to understand different senses of the term *mundus*. First, *mundus* originally represents the good creation of God. Nevertheless, this world

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<sup>19</sup> The same concept is repeated in *Trloh*, III.4-5: *Si omnia ista testimonium dederunt, quomodo mundus eum non cognovit, nisi quia mundus dilectores mundi, corde habitantes mundum? Et malus mundus, quia mali habitatores mundi: sicut mala domus, non parietes, sed inhabitantes.*

<sup>20</sup> 'He (The Father) will give you [...] the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you'.

was irredeemably corrupted by sin. Interpreting *Jn.* 8:43-44 – ‘you belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desires’ – Augustine points out the original goodness of the world, for every nature is created good (*Bona est enim omnis natura*), but human nature has been spoiled through ill will (*sed vitiata est hominis natura per voluntatem malam*) (*Trloh*, XLII.9-11).<sup>21</sup> Therefore, the world became the child of the devil by imitation, not by birth, and the devil is not prince of the world by nature, but by the evil will of the lost world (*Trloh*, LII.10-11). This wicked world of which the devil is prince is depicted according to two characteristics: uncontrollable love for his own glory and pride (*superbiam*) (*Trloh*, XXVIII.4-6). Therefore, Augustine takes the blind man who is healed by Jesus in *Jn.* 9 as a figure of this world (*Trloh*, XLIV). The world is blind because it does not recognise its own sin. By thinking itself not to be blind, the world shows its ‘vain, proud and incurable arrogance’ (*Trloh*, XLV.1-5).<sup>22</sup>

The concept of the wretched *mundus* is therefore coincident with the one of *saeculum*. Throughout the tractates, Augustine uses the words *mundus* and *saeculum* interchangeably. Indeed, they are both theological signifiers of the present condition of human beings, which is marked by ontological weakness – for the world ontologically lacks true Being – and by the presence of time. In this sense, although Augustine sometimes uses the term *mundus* to indicate created being, and *saeculum* to indicate the present age,<sup>23</sup> it is possible to state some equivalence between the two terms. Indeed, they both refer to the wretched condition of the creature who finds his source of happiness in the world rather than in God.<sup>24</sup> In this sense Augustine interchangeably uses in the *Tractates* the phrase *dilectores mundi* (*Trloh*, II.11) and *amatores huius saeculi* (*Trloh*, XXVIII.8; LII.1-3). Equally, the salvific mission of Christ is said to be undertaken ‘in the night of this world’ (*in nocte huius saeculi*) (*Trloh*, XXXV.6-9), that is, in the

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<sup>21</sup> See also: *Trloh*, XLII.15-16.

<sup>22</sup> *Vanam et superbam et insanabilem arrogantiam*. See also: *Trloh*, LI.10-13

<sup>23</sup> See for example *Trloh*, XV.9, where Augustine speaks of the present age as the sixth age of this world (*aetate saeculi sexta*). The same interpretation is given in *Trloh*, IX.6 in reference to the six water jars at the wedding feast in Cana.

<sup>24</sup> In this regard see: Timo Nisula, *Augustine and the Functions of Concupiscence*, Boston MA 2012, p. 187. The author rightly recognises how the term *mundus* is mainly used by Augustine ‘not only to the good order of things, but to those who loves the created realities as their source of happiness’. As far as the *Tractates on John* are concerned, this chapter will show that Augustine mainly characterises the term world in this way. The wretchedness of the world is particularly stressed in the second part of the commentary, where the term *mundus* is constantly treated as *massa damnata*, as the next sections of this chapter will show.

world of darkness (*mundi tenebrarum*) (*Trloh*, LXXIX.2), unable to comprehend the salvation brought by Christ (*Trloh*, III.5).<sup>25</sup>

As a consequence, despite the structural ambiguity of the term, the term “world” (*mundus*) is almost always used by Augustine with regard to evil humans living over the whole globe. The very concept of “world” is thus taken to mean “world of darkness” (*mundi tenebrarum*). Hence, it must not be taken as the whole creation (*universam creaturam*), but as its darkness, represented by the lovers of the world from among whom, nonetheless, some are chosen not by their merit but by the grace of God (*mundi istius amatorum: ex quibus tamen electi sunt, non per suum meritum, sed per Dei gratiam*) (*Trloh*, LXXIX.2) to be transformed by means of the Holy Spirit.<sup>26</sup> Only occasionally *mundus* can also be used for good human beings scattered around the globe (*Trloh*, LII.10-11).

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<sup>25</sup> Commenting on *Jn.* 1:5, Augustine states: *Quia lux in tenebris lucet, et tenebrae eam non comprehenderunt. O homines, nolite esse tenebrae, nolite esse infideles, iniusti, iniqui, rapaces, avari, amatores saeculi: hae sunt enim tenebrae. Lux non est absens, sed vos absentes estis a luce.*

<sup>26</sup> See also *Trloh*, LXXV.2.

## V.2 *Spiritus/Caritas vs Mundus/Saeculum*. The Opposition between *Mundus Creatus* and *Mundus Recreatus*.

### V.2.1 Augustine's Dualism: Between John and Mani

Augustine's affirmation of a radical gap between the absolute goodness of God and the wretchedness of his creatures results in a dualistic theology, which succeeds in accentuating, rather than smoothing, the theological binary oppositions found in the Gospel, such as those between good and evil, flesh and spirit, darkness and light, sinners and chosen ones. Both in recent and in less recent times, Augustine's dualistic framework has been interpreted by some scholars as a sign of his ongoing engagement with Manichaeism. During the course of the twentieth century, scholars have discussed this topic at length, drawing different conclusions.<sup>27</sup> Between the fifties and the eighties many scholars, such as Adam and van Oort, identified a clear Manichaean influence in many of Augustine's theological doctrines, particularly on his account of the cities;<sup>28</sup> whilst contemporary critics prefer to focus on Augustine's conversion as evidence of Augustine's ongoing engagement with Manichaeism. For instance, Jason David BeDuhn challenges Augustine's self-depiction of his own conversion to catholicism in *Confessions* VIII. Many modern scholars would agree with BeDuhn's view that for Augustine 'the new sources of one's self gradually supply elements that displace and integrate with previously existing convictions and

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<sup>27</sup> The scholarly debate on Manichaean influences on Augustine started at the beginning of the nineteenth century. As already noted by John Kevin Coyle, 'Saint Augustine's Manichean Legacy', in John Kevin Coyle (ed), *Manichaeism and its Legacy*, Leiden 2009, p. 307-328, the beginning of this debate can be identified with Albert Bruckner, *Julian von Eclanum. Sein Leben und seine Lehre. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Pelagianismus*, Leipzig 1897. The author had the merit of revitalising an ancient polemic which accused Augustine's thought of being deeply influenced by Manichaeism, as Augustine's Pelagian opponents used to do. Bruckner's perspective was criticised and rejected by Ernesto Buonaiuti, *Sant'Agostino*, Roma 1917.

<sup>28</sup> During the fifties, some scholars reflected on Augustine's account on the two cities as deeply influenced by Manichaeism. Among others, see: Alfred Adam, 'Das Fortwirken des Manichäismus bei Augustin', in *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 69 (1958) p. 1–25. In the eighties, van Oort and others focused on Manichaean influences on Augustine regarding the ideas of sin and desire. See: Johannes van Oort, 'Augustine and Mani on Concupiscentia Sexualis', in Jan den Boeft and Johannes van Oort, *Augustiniana traiectina: communications présentées au Colloque International d'Utrecht 13-14 novembre 1986*, Paris 1987, p. 137-152. For a comprehensive bibliographic discussion on this topic see: J. K. Coyle, 'Saint Augustine's Manichean Legacy', p. 307-328.



habits'.<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless, BeDuhn's account becomes more problematic when he substantially identifies Augustine's anti-Manichaeism with the "optimistic" stress on the goodness of creation ("all existence as such is good," *On True Religion* 11.21) and its permeation by divine order ("matter participates in something belonging to the ideal world, otherwise it would not be matter," *ibid.*).<sup>30</sup> This identification implies that, after an initial anti-Manichaean period expressed in his *On True Religion*,<sup>31</sup> which is theologically rooted in the identification of Being and Good, Augustine progressively retrieved a Manichaean-like anthropology by gradually shifting from a platonising optimism to a Manichaean-like dualism:

This darker, less intrinsically "optimistic" vision of the status of the soul in relation to God may at first have been merely a metaphysical technicality serving primarily as an anti-Manichaean corrective; but it gradually cast its shadow on every corner of Augustine's reflections on the human predicament<sup>32</sup>

While this perspective has the benefit of appreciating the ambiguity and dynamism of every newly converted self-identity, it risks identifying Augustine's theological dualism as a residual element of his former Manichaean beliefs. Such an assumption might be challenged by the fact that Augustine's dualism shows a steady growth from the years of his conversion to the last years of the Pelagian controversies. According to the *Confessions*, Augustine seems to have grown progressively discontented with the Manichaean faith mainly for philosophical reasons. The incapacity of the Manichaean system to propose a convincing account of the structure of the universe and of human faith progressively tore his faith away. These rational concerns were addressed by Augustine by the subsequent study of Neo-Platonism and, lastly, by the conversion to Christianity. Henceforth, the main difference between the Manichaean-Augustine and the Post-Manichaean-Augustine stands in a completely different evaluation of the nature of evil and of the goodness of creation. This tension within Augustine's

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<sup>29</sup> See: Jason David BeDuhn, *Augustine's Manichaean Dilemma, Volume 1. Conversion and Apostasy, 373-388 C.E.*, Philadelphia 2010, p. 245.

<sup>30</sup> Jason David BeDuhn, *Augustine's Manichaean Dilemma, Volume 2: Making a "Catholic" Self, 388-401 C.E.*, Philadelphia 2013, p. 53.

<sup>31</sup> For an in-depth analysis of Augustine's Manichaean influence in his work *On True Religion* see: in Josef Lössl, 'Augustine on "The True Religion": Reflections of Manichaeism in *De vera religione*' in Johannes Oort (ed), *Augustine and Manichaean Christianity*, Leiden 2013, p. 137-153.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*

theology had already been identified by Pelagians; however, they confused the rational evaluation of a good creation with an 'optimistic' evaluation of human nature. Augustine himself was indeed accused by his Pelagian opponents of being a Manichaean and of proposing a doctrine of justification which is not biblical.<sup>33</sup>

Although it is not the aim of this work to propose a thorough assessment of Manichaean influences on Augustine in the years between 406-420 AD – that is, when he was writing his *Tractates on John* – the issue of an alleged Manichaean influence in the early decades of the fourth century contrasts greatly with my conclusions. While the former scholarly hypothesis implies that Augustine is still holding to a cosmological dualism in commenting on the fourth Gospel's dichotomies, my work shows that Augustine's dualism is not imposed on the text of the Gospel, but is rather drawn from it. It seems to me that, rather than hypothesizing some kind of unconscious debt to his former Manichaean identity – an identity which was refused and rejected for over twenty years before the *Tractates* were first preached – it would be more useful to try to understand the way in which the very text under analysis actively shapes Augustine's dualism. Augustine's dichotomy between sinners and chosen does not come from a difference in nature between the two; hence, like the Gospel of John, Augustine does not propose a cosmological dualism. Dualism exists as a result of a free act of God's will, since no difference in nature can be found within human nature, which is created good but altogether lost its goodness because of sin.

This brief digression on Augustine's alleged Manichaeism serves the purpose of preparing the reader for the discussion on the problem of the *Imago Dei* in Augustine's *Treatises*. It is precisely here that the main difference between Augustine and Manichaeism emerges. In all the *Tractates on John*, Augustine consistently presents a firm and strong belief in the human being as the ontological image of the Creator, so much so that the goodness of human nature is to be found in its being the image of the Trinity who created it. Therefore, the following section will analyse the ambivalent relationship between the concept of

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<sup>33</sup> These accusations of crypto-Manichaeism in Augustine by his Pelagian opponents can be clearly found in Augustine's own response to Julian of Eclanum, who was a Pelagian himself. See: Augustine, *Against Two Letters of the Pelagians* and *Against Julian*.

“the world” and the human being as *Imago Dei*. In this regard, I will show that Augustine’s interpretation of salvation is to be understood as a re-creation rather than a restoration.

### **V.2.2 *Mundus Creatus*: The ‘Image Within’ as Opposed to the World in a Dualistic Framework**

The topic of the *imago Dei* has already been discussed in relation to the Trinity when I observed that being the Son the Father’s image, he is in a perfect relationship of identity with the Father, with whom he exists as a unity in the Holy Spirit.

Building on my previous conclusions, this subsection aims at discussing Augustine’s doctrine of the image as far as human being is concerned.<sup>34</sup> This is discussed by Augustine in several places, but it finds its most complete expression in Augustine’s *On the Trinity*,<sup>35</sup> where he focuses on the ontological structure of the soul – divided in memory/intellect/will – as God’s image.<sup>36</sup>

Here, however, I will give an account of the double meaning of this doctrine in Augustine’s *Tractates on John*, with particular regard to his exegesis of the *Prologue* and Jn. 5:19.<sup>37</sup> By contrast with the Father/Son relationship, being

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<sup>34</sup> Much scholarship is found concerning Augustine’s doctrine of the image in his early and mature thought. With regard to Augustine’s doctrine of the image in his early years see: Gerald P. Boersma, *Augustine’s Early Theology of Image. A Study in the Development of Pro-Nicene Theology*, Oxford 2016. The book not only discusses at length Augustine’s doctrine of the image in his early works, but also proposes a detailed study of this doctrine in Western theologians of the third and fourth century, such as Tertullian, Hilary of Poitiers, Marius Victorinus, and Ambrose of Milan. The author then analyses their influence in the construction of Augustine’s thought.

<sup>35</sup> Among many places see: *On the Trinity*, X.11.17 and XII.7.12.

<sup>36</sup> Regarding the doctrine of the image in Augustine’s *On the Trinity*, many works have been written. For a clear and comprehensive analysis with the contemporary scholarship regarding this text see the unprecedented work of classification by Roland Kany, *Augustins Trinitätsdenken: Bilanz, Kritik und Weiterführung der modernen Forschung zu “De trinitate”*, Tübingen 2007. In the first part of this massive volume, the author maps different trends of interpretation of Augustine’s masterpiece. For another quite recent study on Augustine’s theology of the image in his mature thought, with particular focus on *On the Trinity* see: Luigi Gioia, *The Theological Epistemology of Augustine’s De Trinitate*, Oxford 2008. See also: Gaetano Lettieri, ‘La dialettica della conoscenza nel *De Trinitate*’, in Luigi Alici (ed), *Interiorità ed intenzionalità in sant’Agostino*, Rome 1990, p. 145-176. For a detailed study on the tripartite structure of the *mens* in Augustine see: G. O’Daly, *Augustine’s Philosophy of Mind*.

<sup>37</sup> In the *Tractates*, the doctrine of human being as *imago Dei* is not explained fully and systematically as in other works, but is rather detected by Augustine during his exegesis on the text.

image of God does imply an ontological degradation.<sup>38</sup> The gap between humans and their creator is explained by Augustine in both metaphysical and moral terms: human beings are incapable of being the perfect image of God due to the wretched condition of sinning creatures and to the ontological condition of finite beings. However, what it is most interesting to note here is the fact that the process of regaining the image is always expressed by Augustine as a process of detachment of the soul from “the world”. Hence, this section shall show how the theological concept of “the world” plays a fundamental role in shaping Augustine’s doctrine of the imperfection of the human image when compared to God.

In trying to understand the relationship between “the world” and the doctrine of the image it is firstly worth noting that the world (either *mundus* or *saeculum*) is never said, in the *Tractates*, to be image of God. On the contrary, Augustine explicitly states that although creation must be intended as something good, the world itself should not be taken as meaning the “image of God”. Augustine firstly faces this problem when commenting on *Jn.* 1:3-4.<sup>39</sup> This couple of verses posed a serious problem to ancient interpreters due to the lack of punctuation in ancient manuscripts.<sup>40</sup> The verse could mean ‘without him nothing was made that has been made’, or, on the contrary, ‘without him nothing was made. What has been made in him was life’. The latter interpretation was particularly problematic to Augustine, for it could involve the Manichaean idea that even soulless parts of the creation (like a stone) have life, thus participating in some way in the life of God (*Trloh*, I.16). Therefore, Augustine partially opts for the former reading, declaring that one ought to understand ‘life’ as referring only to the Word itself:

Pronuntia sic: *Quod factum est*; hic subdistingue, et deinde infer, *in illo vita est*. Quid est hoc? Facta est terra, sed ipsa terra quae facta est, non est vita:

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<sup>38</sup> The influences of Platonic – in particular Plotinian – metaphysic in Augustine’s doctrine of the image is quite evident.

<sup>39</sup> ‘Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life’.

<sup>40</sup> When dealing with this kind of problems caused by the absence of punctuation, Augustine suggests interpreting the passage grounding the interpretation on the authority of other passages of the Scriptures, or on the Church’s teachings or on the context. See: *On Christian Doctrine*, III.2.2-5. On the Latin translation of John’s Gospel Augustine was using and particularly on these verses see: H. Houghton, *Augustine’s Text of John*, p. 187-189.

est autem in ipsa sapientia spiritaliter ratio quaedam qua terra facta est; haec vita est (*Trloh*, I.16).<sup>41</sup>

Through this expedient, Augustine is trying to avoid the risk of identifying creation with divine life. Nonetheless, creation is deemed to be 'life' as long as it is *in sapientia*, that is, in the creative knowledge of God. In order to explain the double meaning of creation as both not-life and life, Augustine uses the example of the carpenter making a chest. Before making the actual chest, the artisan already possesses the chest in his creative knowledge (*in arte*) (*Trloh*, I.17).<sup>42</sup> Before existing as a discrete object, the chest exists in the soul of the carpenter. Therefore, insofar as the chest is in his soul, the chest is life, while insofar as it is a discrete object, it is not life. Equally, the creation is life in God, for God made everything in wisdom, but it is not life as a separate object:

Quia quod factum est, in ipso vita erat: et antequam fieret, vita erat. Quod factum est, non est vita: sed in arte, hoc est, in Sapientia Dei, antequam fieret, vita erat. Quod factum est, transiit: quod est in Sapientia, transire non potest. Vita ergo in illo erat, quod factum est. Et qualis vita? [...] *vita erat lux hominum* (*Trloh*, III.4).<sup>43</sup>

By stating the difference between the creation *in arte Dei* and the creation as a discrete object which has its own existence apart from God, Augustine is stating the impossibility of considering "the world" – even in its good meaning of "creation" – as the image of God. Augustine also affirms that what the Gospel calls "life" can be properly predicated only of the Logos. Nevertheless, Augustine does not deny the existence of this attribute in an imperfect way beyond God. In

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<sup>41</sup> 'Read it thus: "that which was made" – punctuate here, and after that put: "in him is life". What does this mean? The earth was made; but the earth itself which was made is not life. There is, however, in wisdom itself, in a spiritual way, a certain reason by which the earth was made: this is life'.

<sup>42</sup> On the creation *in arte* see also *Trloh*, XXXVII.8-10. There, Augustine explains that, like a builder makes a construction, the Word made all things firstly in his creative knowledge (*in arte*) and then as a discrete object. However, things made in the creative knowledge are better, for they do not collapse.

<sup>43</sup> 'Because "what was made, in him was life", and before it was made, there was life. What was made is not life; but in his creative knowledge, that is, in the Wisdom of God, before it was made, there was life. What was made passed away; what is in wisdom cannot pass away. What was made, therefore, was life in him. And what sort of life? [...] "the life was the light of men"'.  
221

this sense, the soul too is said to be the life of the body (*Trloh*, III.4).<sup>44</sup> The difference between the two ways of being “life” resides in the fact that while the soul gives life to a piece of matter, God is said to be the “life of man” only, as distinguished from the rest of creation. Therefore, Augustine interprets the human mind as the only place where the image of God properly shines:

Non distas a pecore, nisi intellectu. [...] Unde ergo melior es? Ex imagine Dei. Ubi imago Dei? In mente, in intellectu. Si ergo ideo melior pecore, quia habes mentem qua intellegas quod non potest pecus intellegere; inde autem homo, quia melior pecore; lux hominum est lux mentium. Lux mentium supra mentes est, et excedit omnes mentes. Hoc erat vita illa per quam facta sunt omnia (*Trloh*, III.4).<sup>45</sup>

The light signifies the rationality of the Logos, whose absolute reason has a special relationship only with the rational mind (*rationales mentes*) found in human beings (*Trloh*, I.18).<sup>46</sup> The identification of the rational mind as the privileged *locus* where the image of God shines does not entail an ontological identity of human reason with that of God (*Trloh*, XX.11). While Augustine admits that God’s light shines in every human being, not every human being is capable of perceiving it. This incapability is due to their belonging to the world (*Trloh*, I.19

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<sup>44</sup> In this regard, see: *On the Trinity*, XIV.18.24. There, Augustine speaks of the final participation of the human body in the image of God. Indeed, since Christ took a body and the body of Christ resurrected and participate in the divine life, so the body of the elect will be rescued as well. In this way, Augustine resolves the problem of his over platonising identification of the *imago dei* with the mind only. While the mind is still deemed to be the only place where the image of God is to be found, Augustine allows an eschatological recovery of the body. As the soul gives life to the body on earth, it will give life in the afterlife. Equally, in *On the Trinity*, VII.3.5 Augustine explains that, just as the soul will be shaped according to the image of the Holy Spirit, the body will be shaped according to the image of the Son, which is the only person of the Trinity who has a body. Regarding the participation of the body in the image of God, see the good analysis by G. P. Boersma, *Augustine's Early Theology of Image*, p. 257-265.

<sup>45</sup> ‘You do not differ from an animal except in the intellect. [...] How then are you better? From the image of God! Where is the image of God? In the mind, in the intellect. If therefore you are better than an animal precisely because you have a mind with which you may understand what the animal cannot understand and, therein a man because you are better than a cow, the light of man is the light of minds. The light of minds is above all minds and transcends all minds. This was that life through which all things were made.’ On the distinction between human beings and animals, on the basis of the rational capacity of human beings, see also: *On the Trinity*, XV.11. Regarding Augustine’s doctrine of the image in the fifteenth book of *On the Trinity* see: Cheuk Yin Yam and Anthony Dupont, ‘The Role of *Imago Dei* in Augustine’s Speaking of Trinity: A Study of Neglected Book XV of *De Trinitate*’, in *Ciudad de Dios: Revista Agustiniiana* 225 2 (2012), p. 325-359.

<sup>46</sup> In all his mature production Augustine is very consistent in indicating the *mens* as the proper place where the image of God shines. In *On the Trinity*, XII.7.12 he explicitly denies that the body was made in the image of God. Besides the occurrences found in the *Trloh*, see also: *Confessions*, XIII.22 and *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, VI.27.

and III.5). Therefore, Augustine explains how the verse of *Jn.* 1:9 – ‘it was the true light which enlightens every man who comes into the world’ – should be interpreted according to *Jn.* 1:10 – ‘he was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him’. Although the creation recognises its creator, *the world*, that is, the lovers of the world, do not (*Trloh*, I.5 and II.11).

The reason the world cannot be the image of God does not reside only in its ontology – that is, its lack of true Being – but mainly in its incapacity to transcend itself in a pure act of love for God. Therefore, the world is not *imago Dei* – both in the sense of “creation” and in the sense of the lover of the world – but rather the human mind is.<sup>47</sup> The mind itself is also indicated as the subject of decision: *Ipsae enim considerator istorum omnium, discriminator, distinctor et quodammodo appensor in libra sapientiae, animus est* (*Trloh*, XX.12).<sup>48</sup> Therefore, commenting on *Jn.* 5:19 – ‘the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing’ – Augustine appeals to the mind of his listeners, begging them to abandon worldly images and perceive only the true image of God imprinted in their minds:

Redite ad cor: quid itis a vobis, et peritis ex vobis? [...] Redi ad cor; vide ibi quid sentias forte de Deo, quia ibi est imago Dei. In interiore homine habitat Christus, in interiore homine renouaris ad imaginem Dei, in imagine sua cognosce auctorem eius (*Trloh*, XVIII.10).<sup>49</sup>

The first step of the believer who wants to see God is to return inside his own heart.<sup>50</sup> Within the heart, human beings discover the image of God, which is

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<sup>47</sup> The mind is alternatively defined by Augustine as *mens, cor, animus, ratio* and *intellectus*. In this regard see the entire episode of the Samaritan woman in *Trloh*, XV; See also *Exposition on the Psalms*, XLII.6: “*Ergo intelligimus habere nos aliquid ubi imago Dei est, mentem scilicet atque rationem*”. See also the precedent footnote.

<sup>48</sup> ‘The soul is the one who considers all thing, who distinguishes, who differentiates, who in some way weights them in the scale of wisdom’.

<sup>49</sup> ‘Return to your heart! Why do you go away from yourselves and perish from yourselves? [...] Return to your heart! See there what perhaps you perceived about God because the image of God is there. In the inner man Christ dwells; in the inner man you are renewed according to the image of God. In his image recognise the author’.

<sup>50</sup> Augustine’s exhortation to return to the heart in order to know the true essence of one’s souls has been commented by many scholars. With regard to the doctrine of the image in Augustine’s mature theology see: Matthew Drever, *Image, Identity, and the Forming of the Augustinian Soul*, Oxford 2013. See in particular the fifth section: ‘Know thyself’ p. 110-141, where the author

hidden to the world because it does not belong to the world. The act of returning to the heart is thus presented as the act of grace, which moves the will away from the images of the world, painted as shades and darkness (*Trloh*, XVIII.11). Without being distracted by the earthly images, the mind is indeed capable of understanding how it is possible to conceive a vision which is not mediated by the senses of the body.<sup>51</sup> This intellectual vision starts from the understanding of theoretical concepts – such as Justice and Goodness – as this understanding belongs to the intellect alone. Nevertheless, this journey is not yet completed in the heart. This introspection, which is accomplished by training and study, does not itself grant the true vision of God. Indeed, God is truly apprehended only when one is able to transcend not only the bodily senses, but the mind itself.<sup>52</sup>

In this regard, in the twentieth *tractate* – which deals solely with the exegesis of *Jn. 5:19* – Augustine makes clear the impossibility of speaking of an ontological proximity between the Being (that is, God) and its image (the soul). In the *tractate* not only the body is disregarded as mortal and corruptible, but even the mind does not properly pertain to the reality of ‘Being’: *Magna ergo res est animus. Sed quomodo dico, est? Transi et ipsum; quia et ipse animus mutabilis est, quamvis melior sit omni corpore* (*Trloh*, XX.12).<sup>53</sup> Therefore, it is only through transcending the mind that one can apprehend God. This journey was undertaken by John the Evangelist, who *transcendit mentem suam ipsa ratione animi sui* (*Trloh*, XX.13).<sup>54</sup>

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discusses Augustine’s interpretation of the Oracle of Delphi in *On the Trinity*, occurring during his search for the divine image in the soul.

<sup>51</sup> In *On the Trinity*, XII.4.4 Augustine refers to this capacity as the contemplative part of the mind which is the only true image of God. Being God’s image, it is able to contemplate the eternal truth of God.

<sup>52</sup> See, in this regard, Augustine’s statements in *Trloh*, XX.11: *Quaere in Patre et Filio separationem, non invenis. [...] Nam si in his versaris, quae sibi errans animus facit; cum imaginibus tuis loqueris, non cum Verbo Dei: fallunt te imagines tuae. Transcende et corpus, et saepe animum: transcende et animum, et saepe Deum. Non tangis Deum, nisi et animum transieris.* (‘Look for separation in the Father and Son and you do not find it. [...] For if you busy yourself in these things which the erring mind makes for itself, you speak with your own images, not with the Word of God; your images deceive you. Transcend the body also and savour the mind. Transcend the mind also and savour God. You do not reach out and touch unless you have also passed beyond the mind’).

<sup>53</sup> ‘A great thing is the mind. But how do I say “is”? For the mind itself also is mutable even though it is better than every single body’.

<sup>54</sup> ‘He transcended his own intellect by the very reasoning power of his mind’.



The apprehension of God is therefore presented by Augustine as both possible and impossible. It is possible insofar as the human mind, being created as the image of God, naturally possesses the light of reason. It is metaphysically impossible insofar as the human being is finite, thus being unable to participate in God's essence perfectly. It is impossible insofar as human beings are tied down by the images of this world, thus making them incapable of apprehending the existence of the perfect Image, that is, the Son. It is possible insofar as the grace of God allows the human being to transcend his own being and see the totality of God with the intellect. All these pairs of mutually exclusive possibilities are held together in Augustine's exegesis.

In any case, it is worth noting how Augustine's exegesis is not only concerned with the metaphysical problem of the relationship between the perfect image of the Son and the ontologically degraded image of human beings, but mainly with the necessity of drawing the worldly images away from the hearts of the believers in order to make them rediscover the image of God in their mind. In addition, not only the world is not deemed to be the image of God, but it actively stands as the theological opposite of God's images. By loving the darkness of the worldly images, human beings are constrained from seeing the pure light of the Logos. Therefore, in order to apprehend the image within, human minds have to be regenerated by God through the power of his grace. This process of regeneration, which will be the argument of the next section, eventually leads to the separation between two worlds: the saved world and the forsaken one.

### **V.2.3 *Mundus Recreatus*: The Recreation of the Lost Image**

The process of rediscovery of the image of God in the inner self depicted in the previous subsection must not be confused with a concession to any kind of intimism or emotionalism, in Augustine's thought.<sup>55</sup> In this section, I shall focus on the Johannine perspective according to which Augustine intends the salvation

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<sup>55</sup> Contrariwise, this section will show that Augustine's focus in the *Tractates on John* is not on the doctrine of the image intended as the place where an ontological identity between Creator and creature is found, but rather on the renewal of the fallen image through the work of Christ and the Holy Spirit. In this section, I will only partly enquire about the differences between the soteriological role Christ and that of the Spirit, for this will be the focus of the next section.

of human being much more as a *recreation* rather than as a *restoration*. Against the opinion of some influential scholars, I will therefore show that Augustine conceives a great difference between the grace which is given for creation and that given for re-creation. In other words, following the Johannine logic which identifies the creation with 'the world', Augustine shows an understanding of soteriology which interprets salvation as the act of pulling human being *out of the world*. In this sense, rather than being understood as an act of *transformation* of the world, salvation is presented as an act of *separation* of the elect from the world.

Given the exegetical nature of the *Tractates on John*, Augustine does not aim at presenting here a comprehensive discussion on how original sin entered into the world and was transmitted from the first couple to the whole human race.<sup>56</sup> Just as the Gospel of John, Augustine takes the presence of evil in the world for granted. Right from its Prologue, the Gospel presents the refusal of the world to accept the salvation brought by the Logos. By refusing salvation the world becomes wicked. Accordingly, Augustine's attention is much focused on interpreting the dichotomies between the wicked world and the saved one. Creation itself is not naturally corrupted in a Manichaean sense, nevertheless, the severity of sin is such as to irreparably transform 'creation' – that is, the good creation of God – into 'world' – where the light shines but is not accepted. Therefore, by focusing on the relationship between creation and recreation, this section shows the extent to which Augustine's soteriology is driven by the Gospel of John much more than scholarship has recognised so far.

Just as with many of the most important themes of Augustine's *Tractates*, the tension between creation and re-creation emerges from the exegesis of the

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<sup>56</sup> On the transmission of the original sin through sexual concupiscence (traducianism) Augustine wrote much in other works. Among the many see: *Against Julian*, V, 4.18, IV, 14.65, VI, 19.60; *On the Grace of Christ, and on Original Sin*, II, 40.45; *The City of God*, XIV, 16; *On the Trinity*, XII, 9. 14; *On Genesis against the Manichees*, II, 9.12. This doctrine remains one of the most debated among modern scholars. See among the many: T. Nisula, *Augustine and the Functions of Concupiscence*; Jesse Couenhoven, 'St. Augustine's Doctrine of Original Sin', in *Augustinian Studies* 36 (2005), p. 359-396; See also the work of Pier Franco Beatrice, *Tradux peccati. Alle fonti della dottrina agostiniana del peccato originale*, Milano 1978, which has been recently translated into English by Adam Kamesar: *The Transmission of Sin: Augustine and the Pre-Augustinian Sources*, Oxford 2013. In this book, Beatrice traces back in the second and third century the sources that will be lately used by Augustine in constructing his doctrine of the original sin.

Prologue. In the first tractate, Augustine proposes a comparison between the beginning of the Gospel<sup>57</sup> and the first verse of Genesis.<sup>58</sup> Here Augustine strongly underlines that the very Logos who effected creation is the same who effects the re-creation of the elect. Thus, Augustine identifies three different moments: the creation of everything that exist; the sin of human beings, who corrupted the image of God in their heart; the re-creation of human beings by the Logos (*Trloh*, I.12).<sup>59</sup> Along with these three movements, God is indicated as the dispenser of *salus*. This Latin word indicates both the physical health and the spiritual salvation brought by the Saviour (*Trloh*, XXX.1-3; XXXIV.4). With regard to the double meaning of the word *salus*, Augustine connects two passages of the Gospel where the Logos is said to be 'light'. In the first, the Logos is said to be 'light of all humankind' (*Jn.* 1:4) while in the second he is said to be 'light of the world' and 'light of life' (*Jn.* 8:12). Accordingly, insofar as the Lord is light of the world, he will save – that is, give *salus* to – everyone, from human beings to beasts, from angels to brute animals (*Trloh*, XXXIV.3). This kind of 'salvation' (*salus*) derives from the interpretation of creation itself as a miracle of God, who provides to the entire creation the ontological means to exist. In this sense the very creation is interpreted as an act of grace and mercy (*Trloh*, IX.1-2). Nonetheless, insofar as the Logos is 'light of all humankind' he provides a special *salus* for human beings, who bear his image within:

Si ergo sicut multiplicata est misericordia Dei (*Ps.* 35:7-8), ab illo homines et iumenta salvantur; nonne homines habent aliquid aliud quod eis Deus praestet creator, quod iumentis non praestat? Nullane discretio est inter animal factum ad imaginem Dei, et animal subditum imagini Dei? Est plane! [...]. Aliam habent salutem in re, aliam in spe (*Trloh*, XXXIV.4).<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> *Jn.* 1:1: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God'.

<sup>58</sup> *Gen.* 1:1: 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth'.

<sup>59</sup> *Trloh*, I.12: *Iam enim factus es per Verbum, sed oportet te refici per Verbum: si autem mala fuerit fides tua de Verbo, non poteris refici per Verbum. Et si tibi contigit fieri per Verbum, ut per illud factus sis, per te deficis: si per te deficis, ille te reficiat qui te fecit: si per te deterior efficeris, ille te recreet qui te creavit.* ('You have already been made through the Word, but you need to be made anew through the Word. But if your faith in the Word is deficient, you will not be able to be made anew through the Word. And if it has been given to you the fact that you exist through the Word, so that you are made through the Word, yet it is through yourself that you became defective. If you became defective through yourself, let him who made you remake you: if you made yourself worse through yourself, let the one who created you re-create you').

<sup>60</sup> 'Therefore if, as God's mercy has been multiplied, men and beasts are saved by him, do not men have something else which God the creator may present to them which he does not present to the beasts? Is there no distinction between animal made in the image of God and the animal

The commonality of *salus* between men and animal is therefore referred by Augustine as that grace which allows everything created to live and exist. Many times in the *Tractates* Augustine repeats that the very existence of the world is to be considered as miracle and grace. Every work of God is a miracle. The governance of the whole world is a miracle (*Trloh*, XXIV.1-4). Every seed of grain is a miracle. The creation of the world by the Word is a miracle (*Trloh*, VIII.1-2; IX.1-2;).<sup>61</sup> Therefore, the creation of the mind or intellect (*mens-intellectus*) of a single person who is made at the image of God and re-made through Christ (*factus-renovatus*) is presented as a miracle (*Trloh*, VIII.3).

At first glance, the identification of both creation and re-creation as acts of grace, or even 'miracles', might be interpreted as an indication of similarities between the two operations. In this regard, many scholars have recognised that Augustine himself deems creation to be a form of grace. Indeed, without the ontological help of the Trinity, creation itself would cease to exist. Therefore, they concluded that is not possible to speak about a natural order in which grace has no place and a supernatural order of salvation which is governed by the grace of God. As a consequence, for example, Romano Guardini states that 'for Augustine grace is a category not only of salvation, but also of existence'.<sup>62</sup> Similarly, Jared Ortiz supports Carol Harrison's claim that 'everything is of grace: both creation and recreation are the work of the Trinity. There is no gap between creation and redemption'.<sup>63</sup>

This scholarly position, particularly that of Harrison, is entirely focused on Augustine's metaphysics, according to which the very finitude of the created world makes it ontologically unstable to the point of needing the work of the Trinity

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subjected to the image of God? Certainly, there is! [...] One has a salvation in present reality, another in hope'.

<sup>61</sup> Augustine's discourse on miracles is strictly connected to his exegetical intents. According to him, the reader of the Gospel should not be amazed by the miracles performed by Jesus because, ultimately, the very existence of the world is a miracle. Therefore, it is much more important the symbolic meaning of miracles found in the Gospel rather than the effect they had on those who witnessed. Similarly, for the salvation of human beings, it was much more important that the Logos became man, rather than what he did as a man, as it will be shown in much details later on in this chapter. See: *Trloh*, IX.1-2; XVII.1-3; XXIV.1-4; XXX.1-3.

<sup>62</sup> Romano Guardini, *The Conversion of Augustine*, Westminster MD 1960, p. 124

<sup>63</sup> C. Harrison, *Rethinking Augustine* p. 114. See also: Jared Ortiz, *You Made Us for Yourself: Creation in St. Augustine's Confession*, Minneapolis MN 2016. See in particular the section 'Creation and Re-creation', p. 37-40.

to subsist. Nevertheless, my analysis of the Johannine categories in Augustine's tractates aims at nuancing this opinion by showing that, although Augustine undeniably considers creation to be a work of grace, he still values the works of salvation as more important than those of creation. Consequently, there is a radical gap between the works of creation and that of redemption. This consideration comes not only from metaphysical reasons, but also from *existential* reasons related to Augustine's own interpretation of the problem of evil in the world. Moreover, the very understanding Augustine shows of salvation as spiritual salvation, that is, the entering of the Trinitarian communion of the Holy Spirit, entails a status which is utterly superior to that of "simple" creation. It is not for no reason, indeed, that Augustine utterly refuses in the *Tractates* to consider "the world", even in its highest meaning of originally good "creation", to be the image of God.

Considering creation as a work of grace does not entail that the grace which is given by God to creation is the same as the one given by God to those who reach salvation. While *salus* is given to both human beings and animals *in re*, only to human being it is given also *in spe* (*Trloh*, XXXIV.4).<sup>64</sup> Similarly, while God is said to be 'light of the whole world', he is also said to be 'light of humankind' in the sense that only human beings, insofar as in their mind is the image of God, have the capacity to apprehend that light. The difference between the two kinds of grace stands in the exclusiveness of the second. Similarly, while the work of creation embraces everything that exists, that of re-creation pertains to a special grace which is granted only to a few. The exclusiveness of the grace which is given to the 'few', as opposed to the 'many' who do not see the light and remain in the darkness, assumes in Augustine a strong Johannine connotation. In commenting on the healing of the blind man in *Jn.* 9, Augustine detects in the blindness of the man the current state of human race. The Johannine dichotomy between light and darkness, of which the blind man is a symbol, is here explained in Pauline terms as the hiatus between the utterly corrupted human nature where 'vice grew in the place of nature' and the light brought by Christ (*Trloh*, XLIV.1).<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> On the difference between salvation in present reality (*salus in re*), and salvation in hope (*salus in spe*) see *supra*.

<sup>65</sup> *Genus humanum est iste caecus: haec enim caecitas contigit in primo homine per peccatum, de quo omnes originem duximus, non solum mortis, sed etiam iniquitatis. [...] Quandoquidem Apostolus dicit: Fuimus et nos aliquando natura filii irae, sicut et caeteri. (Eph. 2:3) [...]*

This interpretation is wholly consistent with the Johannine dichotomy between the holy community and “the world”. Indeed, this is exactly the way in which Augustine interprets the Gospel’s prologue when the Word is said to be refused by ‘his own’ (*Jn.* 1:11). ‘His own’ are all human beings whom God made before they became corrupted and forgot about him.<sup>66</sup>

This work of re-creation is marked by the separation of the elect from the world. In this way, Augustine’s interpretation of the wording ‘his own’ presents a shift from the universal meaning related to all human beings who possess reason to the exclusive meaning related to the ones who have accepted Christ and his salvific role. This radical shift in Augustine’s theology is consistent with what I have shown in the first section regarding the meaning of the term ‘world’. While the term ‘world’ might sometimes be interpreted as ‘creation’, that is, the ontological substance which is created by God through an act of grace, it should nonetheless be usually interpreted as the forsaken part which is no longer able to recognise its creator due to the severity of its own sin, that wiped out its good nature. The contrast between the grace which is universally given and that which is given only to the elect marks the difference between the elect and the world. In Augustine’s interpretation of grace it is therefore possible to detect a radical displacement between what is given to the many and what is given to the few. Equally, this interpretation is referred by Augustine to the Law which is given by God in the Old Testament. This Law, which was given to all the people of Israel was not given to save, but to condemn (*Trloh*, III.1-2).<sup>67</sup> That is how Augustine interprets the verse of *Jn.* 1:16 that envisages a further outpouring of grace in the

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*Quomodo natura, nisi quia peccante primo homine, vitium pro natura inolevit? Si vitium pro natura inolevit, secundum mentem omnis homo caecus natus est.* (‘This blind man is the human race. This blindness happened through sin in the first man, from whom we all have taken the origin not only of death, but also of wickedness. [...] In as much as the Apostle, says: “All of us, too, were once by nature children of wrath, even as the rest”. How “by nature”, except that when the first man sinned, vice grew in the place of nature? If vice has grown in the place of nature, every man is born blind as regard to his mind’).

<sup>66</sup> Through his mercy and grace (*gratia*) the Son of God came to untie human beings from their sins so that they can cross the sea of this world (*Trloh*, II.12-15). In this way, human beings are said to be re-made through Christ, thus becoming sons through grace, sons of God according to his Word (*Trloh*, II.12-15).

<sup>67</sup> Regarding the impossibility of fulfilling the law without God actively helping human beings with his grace, that is, his love, see also: *Trloh*, III.11-14; VII.8-12; VII.15-17; XVII.1-3; XVII.6; XXVI.1; XXVI.1; XLI.9-13; IL.21-25; LXV.1; LXXXIX.1-4. In this sense love, which is the Holy Spirit, is not only the fulfilment of the law, but spiritually becomes the law itself. In this regard, see the last section of this chapter.

elect – ‘Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given’:

Qui pertinent ad Adam? Omnes qui nati sunt de Adam. Qui ad Christum? Omnes qui nati sunt per Christum. Quare omnes in peccato? Quia nemo natus est praeter Adam. Ut autem nascerentur ex Adam, necessitatis fuit ex damnatione: nasci per Christum, voluntatis est et gratiae (*Trloh*, III.12).<sup>68</sup>

The opposition between being necessarily born of Adam, thus being part of ‘the world’, and being born of Christ, is one of the main themes which runs through the *Tractates*. Augustine’s language aims at underlining the *necessity* of condemnation as opposed to the gratuitous gift of faith. This gift of faith is not the cosmological grace which grants existence to everything that exists, but is rather an invisible grace that God personally allots to some human beings who are gratuitously chosen when they are still ‘darkness’ and part of ‘the world’.

This line of thought marks Augustine’s interpretation of the figure of Nicodemus. In the Gospel, Nicodemus is said to approach Jesus by night (*Jn.* 3:2). This night is interpreted by Augustine as the darkness of the world, which is still not enlightened by the light of the Logos (*Trloh*, XI.1-4). Through the encounter with Jesus, Nicodemus experiences a spiritual regeneration and the rebirth from the Spirit: *cum ergo sint duae natiuitates, ille unam intellegebat. Una est de terra, alia de coelo; una est de carne, alia de Spiritu; una est de mortalitate, alia de aeternitate; una est de masculo et femina, alia de Deo et Ecclesia* (*Trloh*, XI.6).<sup>69</sup> Here as well, Augustine’s language reproduces the dichotomy between that grace which is given through creation and that which is given through election.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> ‘Who belongs to Adam? All who have been born of Adam. Who belongs to Christ? All who have been born through Christ. Why are all in sin? Because no one has been born apart from Adam. That they be born from Adam was necessarily because of damnation. But coming through Christ pertains to will and grace’.

<sup>69</sup> ‘Although there are two births, he only knew one. One is from earth, the other from heaven; one is from the flesh, the other from the Spirit; one is from mortality, the other from eternity; one is from male and female, the other from God and Church’.

<sup>70</sup> This second grace passes through the mediating role of the Church and its sacraments, being operated by the Holy Spirit (*Trloh*, XI.5-6; XII.1-2; XII.5-6). In the first group of *Tractates* (*Trloh*, I-XVI) it is possible to detect a strong anti-Donatist polemic. Therefore, Augustine stresses much the necessity of sacraments and of being fully part of the catholic community in order to achieve salvation. For further information on the Donatist controversy in the *Tractates on John* see: A. Ployd, *Augustine, the Trinity and the Church*. In any case, the mediation of the sacraments distributed by the catholic Church does not grant salvation in itself. Indeed, this dispensation must be operated by the invisible work of the Spirit.

The condition acquired through spiritual rebirth is not permanent because, differently from Christ, human beings are said to be sons by grace, not by nature. Therefore, in commenting on *Jn. 12:46* – ‘I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness’ – Augustine explains how the withdrawal of Christ would naturally lead human beings to their previous condition of darkness: *lumina ergo sunt omnes sancti; sed credendo ab eo illuminantur, a quo si quis recesserit tenebrabitur* (*Trloh*, LIV.4).<sup>71</sup> This is exactly how the originally good creation became “the world”.

As human beings are not able to be light without the active help of Christ, the work of the re-creation of the human image by God is said to be operated by both Christ and the Holy Spirit. Commenting on *Jn. 2,21* – ‘but the temple he had spoken of was his body’ – Augustine identifies in the mystical doctrine of the body of Christ the means through which re-creation of human beings happens. Augustine describes it as something happening *intus in secreto* (inside in the secret place), where human beings understand how God humbled himself in Christ in order to re-create them (*humilis ut nos reficeret*) (*Trloh*, X.1).<sup>72</sup> Commenting on Jesus’ tiredness at the well of Jacob in *Jn. 4*, Augustine marks a clear distinction between the work of creation and the one of re-creation:

Fortitudo Christi te creavit, infirmitas Christi te recreavit. Fortitudo Christi fecit ut quod non erat esset: infirmitas Christi fecit ut quod erat non periret. Condidit nos fortitudine sua, quaesivit nos infirmitate sua (*Trloh*, XV.6).<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> ‘All the saints are light; but, in believing, they are enlightened by him from whom, if anyone withdraws, he will be darkened’.

<sup>72</sup> The connection between humility and the capacity of being re-created by Christ is not an accidental part of Augustine’s discourse, but it rather represents its core. While the work of creation is presented by Augustine as a show of power by God, the work of recreation is operated through the weakness of Christ. Therefore, the renovation of the human image happens through what Augustine calls ‘the two births of Christ’: *Duae nativitates Christi intelleguntur; una divina, altera humana: una per quam efficeremur, altera per quam reficeremur* (*Trloh*, XII.8) (‘Two births of Christ are understood, one divine, and the other human; one through which we were to be made, the other through which we were to be remade’). In this regard see *Trloh*, XXV.13-19, where Augustine comments on *Jn. 6:38*: ‘For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me’. As opposed to the obedience of the Son who dies to accomplish the Father’s will, the pride of human beings makes them incapable of performing God’s will even if this would lead them to salvation.

<sup>73</sup> ‘The strength of Christ created you, the weakness of Christ re-created you. The strength of Christ caused what was-not to be; the weakness of Christ caused what-was to perish not. He produced us in his strength; he sought us in his weakness’.



While the work of creation speaks of the power of God, the work of re-creation speaks of his mercy towards human being. Therefore, Christ is the one who not only performs the work of creation, but even the one who takes human beings out of their world by stripping off their sins and re-creating them through his incarnation. Similarly, commenting on one of the most significant passage of the Gospel – *Jn.* 8.23-25: ‘you are of this world, I am not from this world’ – Augustine states that, in the multitude of the unbelievers, only *some* were chosen by Jesus for eternal salvation. Therefore, only few of them will have the possibility of understanding who Jesus is, that is, *hominis formator et reformatore, creator et recreator, factor et refactor* (*Trloh*, XXXVIII.8).<sup>74</sup>

As the incarnation of Christ grants that human souls are renewed by God, so the Holy Spirit provides the ontological means through which this work of God is operated. The effusion of the Holy Spirit is indeed the effusion of grace itself. In the course of the *Tractates*, Augustine identifies the Holy Spirit as both the gift and the giver of that love which makes human beings able to re-discover the image of God hidden within. Indeed, the Spirit works both as the *sign* of unity of the holy community and the *unity itself* that holds together the *societas* of the elect.<sup>75</sup> As the Holy Spirit is the ontological bond of love in God, he is also the ontological bond of love in the elect which makes the re-creation of the elect possible.<sup>76</sup> The action of the Holy Spirit is deemed to be necessary in order to be able to perform good deeds. Indeed, if God does not help the human being with his grace (*adiuvaret gratia*), which is given through the Holy Spirit, no one can fulfil the law (*Trloh*, XXVI.1).<sup>77</sup> Similarly, in the episode of the Samaritan woman, the Holy Spirit is the fountain of water and the gift of God which allows human beings to be converted (*Trloh*, XV). According to *Jn.* 6:63, where Jesus urges the disciples to recognise that ‘the words I have spoken to you are spirit and life’, the Spirit is presented as the only means through which Peter was able to recognise

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<sup>74</sup> ‘Fashioner and re-fashioner of man, the creator and re-creator, the maker and re-maker’.

<sup>75</sup> Regarding the way in which the Holy Spirit works in the Augustine’s *Tractates*, his opposition to the world and his proper work as distinguished from that of the Son see the next section: *infra*, V.3.

<sup>76</sup> On the Spirit as the bond of unity in the community in *Tractates* see: *Trloh*, XVII.7-10 and XXVII.5-6.

<sup>77</sup> Therefore, this process of re-discovery is attributed to God. Even if reborn by the Word of God (*renati*) human beings are not renewed by Christ (*innovati*) in such way as to be stripped (*expoliati*) of mortal and corruptible parts from Adam. But the spiritual part (*spirituale*) which uplifts the soul is clearly a gift of God and his mercy (*donum dei et misericordia eius*) (*Trloh*, XXI.1).

Jesus as 'the Holy One of God' (*Jn.* 6:69). Specifically, Augustine explains that Peter was able to understand only through the effusion of the Holy Spirit in him: *Videte quemadmodum Petrus, dante Deo, recreante Spiritu sancto, intellexit (Trloh, XXVII.9).*<sup>78</sup>

While the Spirit re-creates Peter's heart making it possible for him to profess his faith in Christ, Augustine underlines the difference between Peter, who was chosen by God for being re-created through the Holy Spirit, and Judas, who was chosen by God to be used as a tool. While Augustine explains that *electi in laude solent dici (Trloh, XXVII.10),*<sup>79</sup> he also states that, while Peter was chosen by God in a positive sense, Judas was chosen so that through his evil works, God could permit something good to happen: *Artifex illo utitur; et magnus artifex, si illo uti non nosset, nec eum esse permetteret (Trloh, XXVII.10).*<sup>80</sup> It is worth noting though, that also in this case, the difference between Peter, who has been re-created through the Holy Spirit, and Judas, who was created by God but not re-created by the Spirit, is striking.<sup>81</sup> While both participate in the 'grace' of creation, only Peter participates in the Holy Spirit, who re-creates his interiority, orienting it toward God. On the contrary, God uses Judas' evil works in order to accomplish his will. Therefore, Augustine's insistence on the fact that, were Judas not chosen as a negative actor in God's plan, God would not have allowed him even to exist, is the ultimate evidence of the difference between the portion of people who is only part of creation and the one which is re-created through the Holy Spirit. The re-creational work operated by God is indeed a special grace personally orientated only to *some* human beings which surpasses that given by creation and existence.

So far, this section has shown how Augustine is constantly led by the Gospel of John to propose a difference between the protological creation made good by God and "the world", that is, creation as it is now, after sin. While God still provides

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<sup>78</sup> 'You see in which way Peter believed: with God giving him (the ability) and the Holy Spirit re-creating him'.

<sup>79</sup> 'We are accustomed to call "chosen" in praise'.

<sup>80</sup> 'The maker uses him; and the great maker, if he did not know how to use him, would not even permit him to be'.

<sup>81</sup> Regarding Origen's and Augustine's interpretation of the passage of *Jn.* 13, particularly focusing on the figure of Judas, see the excellent article by G. Lettieri, 'Origene, Agostino e il mistero di Giuda'.

existence to the world, he does not provide it with the necessary aid not to sin. The difference between the original creation and the world is best summoned in a passage where Augustine provides a clear distinction between the concept of *human being* as created by God, and *human being as it is now*:

Quasi duae res sunt, homo et peccator. Quod audis homo, Deus fecit: quod audis peccator, ipse homo fecit. Dele quod fecisti, ut Deus salvet quod fecit. Oportet ut oderis in te opus tuum, et ames in te opus Dei. [...] Initium operum bonorum, confessio est operum malorum. Facis veritatem, et venis ad lucem (*Trloh*, XII.13).<sup>82</sup>

Augustine's theorization of two substances should not be confused with a legacy from his Manichaean past. As Augustine makes clear in other passages, vice has not replaced the goodness of God's creation *in re*. As a consequence, vice should be distinguished from nature (*Trloh*, LXII.16).<sup>83</sup> Nevertheless, the present condition of every human being who comes into this world is that of the sinner, not that of the original human being. Therefore, insofar as human beings exist in this world, they are *of this world* where, in Augustine's words, *vitium pro natura inolevit* (*Trloh*, XLIV.1).<sup>84</sup> This existential condition is expressed by the difference between those who are created and then abandoned by God and those who are re-created:

Attendat unusquisque vestrum, fratres mei, quid habeat christianus. Quod homo est, commune cum multis: quod christianus est, secernitur a multis; et plus ad illum pertinet quod christianus, quam quod homo. Nam quod

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<sup>82</sup> 'It is as if there are two things, man and sinner. What is called man, that God has made; what is called sinner, that man himself has made. Destroy what you have made that God may save what he has made. You must hate your own work in yourself and love God's work in you. The beginning of good work is the confession of evil works. Do the truth and come to the light'.

<sup>83</sup> The passage runs like this: *Venit ergo Dominus Deus ad hominem peccatorem. Duo nomina audisti, et hominem, et peccatorem. Quod homo est, ex Deo est: quod peccator est, non est ex Deo. A natura vitium secernatur: agnoscatur natura, unde Creator laudetur; agnoscatur vitium, propter quod medicus invocetur.* (*Trloh*, XLII.16) 'Therefore, the lord God came to man the sinner. You have heard two names, both man and sinner. In that he is a man, he is of God; in that he is a sinner, he is not of God. Let the vice be distinguished from the nature. Let the nature be recognised from which the creator is to be praised; let the vice be recognised on account of which the Physician is to be summoned'.

<sup>84</sup> 'Vice has grown in place of sin'.

christianus, renovatur ad imaginem Dei, a quo homo factus est ad imaginem Dei (*Trloh*, V.12).<sup>85</sup>

Once again, the work of re-creation of the human image is deemed to be more precious than the work of creation, as it is personally directed to the single human being and, most of all, it is exclusive to some human beings only whom God has chosen out of the world. Being chosen out of the world, they are *separated from* the world, thus forming the holy community of the saints. This Johannine logic is enhanced by Augustine to the point of asking explicitly, when preaching about the resurrection of Lazarus, in *Jn.* 11:1-54, whether it should be considered to be a greater thing to create or to resurrect:

Si ergo per illum facta sunt omnia, quid mirum est si resurrexit unus per illum, cum tot quotidie nascantur per illum? Plus est homines creare quam resuscitare. Dignatus est tamen et creare et resuscitare; creare omnes, resuscitare quosdam (*Trloh*, XLIX.1).<sup>86</sup>

The complex relationship between creation and recreation set up by Augustine in the *Tractates* is therefore resolved in acknowledgment of the mystery of a God who deemed it good to create all and resurrect some. In this quotation, Augustine does not aim at giving a definitive answer to the question. Anyway, as the quotation comes from the episode of the resurrection of Lazarus, Augustine resolves the exegetical problem by making the resurrection of Lazarus a symbol of the spiritual resurrection of all Christians in the final days.<sup>87</sup> Much more revealing of Augustine's true attitude is instead his comment on the passage of *Jn.* 14:12: 'whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things'. Here Augustine wonders what kind of 'greater things'

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<sup>85</sup> 'Let each and every one of you examine closely, my brothers, what a Christian has. In that he is a human being, he shares (his humanity) with many; in that he is a Christian, he is separated from many. And the fact that he is a Christian has more relevance to him than that he is a human being. For in that he is a Christian he is remade according to the image of God by whom he was made a human being according to the image of God'

<sup>86</sup> 'If, therefore, all things were made through him, what wonder is it if one person arose through him since so many are born through him every day? It is a greater thing to create persons than to resurrect them. Yet, he deemed it to be good both to create and to resurrect – create *all* and resurrect *some*'

<sup>87</sup> On Augustine's interpretation of the miracles found in the Gospel see *supra*.

Christians might do when compared with the one made by Christ;<sup>88</sup> Augustine answers:

Sed et in coelis, Sedes, Dominationes, Principatus, Potestates, Archangeli, Angeli opera sunt Christi; numquid etiam his operibus maiora facit, qui operante in se Christo, cooperatur aeternam salutem ac iustificationem suam? Non hic audeo praecipitare sententiam: intellegat qui potest, iudicet qui potest, utrum maius sit iustos creare quam impios iustificare. Certe enim si aequalis est utrumque potentiae, hoc maioris est misericordiae (*Trloh*, LXXII.2-3).<sup>89</sup>

In this case, I would say that Augustine's deliberate refusal to answer is nonetheless an answer to the question. Indeed, while in creating not only human beings, but also much purer creatures, God shows his grace in the form of power, in justifying unjust creatures he also shows mercy. While the ontological power of God is shown in both, for even wicked creatures still need God in order to exist, God's mercy and love is shown only in the justification of the wicked. This work of justification is much more striking when considering that God deemed good to justify only *some* wicked and forsake others. God's reasons for acting in such a manner are obscure to Augustine, who cannot find a rational explanation for this, but still believes it must be good, for this is God's decision. In other words, the exclusivity of the work of recreation is the means through which the elect understand the depth of God's love for them. This exclusive love is identified not only with the grace of God, but also with the Holy Spirit himself. To be recreated means to enter in the Trinitarian community which *is* indeed instantiated in the

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<sup>88</sup> The following quotation starts like this: *Ipsium credere in Christum, opus est Christi. Hoc operatur in nobis, non utique sine nobis. [...] Prorsus maius hoc esse dixerim, quam est coelum et terra, et quaecumque cernuntur in coelo et in terra. Et coelum enim et terra transibit; praedestinatorum autem, id est eorum quos praescit, salus et iustificatio permanebit. In illis tantum opera Dei, in his autem etiam est imago Dei.* 'To believe in Christ is also itself a work of Christ. He works this in us, surely not without us. [...] Truly, I would say that this is greater than is heaven and earth and whatever things are seen in heaven and on earth. For heaven and earth will pass away, but the salvation and justification of the predestined, that is, of those whom he foreknows, will abide. In the former are only God's works, but in the latter is also God's image.

<sup>89</sup> But even in the Heavens, the Thrones, the Dominations, the Principalities, the Powers, the Archangels, the Angels, are works of Christ. Does he do even greater works than these, he who, when Christ is working in him, works out together his salvation and justification? I do not dare to rush here this idea along. Let him understand who can, let him judge who can, whether it is greater to create the just than to justify the wicked. Anyway, for sure, if they are both of equal power, the latter is of greater mercy'.

Holy Spirit.<sup>90</sup> In this sense, the grace of salvation is much more precious of the one given by creation because of the gift of the Spirit. In creation, you are given existence; in salvation, you are given God.

In this regard, Augustine's reflection on the problem of re-creation is intimately shaped by the Gospel of John's understanding of the spirit. Commenting on Jesus' prayer for the disciples in *Jn.* 17:14 – 'I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world' – Augustine points out that 'not to be of the world' means to be reborn of the Holy Spirit:

Hoc eis regeneratione collatum est: nam generatione de mundo erant, propter quod iam eis dixerat: *Ego vos de mundo elegeri* (*Jn.* 15:19). Donatum est ergo eis ut sicut ipse, nec ipsi essent de mundo, eos ipso liberante de mundo. [...] Nam si propterea illi iam non de mundo, quia renati sunt de Spiritu sancto (*Trloh*, CVIII.1).<sup>91</sup>

The re-creation worked by God through Christ and the Holy Spirit allowed the disciples to be pulled out of the 'damaged and condemned stock in which they were born' (*vitiata atque damnata stirpe generatum est*) (*Trloh*, CXV.2) and enter into the communion of the Holy Spirit in God. Taking the elect from the world, which is condemned to perdition, represents the deeper meaning of Augustine's understanding of the idea of re-creation. Indeed, the unity between the Spirit and the chosen ones is achieved by the separation of those who are chosen from the world from which they come from. However one might want to interpret his doctrine of grace in relation to the predestination, this section has provided sufficient evidence to show that Augustine's interpretation of re-creation must be understood as a *separation-from*, rather than a *regeneration-of* the world. Most importantly, it is worth reiterating that Augustine's system of thought is drawn from, rather than imposed on, the text of the fourth Gospel. Indeed, the higher

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<sup>90</sup> The identification of the Holy Spirit with the Trinitarian communion will be further discussed in the next section: *infra*, V.3.

<sup>91</sup> 'This was conferred to them by regeneration; for by generation they were of the world, and because of this he had already said to them: "I have chosen you out of the world". Therefore, it was granted to them that they themselves, as he, might be not of the world, since he himself was freeing them from the world. [...] Indeed, if they now were not of the world is because they were reborn of the Holy Spirit'.

value given to *re-creation* over creation comes directly from the reading of this text.

### V.3 The *Proprium* of the Spirit: Christ, the Holy Spirit and the World as *Massa Damnationis*

In the two previous sections, the opposition between the created world and the re-created world has been analysed to underline the extent to which Augustine's doctrine of re-creation is structured according to the Johannine contraposition between Jesus' followers and 'the world'. In particular, I have analysed the way in which, according to the Johannine identification of creation with 'the world', Augustine proposes a view of re-creation that marks the shift between God's grace that is necessary for creation and the one that is necessary for re-creation. While the grace of creation is given to everybody and the very power of God allows the world to subsist, the grace given for re-creation is the sign of the personal love of God for some of his creatures which are separated from the world and brought in the communion with the Holy Spirit. Only this grace makes the human being capable of seeing God and, consequently, be saved.

This new section will analyse the relationship between 'the world' and the two divine soteriological agents who work in it: Christ and the Holy Spirit. Since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, scholarship has discussed Augustine's pneumatology in relationship to his soteriology at length.<sup>92</sup> In particular, scholars have questioned whether it is possible to ascribe a particular role to the Holy Spirit in the works of salvation. This section aims at understanding what role the Spirit performs in the salvation of human beings in Augustine's *Tractates on John* and the extent to which Augustine draws his soteriological pneumatology from the fourth Gospel. In order to analyse the difference between the role of Christ and that of the Holy Spirit, this section will first discuss the ontological problems related to the ascription of a particular role to each one of the three hypostases. Then, this issue will be linked with the proper role of Christ and the Holy Spirit, thus expounding the different soteriological roles of the two persons. Regarding

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<sup>92</sup> Among the many works on Augustine's pneumatology see in particular: Michel Rene Barnes, 'Augustine's Last Pneumatology', in *Augustinian Studies* 39 2 (2008), p. 223-234. In this article, Barnes concentrates on *Triloq*, XCIX and on Augustine's work *Against Maximinus*, that is, the last work where Augustine explains his Trinitarian theology before his death. While focusing on these two texts, Barnes discusses the late understanding of the Spirit as "Creator" and the association of "power" with the Holy Spirit as mainly related to his debate against Homoians.



Christ, Augustine mainly focuses on three doctrines: the unity of the person, the predestination Christ and his role in the final judgement. Therefore, this section will show how Christ's action toward humanity is said to be universal and particular at the same time. While the very incarnation of the Word is deemed to be a grace which God grants to all humanity, the person of Christ is also the giver of a special grace, which is personally given and exclusive. This grace, that allows the elect to enter the communion with God, is identified with the Holy Spirit. This interpretation is particularly stressed in commenting on the pneumatological books of the Gospel (*Jn.* 14-16), where Jesus promises to send the Holy Spirit to his disciples. While the sending of the Holy Spirit by Jesus is also interpreted as the scriptural proof of the double procession of the Spirit from both the Father and the Son, Augustine takes this sending as the means by which the elect enter in communion with God.<sup>93</sup> Therefore, Augustine understands actual salvation as fully spiritual. In other words, salvation *is* and *is in* the Holy Spirit, for the Holy Spirit is both the object and the subject of salvation. In this regard, the identification between the Holy Spirit and *caritas* – which is indeed a Johannine theme – is crucial.

Finally, this section aims at understanding the way in which Augustine interprets the proper relationship between the Spirit and the world. Differently from Christ who, through the incarnation, is seen by the world, the Spirit is considered to be completely alien from the world. Therefore, Augustine attributes the final judgement of the world only to the Son. Indeed, the world is not able to see either the Father or the Spirit, but only the Son. The irreconcilability between the Spirit and the world is made even sharper by fact that the Spirit resides only in the elect; consequently, only those who are already in God have the possibility to perceive the Spirit. Augustine's interpretation of the Trinitarian participation of the elect in the Holy Spirit necessarily leads to the consequence of the absence of the Spirit from the world. The strong dichotomy between the world and the Saviour found

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<sup>93</sup> Augustine interprets the sending of the Spirit by the Son as both referred to the soteriological role of the Spirit and to his ontological role inside the Trinity. Generally speaking, Augustine tends to read all relationship between the persons of the Trinity as both ontological and soteriological statement. In this regard, I agree with Lewis Ayres who plainly recognises this exegetical pattern. See: Lewis Ayres, '*Spiritus Amborum: Augustine and Pro-Nicene Pneumatology*', in *Augustinian Studies* 39 2 (2008), p. 207-221, in particular p. 215. On the same subject see: M. R. Barnes, '*Augustine's Last Pneumatology*', p. 225: 'Augustine reads virtually all statements about the relationship of Son and Spirit as also signifying aspects of their eternal relationship'.

in the Gospel of John is therefore radically mirrored in Augustine's pneumatology. While Christ has to deal with the world, at least in the act of condemning it, the Spirit *is in no sense ever mingled* with the world. While the work of Christ is therefore that of choosing people out of the world and to deliver them to the Father by means of the Holy Spirit; the work of the Spirit is only referred to the saved portion which is chosen out. It is indeed the remoteness of the world from the Trinitarian union, which *is* the Holy Spirit, to make it irredeemably damned.

### V.3.1 Unity and Relationship in God: The Inseparability of the Works of the Trinity

In the chapter regarding the Spirit in God I have shown how the Gospel of John, particularly *Jn.* 5:26,<sup>94</sup> shapes Augustine's way of understanding the relationship between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.<sup>95</sup> Having 'life in himself', the Son joins the Father in the eternal self-sameness of the *idipsum* and is also responsible for the procession of the Spirit, for the Father is said to grant by generation to the Son the capacity to generate their mutual bond eternally. The ontological consequences of this Trinitarian relationship have already been discussed and will not be repeated here. The problem at hand concerns the economic functions of the aforementioned hypostases. When commenting on passages such as *Jn.* 10:30 – 'I and the Father are one' – Augustine applies the concept of *idipsum* not only to the essence of the Trinity, but also to the works that the Trinity performs. By negating any 'subordinationist' interpretation of the hypostases, Augustine states that the unity in God must be understood as unity of both divine essence and actions. According to the Latin pro-Nicene tradition to which he belongs, Augustine is affirming that the works of the Trinity are inseparable (*Trloh*, LXXIV.3-5; LXXVIII.1-3; XCI.4).<sup>96</sup> Moreover, Augustine maintains that each person of the Trinity does not exist in reality as a separate

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<sup>94</sup> 'For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself'.

<sup>95</sup> For full bibliographical discussion see *supra*, III.1.

<sup>96</sup> Augustine deems the inseparability of the works of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit to be a distinctive sign of the catholic faith. As such, his attitude towards the problem is exemplified in *Trloh*, XX.3, where Augustine exhorts the listeners to try to understand such doctrine which is treated as an apostolic teaching: *Catholica autem fides habet, quod Patris et Filii opera non sunt separabilia. Hoc est quod volo, si possum, loqui Caritati vestrae: sed secundum illa verba Domini: Qui potest capere capiat (Mt. 19:20). Qui autem capere non potest, non mihi adscribat, sed tarditati suae; et convertat se ad illum qui cor aperit, ut infundat quod donat.*

person, but only exists in relationship with the others (*Trloh*, LXXVII.2; XCV.1). As a consequence, when the Gospel ascribes the performance of a work to a single hypostasis, the entire Trinity is to be understood as performing it (*Trloh*, XCIV.5). Thus, Augustine finds in *Jn.* 5:19-20 – ‘whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise. The Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing’ – the perfect representation of the Trinity-in-itself and of the inseparability of his works:

Catholica fides hoc habet, firmata Spiritu Dei in sanctis eius, contra omnem haereticam pravitatem, quia Patris et Filii opera inseparabilia sunt. Quid est quod dixi? Quomodo ipse Pater et Filius inseparabiles sunt, sic et opera Patris et Filii inseparabilia sunt. Quomodo Pater et Filius inseparabiles sunt? Quia ipse dixit: *Ego et Pater unum sumus* (*Jn.* 10:30). Quia Pater et Filius non sunt duo dii, sed unus Deus, Verbum et cuius est Verbum, unus et Unicus, Deus unus Pater et Filius caritate complexi, unusque caritatis Spiritus eorum est, ut fiat Trinitas Pater et Filius et Spiritus sanctus. Non ergo tantum Patris et Filii, sed et Spiritus sancti, sicut aequalitas et inseparabilitas personarum, ita etiam opera inseparabilia sunt (*Trloh*, XX.3).<sup>97</sup>

According to Augustine’s reasoning, insofar as the three persons are the eternal process which is the true Trinity, the three persons are inseparable. As such, each of them is one God and one *idipsum*, but the three of them are equally one God and one *idipsum*. The doctrine rests on the conception of the Spirit as the procession of both Father and Son and as the bond of love in which, *caritate complexi*, Father, Son and Spirit become one Trinity.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> ‘The catholic faith, made firm by the Spirit of God in the saints, holds this against every heretical depravity: the works of the Father and the Son are inseparable. What is it that I have said? Just as the Father himself and the Son himself are inseparable, so also the works of the Father and the Son are inseparable. In what way the Father and the Son are inseparable? Because he himself said: “I and the Father are one” (*Jn.* 10:30). For the Father and the Son are not two gods, but one God, the Word and the one from whom the Word is, they are one and the only one, one God, Father and Son, combined in love; and the Spirit of their love is one, so that there is found the Trinity, Father and Son and Holy Spirit. Therefore, as there is an equality and inseparability of the persons, not only of the Father and the Son, but also of the Holy Spirit, so also the works are inseparable’. Augustine goes on by saying: *Adhuc planius dicam quid sit, opera inseparabilia sunt. Non dicit catholica fides quia fecit Deus Pater aliquid, et fecit Filius aliquid aliud: sed quod fecit Pater, hoc et Filius fecit, hoc et Spiritus sanctus fecit. Per Verbum enim facta sunt omnia: quando dixit et facta sunt, per Verbum facta sunt, per Christum facta sunt.*

<sup>98</sup> See also the references to the *individua caritas* which is the perfect unity of and in God. See *Trloh*, XVIII.4. See also *Trloh*, XVII.7-10 and XXVII.5-6, where Augustine uses *Acts* 4.32 in order to describe both the work of the Holy Spirit in human hearts and the work of the Spirit in the Trinity. These instances will be analysed later in this chapter.

From an ontological point of view, the perfect unity of the Trinity is therefore found in the Holy Spirit, for his very existence gives witness to the Trinitarian union. In this sense, so far as God is concerned, the different persons of the Trinity do perform different roles by means of their relationship. These specific roles do not pertain to each person individually, but to the relationship between each other. Indeed, the unity between God's essence and action makes the very essence of the Trinity a *relational* one. Thus, the Father is Father insofar as he has a Son, the Son is Son insofar as he has a Father and the Spirit is Spirit insofar as he is the Spirit of both and both are Spirit. Being the Spirit of both, he shares their essence and by his very existence he is the hypostatical union between the two.

Because of this relational role, the Spirit is said to be love. So far as this section is concerned, it is worth noting that Augustine's depiction of the Spirit as *caritas* is not metaphorical and is absolutely crucial in understanding the relation between the Trinity's essence and its works. God *is* love insofar as the Holy Spirit instantiates the eternal union and communion between the Father and the Son. Commenting on *Jn. 17:3*,<sup>99</sup> Augustine describes the Holy Spirit as the substantial and consubstantial love of both, through which the Trinity is a perfect unity:

Consequenter enim et Spiritus sanctus intellegitur, quia Spiritus est Patris et Filii, tamquam caritas substantialis et consubstantialis amborum. Quoniam non duo dii Pater et Filius, nec tres dii Pater et Filius et Spiritus sanctus; sed ipsa Trinitas unus solus verus Deus. Nec idem tamen Pater qui Filius, nec idem Filius qui Pater, nec idem Spiritus sanctus qui Pater et Filius; quoniam tres sunt Pater et Filius et Spiritus sanctus; sed ipsa Trinitas unus est Deus (*Trloh*, CV.3).<sup>100</sup>

Augustine is here stating the impossibility of understanding the unity between the Father and the Son without acknowledging the reality of the Spirit as eternal

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<sup>99</sup> *Jn. 17:3*: 'Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent'.

<sup>100</sup> 'Consequently, the Holy Spirit too is understood, because he is the Spirit of the Father and of the Son, as the substantial and consubstantial love of both. For there are not two gods, Father and Son, nor three gods, Father and Son and Holy Spirit, but the Trinity itself is the one, sole, true God. Yet neither is the Father the same one who the Son is, nor is the Son the same one who the Father is, nor is the Holy Spirit the same one who the Father and the Son are, because they are three, Father and Son and Holy Spirit, but the Trinity itself is the one God'.

*caritas* between the Two. Indeed, while there is a generative relationship between the first two Trinitarian hypostases – testified by the very names of ‘father’ and ‘son’ – there cannot be unity between them outside the Holy Spirit. In the whole *Tractates*, Augustine unravels this Trinitarian framework by applying it to the binitarian logic which he found in the Gospel of John. While the depiction of the Spirit as love is justified from the doctrine of the double procession of the Spirit from both the Father and the Son – a doctrine which Augustine builds from a close exegesis of some passages of the fourth Gospel (*Jn.* 15:26; 16:12-15; 20:22 etc.) – Augustine explains the relationship between the Son and the Father in terms of a loving relationship which is instantiated in their perfect fruit, the Holy Spirit.<sup>101</sup>

Furthermore, Augustine states that *si duo dii sunt, non est ibi summa caritas* (*Trloh*, XIV.9).<sup>102</sup> In other words, by accepting any form of subordination between the Father and the Son one admits that their love – and, consequently, their unity – is not perfect. It appears that here the very conception of the Spirit as ‘procession’ inside God points to the idea of a Trinity which is one insofar as it is an eternal process of generation and procession. As constituents of this process, Father, Son and Spirit are not logical modes of being of a single entity, but rather existent hypostases in which the entire process is eternally accomplished. In this regard, the doctrine of the *idipsum* acts as a guarantor of the unity and steadiness of God and of the process of mutual relationship which the Trinity is. The self-sameness of God gives to Augustine the possibility of attributing every action that a single person performs in the world to all the three persons of the Trinity.

Before moving to the next part of this section, which will analyse the proper work of the Son and of the Spirit in dealing with the creation, it is worth noting that Augustine explains the inseparability of the work of the Trinity as a consequence of the Trinity’s essence. The unity of its essence results in the necessary unity of essence and actions according to the principle of the *quod habet hoc est* which I

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<sup>101</sup> In this regard see: *Trloh*, XIV.9: *Deus misit Deum. Iunge ambos, unus Deus, Deus verax missus a Deo. De singulis interroga, Deus: et de ambobus interroga, Deus. Non singuli Deus et ambo dii, sed singulus quisque Deus et ambo Deus. Tanta enim ibi est caritas Spiritus sancti, tanta pax unitatis, ut de singulis cum interrogatur, Deus tibi respondeatur; de Trinitate cum interrogatur, Deus tibi respondeatur.*

<sup>102</sup> ‘If there are two gods there is not the greatest love there’.

have explained in chapter two. However, just as the three persons of the Trinity are inseparable in the Trinity and yet they perform different roles in the Trinitarian relationship, so the Trinity acts as a whole towards created creatures but to every person is ascribed a specific role.

### **V.3.2 Augustine's Trinitarian Gospel: Christ's *Proprium* in Relation to the World**

The figure of Christ in Augustine's soteriology in the *Tractates* is – not surprisingly – crucial. It is not my intention here to propose a systematic interpretation of Augustine's Christology. Such matter, particularly difficult due to the lack of a systematic work on the role of Christ by Augustine, has already been proposed by many scholars throughout the last century, with quite opposite evaluations.<sup>103</sup> Rather than proposing a full account of this matter, this section will try to unfold the way in which Augustine interprets the *proprium* of Christ, that is, the proper works of salvation operated by Christ, and his relationship to “the world” in commenting the Gospel of John, as opposed to the *proprium* of the Spirit.

Identified since the beginning of the *Tractates* with the ‘light that was coming into the world’ (*Jn.* 1:9), Christ is regarded as the soteriological agent who frees the elect from the world, leading his people to the glory of the Father.<sup>104</sup> Further developing the Johannine parallel between the ‘Word that takes flesh’ and the

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<sup>103</sup> During the first fifty years of the last century the scholarly debate was focused on the alleged orthodoxy (or unorthodoxy) of Augustine's Christology on the basis of the later dogmatic pronouncements of Chalcedon. See: Otto Scheel, *Die Anschauung Augustins über Christi Person und Werk*, Tübingen 1901. A change of perspective was operated by Tarsicius J. van Bavel, *Recherches sur la christologie de saint Augustin; l'humain et le divin dans le Christ d'après saint Augustin*, Fribourg 1954, who identified Docetic traits in Augustine's Christology. For a more recent work suggesting the centrality of Christology in Augustine's theology see: Goulven Madec, *La Patrie et la voie: Le Christ dans la vie et la pensée de Saint Augustin*, Paris 1989. For a full account of the scholarly debate on Augustine's Christology see: Dominic Keech, *The Anti-Pelagian Christology of Augustine of Hippo*, p. 12-15. In his book Keech argues for a strong influence on Augustine's Christology of Origenian themes, stating that ‘his sustained use of Origen's interpretation of *Romans* 8:3 at the heart of his Christology, together with his attack on Jerome in the 390s and 410s, should be taken to indicate a deeper, unflinching appreciation of Origen's work and influence’ (p.19). According to this perspective, the author claims that ‘later critique of Pelagianism worked in part to draw attention away from Caelestius' attack on Origen and the construal of his own theology of the Fall as essentially Origenist in character’ (p.5). Unfortunately, the extent of my work does not allow for a full comparison between Origen's and Augustine's Christology. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that, while a deep influence of Origen's work on the young Augustine is still a little more than an educated guess, the lack of a deep engagement with Origen's work is quite clear in Augustine's later writings.

<sup>104</sup> See, among the many: *Trloh*, II.2-3; III.3-4; VII.4-7; XII.12-13; XLIV.4-6; CVI.5-6.

'lamb of God' (*Jn.* 1:17; 1:36), Augustine explains to what extent the works of salvation are carried on by Christ-the-lamb, whose blood outbalances the sins of the world (*mundus*) (*Trloh*, VII.4-7). As a consequence, salvation is only operated through Christ (*Trloh*, XXII.1) and directed towards the world, according to the Johannine saying that 'God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him' (*Jn.* 3:17). Augustine's interpretation of this passage is crucial, for it shows both Augustine's understanding of the double meaning of the term 'world' and the basis of his Christological soteriology. In interpreting this passage, Augustine declares that, when the Lord came into the world, he found no one without sin (*Trloh*, XII.12). As a consequence, Augustine interprets the passage according to the subsequent words of the Gospel: 'Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil' (*Jn.* 3:19). As we have seen, Augustine puts the faults for this sin entirely in human hands, thus distinguishing between two different ways of being human: *Quasi duae res sunt, homo et peccator. Quod audis homo, Deus fecit: quod audis peccator, ipse homo fecit. Dele quod fecisti, ut Deus salvet quod fecit* (*Trloh*, XII.13).<sup>105</sup> While the world and human beings were both created good by God, human beings become sinners to the point that their sin is defined almost as their *res*. Augustine's attention here is mainly focused on the incarnation of Christ himself and the fact that, because of the incarnation, the judgement of sinners cannot be said to be anything but right: *Venit Salvator ad mundum [...] Salvari non vis ab ipso; ex te iudicaberis.[...] Nondum apparuit iudicium, sed iam factum est iudicium. Novit enim Dominus qui sunt eius, novit qui permaneant ad coronam, qui permaneant ad flammam* (*Trloh*, XII.12).<sup>106</sup> Those who 'persevere to the flame' are the identified with the darkness, and defined as *massa peccatum*.

### V.3.2.1 The Son of God; the Son of Man; the World

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<sup>105</sup> 'It is as if there are two things: human being and sinner. What is called human being, that God has made; what is called sinner, that human being himself has made. Destroy what you have made, that God may save what he has made'.

<sup>106</sup> 'The Saviour came to the world [...] You do not wish to be saved by him; you will be judged of yourself [...] Judgement has not yet appeared, but judgement has already been made; for the Lord knows who are his; he knows those who are to persevere to the crown and those who are to persevere to the flame'.

Even from the short analysis of this passage it appears that, in interpreting the Gospel of John, Augustine's interpretation is focused on underlining the fact that human beings 'have loved the darkness rather than the light' (*Jn.* 3:19). In his own words, he declares that this is the most profound meaning of the text at hand: *Ibi posuit vim: multi enim dilexerunt peccata sua, multi confessi sunt peccata sua* (*Trloh*, XII.13).<sup>107</sup> In other words, Augustine is here stating that the most important meaning of the text at hand stands in the fact that the incarnation of the Word acts as a separation between those who are light and those who are darkness. Therefore, much more than what Christ did, Augustine values the very incarnation as the watershed in the history of salvation. By assuming human flesh without being part of the *massa peccatum*, (*Trloh*, IV.10-12) Christ is already showing the Father's love towards the world.

This interpretation is confirmed by Augustine throughout the entire *Tractates*. Commenting on the miracle of Jesus at the pool in Bethesda, (*Jn.* 5:1-8) Augustine states:

Magis gaudere quam mirari debemus, quia Dominus noster et salvator Iesus Christus homo factus est, quam quod divina inter homines Deus fecit. Plus est enim ad salutem nostram quod factus est propter homines, quam quod fecit inter homines (*Trloh*, XVII.1).<sup>108</sup>

Augustine's insistence on the importance of the incarnation, rather than on the works that Christ performed during his life, profoundly marks his interpretation of the Gospel of John. As Christ is born out of the *massa peccatum*, he gives human beings the means through which they are saved. This salvation is represented as a rebirth, a second birth in Christ (*Trloh*, III.11-13).<sup>109</sup> As a consequence of Augustine's primary focus on the incarnation – rather than on the actions – of Christ, the author's attention is mainly directed towards the very nature of Christ,

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<sup>107</sup> 'He put the real importance there: many have loved their sins, many have confessed their sins'.

<sup>108</sup> 'We ought to rejoice more than be amazed that our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, become man than that God performed divine acts among men. For what he became for men is more valuable for our salvation than what he did among men'.

<sup>109</sup> This process of rebirth is said to deprive human beings of their own 'glory', that is, of their own pride, giving room to the action of God in humans' hearts so that, while the glory of humans decreases, the glory of God increases (*Trloh*, XIV.4-5; XIX.19).



his divine birth and the unity of the divine and human aspects in him.<sup>110</sup> Therefore, Jesus' answer to the mother at the wedding in Cana was aiming at explaining that Mary is the mother of his humanity only, not of his divinity, and that his miracles were carried on by the power of his divine nature.<sup>111</sup> The distinction between what Christ says and does as God and what Christ says and does as man is an exegetical rule which Augustine applies in all *Tractates*.<sup>112</sup> This rule must not only be taken as an exegetical technicality which allows Augustine to deal with difficult passages of the Gospel. Indeed, this distinction is always paralleled with the understanding of the human part of Christ as Jesus' weakness. This weakness is the means through which human beings are saved, as testified by the episode of the Samaritan at the well in *Jn.* 4:6.<sup>113</sup> The process of re-creation, which was examined in the previous section of this chapter, is therefore accomplished through the human part of Christ. As Christ's divine power (the Word) creates human beings, his weakness re-creates them (*Trloh*, XII.8-9; XIII.1-5).

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<sup>110</sup> Augustine sets this distinction since commenting on the first miracle of the Gospel at the wedding in Cana (*Jn.* 2:1-12). In *Trloh*, VIII.8-9 he explains that the interpreter ought to distinguish what Jesus said to his mother with regard to his divinity and what he says with regard to his humanity. Augustine explains that, insofar as Christ is God, he is born of the Father without a mother, insofar he is man, is born of a mother without a father. See: *Trloh*, VIII.8: *Ille singulariter natus de Patre sine matre, de matre sine patre; sine matre Deus, sine patre homo; sine matre ante tempora, sine patre in fine temporum*. The very same idea is again repeated in commenting on Jesus' speech on the Bread of Life (*Jn.* 6:25-53). See: *Trloh*, XXVI. 10.

<sup>111</sup> Augustine is here denying the idea of Mary as *Theotokos*. In any case, Augustine died before the Council of Ephesus in 431 declared Mary to be the Mother of God. Augustine's interpretation of the figure of Mary is mostly explained in *Of Holy Virginity*, III.3. According to Augustine, Mary ought to be considered as the most blessing of all Christians, because she accepted to obey to the will of God. Therefore, Augustine's Mariology is more centred on her obedience to God and her predestination rather than on her undefiled nature. For Augustine's Mariology see: Luigi Gambero, *Mary and the Fathers of the Church: The Blessed Virgin Mary in Patristic Thought*, San Francisco 1999, p. 216-229; Geoffrey D. Dunn, 'The Functions of Mary in the Christian Homilies of Augustine of Hippo', in Jane Baun, Averil Cameron, Mark Edwards and Markus Vinzent (eds), *Studia Patristica* 48, Leuven 2010, p. 433-447; Pauline Allen, 'The International Mariology Project: A Case-Study of Augustine's Letters', *Vigiliae Christianae*, 60 2 (2006), p. 209-230; Michele Pellegrino, *La vergine Maria. Pagine scelte di (sant') Agostino*, Milan 1993.

<sup>112</sup> See, among the others, the episode of the Samaritan at the well (*Jn.* 4:6), where Jesus' tiredness is interpreted as referred to his humanity only: *Trloh*, XV.6. See also the episode of Jesus' weeping after Lazarus' death (*Jn.* 11:33), in *Trloh*, LI.18-20.

<sup>113</sup> See *Trloh*, XV.6: *Vis videre quam iste Filius Dei fortis sit? Omnia per ipsum facta sunt, et sine ipso factum est nihil (Jn. 1:13) [...] Infirmum vis nosse? Verbum caro factum est, et habitavit in nobis (Jn. 1:14). Fortitudo Christi te creavit, infirmitas Christi te recreavit. Fortitudo Christi fecit ut quod non erat esset: infirmitas Christi fecit ut quod erat non periret. Condidit nos fortitudine sua, quaesivit nos infirmitate sua.* ('Do you want to see how this Son of God is strong? "All things were made through him and without him was made nothing"; [...] Do you want to know how he was weak? "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us". The strength of Christ created you; the weakness of Christ recreated you. The strength of Christ caused what was not to be; the weakness of Christ caused what was not to perish. He established us in his strength; he sought us in his weakness').

Augustine's observations on the double birth of Christ mark only the beginning of his speculation on Christ's nature. Augustine's reflections on the nature of Christ and on his relationship to the Father arise – just as Augustine's Trinitarian reflections! – from the text of *John* 5, particularly *Jn. 5:19* – 'the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing' – and *Jn. 5:26* – 'as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself'.<sup>114</sup> Commenting on the difference established by the Gospel between the 'Son of God' and the 'Son of man' (*Jn. 5:25-29*), Augustine proposes a systematic view on how to interpret the relationship between the two:

Haerendo enim ad unitatem personae filius hominis Filio Dei, facta est una persona, eademque Filius Dei, quae et filius hominis. Quid autem propter quid habeat, dignoscendum est. Filius hominis habet animam, habet corpus. Filius Dei, quod est Verbum Dei, habet hominem, tamquam anima corpus. Sicut anima habens corpus, non facit duas personas, sed unum hominem; sic Verbum habens hominem, non facit duas personas, sed unum Christum. Quid est homo? Anima rationalis habens corpus. Quid est Christus? Verbum Dei habens hominem (*Trloh*, XIX.15).<sup>115</sup>

Augustine states that God has assumed the entire human nature in Christ, thus making it possible for every component of human being (both soul and body) to

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<sup>114</sup> Augustine interprets Jesus' words in *Jn. 7:16* – My Doctrine is not of myself – as meaning 'I am not of myself' (*non sum a meispro*), the eternal generation of the Son from the Father does not allow for any separation in nature and substance (*natura et substantia*) between the two persons. *Trloh*, XXIX.5: *Hoc videtur mihi dixisse Dominus Iesus Christus: Mea doctrina non est mea, ac si diceret: Ego non sum a meispro. Quamvis enim Filium Patri dicamus et credamus aequalem, nec ullam in eis esse naturae substantiaeque distantiam, nec inter generantem atque generatum aliquod interfuisse temporis intervallum.* Therefore, Augustine interprets the superiority of the Father as only related to the flesh (that is, the human part) of Christ: *Ita Pater et aequalis, et maior: aequalis Verbo, maior carne; aequalis ei per quem fecit nos, maior eo qui factus est propter nos* (*Trloh*, XVIII.2).

<sup>115</sup> 'Indeed, by adhering to the unity of the person, the Son of man with the Son of God was made one person; and the Son of God is the same person as the Son of man. But one must distinguish what he has and why. The Son of man has a soul, has a body. The Son of God, who is the Word of God, has human nature, as the soul has body. As a soul, having a body, does not make two persons, but one man, so the Word, having human nature does not make two persons, but one Christ. What is human nature? A rational soul having body. What is Christ? The Word of God having human nature'.

be saved. This discourse is pronounced, polemicizing against those who believe that there is no resurrection of the body.<sup>116</sup>

It is worth underlining how the assumption of the Son of man (the human part) in the Son of God makes it possible to predicate both human weakness and divine power of Christ. As a consequence, commenting on Jesus' weeping before the resurrection of Lazarus in *Jn.* 11:33, Augustine states that Jesus is willingly troubled, insofar as he is troubled in the Son of man by decision of the Son of God (*Trloh*, LI.18-20). The very same argument, according to which Christ is God, rational soul and body, is repeated in every situation when Jesus is trouble in Gospel (*Trloh*, XXIII.5-6; XLVII.7; LXIX.1-4; LXX.1).<sup>117</sup>

As Augustine takes the doctrine of the unity of the persons to signify the complete unity that the man Jesus enjoyed with the Father, so this doctrine is of fundamental importance in describing the way in which the Son was sent to the world. In commenting on Jesus' statements 'I am going to the Father' (*Jn.* 14:28), Augustine explains that insofar as the Son of man is not equal to the Father he was going to the Father, insofar as he is the Only Begotten he never withdrew (*Trloh*, LXXVIII.1-3). In this way, although the Son is sent by the Father on earth, the Son is said both never to have ceased to be in heaven with the Father and to ascend to the Father in heaven (*Trloh*, XXVII.1-4; CV.4-5). Moreover, insofar as it is in heaven and it is one, the entirety of Christ is a member of the Trinity. Although the Son of God was made man, he never ceased to be God, never departing from the bosom of the Father (*Trloh*, XXVIII.1; XXXV.1-5). The Son of man was not always in the bosom of the Father, thus he needs to ascend to the Father in Christ through the Son of God. Nevertheless, their unity being perfect, they are now one Christ in the Trinity (*Trloh*, XXVII.1-4; LXXVIII.1-3).<sup>118</sup> To this

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<sup>116</sup> In this regard, Augustine makes explicit mention of the Apollinarists. Nevertheless, they are a purely theoretical polemical target, for it seems that there were no Apollinarists where Augustine was preaching. In this regard see: *Trloh*, XXIII.6 and XLVII.9.

<sup>117</sup> When commenting on the last supper (*Jn.* 13:21: 'After he had said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, "Very truly I tell you, one of you is going to betray me"'), Augustine explains that Christ transfigured in himself the affection of human weakness, sharing human suffering in his soul by the unity of the persons (*Trloh*, LX.1-5).

<sup>118</sup> Augustine describes Christ as that unity where the Word of God has the power and the will, while the human part of Christ acts according to the Word's will. Similarly, commenting on Jesus' death on the cross, Augustine reflects on the way in which Christ laid down his life. Since from the incarnation the soul and the Word are forever and indissolubly united, Augustine interprets the flesh of Christ to lay down his life, for it is not possible to think about any separation in Christ after the incarnation (*Trloh*, XLVII.10-13).

extent, Christ is the perfect union between God and the human being: being completely united in the spiritual communion with the Son of God, the Son of man enters in the perfect Trinitarian communion of God.

With regard to the relationship between the human and the divine part of Christ, the taking on of the Son of man by the Word is regarded by Augustine as an act of grace: *Iste filius hominis sequestratus quadam gratia Spiritus, et secundum carnem filius hominis, [...], iste homo etiam Deus est (Trloh, XXV.11).*<sup>119</sup> Augustine's consideration that the Son of man is such by the operating grace of the Spirit is burdened with soteriological consequences. Indeed, this grace is explicitly identified with the proper work of the Holy Spirit throughout the *Tractates*:

Quando autem ait Ioannes Baptista: *Non enim ad mensuram dat Deus Spiritum, (Jn. 3:34)* de ipso Dei Filio loquebatur, cui non est datus Spiritus ad mensuram; quia in illo inhabitat omnis plenitudo divinitatis. Neque enim sine gratia Spiritus sancti est mediator Dei et hominum homo Christus Iesus [...]. Quod enim est Unigenitus aequalis Patri, non est gratiae, sed naturae: quod autem in unitatem personae Unigeniti assumptus est homo, gratiae est, non naturae (*Trloh, LXXIV.3*).<sup>120</sup>

This citation further divides the divine part of Christ, that has always been one with the Spirit in the perfect unity of the Trinity, from the human part of Christ, that has been chosen by the Spirit by grace, that is, regardless of its previous merits.<sup>121</sup> This same grace which is given to human being not by nature but by mercy is the one that is found in the man Christ, for even in the case of Christ

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<sup>119</sup> 'This Son of man has been set apart by a certain grace of the Spirit, and he is Son of man according to the flesh [...] but man is also God'.

<sup>120</sup> 'Now, when John the Baptist said "God does not give the Spirit by measure", he was speaking of the Son of God himself to whom the Spirit was not given by measure because all the fullness of divinity dwells in him. For neither without the grace of the Holy Spirit is he the mediator of God and men, the man Jesus Christ; [...] For that he is the Only Begotten, equal to the Father, is not of grace but of nature; but that the man was taken up in the unity of the person of the Only Begotten is of grace, not of nature'.

<sup>121</sup> Insofar as God's plan for salvation is eternal, this grace precedes every merit that the Son of man could possibly have had. In this regard, commenting on Jesus' words in *Jn. 15:10* – 'If you keep my commands, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and abide in his love' – Augustine maintains that the expression 'abide in my love' ought to be read as 'abide in my grace'. Indeed, if one does not already abide in God's grace he is not able to keep the Father's commandments.

there is not any merit which precedes the assumption of the man (*Trloh*, LXXXII.3-4). A similar understanding of Christ's role as a mediator is given by Augustine regarding the glorification of the Son. As the glorification is one of the major themes of the Gospel, Augustine's reflection on it is particularly significant.<sup>122</sup> According to the Gospel's passage of *Jn.* 13:31-32 – 'Now the Son of man is glorified and God is glorified in him' – Augustine explains that this glorification is found in the human nature of the Son of man that was taken on by the eternal Word and thus endowed with immortal eternity (*Trloh*, LXIII.3). This glorification is the archetype of what will happen when, *victus a Christo, transierit hic mundus, et nemo in populo Christi remanebit immundus* (*Trloh*, LXIII.2).<sup>123</sup> Augustine's words pun between *immundus* (unclean) and *mundus* (world) reveals in this case the prototypical nature of the incarnation, laying the ontological foundations for the resurrection of all the elect. At the final judgement then, the people of Christ will be definitely separated from the *mundus immundus* by the operating grace of the Holy Spirit, which will unite those who are chosen in the Trinitarian communion, just as it has already happened in Christ.

### V.3.2.2 The Predestination of Christ

Commenting on another fundamental passage of the Gospel – 'Father, [...] Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. [...] glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began' – Augustine again explains that this glory is referred to the form of a servant, for the glory of the Word always was (*Trloh*, CIV.2-3; CV.1-2). Therefore, the Father glorified the Son of man in the sense that he made him one with the Word in Christ, while Christ glorified the Father by making him known to human beings.<sup>124</sup> Moreover, Augustine explains that the 'glory that I had before the world began' reveals the predestination of the man Jesus, because no human nature, including the one of Christ, has something

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<sup>122</sup> On the subject of glory and glorification in the Gospel of John see: Andreas J. Köstenberger, 'The Glory of God in John's Gospel and Revelation', in Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson (eds), *The Glory of God*, Wheaton ILL 2010, p. 107-126.

<sup>123</sup> 'when this world, conquered by Christ, will pass away and no one in the people of Christ will remain unclean'

<sup>124</sup> See *Trloh*, CV.3: *Summa tunc Dei clarificatio; quia summa gloria, quae graece dicitur δόξα. Unde dictum est δόξασον, quod latini quidam interpretati sunt, clarifica; quidam, glorifica. A veteribus autem gloria, qua gloriosi homines dicuntur, ita est definita: Gloria est frequens de aliquo fama cum laude. [...] Ibi erit Dei sine fine laudatio, ubi erit Dei plena cognitio; et quia plena cognitio, ideo summa clarificatio vel glorificatio.*

that has not received by God. The verb 'glorify' in the past tense further reveals that everything Christ did, he was predestined to do: *Qui enim certis et immutabilibus causis omnia futura praedestinavit, quidquid factururus est fecit* (*Trloh*, CV.5).<sup>125</sup>

The predestination of Christ is not an incidental element.<sup>126</sup> The fundamental importance of such doctrine has been already recognised by scholars such as Madec and Bernard.<sup>127</sup> Indeed, this predestination is the basis of the salvation of every human being: *Quisquis igitur Dei Filium praedestinatum negat, hunc eundem filium hominis negat* (*Trloh*, CV.8).<sup>128</sup> Indeed, just as every other human being, the Son of man is said not to be such by merit, but by the grace of the Spirit (*Trloh*, CVI.5). This is therefore the way in which Augustine interprets the evangelical passage of *Jn. 15:15* – 'I have chosen you out of the world':

Quos Deus Filius de mundo elegit cum Patre, idem ipse homo Filius de mundo eos accepit a Patre: non enim Pater illos Filio dedisset, nisi elegeret. [...] Nunc autem homo idem ipse Filius accepit eos qui non erant ipsius, quia et formam servi accepit Deus idem quae non erat ipsius. (*Trloh*, CVI.5)<sup>129</sup>

Through the predestination of the Son of man, God sanctifies his chosen people in himself. God does it by predestination, as by predestination he sanctifies the Son of man (*Trloh*, CVIII.4-5). Through this predestination, the mediator between God and human beings receives the power to choose other human beings out of the world. As incarnation poses the ontological basis for the redemption of human nature, the very human nature of Christ reveals the eternal predestination of those who are chosen by God. Therefore, it is shown here that the *proprium* of Christ stands in his being the first of the predestined. As the Son of man is

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<sup>125</sup> 'For he who has predestined all future things all future things by certain and immutable causes has (already) done whatever he will do'.

<sup>126</sup> On Christ as the first predestined human see also: *On the Predestination of the Saints*, XXXI.15; *On the Gift of Perseverance*, LXVII.24.

<sup>127</sup> The first work to analyse this theme properly is that of René Bernard, 'La Prédestination du Christ total selon Saint Augustin', in *Recherches Augustiniennes* 3 (1965), p. 1–58. See also: G. Madec, *La Patrie et la voie*, p. 272.

<sup>128</sup> 'Therefore, whoever denies that the Son of God was predestined denies that this same one was the Son of man'.

<sup>129</sup> 'Those whom the Son of God had chosen out of the world together with the Father, the very same Son of man has received from the Father; for the Father would not have given them to the Son unless he had chosen. [...] But now the very same Son of man has received them who were not his, because the same one as God also received the form of the servant, which was not his'.

predestined to be united with the Word, those who are chosen by God out of the world are able to enter the Trinitarian communion by the works of the Holy Spirit. Moreover, Augustine states that just as the human nature of Christ does not disappear in the Word, but is ruled by the Word, so the human nature of the chosen will not disappear in the Trinitarian communion, but will maintain its singularity:

Hoc quidam sic intellegendum putarunt, tamquam natura humana quae suscepta est a Verbo, converteretur in Verbum, et homo mutaretur in Deum; imo, si diligentius quod opinati sunt cogitemus, homo periret in Deo. [...]. Porro si natura humana in Verbum mutata atque conversa, Verbum Dei quantum erat et quod erat hoc erit, ubi est homo si non perit? Sed ad hanc opinionem, quam veritati prorsus non video convenire, nihil nos urget si [...] intellegamus praedestinationem claritatis humanae quae in illo est naturae; et hoc iam praedestinando factum fuisse antequam mundus esset (*Trloh*, CV.6-7).<sup>130</sup>

By the very predestination of Christ all predestinations begin. Therefore, predestination is not only the sign of every human nature, but it is also the way in which Augustine explains the persistence of singularity after the final judgement in the communion of the chosen with God. Indeed, being loved by God with an infinite and eternal love – which is the Holy Spirit himself – entails a free and voluntary act of choice operated by God. Being God eternal and without time, this choice is eternally made and then projected onto the world. In this way, the very existence of the world stands as the sign of God's care, as he draws the elect out of the world by an act of eternal love. This act is operated personally, rather than universally. By loving some of his creatures and rejecting others, God is showing the care he has for each one of his chosen, thus assuming that the singularity of each creature survives even after the reunion with God. All of this has been firstly settled in Christ, the Mediator between God and man.

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<sup>130</sup> 'Some thought that this should so be understood as though the human nature that was assumed by the Word would be transformed into the Word and the man changed into God; rather, if we should ponder more diligently what they thought, the man was lost in God. [...] Moreover if, once the human nature has been changed and transformed into the Word, the Word of God will be exactly as great as it was and exactly what it was, where is the man if not lost? But, to this opinion, which I do not see to be at all consistent with the truth, nothing impels us, if [...] we understand the predestination of the human nature which is in him, and that this was already done by predestining before the world was'.

### V.3.2.3 The Final Judgement

After having analysed Christ's role as the first of those who are chosen by predestination to enter in the everlasting Trinitarian communion, it is worth now explaining Christ's role in the final judgement. According to the text of John, Augustine treats the final judgment as a proper work of the Son.<sup>131</sup> Augustine's speculation takes the move from *John* 5, which appears again to be the keystone of Augustine's interpretation of the fourth Gospel. In particular, the verses of *Jn.* 5:26-27 acquire a fundamental meaning in explaining Christ's *proprium*: 'For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of man'. Augustine explains that, since not every soul will have the capacity of understanding God, not every soul will actually see God as it is at the end of the world (*Trloh*, XIX.13). Therefore, it is necessary that God will appear both in his divine and human form. The dead will rise in the human mind (*in mente*) through the Son of God, and they will rise in the flesh (*in carne*) through the Son of man (*Trloh*, XXIII.5-6). The reason the judgment is of the Son is that Christ will appear in the form of servant so that also the wicked will see him:

Talis apparebit iudex, qualis videri possit et ab eis quos coronaturus est, et ab eis quos damnaturus est. Forma ergo servi videbitur, occulta erit forma Dei. Occultus erit in servo Filius Dei, et apparebit filius hominis; [...] Et quia ipse solus apparebit in forma servi, Pater autem non apparebit, quia non est indutus forma servi (*Trloh*, XIX.16).<sup>132</sup>

By appearing in the form of the Son of man, Christ will make the judgment visible also for those who will not be saved by God. Indeed, nobody can see God if this is not granted by God. This idea stands at the centre of Augustine's understanding of the relationship between the Trinity and human beings: no one

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<sup>131</sup> See in particular: *Trloh*, XIX.14-15; XIX.16-18; XXI.11-16; XXIII.5-6; XXXV.1-5; XXXVI.10-13; CVI.4.

<sup>132</sup> 'The judge will appear such as can be seen both by those whom he will crown and by those whom he will condemn. Therefore, the form of the servant will be seen, the form of God will be hidden. The Son of God will be hidden in the servant and the Son of man will appear; [...] And because he alone will appear in the form of the servant, the Father will not appear because he has not been clothed with the form of a servant'.



can see God if he is not in communion with God. This communion is considered to be the proper work of the Spirit. This is also confirmed by the interpretation of *Jn. 8:16*: 'But if I do judge, my decisions are true, because I am not alone. I stand with the Father, who sent me'. Augustine here explains that the judgment of the Son is true and just because it is willed by the entire Trinity. This Trinitarian communion will nevertheless be seen only by those who are part of it, that is, by those chosen people who have already entered the communion of God in the Holy Spirit.

Before moving on to analysing the *proprium* of the Spirit and his relationship to the world, it is worth making some concluding remarks on the role of Christ. This section has shown that Augustine's doctrine of the unity of the person which grounds its scriptural basis on *Jn. 5*, has fundamental repercussions which lead to interpreting the prerogatives of Christ in three different ways.

First, it implies that the very act of taking flesh by the Word – that is, the incarnation – is more significant than what Christ has done. Indeed, this is an act of undeserved grace which allows human beings to be saved. This kind of reasoning, which fits very well in the Prologue of John's Gospel, is connected by Augustine with the distinction in Christ between the Son of God and the Son of man. Secondly, having taken flesh, the Son of man is the first of the predestined. As this taking flesh is operated through predestination, every human being is saved by an act of grace which happens through predestination. Therefore, salvation is an undeserved act of grace which is operated by God *in* and *through* the Holy Spirit.

Thirdly, only Christ has been provided with the power of judging. Christ's role in the final judgement allows Augustine to understand God's relationship to the world as something which is alien from God's essence. The human part of Christ – the Son of man – allows Augustine to keep God distanced from the world. As it is impossible to understand the Trinity if one is not in communion with the Trinity, Augustine affirms that only those who are already taken in the Trinitarian communion by means of the Holy Spirit will be able to see God, while those who are condemned will only perceive the human part of Christ.

All these roles that Christ performs, which represent the *proprium* of Christ, could not be performed by Christ alone without the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, this section has shown how, while working together, Christ and the Spirit do perform different roles. As this section has been focused on the works of Christ, the next one will analyse the *proprium* of the Spirit.

### **V.3.3 Augustine's Trinitarian Gospel: The Holy Spirit's *Proprium* and the Absolute Irreconcilability between the Spirit and the World**

The previous section of this chapter has made clear the close interconnection between the works of Christ and that of the Spirit. Each person possesses a specific role, which is derived both from his ontological origin— and from his different ways of relating to creation: as for the Son, the incarnation; as for the Spirit, the sanctification. In this respect, it has been shown how the *proprium* of Christ is mostly related to the incarnation, the unity of the person and the final judgment. This section will instead analyse the *proprium* of the Spirit.

Just as Christ, the Spirit is said to perform a myriad of different actions and works throughout the exegesis of John. First, the Spirit is said to be the inspirer of the Scriptures, both Old and New Testament, and to have been present and active in the prophets even before the coming of Christ (*Trloh*, XXXII.6-8; LII.6-9).<sup>133</sup> Secondly, he is interpreted as the third person of the Trinity, which substantiates the ontological union between the Father and the Son (*Trloh*, IX.7; XIV.9; XVIII.2-4; XXXIX.5; CV.3). Thirdly, the Spirit is the source of love (*fons caritatis*) which unifies the Church in one fellowship (*Trloh*, XXXII.8). He is therefore very often described as the sign of love and unity (*Trloh*, V.8-11; VI.1-2; IX.7-8; XVII.7-10). Moreover, the Spirit is taken to be the means by which human beings are able to know God (*Trloh*, XXXII.5). As a consequence, he must be considered as the active force that converts humans and teaches truths about Christ (*Trloh*, XL.1-2; XLVI.1-4).

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<sup>133</sup> Commenting on the prophecy of Caiaphas in *Jn.* 11:49-54, the Spirit is also said to be able and willing to foretell the future even through evil men, for 'all the things that Caiaphas prophesied were said in regard to predestination (*secundum praedestinationem*)'. See *Trloh*, II.27-28.

In addition, the role of the Spirit is also visible in the union between the Son of God and the Son of man in Christ. The unity of the person in Christ is made possible by the power and work of the Holy Spirit that eternally chose the Son of man to be united with the Son of God. By commenting on *Jn. 17: 5* – ‘And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began’ – Augustine clearly explains how the glory which belonged to Christ before the foundation of the world has to be interpreted as the predestination of the Son of man who, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, as opposed to his original nature, is united with the Son of God (*Trloh*, CV.4 and CV.6-7). As this grace is identified with the Holy Spirit, it is said to precede any merit of the Son of man, and to be without equal (*Trloh*, LXXXII.3-4). Not being Son of God by nature, but by grace (*Trloh*, LXXIV.3-5) the Son of man incarnates the very possibility of Salvation which is given by predestination to human beings by being born of the Holy Spirit. In this context, the difference between Christ and other human beings lies in the fact that, while every human being who is saved by God is originally born of the world and re-born of the Spirit, Christ was always born of the Spirit: *Nam si propterea illi iam non de mundo, quia renati sunt de Spiritu sancto; propterea ille nunquam de mundo, quia natus est de Spiritu sancto* (*Trloh*, CVIII.1).<sup>134</sup> This re-birth which the disciples experience in the Holy Spirit has to be interpreted according to the interpretation of regeneration as *re-creation* rather than *restoration* (*Trloh*, CVI.5-6), as explained in a previous section of this chapter. In a similar but yet different way, the Spirit depends on Christ for the salvation of human beings. According to the letter of the text of John, the Spirit is sent from Christ to creatures and is said ‘to speak not of himself but of what he heard of the Son’ (*Jn. 16:13-14*). As I will show, the quotation from this passage is as crucial in understanding the *proprium* of the Spirit in his relationship to the world as it had been in analysing his ontological role in the second chapter.

This section does not aim at presenting a full account of Augustine’s pneumatology. Rather, it is focused on understanding what, according to Augustine’s interpretation of the Gospel of John, can be preached *proprie* of the Spirit in his relationship to the world. Therefore, I will firstly analyse the occurrences where the Spirit is properly characterised as *love* and is identified

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<sup>134</sup> ‘For if they now were not of the world because they were reborn of the Holy Spirit, he was never of the world because he was born of the Holy Spirit’.

with the *gift of God*, that is, *grace* of God. It is quite clear that some of these attributes cannot be said to derive uniquely from a Johannine influence on Augustine's thought, but also from his reading of the letters of Paul – with particular regard to the doctrine of grace. Nevertheless, this section will show how Augustine's identification of the Spirit with love, and his characterisation of him as the gift of God is deeply consistent with – or even drawn from – his understanding of the pneumatology of the fourth Gospel. This identification of the Spirit with love is crucial for understanding the *proprium* of the Spirit in his relationship to creation. On the one hand, as the Spirit is the substantial and consubstantial love of the Father and the Son (*caritas substantialis et consubstantialis*; *Trloh*, CV.3), he is also the one who acts as perfect unity. Only in the Spirit human beings are able to see God and to join his perfect and everlasting peace. On the other hand, the very nature of the Spirit as God in its everlasting unity and perfect relationship implies a severe division between the Spirit and the world. The Johannine shape of Augustine's theology adds a radical dualism between the Spirit and the world to the interpretation of the Spirit as love. As the Spirit is love and unity for the chosen, he is damnation for the world, which is not chosen and therefore is neglected and forsaken in its depravity. It is indeed the very absence of the Spirit that makes the world such.<sup>135</sup>

### V.3.3.1 Holy Spirit: Love and Grace

In the Gospel of John, the Spirit makes his first appearance in *Jn*.1:32, when John the Baptist makes his testimony: 'I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him'. According to Augustine, the dove is a symbol of simplicity (*simplicitas*), which is indeed the first characteristic of unity (*Trloh*, V.8-11).<sup>136</sup> Therefore the dove itself is also a symbol of unity. It is such because the dove is innocent and never lacerates or kills anyone, not even flies (*Trloh*, VI.3-8). In addition, the moans of the dove are symbols of the way in which the Holy

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<sup>135</sup> This understanding of the Spirit, which is mostly drawn from the fourth Gospel, poses serious problems of theodicy. Augustine is fully aware of the problem and does not avoid the question. Nevertheless, in line with the pneumatological section of the fourth Gospel, Augustine describes the world as the *massa damnationis*, the forsaken rest which is destined to damnation.

<sup>136</sup> Besides the obvious identification of the dove with the Holy Spirit, Augustine states that the dove represents the Church as well. As the Spirit is one, the Church which is led by the Spirit is one.

Spirit teaches human beings to moan in this world (*in hoc saeculo*), so that they understand their condition as outcasts in this world (*Trloh*, VI.2). Therefore, in the appearance of the dove the very Trinity appears: the Father appears in the voice, the Son in the man, the Spirit in the dove. The unity of the church signified in the dove abides in Christ (*Trloh*, VI.3-8), while the dove is the Spirit in unity (*Trloh*, VI.9-11).<sup>137</sup> In that the dove is the unity acquired by Church by the Holy Spirit, Augustine explains that the most deep teaching obtained from the image of the dove is twofold: on the one hand, it teaches that humans do not have to love the things of the world; on the other hand, it shows that the whole fruit of Christ is love (*Trloh*, VII.1-3). Similarly, commenting on the casting out of the merchants from the temple court in *Jn.* 2:14-16, Augustine describes the dove sellers as those who want to sell the Holy Spirit. But the dove is not for sale, for, since the dove is the Holy Spirit, the dove represents grace: *Columba non est venalis: gratis datur, quia gratia vocatur* (*Trloh*, X.6).<sup>138</sup>

The identification of the dove with the Holy Spirit is particularly interesting when it is put in connection with the recognition of the Spirit as love and grace.<sup>139</sup> This theme is present in all *Tractates*, beginning with the exegesis of the water jars in Cana containing two or three measures each (*Jn.* 2:6), where Augustine states that *scrutatae Scripturae indicant quod Spiritus sanctus caritas est* (*Trloh*, IX.7).<sup>140</sup> The episode of the Samaritan woman at the well in *Jn.* 4 shows that, as the Holy Spirit is the love of God and in God, he is also the gift of God which is

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<sup>137</sup> Augustine distinguishes here between the two symbols of the Holy Spirit in the Gospels: the dove and the fire. While the dove represents the Spirit in unity, the tongues of fire represent the Spirit in various nations (*Trloh*, VI.9-11). Moreover, as simplicity is meant by the dove, fervour is symbolised by the fire (*Trloh*, VI.3-8). This interpretation of the dove and the fire shows clearly Augustine's polemical intent against the Donatists. Indeed, through the characterisation of the Spirit as both scattered in the nation and united in the dove, Augustine is criticizing the exclusivity of the Donatist church in favour of the universality of the catholic Church.

<sup>138</sup> 'The dove is not for sale; it is given *gratis*, for it is called grace'. On the grace which is given gratuitously and not before of previous merits see: *Trloh*, III.8-9.

<sup>139</sup> Among the many instances where the grace of God is directly identified with the Holy Spirit in the *Tractates*, see in particular: *Trloh*, XIV.8; XVII.6; XCII.1-2.

<sup>140</sup> 'A thorough investigation of the Scriptures will show that the Spirit is love'. Here Augustine adds that his love is not cheap. On the contrary, it is the most important gift of God to human beings: *Et ne putetis vilem esse caritatem. Quomodo autem vilis est, quando omnia quae dicuntur non vilia, cara dicuntur? Si ergo quae non sunt vilia, cara sunt; quid est carius ipsa caritate?* (*Trloh*, IX.7) ('And do not think that love (*caritas*) is cheap. On the contrary, how it is cheap when all things which are not cheap are called dear (*cara*)? Therefore, if things that are not cheap are dear, what is dearer than dearness itself (*carius ipsa caritate*)?'). Besides the Johannine examples that I am going to analyse, Augustine finds confirmation to his identification of God with love from many scriptural passages, particularly *1Jn.* 4:16 and *Rom.* 5:5. Therefore, whoever misses love, he misses the Holy Spirit also, thus missing God.

given to chosen human beings. When Jesus accuses the woman of not knowing 'the gift of God' (*Jn.* 4:10), Augustine explains that the Samaritan actually ignores the fact that the gift of God is the Holy Spirit (*donum dei est spiritus sanctus*) (*Trloh*, XV.12). This identification is confirmed by the necessity of adoring the Father 'in Spirit and truth' (*Jn.* 4:24), that is, in the temple of God which is inside one's own intellect (*Trloh*, XV.23-28). In this re-creation of the image one discovers the gratuity of the gift, that is, of the Holy Spirit himself, who illuminates those who search for him (*Trloh*, XV.18-19). Similarly, commenting on *Jn.* 6:44 – 'No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them' – Augustine explains that no one is able to fulfil the law if grace does not help him (*adiuvaret gratia*). Indeed, only love (*caritas*) can fulfil the law, love of heaven, given to human beings by the Holy Spirit. (*Trloh*, XXVI.1).<sup>141</sup>

The necessity of the presence of the Holy Spirit in order to fulfil the law has implications for Augustine's conception of God's justice which will be discussed later on. For now, it is worth underlining that this love, identified with the gift of the Spirit, drives the actions of the chosen, making them able to become worthy of participating in God. This line of thought is particularly developed by Augustine in the so-called pneumatological books of the fourth Gospel (*Jn.* 14-16). Commenting on *Jn.* 15:26 – 'When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me' – Augustine points out the incapacity of the disciples to give testimony until the love of God was poured forth in their heart by the Holy Spirit (*caritas dei diffusa per spiritum sanctum*) (*Trloh*, XCII.1-2).

In this regard, the figure of Peter is particularly significant, as in Peter love itself (*amor*) was weak and restricted until the Holy Spirit, infused by an abundance of more bountiful grace, strengthened and enlarged his will. Similarly, in other tractates Peter is said to have understood the truth about the Son of God only because God granted him understanding and the Holy Spirit renewed him (*dante*

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<sup>141</sup> Similarly, commenting on other episodes of the Gospel, Augustine explains that this love is the fulfilment of the Law which was given through the prophets. As love is said to be given through the grace of God and through the Holy Spirit (*caritas unde? Per gratiam Dei, per Spiritum sanctum*), human beings are said not to have it from themselves. Rather, it is a gift of God, a great gift (*Dei donum est, et magnum donum*) (*Trloh*, XVII.6).

*deo recreante Spiritu sancto intellexit*) (*Trloh*, XXVII.9-10).<sup>142</sup> As a consequence, the re-creation and the fulfilment of the Holy Spirit, that is, of the gift of the grace of God (*impleti spiritu sancto, hoc est, dono gratia dei*) (*Trloh*, XCIII.2-4), gives to the disciples the strength to endure the persecutions described in *Jn.* 16:1-3 (*Trloh*, XCIV.1-4).<sup>143</sup> As in the case of Peter, the Spirit is identified as the agent of re-creation of human beings in the *Tractates* (*Trloh*, CVIII.1).

According to the Johannine understanding of the Spirit as the one who ‘will make known to you’ (*Jn.* 16:15), this work of re-creation is often presented as the knowledge of the Father and of the Son (*Trloh*, XCVI.4-5; XCVII.1). As the Holy Spirit is the one who teaches spiritual things, he is also the agent who, together with the Son, makes the Father known to creation. For this reason, commenting on *Jn.* 17:3 – ‘this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent’ – Augustine states that the Holy Spirit has to be understood as well. Being the substantial and consubstantial love of both, he works together with Christ in the works of salvation (*Trloh*, CV.3). As this work of salvation is often presented as knowing God, the Holy Spirit is said to be absolutely crucial in gaining some knowledge about God, for nothing of God can be understood by human beings without the Spirit (*Trloh*, XXXII.5).

### **V.3.3.2 Holy Spirit: Unity and Communion**

Besides the identification of the Spirit as the one who testifies about the Father, the Spirit also plays the crucial role of the one who grants human beings to be sharers in the commandment of love. The Johannine derivation of the identification of Spirit and love is particularly stressed in the exegesis of this commandment. Both in *Jn.* 15:12 and *Jn.* 13:34 Christ defines this commandment – ‘love each other as I have loved you’ – as his most important teaching and legacy. Augustine stresses this Johannine theme by declaring it the only true commandment, because where there is love, necessarily there are also found

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<sup>142</sup> These words are pronounced by Augustine commenting on *Jn.* 6:67-70 where Peter recognises Christ as the Son of God.

<sup>143</sup> ‘All this I have told you so that you will not fall away. They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, the time is coming when anyone who kills you will think they are offering a service to God. They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me’.

faith and hope.<sup>144</sup> Moreover, in loving their neighbours, humans also love God (*Trloh*, LXXXIII.2-3; see also XVII.7-10). The commandment of love is then connected by Augustine with the passage of *Jn.14:15-17*: 'If you love me, keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever: the Spirit of truth'. Here Augustine wonders how Christ can ask us to keep his commandment of love since, unless we have the Holy Spirit, we can neither love God nor keep his commandments (*Trloh*, LXXIV.1). Augustine replies that *intellegamus Spiritum sanctum habere qui diligit, et habendo mereri ut plus habeat, et plus habendo plus diligat. Iam itaque habebant Spiritum discipuli* (*Trloh*, LXXIV.2).<sup>145</sup> Nevertheless, the Spirit was given to the disciples twice *ut commendaretur ad Spiritum sanctum pertinere dilectio* (*Trloh*, LXXIV.2).<sup>146</sup> The whole point of the tractate is to demonstrate that *sine Spiritu sancto Christum nos diligere et mandata eius servare non posse* (*Trloh*, LXXIV.2).<sup>147</sup> In my opinion, against the idea of some influential scholars like Bonner, who claims that Augustine tended to misread the Bible in favour of his theological positions, it would be wrong to understand these words as a mere testimony of the ongoing polemic against the Pelagius and his followers.<sup>148</sup> Rather, these words are testimonies of one of the most interesting achievements of Augustine's mature pneumatology. This is deeply influenced by the Johannine theology and regards the way in which the Spirit acts as the hypostatized agent of unity and communion not only inside the Trinity, but in relation to the elect as well.

Dealing with the passage of *Jn. 16.27* – 'The Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God' – Augustine explains that the true meaning of Jesus's words lies in their connection with *1Jn. 4:10*: 'We love because he himself has first loved us'. Then, Augustine adds:

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<sup>144</sup> The same idea is repeated in *Homilies on the First Epistle of John*, VII.8: *Dilige, et quod vis fac: sive taceas, dilectione taceas; sive clames, dilectione clames; sive emendes, dilectione emendes; sive parcas, dilectione parcas: radix sit intus dilectionis, non potest de ista radice nisi bonum existere.*

<sup>145</sup> 'We understand that he who loves has the Holy Spirit, and by having deserves to have more, and by having more to love more. And so, the disciples already have the Spirit'.

<sup>146</sup> 'In order that love might be shown to belong to the Holy Spirit'.

<sup>147</sup> 'Without the Holy Spirit we cannot love Christ and keep his commandments'.

<sup>148</sup> G. Bonner, 'Augustine, the Bible and the Pelagians' p. 227–242. I have discussed Bonner's work in the introduction of this chapter.



Prorsus donum Dei est diligere Deum. [...] Non enim amaremus Filium, nisi amaremus et Patrem. Amat nos Pater, quia nos amamus Filium; cum a Patre et Filio acceperimus ut et Patrem amemus et Filium: diffundit enim caritatem in cordibus nostris amborum Spiritus, per quem Spiritum et Patrem amamus et Filium, et quem Spiritum cum Patre amamus et Filio (*Trloh*, CII.5).<sup>149</sup>

The reason why it is not possible to love God before being loved by him stands in the very nature of 'love'. This love is not to be considered as 'affection' or 'feeling', but as an ontological bond which unifies lover and beloved in one. Therefore, whoever claims to love the Son without loving the Father does not really love the Son, but only a false idol which he made for himself (*Trloh*, LXXIV.1-2). As a consequence, whoever loves the Son loves the Father who sent the Son. In loving them, he loves the Holy Spirit. Indeed, the Holy Spirit is the love of the Father and the Son, as he proceeds from both. In other words, whoever loves the Father and the Son *is in* the Holy Spirit and, to a certain extent, *is* the Holy Spirit himself. This is also the way in which the Spirit is said to glorify Christ: pouring out love in the hearts of believers and making them spirituals (*diffundendo caritatem spiritualesque faciendo*), the Spirit reveals to them how the Son is equal to the Father (*Trloh*, C.1).

Therefore, Augustine's description of the Holy Spirit as love should be taken literally. The most interesting passages in this regard comes from *Tractates* XIV.9; XVIII.2-4; XXXIX.5, that have already been analysed in the third chapter.<sup>150</sup> In these tractates, the Spirit is both the eternal love between the Father and the Son in the Trinitarian union and the agent who keeps the souls of the chosen ones in unity with God. All these tractates comment on portions of the Gospel where the problem of the relationship between the Father and the Son is tackled. In *Trloh*, XIV.9 Augustine is commenting on *Jn.* 3:34: 'For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God gives the Spirit without limit'. Here Augustine uses the example of *Acts* 4:32<sup>151</sup> to explain the perfect unity created

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<sup>149</sup> 'Even to love God is a gift of God. [...] For we would not love the Son unless we loved the Father too. The Father loves us because we love the Son, since from the Father and the Son we have received that we love both the Father and the Son, for the Spirit of both pours forth love in our hearts, and through this Spirit we love both the Father and the Son, and this Spirit we love together with the Father and the Son'.

<sup>150</sup> See: *supra*, III.5.

<sup>151</sup> See *Acts* 31-34: 'After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly. All the believers were one in

by the Spirit not only in God, but also in the souls of the first community. Similarly, commenting on *Jn.* 5:20 'For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does', Augustine explains that the perfect unity of the Father and the Son comes from the perfect love which is one and is of both: the Holy Spirit. According to the principle *si individuam caritatem, perfectam unitatem*,<sup>152</sup> Augustine also explains the unity of the Church as the testimony of the perfect love which reigns in the Trinity (*Trloh*, XVIII.2-4). Finally, in *Trloh* XXXIX.5 Augustine states:

Si accedentes ad Deum, multae animae per caritatem una anima est, et multa corda unum cor; quid agit ipse fons caritatis in Patre et Filio? Nonne ibi magis Trinitas unus est Deus? Inde enim nobis caritas venit, de ipso Spiritu sancto (*Trloh* XXXIX.5).<sup>153</sup>

The *proprium* of the Spirit is therefore to be found in the fact that his very existence represents the *unity* of the Trinity-in-itself and of the Trinity with human beings. This unity is the fruit of the same agent both in God and in human beings, insofar as the very same Spirit operates in the Trinity, in the Church and in the hearts of the chosen ones. The difference stands in the measure to which the Spirit is given. Indeed, while to the Son the Spirit is 'given without limit' (*Jn.* 3:34), to human beings in this life he is given only as a pledge (*Trloh*, XXXII.5 XCVI.4-5).<sup>154</sup> Consequently, Augustine's pneumatology renders salvation an act of spiritual unification between God and the chosen ones. In other words, Augustine portrays salvation itself as the *proprium* of the Spirit, insofar as salvation is achieved by the unity between the chosen and the Holy Spirit, which is himself the unity of God. From this perspective it is easy to notice that every accusation against Augustine of creating an unbridgeable distance between the immanent

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heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all that there were no needy persons among them'.

<sup>152</sup> 'If there is perfect love, then there is perfect unity'.

<sup>153</sup> 'If, coming to God, many souls through love are one soul, and many hearts are one heart, what does the very Fountain of love do in the Father and the Son? Is not the Trinity there even more one God? For love comes to us from there, from the Holy Spirit himself'. Augustine goes on saying: *Si ergo caritas Dei diffusa in cordibus nostris per Spiritum sanctum qui datus est nobis, multas animas facit unam animam, et multa corda facit unum cor; quanto magis Pater et Filius et Spiritus sanctus, Deus unus, lumen unum, unumque principium?*

<sup>154</sup> In this regard, see, in particular, *Trloh*, XCVI.4-5 where, commenting on *Jn.* 16:12 'I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear', Augustine states that the fullness of the truth, that is, the perfection of love in the Spirit, cannot be fulfilled in this life. Nevertheless, a vision can be fulfilled through the Holy Spirit, of which we now receive a pledge.

Trinity and the economic Trinity is deprived of foundation.<sup>155</sup> Indeed, the Spirit himself is the bridge through which and in which creatures are admitted in the Trinitarian union. As the *proprium* of the Spirit properly resides in the sanctification of creatures, his unifying role derives ontologically from his procession from the Father and the Son. In this regard, it could be stated that Augustine pneumatology is largely dependent on the verses of *Jn.* 16:12-15: 'But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears [...] The Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you'. By contrast with the Son, the Holy Spirit does not have a human aspect. Therefore, there is no unity of the person in the Holy Spirit. Therefore, this passage cannot be explained, as it was the case of Jesus in *Jn.* 5:15<sup>156</sup> according to the obedience that the human part owes to the divine one. In a passage that I have already quoted in chapter III.4.2, Augustine writes:

Ac per hoc Spiritus sanctus ut etiam de Filio procedat, sicut procedit de Patre, ab ipso habet Patre. Hic utcumque etiam illud intellegitur, quantum a talibus quales nos sumus, intellegi potest, cur non dicatur natus esse, sed potius procedere Spiritus sanctus. [...] Filius quippe nullus est duorum, nisi patris et matris. [...] Quia nec filius hominum simul et ex patre et ex matre procedit: sed cum in matrem procedit ex patre, non tunc procedit ex matre; et cum in hanc lucem procedit ex matre, non tunc procedit ex patre. Spiritus autem sanctus non de Patre procedit in Filium, et de Filio procedit ad sanctificandam creaturam; sed simul de utroque procedit: quamvis hoc Filio Pater dederit, ut quemadmodum de se, ita de illo quoque procedat (*Trloh*, XCIX.9).<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> I refer here to the works of Rahner, LaCugna, Gunton. See: K. Rahner, *The Trinity*; C. M. LaCugna, *God for Us*; C. E. Gunton, 'God the Holy Spirit'. For a critical discussion of these authors see *supra*, III.1.

<sup>156</sup> 'By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me'.

<sup>157</sup> 'And because of this the Holy Spirit has it from the Father himself that he proceeds also from the Son, just as he proceeds from the Father. Here, to some extent, it is understood, as far as it possible to understand for someone such as we are, why the Holy Spirit is not said to have been born, but rather to proceed. [...] For indeed no one is the Son of two except of a father and a mother. [...] For neither does the son of human beings proceed at the same time both from the father and from the mother. But when he proceeds from the father into the mother, he does not proceed from the mother; and when he proceeds into the light of the day from the mother, he does not proceed from the father. But the Holy Spirit does not proceed from the Father into the Son, and from the Son proceed to sanctify the creature; but he proceeds from both at the same time, although the Father has given this to the Son, that the Holy Spirit proceeds as from himself, so also from him'.

As the rule of the *quod habet hoc est* is applied both to the Spirit and to the Son, Augustine explains the double procession of the Spirit from the Father and the Son as the sign of his ontological and soteriological *proprium*. While the procession of the Spirit upholds his ontological role as the hypostatic union between Father and Son, the simultaneous procession from both provides him with a soteriological agency utterly distinct from that of the Son. In other words, the Spirit, more than any other person, does not ‘speak of his own’ insofar as he is the very love that bonds the other hypostases. Therefore, sanctification is the *proprium* of the Spirit exactly because he proceeds from both the Father and the Son, thus being the bond of love that unifies the Trinity in one, and the chosen creatures with the Trinity. As a consequence, salvation, that is, sanctification of the creatures, is explicitly said to pertain *proprie* only to the Spirit, as Augustine explains in crucial passage almost at the end of the *Tractates*:

Nempe enim sanctitas vel sanctificatio ad sanctum proprie pertinet Spiritum: unde cum et Pater spiritus sit, et Filius spiritus sit, quoniam Deus spiritus est (*Jn.* 4:24); et Pater sanctus, et Filius sanctus sit: proprio tamen nomine amborum Spiritus vocatur Spiritus sanctus (*Trloh*, CXXII.8).<sup>158</sup>

From this quotation it is made particularly clear why Salvation is a spiritual matter. Indeed, sanctification of creatures pertains properly (*proprie*) to the Holy Spirit as the Spirit is the unity between Father and Son. As such, he is called Spirit, a name that does not pertain to the generation – as ‘Father’ and ‘Son’ – but rather to the commonality of essence of the two person from whom he proceeds. Since, according to *Jn.* 4:24, ‘God is Spirit’, the hypostatized union between Father and Son must be Spirit as well. Therefore, salvation itself is a spiritual matter insofar as it is the vey *proprium* of the Holy Spirit.

As the works of the Holy Spirit pertain to the salvation and sanctification of human beings, it is worth underlining the two ways in which salvation is operated. In the *Tractates* – just as in the rest of Augustine’s works – the Holy Spirit is both the

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<sup>158</sup> ‘Indeed, certainly holiness or sanctification pertain properly (*proprie*) to the Holy Spirit, and in this regard, although both the Father is spirit and the Son is spirit because God is spirit, and the Father is holy and the Son is holy, nevertheless by proper name the Spirit of both is called Holy Spirit’.

agent who operates inside human hearts and the one who fills the church with his love, unifying it and making it the body of Christ. While the Church is identified with the mystical body of Christ, the Spirit is said to be the one who gives unity to that body (*Trloh*, CX.4-5): *Ecclesiae caritas quae per Spiritum sanctum diffunditur in cordibus nostris, participum suorum peccata dimittit: eorum autem qui non sunt eius participes, tenet* (*Trloh*, CXXI.4).<sup>159</sup> In the explanation of the necessity of the mediating role of the Church it is possible to appreciate the joint action of both the Holy Spirit and Christ in the salvation of human beings, each one according to his *proprium*.<sup>160</sup> The incarnation of Christ provides human beings with the mystical body, that is, the Church. In the Church, human beings become participant of the unity of God; it is a proper work of the Holy Spirit to produce that unity which is found in the spiritual Church. The action of the Spirit works only in those who are already part of the spiritual Church in heaven, as the Spirit sanctifies only those creatures who he already found in the body of Christ: *spiritus enim facit viva membra. Nec viva membra spiritus facit, nisi quae in corpore quod vegetat ipse spiritus, invenerit* (*Trloh*, XXVII.6).<sup>161</sup> In a similar way, Augustine explains how one should understand the fact that the Spirit was not yet given before the glorification of Christ (*Jn.* 7:39): the unity of the Church was not yet present. Consequently, everyone who is outside this unity is outside salvation and does not have the Spirit:

Accipimus ergo et nos Spiritum sanctum, si amamus Ecclesiam, si caritate compaginamur, si catholico nomine et fide gaudemus. Credamus, fratres; quantum quisque amat Ecclesiam Christi, tantum habet Spiritum sanctum.

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<sup>159</sup> 'The love of the Church which is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Spirit dismisses the sins of those who participate in it, but it retains the sins of those who do not participate in it'. Augustine is here commenting on *Jn.* 20:22-23: 'And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven"'.  
<sup>160</sup> Similarly, commenting on *Jn.* 6:63 – 'The words I have spoken to you are Spirit and life' – Augustine explains that the eating of the flesh and blood of Christ makes Christian spiritual members of the very body of Christ. This body of Christ is the Catholic Church, whose sign is unity. Then he adds: *Ut autem simus membra eius, unitas nos compaginat. Ut compaginet unitas, quae facit nisi caritas? Et caritas Dei unde? [...] Ergo Spiritus est qui vivificat* (*Trloh*, XXVII.6) ('But that we may be his members, unity joins us together. That unity may join together, what causes it except love? And whence is the love of God? [...] Therefore, "it is the Spirit which gives life"').

<sup>161</sup> 'For the Spirit produces living members. But the Spirit does not produce living members except for those who he has found in the body which the Spirit himself enlivens'.

[...] Habemus ergo Spiritum Sanctum, si amamus Ecclesiam: amamus autem, si in eius compage et caritate consistimus (*Trloh*, XXXII.8).<sup>162</sup>

As Christ gives the body in which all believers are united with God, the Holy Spirit provides the love and unity that makes the Church the real place of manifestation of God. This love, which maintains Christians inside the unity of the Church, is the sign of the holiness of the Church, which is made holy by the Spirit who resides in it.

### V.3.3.3 The Spirit and the World

So far, it has been shown how the Spirit's *proprium* ought to be found in his very nature of love and unity. His soteriological characteristic is to provide the ontological material through which the chosen are taken out of the world into communion with God. What it is still to be analysed is the very nature of the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the world. This issue has been already partially addressed in the course of this chapter, but it is now the time to systematise it, because this relationship is crucial in demonstrating how Augustine's theology is deeply influenced by Johannine themes.

In the section regarding the *proprium* of Christ it has been shown how Augustine, following his reading of the Gospel, deems the final judgement to pertain only to the Son. This reason is found in the fact that the Son is able to be seen both by wicked and good at the end of time. Indeed, since the wicked are incapable of seeing God, they will only perceive the Son of man. The corollary of this discourse is that the wicked are not able to see the Father or the Holy Spirit at all, not even at the end of time, because only those who are united with the Holy Spirit can perceive God. Augustine confirms this idea in his interpretation of the parable of the good shepherd (*Jn.* 10:1-18). In the parable, Christ is said to be the good shepherd, the gate and the gatekeeper, for he is the one who opens the gate to God. Nevertheless, Augustine does not seem entirely happy with this

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<sup>162</sup> 'Therefore, we also receive the Holy Spirit if we love the Church, if we are joined together by love, if we rejoice in the Catholic name and faith. Let us believe, brothers, that as much as each one loves Christ's Church, so much does he have the Holy Spirit. [...] Therefore, we have the Holy Spirit if we love the Church; but we love if we are within its unity and love'.

explanation; thus, he suggests the idea that the gatekeeper is the Holy Spirit. Indeed, the Spirit is the one that 'teaches all truth' (*Jn.* 16:13). Therefore, he is the one that opens the gate – that is, Christ – to those who are predestined to enter in the kingdom of the Father (*Trloh*, XLVI.4).<sup>163</sup> The teachings of the Spirit are the one which allow the chosen sheep to enter the gate.

This example, just as the others that will follow, shows the other side of the coin of Augustine's conception of the Spirit as unity and love. Indeed, while the Spirit is the agent of unity among those who are chosen by God, he is also the agent of *separation* between the chosen and the world. In the whole *Tractates*, the perfect love and unity created by the Spirit among the elect is constantly opposed to the wretchedness of 'the world' that does not perceive the Spirit, thus not being able to comprehend anything about God. Therefore, Augustine explains the fact that the Spirit is given after the resurrection as signifying that, at the resurrection, the love of the Spirit will definitively separate the elect from the rest of the world: *ut in resurrectione nostra caritas nostra flagret, et ab amore saeculi separet, ut tota currat in Deum* (*Trloh*, XXXII.9).<sup>164</sup> The topic of the two loves (*amor sui* or *amor saeculi* vs *amor Dei*) is well testified in all Augustine's mature works. Nevertheless, the *Tractates of John* are particularly interesting insofar as it is possible from here to understand how much this theme owes to the Johannine text on which Augustine is commenting.

In this regard, one of the most interesting figures in the fourth Gospel is the Samaritan woman, whom Augustine takes as a symbol of the difference between the love of the world and the love of God. The Samaritan represents the Church which is not yet justified before the coming of Jesus and which receives its justification through the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the Samaritan's act of drawing water from the well represents the pleasure of this world: *Etenim aqua in puteo, voluptas saeculi est in profunditate tenebrosa: hinc eam hauriunt homines hydria*

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<sup>163</sup> See: *Trloh*, XLVI.4: *Nulla est ergo necessitas aliquid aliud quaerere, nulla necessitas: sed fortasse est voluntas. Si est voluntas, noli exorbitare, noli a Trinitate discedere. Si personam aliam quaeris ostiarum, Spiritus sanctus occurrat: non enim dedignabitur ostiarum esse Spiritus sanctus, quando ipsum ostium esse dignatus est Filius. Vide ostiarum forte Spiritum sanctum: ipse Dominus discipulis suis de Spiritu sancto dicit: Ipse vos docebit omnem veritatem (Jn. 10:13). Ostium quid est? Christus. Quid est Christus? Veritas. Quis aperit ostium, nisi qui docet omnem veritatem?*

<sup>164</sup> 'that our love may be on fire in our resurrection and may separate us from the love of this world, that all our love may run to God'.

*cupiditatum*. (*Trloh*, XV.16).<sup>165</sup> As the water of the Samaritan is said to be the dark depths of the world, the Lord is offering to her something different: *Promittebat ergo saginam quamdam et satietatem Spiritus sancti* (*Trloh*, XV.17).<sup>166</sup> This spirit is the gift of God, (*Donum Dei est Spiritus sanctus*) (*Trloh*, XV.12), which is given gratuitously to the Samaritan so that she might be finally separated from this world and enter in the communion with God. This very Spirit changes the interiority of the Samaritan making her the true temple of God, thanks to the rediscovering of the image of God within herself (*Trloh*, XV.23-28).

It is worth noting that, although present in every tractate, the radical opposition between the Spirit and the world is particularly emphasised in the pneumatological books of the Gospel, that is, those where the role of the Spirit as love and unity is particularly stressed. As much as the unity and perfect love found in the Holy Spirit is underscored, his separation from the world is made more evident. In this regard, Augustine is directly influenced by the text of the Gospel, as shown by the exegesis of *Jn. 14:16-17*: 'And I will ask the Father [...] the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him'. Augustine writes:

Mundum quippe ait hoc loco, mundi significans dilectores, quae dilectio non est a Patre. Et ideo dilectioni huius mundi, de qua satis agimus ut minuatur et consumatur in nobis, contraria est dilectio Dei, quae diffunditur in cordibus nostris per Spiritum sanctum [...] Non enim habet invisibiles oculos mundana dilectio, per quos videri Spiritus sanctus, nisi invisibiliter non potest (*Trloh*, LXXIV.4).<sup>167</sup>

Therefore, the world is said not to be able to see the Spirit insofar as the world is conceived as the very opposite of the love of God. Similarly, in *Trloh*, LXXVI.2, this love, which is the Spirit, is said to be the one that separates the saints from the world (*Dilectio sanctos discernit a mundo*). This love is said to be only for

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<sup>165</sup> 'For the water in the well is the pleasure of the world in its dark depths, here men drink it from the water jar of desires'.

<sup>166</sup> 'He was promising, therefore, a certain abundance and fullness of the Holy Spirit'.

<sup>167</sup> 'For he says "world" in this place, signifying the lovers of the world, a love that is not from the Father. And therefore contrary to the love of this world, about which we have our hands full that it be lessened and suppressed in us, is the love of God, which is poured in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.[...] For worldly love does not have the invisible eyes through which the Holy Spirit can be seen, but only invisibly'.



those whose dwelling places are already prepared by the Father and the Son by predestination, according to the exegesis of *Jn.* 14:3.

Anyway, the role of the Spirit as the agent which causes the clear separation between human beings is not perceivable in this life by human senses. Commenting on John the Baptist's words in *Jn.* 3:32<sup>168</sup> Augustine explains how only John the Baptist was able, through the grace of the Spirit which he received from God (*gratia Spiritus, quam accepit a Deo*) to see the differences between the two worlds: that one of the chosen and that of the forsaken: *Attendit ergo in spiritu divisionem, in genere autem humano commixtionem; et quod nondum locis separatum est, separavit intellectu, separavit cordis aspectu; et vidit duos populos, fidelium et infidelium* (*Trloh*, XIV.8).<sup>169</sup> Whilst in the Spirit there is a division between the chosen people of God and the world, in this life there is mingling. Only once the people of God are unified in one fellowship, the Spirit is the one who condemns the world to be forsaken to its own destiny.<sup>170</sup>

This separation operated by the Spirit inside human hearts is described as the casting out of the devil from the world. Therefore, commenting on *Jn.* 12:31 – 'Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be cast out' – Augustine explains that the judgment which the Gospel is speaking about in this verse is not the judgment of damnation that will happen at the end of the world, but rather the judgment of *separation* operated by the coming of Christ through the Holy Spirit:

Dici etiam iudicium non damnationis, sed discretionis [...] Possidebat ergo diabolus genus humanum, et reos suppliciorum tenebat chirographo peccatorum; dominabatur in cordibus infidelium. [...] Per Christi autem fidem [...] millia credentium a dominatu liberantur diaboli, Christi corpori copulantur, et sub tanto capite uno eius Spiritu fidelia membra vegetantur. Hoc vocabat

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<sup>168</sup> 'He testifies to what he has seen and heard, but no one accepts his testimony'.

<sup>169</sup> 'Therefore, he observed a division in the Spirit, but a mingling in the human race; and what was not separated in place, he separated in understanding, he separated in the sight of his heart. And he saw two multitudes: the believers and the unbelievers'.

<sup>170</sup> In this regard see also *Trloh*, XCIII.2-4, where Augustine explains that the casting out of the synagogues described in *Jn.* 16:1-3 is to be interpreted as something positive: once separated from any worldly congregation, the apostles are able to join the spiritual unity in the Holy Spirit.

iudicium, hanc discretionem, hanc a suis redemptis diaboli expulsionem  
(*Trloh*, LII.6).<sup>171</sup>

The work of separating the chosen and the forsaken is therefore described as the casting out of the devil from the hearts of those who were previously subjected to his power. Once more, it is possible to observe how this work of separation happens through the coming of Christ, so that the chosen might be united with his body, and becomes operative in the Holy Spirit, which is given by Christ so that the chosen ones might join the communion of God.<sup>172</sup>

For this reason, the world is said to hate the believers. Commenting on the section of the Gospel regarding the hate of the world towards Christians (*Jn.* 15:18-24), Augustine explains that it is necessary (*necesse est*) that the world hates the believers, for they do not love what the world loves. Since they are out of the world due to the communion with the Holy Spirit, the world must hate them, for it does not belong to where they belong (*Trloh*, LXXXVII.1). It is easy to notice here how much Augustine's pneumatology and the interpretation of the relationship to the world is drawn from the fourth Gospel. Instead of trying to smooth the radical contraposition between the chosen people and the world, Augustine accentuates it. Similarly, when commenting on the commandment of love in *Jn.* 13:24, Augustine further stresses the contrast between those who are in the love of the Holy Spirit and those who are not:

Dilectio ista nos innovat, ut simus homines novi. [...] Nemo ibi moritur, quo nemo pervenit, nisi huic saeculo moriatur, non morte omnium, qua corpus ab anima deseritur; sed morte electorum, qua etiam cum in carne mortali adhuc manetur, cor sursum ponitur. [...] Hinc fortasse dictum est: *Valida est sicut mors dilectio* (*Cant.* 8:6). Hac enim dilectione fit ut in isto adhuc corruptibili corpore constituti moriamur huic saeculo, et vita nostra abscondatur cum

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<sup>171</sup> 'I have told you that a judgment of separation, not of damnation is here spoken of. [...] Therefore, the devil was in possession of the human race and was holding them guilty of capital crimes by the signature of their sins; he was ruling in the hearts of the unbelieving; [...] However, through the faith of Christ [...] thousands of believers were freed from the domination of the devil, were joined to Christ's body, and under so great a head, by his one Spirit, his fruitful members were enlivened. This he called judgement, this separation, this expulsion of the devil from his own redeemed ones'.

<sup>172</sup> This action strips off the carnal desires from the hearts of the chosen ones (*exspoliationem a corde cupiditatum carnalium*), thus erasing the vice of the race (*vitium propaginis*), since God cleanses the faults by his Holy Spirit (*Trloh*, XXX.4-7).

Christo in Deo: imo ipsa dilectio est mors nostra saeculo, et vita cum Deo. Si enim mors est quando de corpore anima exit, quomodo non est mors quando de mundo amor noster exit? Valida est ergo sicut mors dilectio. Quid ea validius, qua vincitur mundus? [...] Ipsa est dilectio ab omni mundana dilectione discreta, [...] ut mutua dilectione constringamur inter nos, et tam dulci vinculo connexis membris corpus tanti capitis simus (*Trloh*, LXV.1-2).<sup>173</sup>

As Augustine explains that ‘love itself is our death to the world and our life with God’, one has to understand this love as the Holy Spirit. Becoming participant in the Holy Spirit implies the act of getting out of the world to become one with the body of Christ through the love of the Holy Spirit. As the incarnation of Christ saves human beings by his body, the unifying action of the Holy Spirit unites those whom God has previously chosen to gain the eternal contemplation of the Trinitarian communion. For this reason, Augustine plainly declares that the verse of *Jn. 16:8* – ‘when he (the holy Spirit) comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment’ – shows the *proprium* of the Holy Spirit (*proprie tribuit hoc Spiritui sancto*) (*Trloh*, XCV.1). While the judgment of evil belongs only to the Son, the unification of the chosen with God is the work of the Spirit. Therefore, the unity of love, achievable only through the Holy Spirit, proves the world wrong about – that is, convicts it of – justice, sin and judgement (*Trloh*, XCV.1). This is why, according to Augustine, the Gospel attributed this as a *proprium* of the Holy Spirit. While the salvation of human beings is accomplished by the entire Trinity, the sanctification of the creatures is said to belong properly to the agent that makes the Trinity itself an eternal communion. It is indeed the very nature of the Spirit of love and communion between the Father and the Son, acquired through the eternal procession from both, which makes the Spirit the agent through which final salvation is gained. These very

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<sup>173</sup> ‘This love renews us so that we may be new men. [...] There no one dies, where no one comes unless he should die to this world, not by the death of all in which the body is abandoned by the soul, but by the death of the chosen in which, even when one still remains in mortal flesh, the heart is set on high. [...] Perhaps about this it was said “Strong as death is love” (*Cant.* 8:6). For by this love it comes to pass that, dwelling in this still corruptible body, we die to this world and our life is hidden with Christ in God: or, rather, love itself is our death to the world and our life with God. For if death occurs when the soul goes out of the body, how is it not death when our love goes out of the world? Therefore, strong as death is love. What is stronger than that by which the world is conquered? [...] This is the love which is separated from any worldly love, [...] so that we should be bound together with each other by mutual love and, with the members fastened together by so sweet a chain, we may be the body of so great a Head’.

characteristics are those which make the Spirit and the world two irreconcilable opposites.

## Conclusions

Broadly speaking, the aim of this chapter has been to reflect on the influences which the text of the fourth Gospel had on Augustine's mature pneumatology, particularly on the dialectical relationship found in Augustine's *Tractates* between the Holy Spirit and the world. I have shown how Augustine moved away from the Johannine meaning of "world of the protological creation" to affirm the one of "world of present darkness". Therefore, although the word *mundus* occasionally indicates creation as such, Augustine usually understands it as referring to the "lovers of the world". Thus, the theological concept of *mundus/saeculum* comes to signify the totality of the wicked creatures that have irredeemably lost their original goodness by means of their own will. Hence, *mundus/saeculum* is an equivalent of the renowned Augustinian notion of *massa damnata*. Contrariwise, the Holy Spirit has been acknowledged as the agent that unifies some beloved creatures with God, in order to tear them away from the world and make them enter into his eternal peace. This process of unification, represents the very *proprium* – that is, the proper work – of the Spirit.

In order to understand how the Spirit works in the world, I have first tackled the issue of the *imago Dei* in Augustine, showing the differences between the original creation and the re-creation in Spirit. I have demonstrated that the doctrine of the "image within" is clouded by the many worldly and wicked images that human beings make for themselves. It is indeed the pure original created image that one needs to rediscover. From this Augustinian understanding of the *imago Dei*, it follows that the world was originally meant to be the good creation of God, but was distorted by the depravities in which human beings have fallen, thus becoming *mundus/saeculum* in its pejorative connotation. In order to re-activate the "image within", human beings need to exit the world and to be regenerated by the power of God's grace. This process of removing the chosen from the world, which is condemned to perdition, is presented by Augustine as a radical work of *re-creation*. Furthermore, taking the cue from the fourth Gospel's dualism, Augustine presents the work of *re-creation* as a *separation-from* the world, rather than a regeneration of it. Indeed, this process of separation from the world constitutes a grace which is much bigger than the one that was originally given

for creation. Contrary to scholars such as Harrison, Ortiz and Guardini, I have shown the way in which the grace of *re-creation*, which God performs only on some chosen creatures, is deemed by Augustine to be much more precious than the grace given for creation.<sup>174</sup> The very exclusiveness of the grace which is given to the ‘few’ who are chosen, as opposed to the ‘many’ who are forsaken, indicates the bountiful mercy of God, who donates his grace according to his own desires. This exclusive love is then identified with the Holy Spirit. To be recreated means to enter in the Trinitarian community which *is* indeed instantiated in the Holy Spirit. Therefore, grace given *for re-creation* is the sign of the personal love of God for the chosen among his creatures, who are separated from the world and brought in the communion with the Holy Spirit. This process of re-creation eventually leads to the separation between two worlds: the saved world and the forsaken one. In this regard, the influence of the Johannine Gospel on Augustine’s thought is very evident.

This chapter has then analysed the proper relationship between ‘the world’ and the two divine soteriological agents who work in it for the salvation of the chosen: Christ and the Holy Spirit. First of all, it has been made clear in which way it is possible to speak of a *proprium* of Christ and of the Spirit. Although Augustine maintains that the Trinity always works together as a whole, each person of the Trinity has a different relational role (*proprium*). Secondly, I have identified the *propria* of Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Through the division between Son of God and Son of man – representing the divine and human part of the Saviour – Christ’s embodiment is interpreted by Augustine as an act of undeserved grace that allows humans to be re-created. These two parts constitute the one person of Christ, who acts according to the will of the Son of God. This very union between the Son of God and the Son of man has been shown to happen through the work of the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit, insofar as he is love and unity in the Trinity, to allow human beings to be united with God. Just as Christ’s incarnation was operated by the Father’s *gratia gratis data*, making Christ the first of the predestined ones, the grace of salvation is the undeserved act of grace operated by, in and through the Holy Spirit on

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<sup>174</sup> See: C. Harrison, *Rethinking Augustine*, p. 114; J. Ortiz, *You Made Us for Yourself*, p. 37-40; R. Guardini, *The Conversion of Augustine*, p. 124

God's chosen people. In this logic, Augustine considers the final judgement as a *proprium* of the Son, because only the chosen will be able to see God as he really is. Hence, judgment pertains to the Son insofar as the wicked ones will see only the human part of Christ, while his divine part will remain hidden from them. By attributing the final judgment only to the Son, Augustine is stating that only those who are already in communion with God can actually see God. In other words, Augustine is here negating to the world every possibility of perceiving God, since the world is and remains something alien and completely separated from God's communion.

The final part of this work analysed and discussed the *proprium* of the Holy Spirit in his different connotation of 'gift of God', *love* and *grace, unity and communion*. These characterisations of the Spirit have been deduced mainly by Augustine from the text of the fourth Gospel and are closely linked to Augustine's analysis of the Spirit's ontological role and origin within the Trinity. Being the hypostatized communion between the Father and the Son, the Spirit is also the soteriological agent who creates perfect unity and communion between the chosen ones and God. Consequently, it is only through the sanctifying action of the Spirit that the Church is united in one fellowship. Hence, the Spirit is identified with the agent of re-creation, for the whole process of re-creation is accomplished *in the Holy Spirit* through the resurrection of Christ. Since the Spirit is the ontological bond of love between the Father and the Son, he is also the bond of love in which the chosen are saved; in other words, one could say that salvation is really a spiritual matter, for the very nature of the Holy Spirit determines his soteriological role. As a matter of fact, this is also the reason why the Holy Spirit is called "holy" and "spirit": he is Spirit insofar as he shares the essence of the two persons from which he proceeds, and he is Holy insofar as his *proprium* stands in the sanctification of the creatures. This sanctification consists in the contemplation of the Trinitarian communion, since the ability of knowing God is something which is given only to the chosen, which are already participant in the Holy Spirit.

These conclusions challenge the scholarly position of Rahner, LaCugna and Gunton (to name a few) which detects an unbridgeable distance between Augustine's Trinity and human beings. In opposition to their views, I have shown that the nature and action of the Holy Spirit makes the chosen people enjoy the

same love of the persons of the Trinity. If an unbridgeable distance exists within Augustine's system, this ought to be identified with the radical separation between the Spirit and the world. Since the Spirit is love and communion in God, his nature is utterly irreconcilable with the world. In this respect, I have identified the Johannine contribution to Augustine's theology in the formulation of a radical dualism between the Spirit and the world, since the Spirit *is in no sense ever mingled with the world*. Thus, just as the Spirit is love and unity for the chosen, he is also damnation for the world, which is not chosen and therefore is neglected and forsaken in its depravity. Therefore, while Christ works in the choosing of those people who are predestined to be chosen out of the world, the Spirit only works in that portion of the chosen which is predestined to salvation. It is indeed the remoteness of the world from the Trinitarian union, which is the Holy Spirit, which makes the world irredeemably damned.



# **PART C. ORIGEN AND AUGUSTINE: A COMPARISON**



# VI. The Holy Spirit, the Trinity, the World and the Gospel of John: A Comparative Analysis

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## VI.1 The Grounds and Aims of the Comparison

In the course of the twentieth century, Patristic scholars and systematic theologians have tried to unfold and problematize the different approaches to the Trinitarian discourse carried out by “Greek” and “Latin” theologians of the first five centuries of the Christian era. The scholarly tendency of dividing between a “Greek” and a “Latin” Trinitarism takes the move from Théodore de Régnon’s work at the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup> Although de Régnon did not probably intend to establish a “paradigm” regarding the differences between Eastern and Western patristic theologies, as proven by Hennessy,<sup>2</sup> the reception of his work led many scholars to propose a rigid distinction between Eastern and Western Trinitarian theology.<sup>3</sup> According to this paradigm, the basic distinction between Eastern and Western theologians must be found in the affirmation of God’s unity as grounded in the Father, for eastern theology, or

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<sup>1</sup> T. de Régnon, *Études de théologie positive sur la Sainte Trinité*.

<sup>2</sup> Kristin Hennessy, ‘An Answer to de Régnon’s Accusers: Why We Should Not Speak of “His” Paradigm’, in *Harvard Theological Review* 100 2 (2007), p. 179-197. Hennessy argues that, when speaking of the difference between “Greek” and “Latin” theology, de Régnon does not aim at proposing a division between Greek speaking and Latin speaking Fathers, but rather between Patristic theology of the third and fourth century (both Greek and Latin speaking) and the subsequent interpretation of that theology made by Latin scholastic medieval theologians. Moreover, she states that, far from aiming at creating a rigid separation between Eastern and Western theological trends in patristic times, de Régnon’s project should be understood as an ecumenical and apophatic approach aiming at offering an alternative to the rigid Neo-Scholasticism of his days: ‘De Régnon himself sought to bring about a rapprochement of these two approaches in light of the persistent mystery of the Trinity and the failure of any single system, even Neo-Thomism, to express this mystery fully’. In this regard, she agrees with Barnes, when he states that: ‘We are almost to the point where we can say that modern theology, needing the doctrinal opposition between “Greek” and “Latin” Trinitarian theologies, invented it’. See: Michel René Barnes, ‘The Fourth Century as Trinitarian Canon’, in Lewis Ayres and Gareth Jones (eds), *Christian Origins: Theology, Rhetoric, and Community*, London 1998, p. 47–67, 61.

<sup>3</sup> The subsequent critique of this paradigm by Barnes identifies these scholars as perpetrators of this misleading opposition: Frederick Crowe, *Doctrine of the Holy Trinity*, Willowdale 1966; James Mackey, *The Christian Experience of God as Trinity*, London 1983; John O’Donnell, *Trinity and Temporality: The Christian Doctrine of God in the Light of Process Theology and the Theology of Hope*, Oxford 1983; David Brown, *The Divine Trinity*, La Salle IL 1985; C. LaCugna, *God for Us*. In this regard see: M. R. Barnes, ‘De Régnon Reconsidered’, p. 55.

grounded in God's essence, according to Latin theology. As a consequence, proponents of this model, like Brown and Zizioulas, have tended to identify this opposition as exemplified by the difference between the Cappadocian Fathers' and Augustine's Trinity. Brown summarises this approach up in this way: 'In short, the difference is constituted by whether one starts with the one as given or the Threeness. Augustine will be taken as the obvious representative of the former approach [...] the slightly earlier Cappadocian Fathers of the latter model, particularly Gregory of Nyssa'.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, in Zizioulas' words, 'the West began with the unity of God and then moved to the Trinity, while the East followed the opposite course'.<sup>5</sup> In the last 25 years, a new tendency has emerged, following the works of scholars such as Studer, Barnes, Ayres and Coakley – to cite only a few.<sup>6</sup> Aiming at disrupting the old East-vs-West paradigm, these scholars affirmed the continuity between Greek and Latin Patristic theologians, showing that differences and similarities between theological trends should be understood in the context of different – and evolving – pro-Nicene factions, rather than in the geographical and linguistic

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<sup>4</sup> See D. Brown, *The Divine Trinity*, p. 243. This passage is quoted from Kristin Hennessy, 'An Answer to de Régnon's Accusers', p. 187.

<sup>5</sup> John Zizioulas, 'The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity: The Significance of the Cappadocian Contribution', in Christoph Schwöbel (ed), *Trinitarian Theology Today: Essays on Divine Being and Act*, Edinburgh 1995, p. 44-60. For a critique of Zizioulas' perspective see: Lewis Ayres, "Remember That You Are Catholic" (serm. 52.2): Augustine on the Unity of the Triune God,' in *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 8 1 (2000), p. 39-82. Ayres bases his critiques on four points. First, Augustine describes the unity of God according to the pro-Nicene doctrine of the inseparability of operations of the three persons; secondly, Ayres states that Augustine's doctrine does not aim at distinguishing divine essence as in any way separable from the persons; thirdly, Augustine's doctrine of the Trinity is functional to his understanding of incarnation; fourthly, 'he uses a doctrine of divine simplicity, in ways parallel to his predecessors, to focus attention both on what it means for the Trinitarian persons to be truly inseparable, and on the nature of our task if we are to grow in understanding of the divine unity' (p.41).

<sup>6</sup> M. R. Barnes, 'De Régnon Reconsidered'; L. Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy*; Basil Studer, 'La teologia trinitaria.

in Agostino d'Ippona: Continuità della tradizione occidentale?', in *Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum 46: Cristianesimo e specificità regionali nel Mediterraneo latino*, Roma 1994, p. 161-177. Of the same author, see also: Basil Studer, 'History and Faith in Augustine's *De Trinitate*. The 1996 Augustine Lecture', in *Augustinianum* 28 (1997), p. 7-50. Overall, have Barnes and Ayres used this new methodology to focus mainly – but not only – on Augustine's works, while Coakley's attention has been devoted to the Cappadocians' side. See: Sarah Coakley, "Persons" In the "Social" Doctrine of the Trinity: A Critique of Current Analytic Discussion', in S. Davis, D. Kendall, and G. O'Collins (eds), *The Trinity: An Interdisciplinary Symposium*, p. 123-144; Sarah Coakley, 'Re-thinking Gregory of Nyssa: Introduction—Gender, Trinitarian Analogies, and the Pedagogy of The Song', in *Modern Theology* 18 4 (2002), p. 431-443. This paper served as an introduction to the volume edited one year later: Sarah Coakley (ed), *Re-thinking Gregory of Nyssa*, Oxford 2003, with the contributions of both Lewis Ayres, 'On Not Three People: the Fundamental Themes of Gregory of Nyssa's Trinitarian Theology as Seen in *To Ablabius: On Not Three Gods*', p. 15-44 and Michel René Barnes, 'Divine Unity and the Divided Self: Gregory of Nyssa's Trinitarian Theology in its Psychological Context', p. 45-66.

difference between Greek speaking in the East and Latin speaking in the West.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, they claim that a substantial theological difference between East and West never really existed. This new trend has produced a variety of studies on the development of Trinitarian theology in Early Christianity, particularly on Augustine, his Christian predecessors, and the influences previous and contemporary Greek and Latin thinkers had on him.<sup>8</sup> The interest aroused by Augustine in particular in this new trend is justified by the fact that he was previously taken as the most important exponent of the “Latin” theology.<sup>9</sup>

Among the general reassessment of influences and interrelationship between East and West, there have been a number of fruitful studies on the relationship between Origen and Augustine. In the introduction of this work, I have briefly assessed the two scholarly trends which compare Origen and Augustine. Firstly, there are those studies which have tried to detect different instances of the influence of Origen on Augustine.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, the influence of Origen’s works on Augustine’s thought is not the main argument of my thesis, thus this problem has been addressed only tangentially. However, I have detected no influence of Origen’s *Commentary* on Augustine’s *Tractates*. Whether Augustine read some of Origen’s works in his youth or not, it does not seem to have influenced his exegesis of the fourth Gospel. Secondly, some scholars have also produced comparisons on single theological arguments or pieces of exegesis, trying to show differences and similarities between these two theologians. Among these works, it is certainly worth mentioning those of Lettieri,<sup>11</sup> O’Leary,<sup>12</sup> Ludlow<sup>13</sup> and Slotemaker.<sup>14</sup> My thesis fits into this latter historiographical trend.<sup>15</sup> Regardless of the influence Origen might have had on Augustine, these authors are so often chosen by scholars as a source of

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<sup>7</sup> On the debates following the council of Nicaea in the west and on the different of pro-Nicaean theologians see: Daniel H. Williams, *Ambrose of Milan and the End of the Arian-Nicene Conflicts*, Oxford 1995; see also: L. Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy*.

<sup>8</sup> See, among the many, M. Edwards, ‘Augustine and His Christian Predecessors’, p. 215-226; in the same volume (M. Vessey and S. Reid (eds), *A Companion to Augustine*), see also: Michael Stuart Williams, ‘Augustine as a Reader of His Christian Contemporaries’, p. 227-239.

<sup>9</sup> On Augustine, see in particular L. Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity*.

<sup>10</sup> See: *supra*, I.1.3.

<sup>11</sup> See: G. Lettieri, ‘Origene, Agostino e il mistero di Giuda’; Gaetano Lettieri, ‘Apocatastasi logica o apocalisse della carne? Origene e Agostino’.

<sup>12</sup> J. O’Leary, ‘The Invisible Mission of the Son in Origen and Augustine’.

<sup>13</sup> M. Ludlow, ‘Spirit and Letter in Origen and Augustine’.

<sup>14</sup> J. T. Slotemaker, ‘The Primity of the Father in Origen of Alexandria and Augustine of Hippo’.

<sup>15</sup> All the aforementioned authors will be discussed in this chapter.

heuristic comparison because of their major impact on subsequent theological traditions, the Greek eastern and Latin western respectively. Even if they do not totally encapsulate the later eastern and western traditions, we can say that understanding Origen and Augustine (and the differences between them) could help scholars understand those traditions better. Therefore, the juxtaposition of Origen's and Augustine's interpretation of the Trinity, the World and the Spirit according to their understanding of Johannine theology does not aim at proving any influence and contact between the two. Rather, through this heuristic comparison, this thesis aims at clarifying the different modes in which the two authors, who lived almost two centuries apart in very different cultural environments, interpreted and understood those Johannine themes.

In other words, I neither want to re-affirm the old East-West paradigm, nor do I want to study the possible influence of Origen's doctrines on Augustine. Rather, my heuristic comparison will contribute to scholarship by clarifying the thought of two of the most influential theologians of ancient – and, probably of all – times by investigating their pneumatology in light of the dualistic framework which they both derived from the Johannine Gospel. The aim of this comparative methodology that I am proposing in this thesis lies in a re-evaluation of the two authors' pneumatologies, but also in a new assessment of the Johannine derivation of their Trinitarian thought, soteriology, and conception of evil. Although these two authors lived in very different times and geographical contexts, they were nonetheless using the Gospel of John as the source of theological authority. Even if the pro-Nicene and anti-Manichaean concerns of Augustine differ greatly from the pastoral and anti-gnostic interests of Origen, both authors identify the fourth Gospel as the most important source of revelation for understanding the role of the Spirit, his place in the holy Trinity, his relation to the world and to human beings. Hence, the study of the centrality of the Gospel of John for the theology of Origen and Augustine represents a valuable contribution to the on-going debate regarding not only the theologies of these two great theologians, but also regarding the history of Christian pneumatology.

A balanced approach between the two historiographical trends – the Greek-Latin paradigm and the reassessment of pro-Nicene theology – should neither

overestimate the differences between Latin and Greek speaking patristic theologies, nor underestimate the importance of the different languages used by eastern and western theologians. In this regard, it is utterly undeniable that authors such as Origen had much greater influence on eastern writers – such as the Cappadocian Fathers – rather than on Augustine, who did not read his work in the original language. This consideration is not true for all the Latin Fathers – the most obvious examples of the contrary being Ambrose and Jerome. Nevertheless, the astonishing importance that Augustine’s theology gained in Western Europe in early medieval theology eventually results in the later estrangement of Latin and Greek theologies.<sup>16</sup> For this reason, my heuristic comparison will treat Origen and Augustine partly as representatives of two different theological trajectories. As this chapter will show, they do represent two opposite ways of interpreting Christian soteriology.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, these theological trajectories are not to be identified with Greek and Latin patristic theological speculations as a whole, but rather they should be seen as two different ways of interpreting the fundamental texts of Christianity. Some Origenian influence is present in many eastern *and* western theologians up to the present day. The same can be said for Augustinian influence.

Before analysing the differences between Origen’s and Augustine’s interpretation of John with regard to the Trinity, the world and the Spirit, it is worth remembering some basic similarities of intent between the two authors which I have shown in the course of this thesis - similarities which make the present comparison possible.

The first consideration comes from the very texts of Origen’s *ComJn* and Augustine’s *Trloh*. It is true that there are differences in literary genre (commentary and homily respectively) audience (learned Christians, such as Ambrose, and the mixed audience of Augustine’s dioceses) and extension

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<sup>16</sup> On the possibility that Augustine’s read Origen’s works in translation, see *supra*, I.1.3. In this regard see, in particular, the work of: G. Heidl, *The influence of Origen on the Young Augustine*.

<sup>17</sup> In this sense, even if Augustine’s understanding of Origenism is probably mediated through the trivialization of his thought that took place during the Origenists controversies, his reference to Origen as the most influential of ‘those merciful thinkers’ who support the idea of universal salvation in *City of God* reveals an opposite conception of the history of human salvation. See: *City of God*, XXI.17. When Augustine refers directly to Origen, he usually refers to his erroneous opinion regarding soteriology. See: *Retractations*, I.7.6 and 2.44. *On Heresies*, XLII-XLIII. *Unfinished Work against Julian*, V.7.

(*ComJn* was never finished and survived fragmentarily, while *Trloh* is complete). Nevertheless, both authors' works present a consistent interpretation of the Trinity which does not seem to undergo substantial change during the many years of writing. In Origen, the explanation of the relationship between Father, Son and creatures depicted in the first two books of the *ComJn* matches perfectly that of *ComJn*, XXXII.350-357, while the Spirit appears to have the same ontological position and soteriological role in all the books.<sup>18</sup> In Augustine, both the 'generative logic' based on the text of *Jn.* 1:1, 5:19, 5:26, 8:24, 16:13, 20:22 and the three keystones of his Trinitarian metaphysics – that is, the identification of God as *idipsum* and Being; the rule of the *quod habet hoc est*; the double procession of the Spirit – are consistently evident throughout the whole text. It is then possible to postulate that both authors understood their commentaries as coherent and consistent works in which their Trinitarian doctrines are explained according to the text of the Gospel.

The second consideration concerns Origen's and Augustine's own evaluation of the significance of the fourth Gospel for their respective theologies. In my analysis, I have shown that both Origen and Augustine explicitly think of the Gospel of John as the most important text of the Scriptures, the one where the divinity of Jesus is fully expounded. Origen defines it the 'firstfruits of all Scriptures', the text that allows all the Scriptures to become Gospel, according to his hermeneutical principles.<sup>19</sup> Augustine affirms the superiority of John the evangelist over all the others, thus declaring his Gospel the most sublime of all.<sup>20</sup> This consideration is important as it reminds the reader that neither *ComJn* and *Trloh* should be considered – as some scholars have considered them – as exegetical works from which to draw random quotations that fit inside a theological system based on more systematic works of the two authors – e.g. *On First Principles*, *On the Trinity*.<sup>21</sup> Nor should theological doctrines found in these treatises be considered "superior" or expressing the author's thought more fully than the ones found in the exegetical works. On the contrary,

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<sup>18</sup> The consistency of Origen's Christology and soteriology in the *Commentary on John* has been also observed by Jacobsen in the section of his monograph explicitly devoted to this text. See: A. C. Jacobsen, *Christ, the Teacher of Salvation*, p. 121-151.

<sup>19</sup> See *supra*, IV.1.1.

<sup>20</sup> See *supra*, III.2;

<sup>21</sup> Regarding Origen, see, for example, Greggs' treatment of the *ComJn* as less important than other works. See: T. Greggs, *Barth, Origen, and Universal Salvation*, p. 153 n. 9; On Augustine see: D.J. Milewsky, 'Augustine's 124 Tractates on the Gospel of John'. See also *supra*, I.1.1.



theological concepts expressed in these latter works should be held in the highest regard, as they represent speculation on the book both authors regard as the most important text of the Bible. Given the astonishing importance that biblical exegesis has for the two authors, this consideration should lead scholars to value doctrines expressed in these texts as much as – or, possibly, even more than – those expressed in the systematic treaties. While the latter better express an author’s system, the former are more able to express their theological intention.

The third consideration derives from the second and it explains both why it is so important to study Origen’s and Augustine’s doctrine of the Trinity in its relation to the concept of “the world” and why the commentaries on John are so important. The reason stands in the fact that both authors considered the study of the Trinity and its relation to created beings as the most important task a Christian can undertake. This task is only achieved through the study of Scriptures. Using the words of Jacobsen, the main intent of Origen’s exegesis and pastoral activity ‘is not about making the invisible God visible, but about making him understandable’.<sup>22</sup> This assumption has been confirmed by my investigation, which has shown how Origen’s soteriology ought to be considered as consisting of different steps of *noetic* and intellectual understanding of God. Salvation itself is the gradual ethical and noetic apprehension of the Son and of his relation to the Father.<sup>23</sup> Similarly, the study of the doctrine of the Trinity is everything but an intellectual *divertissement* for Augustine. When preaching to his audience, Augustine shows more than anything the driving urgency to save *souls*. There is no place in this or in any other work of his for intellectual triviality or random speculation for the sake of knowledge. On the contrary, according to Augustine’s own hermeneutic, the study of the Trinity benefits the reader with the grace of God which is poured into the hearts of believers, making them able to understand – or, more correctly, partially understand – the mystery of God.<sup>24</sup> Understanding the Trinity and its relation to the world means, therefore, entering the Trinitarian communion by participation in the Holy Spirit.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> See: A. C. Jacobsen, *Christ, the Teacher of Salvation*, p. 308.

<sup>23</sup> See in particular *supra*, IV.1 and IV.1.4.

<sup>24</sup> See *supra*, III.5.

<sup>25</sup> See in particular *supra*, V.3.3.

This comparative chapter is therefore focused on the three themes, towards which Origen and Augustine represent two different approaches: the understanding of the immanent Trinity, the dualism between God and the world, the proper role of the Holy Spirit. Regarding their understanding of the “immanent” Trinity, Origen puts forward a paradigm that understands the *participation* of attributes as the focal point of the oneness and Threeness of God; on the other hand, Augustine’s understanding of the Trinity uses a paradigm of *identity* to understand God’s self-relation. These two metaphysical constructions, each one deriving from a different understanding of the Johannine Gospel, have fundamental consequences when it comes to soteriology, that is, to the interpretation of the so-called “economic” Trinity. In this regard, Origen and Augustine have been accused of two opposite attitudes, both equally bad according to their detractors. While Origen has been accused by various scholars of drawing God too near to creation, Augustine, on the other hand, has been charged of building an unfillable abyss between God and his creatures.<sup>26</sup> The comparison in this chapter will demonstrate that both these accusations are misplaced. Moreover, it will show that the different uses the two authors make of the Gospel of John reveal the two authors’ intentions in tackling the problem of evil and understanding the connection between intra-Trinitarian relations and the world. The study of the role and function of the Holy Spirit is the key to understanding these problems. In this regard, the main difference between the two stands in their interpretation of the Gospel dualism between God/holy community and the world. According to the Trinitarian paradigm of *participation*, Origen presents a theology which generally smooths the gospel’s dualism by interpreting God’s salvific act as a gradual *transformation* of the world, which will eventually become fully spiritual and participate in God. Quite differently, Augustine, according to his paradigm of *identity*, tends to accentuate the Gospel’s dualism. The perfect unity and identity of the Trinity is instantiated in the Holy Spirit, thus establishing the absolute *separation* between Spirit and world. In short, the identification of different paradigms – *participation/transformation* for Origen, and *identity/separation* for Augustine – and the analysis of the authors’ derivation of these paradigms from the fourth Gospel represent the key contribution of my research to scholarship.

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<sup>26</sup> Both these accusations will be analysed in the course of this chapter and bibliographical references will be provided in due course.

## VI.2 The Spirit in God: Origen's and Augustine's Understanding of the "Immanent" Trinity in Their Commentaries on John

### VI.2.1 The Generation of the Son

In a paper first presented at the *Origeniana Decima* conference, Slotemaker proposed a comparison between Origen's and Augustine's concept of the "primity" of the Father.<sup>27</sup> The author affirmed that, contrary to what de Régnon's followers had asserted, no difference ought to be found between Origen and Augustine regarding the idea of the primity of the Father, that is, the doctrine according to which the Father 'takes logical and casual priority, though not temporal priority, among the Father, Son and Holy Spirit'.<sup>28</sup> Expanding on Slotemaker's conclusion – according to which 'both theologians focus acutely on the relational and scriptural language of Father and Son'<sup>29</sup> – my research has highlighted that, in their quest for a Trinitarian doctrine that solves the problem of the relation between simplicity of God, or his oneness, and the intra-divine relationships of the three persons, Origen and Augustine have three points of contact. First, both Origen and Augustine have been shown to build their Trinitarian discourse by focusing on the relation between Father and Son and having the text of John as their focal point.<sup>30</sup> Secondly, both authors uphold the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son from the Father, and they would agree in saying, in Widdicombe's words, that the Father-Son relation is 'distinct from and metaphysically prior to the relation between God and creation'.<sup>31</sup> Thirdly, both authors understand that the fact that the Father is called "father" implies the idea that he has a son and, therefore, both agree in considering the relationship between Father and Son as eternal and inherent to the very nature of the hypostases.<sup>32</sup> In other words, the Father is such because of the Son and vice-versa, but only the Father is logically prior to the Son.

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<sup>27</sup> J. T. Slotemaker, 'The Primity of the Father in Origen of Alexandria and Augustine of Hippo'.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 857.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 871.

<sup>30</sup> See *supra*, II.1.3 and III.4.

<sup>31</sup> Peter Widdicombe, *The Fatherhood of God from Origen to Athanasius*, Oxford 2000, p. 67. See *supra*, IV.2.1 and V.3.1.

<sup>32</sup> See *supra*, II.1.3 and III.4.2. However, the ontological implications of this relation on the metaphysical understanding of the two persons are very different, as I will show later in this chapter.

Nevertheless, my analysis has shown some basic differences in interpreting the Gospel of John which greatly affect the two authors' understanding of the Trinity. Beginning with the Father-Son relationship, it is worth saying that, firstly, while Origen derives most of his Trinitarian speculation from the verse of *Jn.* 1:1-3,<sup>33</sup> particularly from the fact that 'the Logos was with God and the Logos was God', most of Augustine's Trinitarian speculation comes from *Jn.* 5:26, 'For just as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself'. Both authors base their speculation on the idea of the priority of the Father. Nevertheless, their approaches are very different. On the one hand, Origen grants the appellation of God-in-Himself (αὐτόθεος) to the Father only, while Son and Spirit are made God only by participation, according to the distinction between ὁ θεὸς (God-in-himself, the Father) and θεὸς (God by participation, the Son).<sup>34</sup> On the other, Augustine affirms the idea that the Father is *principium* (*Jn.* 8.25) of the Trinity, but he also postulates the complete identity of *idipsum* and Being for all the three hypostases. In other words, while Origen believes that all attributes of God must be predicated *properly* of the Father only, Augustine postulates not only the sameness of attributes, but also a shared essence between Father and Son, affirming that, just as the Father is in-himself the *idipsum*, by generating the Son he granted him to be the very same thing that in-himself (not by participation) he is (*Jn.* 5:26).<sup>35</sup> The basic difference between the two authors' conceptions of the Trinity is then mirrored by their different theological concerns.

Origen's exegesis builds a system according to which he tries to solve the problem of the uniqueness of God and the ontological existence of each person of the Trinity by resorting to the idea of participation. While the oneness of God is located in the Father only, the Son and the Spirit could be properly said to be divine because of their perfect participation in the Father's being. This perfect participation entails the possession of all the attributes of the Father at their maximum level. Since the Son is subordinated to the Father from which he eternally receives everything that he has, I have defined Origen's

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<sup>33</sup> 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him'

<sup>34</sup> See *supra*, II.1.3.

<sup>35</sup> See *supra*, III.4.

subordinationism as an *ontological subordinationism of priority*. According to this idea, all attributes of the Father are predicated of the Son also, thanks to the perfect participation of the Son in the Father. Nevertheless, the unity and oneness of God is located *only* in the Father, as confirmed by the short creed Origen proposed commenting on *Jn.* 13:19 – ‘you may believe that I am’ – in *ComJn*, XXXII.187-189. There, the first rule of faith (‘First of all, believe that God is one’) is referred to ὁ θεός,<sup>36</sup> that is, the Father, while faith in the Son and the Spirit is relegated respectively to the second and third rules of faith.<sup>37</sup> On the other hand, Origen also wants to defend the absolute transcendence and ineffability of the Father. In general, Origen shows two different concerns: the first is to exalt the uniqueness of the nature of the Only-Begotten, that is, of the Son, beyond any other created being; the second is to defend the absolute transcendence of the Father above every other being, including the Son. In this sense, Origen’s speculation is driven by a genuine concern of harmonizing the special relationship between Father and Son presented from *Jn.* 1.1 with the repeated affirmation of the Father’s superiority (e.g. *Jn.* 14:28, ‘the Father is greater than I’). Therefore, the Father is ineffable and utterly incomprehensible. As such, while Origen deems it to be ontologically right to predicate to the Father any attribute properly, he also deems necessary to assert the fact that the Father transcends every attribute. Therefore, while the Son is light and truth, because by eternal participation in the Father he possesses both “light” and “truth”, the Father is both light and beyond light, truth and beyond truth. The main difference between the Father and the Son stands, therefore, in this ineffable and *meta-ontological* nature of the Father. Indeed, the Son lacks the ineffability of the Father. In any case, Origen does not regard ineffability as an ontological attribute. Indeed, by stating that the Father is beyond being, Origen asserts the Father in-himself could not be fully understood according to any ontological category. As such, in Origen’s reasoning, the fact that the Son lacks the ineffability of the Father does not make him ontologically *inferior* to the Father. Indeed, this characteristic of the Father of surpassing ontology itself could be possible regarded as an ontological characteristic. Therefore, while an ontological subordination of priority is affirmed, also a meta-ontological subordination is implied. This whole system, built by Origen to give an account

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<sup>36</sup> Πρώτον πάντων πίστευσον ὅτι εἷς ἔστιν ὁ θεός.

<sup>37</sup> See *supra*, II.1.2.

of unity and relation between Father and Son, rests, therefore, on the idea that the unity of God and the divinity of the three hypostases can be affirmed where two ontological entities possess the same attributes at the same level. In this way, Origen is able to affirm: 1) The ontological priority of the Father; 2) The ineffable meta-ontological nature of the Father (his being ineffable and over every essence; 3) The fact that the acts of will and power properly reside in the Father only, and are merely mirrored in the Son. In the Father-Son relationship as depicted by Origen, the Father acts in the Son, but the Son does not act in any way in the Father. Therefore, while the will of the Father is said to be the will of God *tout court*, the will of the Son is merely the mirror of the will of the Father. This one-way relationship differs greatly from Augustine's account.

While Origen starts from the undefiled and unknowable meta-essence of the Father and from his eternal generation of the Son in order to explain the uniqueness of God's being and will, this thesis has shown, against Marion, that Augustine explains the Father-Son relationship through the idea of *idipsum* and *Being*.<sup>38</sup> First of all, differently from Origen, Augustine's Trinitarian speculation in the *Tractates* always begins from the opposition between the true essence of God and the inadequate essence of creatures. In other words, when speaking of the Trinitarian relationship, Augustine's first concern is to show the ontological stability of God as opposed to the instability of the world, resulting in time and mutability. God is metaphysically superior to the world because he is self-sameness, *principium* and unchangeable Being. Reflecting on the idea of perfect stability and self-sameness of God, Augustine uses the concept of *idipsum* and Being in order to establish the identity of Father and Son. Augustine argues that it is not possible to predicate any attribute of God which is not already inscribed in God's essence. As such, not only attributes, but also actions are neither "substances" nor "accidents" that differ from God's essence, but rather are inscribed in God's very substance.<sup>39</sup> Therefore, Augustine explains that *to be*, *to be right*, *to be just* and *to know* are the same thing in God. As a consequence, God's actions are the same as his own essence. This

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<sup>38</sup> J. L. Marion, 'Idipsum', p. 167-189. See: *supra*, III.3.

<sup>39</sup> It is worth reminding the reader here that, in this thesis, the words "essence" and "substance" are used interchangeably. The reason of this choice stands in the fact that, although Augustine postulated a difference between the two in *On the Trinity* VII.5.10, he still used the two terms interchangeably in the *Tractates*. However, in my analysis I have made clear that he always used these terms as meaning "essence". See *supra*, III.3.

is particularly true insofar as the Trinity is concerned. Augustine is able to interpret the perfect identity in God of *knowing* and *being* as the key factor that explains both the derivation of the Son from the Father and the self-sameness of the two. This identity makes it possible to speak of the Trinity as perfect unity acting in a self-relation according to its own essence. This identity of attributes and being is expressed by Augustine as the rule of the *quod habet hoc est*. As a consequence, Augustine can affirm that the Son and the Spirit not only possess being just as the Father does, but that they *are* Being, just as the Father is. Building on the texts of *Jn.* 5:26 ('just as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself'), but also 8:19 and 16:13, Augustine affirms that, by being begotten, the Son not only has the same attributes of the Father, but he is the same as the Father. Hence, he is God not *in participating* in the Father, but *in himself*. This difference between *participation* and *identity* stands as the main difference between the two authors' Trinitarian discourse. In this regard, it is worth noticing that Augustine's rebuttal of Arianism is extremely focused on its alleged subordinationism. In a previous chapter, I have shown that Augustine's accusation is centred on the idea that Arian subordinationism breaks the unity of the Trinity for, according to Augustine, *perfect unity entails perfect identity*.<sup>40</sup> Therefore, Augustine affirms that the Trinity exists in reality only as a perfect unity. While Father, Son and Spirit exist as different ontological hypostases, God exists only as one being in reality.

In short, by contrast with Origen, for Augustine it is not possible to distinguish the Father and the Son by their power and being, but only by generation and mutual relationship. In his idea, God is simple because there are no differences between the persons and all three persons exist together as a unity. In Origen, the lack of ineffability of the Son and thus the possibility of understanding the Father as superior to the Son is the result of a subordinationism which sees in the Father the source of divinity and will. The Father must be ineffable and the Son must not. In Augustine, by contrast, the shared deity between Father and Son – that is, having same attributes – is not considered as a sufficient

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<sup>40</sup> See: *supra*, III.4.2. References to Arianism should not be taken as if I wanted to repeat the false accusation against Origen of being an Arian. My analysis has already made clear the differences between the two. Nevertheless, it is extremely interesting to notice that Augustine's criticism is focused on subordinationism as such, that is, against every theological system that entails the idea that Father and Son exist as separated entities in reality.

guarantee of the perfect unity of God; nor can Augustine accept the application of unity and self-sameness of God to the Father only, like Origen did.<sup>41</sup> The fault Augustine would have found in Origen's argument would therefore be that of considering the hypostases as ontological entities existing distinctly one from the other, instead of understanding them as existing only as a unity. Therefore, the difference between the two theological systems stands in the interpretation of the generation of the Son as establishing either the *participation* of the Son in the Father or his *identity* with him. Both systems are based on the text of the Gospel, particularly on the necessity of balancing the superiority of the Father with the equality between the Son and the Father. Nevertheless, the two authors put a different emphasis on different passages, thus building two very different Trinitarian metaphysics. However, the difference between the two systems appears even more clearly in their pneumatology.

## VI.2.2 The Procession of the Spirit

So far, I have analysed the differences between the depictions of the generation of the Son in Origen and Augustine. However, it is the conception of the Spirit's procession and role that marks the real difference between the two authors' Trinitarian theologies. In other words, it is in their pneumatologies that the difference between the paradigm of *participation* and that of *identity* emerges most clearly. In the case of Augustine, the Spirit is the ontological means that makes the relation of identity possible inside the Trinity. The Trinity exists as a unity because the mutual process of generation/being generated between Father and Son is instantiated in the person of the Spirit. As such, the Holy Spirit is described as the hypostatized common essence of the two. The procession from both makes the Spirit not only the instantiation of their common "generative" essence, but also of their mutual *love*, here understood as the eternal process of generation.<sup>42</sup> On the contrary, despite the importance of the

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<sup>41</sup> It is clear that the impossibility for Augustine of accepting such an ontological framework derive also from his pro-Nicene necessity of following the rule of the *Deus de Deo*. This rule is at the core of *Trloh*, XX-XXII, as well as in his second book of *On the Trinity* (particularly II.1.2) and in his *Arian Sermons*. On the homilies, see: William A Sumruld, *Augustine and the Arians: the Bishop of Hippo's encounters with Ulfilan Arianism*, London 1994. See also L. Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy*, p. 364-381.

<sup>42</sup> At the end of the eighth book of *On the Trinity*, Augustine seems to move away from his own analogy of the Trinity of lover-beloved-love stating that, through this analogy, 'what is sought



Holy Spirit in Origen's soteriology, the Spirit is not a fundamental actor in the intra-Trinitarian process. Being generated by the will of the Father through the operation of the Son, the Spirit has no role in the immanent Father-Son relationship, nor is the Spirit hermeneutically necessary to understand that relationship.

My analysis of the ontological role of the Spirit in Origen has shown that the Spirit proceeds from the Father through the Son in the same way in which all created beings proceed from the former through the latter. The Spirit is brought into being from the Father through the Son, according to the passage of *Jn.* 1:3: 'All things came into being through Him'. Therefore, this thesis has shown that, on the one hand, the Spirit should be understood to be κτίσις, in the sense that he has been brought into being through the Son; on the other hand, the Spirit is fully divine and part of the Godhead, as he possess all the attributes of the Father and the Son by means of participation in the Son, who administrates his hypostasis.<sup>43</sup> Therefore, the perfect possession of all the attributes of God results in the Spirit's divinity. I have defined this relation as an *ontological subordination of double priority*, since not only the Father, but also the Son is ontologically prior to the Spirit. The difference between the Holy Spirit and the rest of the created world is therefore located in the fact that the Spirit is able to conform himself to the will of the Father perfectly. Just as for the Son, the divinity of the Spirit comes from the fact that he shares the same perfect will: the will of the Father. In this regard, I have shown that there are two important aspects of the Trinitarian role of the Spirit in Origen's theology. First, the Spirit does not seem to have any role in the Father-Son relationship, apart from the

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(the Trinity) has not yet been found, but the place is now being found where it is to be sought'. See *On the Trinity*, VIII.10.14. After that, Augustine proposes a few "psychological" Trinities to elucidate the concept of the Trinity. Nevertheless, the persistent use of the metaphor of love in the *Trloh* should not be discarded as a "simple" way to explain the Trinity to his unlearned congregation. On the contrary, the metaphor of love remains the most important one in Augustine's Trinitarian thought for two reasons: first, his fidelity to the biblical (in particular, Johannine) assertion that 'God is love' (*1Jn.* 4:7) and that the Spirit is love; secondly, because the reason why this analogy does not perfectly reflect the immanent Trinity is that it is impossible to ascribe to a single person of the immanent Trinity a single role (that of lover or beloved), because in the Trinity every person acts in the same way as the other two. Nevertheless, this inconvenience is found in other psychological analogies as well (like memory-intellect-will). The appellation of love remains, therefore, the most important descriptor of the Spirit because it describes both the perfect process of *unity* and *communion* of the Trinity and because it also represents the means of unification of those who are justified in God. In this regard, see my analysis in *supra*, III.5.

<sup>43</sup> See: *supra*, II.2.1 and II.2.2.

one of being generated. Secondly, the Holy Spirit is neither called “Holy” nor called “Spirit” because of his Trinitarian relationship; rather, he is called Spirit in reference to his relation to the rest of the created world.<sup>44</sup> Origen’s interpretation is based on two key texts of the Gospel: the aforementioned text of *Jn.* 1:3 and that of *Jn.* 4:24, where God is said to be Spirit.<sup>45</sup> In particular, the comment on the verse of the prologue represents the most important contribution in our possession regarding Origen’s reflection on the divine role of the Spirit. Compared to the emphasis on the revealed – and, to some extent, unapproachable – nature of the Spirit found in *On First Principles* which many scholars have underlined, my analysis has shown how the *Commentary on John* is the most mature attempt to build a coherent Trinitarian metaphysics which assigns a specific role to each hypostasis.<sup>46</sup> In particular, it solves the dilemma over the created/divine nature of the Holy Spirit. As, in Origen’s worlds, it is impossible to have ‘even a suspicion of the existence of the Holy Spirit’ outside of the Scriptures, his reflection on the Spirit is indeed driven by the ‘firstfruit’ of the Gospels.<sup>47</sup>

Augustine shows a completely different understanding of the Trinitarian role of the Spirit. First of all, Augustine’s pneumatology is based on the text of *Jn.* 16:13-15, where the Spirit is said ‘not to speak of his own’ and to receive ‘what he hears’ from the Son.<sup>48</sup> It is worth reminding the reader that Augustine’s theology is built on the pro-Nicene assumption that the works of the Trinity are inseparable. Therefore, Augustine assumes that, since works of the Father and the Son are inseparable, they must be inseparable in essence, according to the doctrine of the *homoousios*.<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, since their essence is one and their works are one, then the whole Trinity, including the Spirit, is one in reality and in works. However, since Father, Son and Spirit exist in reality only as unity,

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<sup>44</sup> See: *supra*, IV.2.

<sup>45</sup> Regarding Origen’s interpretation of *Jn.* 4:24, see *supra*, II.2.1 and IV.2.1.

<sup>46</sup> For a study mainly based on *On First Principle* see, for example: Helmut Saake, ‘Der Tractatus Pneumatico-Philosophicus des Origenes in Περὶ ἀρχῶν 1 3’, in *Hermes* 101 (1973), p. 91-114.

<sup>47</sup> See: *On First Principles*, I.3.1.

<sup>48</sup> ‘But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you’.

<sup>49</sup> See: *supra*, III.4.2.

Augustine faces the problem of justifying the ontological existence of the three persons in a way that does not entail an accusation of modalism. For these reasons, he insists on their relational nature. As the Trinity is the eternal process of generation and being generated between the Father and the Son, the Spirit is depicted as the person which instantiates the communality of essence, action and being of the Trinity. The brilliance of this Trinitarian formula resides in the correspondence of the economic role of the Spirit with his ontological role in the Trinity. As the Spirit is the ontological bond of *love* inside the Trinity which holds Father and Son together, so he is the bond of love which allows creatures to be saved by entering into the Trinitarian communion. The three hypostases have, therefore, a relational nature, in the sense that the Father is Father insofar as he has a Son, and the Son is Son insofar as he has a Father. The *proprium* of the Spirit in the Trinitarian formula resides in his being the commonality of everything between Son and Father; as such, the Spirit is said to proceed from both. It is indeed in the procession of the Spirit that the Trinity reveals its true unity. While the priority of the Father is maintained as the ontological origin of the Trinitarian communion, the very relational nature of the Spirit indicates the perfect communion of the three persons according to a method that is not “descendent” but “circular”. Differently from Origen, there is not a one-way descending relationship between Father and Son, because they both share their generative nature in the procession of the Spirit, where their commonality of nature and being is evident. Previous chapters have shown how this Trinitarian system is based on the exegesis of *Jn.* 5:26, that is, the idea that the Father gives to the Son the possibility of having ‘life in himself’ and on *Jn.* 16, where the Spirit is administrated by the Son and the Father. In this sense, the relationality of Augustine’s Trinity, although mediated by his pro-Nicene concerns, carries the marks of Johannine theology.

The main difference between Origen’s and Augustine’s understanding of the Trinity comes, therefore, from the procession of the Spirit. It is worth reminding the reader here of Augustine’s discussion of this procession, where he asserts that, according to Galen’s principles of human generation, *filiius quippe nullus est duorum, nisi patris et matris*.<sup>50</sup> Because Augustine would deem it absurd

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<sup>50</sup> ‘For indeed no one is the Son of two except of a father and a mother’. For the discussion of the generative principles in late antiquity see: *supra*, III.5.

both to declare that the Son is the “mother” of the Spirit or that the Spirit is the second Son of the Father, Augustine explains that *Spiritus autem sanctus non de Patre procedit in Filium, et de Filio procedit ad sanctificandam creaturam; sed simul de utroque procedit (Trloh, XCIX.9)*.<sup>51</sup> According to the principles of *Jn. 5:26*, the Father has given to the Son the capacity of generating the Spirit just as he does. It is interesting to note that the conception according to which the Spirit proceeds from the Father to the Son, and then is sent from the Son to sanctify creatures describes exactly Origen’s doctrine of the Procession of the Spirit.<sup>52</sup> Although Origen does not say that the Spirit proceeds “into” the Son, but “through” the Son – thus explaining why the title of Only-Begotten is a prerogative of the Son – his doctrine of the Trinity shows a kind of pattern according to which the Spirit is merely a soteriological agent of the Son from whom he is sent for the sanctification of creatures. Hence, Origen’s subordinationist and descending interpretation of the Trinity appears very different to the “circular” interpretation given by Augustine. This difference is mainly located in their interpretations of the Spirit.

Through a close analysis of the two authors’ exegeses of John, this thesis has shown that differences in Origen’s and Augustine’s Trinitarian theology derive mostly from two factors: the different emphasis placed on certain passages of the fourth Gospel, and a different interpretation of same passages. In regard to the former point, the differences arise particularly from the passages where God is said to be Spirit (e.g. *Jn. 4:24*) and where the Spirit is said to help the Son in

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<sup>51</sup> ‘But the Holy Spirit does not proceed from the Father into the Son, and from the Son proceed to sanctify the creature; but he proceeds from both at the same time’.

<sup>52</sup> In this sense, it is possible to say that Augustine attacks any “descending” Trinitarian theology, not only that represented by Arians and Semi-Arians, but maybe also that of other pro-Nicene theologians, possibly also the Cappadocians. Regarding the problem of subordination among Trinitarian hypostases, there is no consensus among scholars whether the Cappadocian Fathers’ conception of the Trinity should be considered more similar to that of Athanasius or that of Origen. If the latter is true, as Harnack, Holl and Meijering maintain, Augustine might have sensed a problem in their Trinitarian speculations related to the “descending” attitude. Meesters, on the contrary, believes that the Cappadocians are much closer to Athanasius than to Origen. In any case, I think it would be extremely fruitful to compare the findings of this thesis with the fourth and early fifth century debates on the Trinity, with particular regard to the influence Origen’s *subordination of priority* had on the Cappadocians’ Trinitarian theology and on the perception Augustine had of the problem. See: Albert C. Meesters, ‘The Cappadocians and their Trinitarian conceptions of God’, in *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie Und Religionsphilosophie* 54 4 (2012), p. 396-413; Eginhard P. Meijering, ‘The Doctrine of the Will and the Trinity in the Orations of Gregory of Nazianzus’, in *Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift* 27 3 (1973), p. 224-234; Karl Holl, *Amphilochius von Ikonium in seinem Verhältnis zu den großen Kappadoziern*, Tübingen 1904. A. von Harnack, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*.

his salvific mission and to be administered by the Son (e.g. *Jn.16:13-15; Jn. 20:22, etc*).<sup>53</sup>

On the affirmation of God as Spirit, I have shown that Augustine can support neither the idea that to be “Spirit” is a contingent attribute of Father and Son, nor the idea that the Spirit is a universal of which Father and Son are participants. The reason for Augustine’s denial of this possibility comes from his reading of the Gospel affirmation about the Spirit as ontologically related both to the economic function of the Spirit in salvation and to his ontological functions within the immanent Trinity. The hermeneutical principles that drive Augustine’s interpretation of the Gospel are responsible for this reading which establishes a very new paradigm of Christian Trinitarianism. Consequently, as already wisely noted by Adam Kotsko – although his work is based on Augustine’s *On the Trinity* – Augustine deems the Spirit to be God in a very privileged sense, because not only “God is Spirit”, but the Spirit is also defined as coinciding with *love*, which is the proper definition of God in the Scriptures.<sup>54</sup> As the Spirit is unity in relation, that is, communion, so he instantiates in his person the entire divinity, which is indeed unity in relation. The depiction of the Trinity as the eternal *process* of generation and relationality represent the very essence of the Trinity and is fully understood in the Holy Spirit. In this sense, neither the Spirit is merely the ‘essence’ of the other two hypostases, nor is a contingent attribute of them.<sup>55</sup>

My analysis of Origen’s interpretation of these passages has shown that, on the one hand, Origen considered them as a sufficient proof of the divinity of the Spirit. On the other hand, Origen’s interpretation does not allow for a consonance between the “immanent” and “economic” reading of these episodes. In other words, I have shown that Radde-Gallwitz is right in considering the Spirit as an ontological agent rather than an activity, according to Origen.<sup>56</sup> Radde-Gallwitz’s analysis is based on *Jn. 3:8* ‘The Spirit blows where he wills’. Nevertheless, by means of Origen’s interpretation of *Jn. 4:24*, I

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<sup>53</sup> See in particular *supra*, IV.2.2 and III.5.

<sup>54</sup> Adam Kotsko, ‘Gift and Communion: The Holy Spirit in Augustine’s *De Trinitate*’, in *Scottish Journal of Theology* 64 1 (2010), p. 1-12.

<sup>55</sup> See in this regard the debate between Ayres and O’Leary analysed in *supra*, III.5.

<sup>56</sup> A. Radde-Gallwitz, ‘The Holy Spirit as Agent, Not Activity’.

have also demonstrated that although the Spirit is divine, he does not instantiate the essence of God in any way. When Origen has to explain why, according to John, “God is Spirit”, he firmly rebuts the idea that the appellative “spirit” could be taken to mean the essence of God, or the common essence of Father and Son.<sup>57</sup> As a consequence, he explains that God has to be understood as Spirit in the same way in which he is taken to be “light”. Just as God is light insofar as he illuminates the intellect, so is he spirit insofar as he gives the “spirit of life” to his creatures. This consideration is extremely important, as it reveals two ideas. First, it hints at the fact that the “Spirit” is not considered by Origen to be the essence of God: the Spirit has therefore a different οὐσία from that of the Son, who in turn has a different οὐσία from that of the Father.<sup>58</sup> Secondly, it shows that the hypostasis of the Holy Spirit is not so-called because of his Trinitarian relation, but only with reference to his soteriological action in the world. The Spirit is ‘Holy’ because he sanctifies creatures, and he is ‘Spirit’ because his essence allows him complete immateriality and participation, through the Son, in the deity of the Father. The fundamental difference between Origen’s and Augustine’s Trinitarian constructions, which I have analysed in this brief comparison, stands precisely in this argument, that is in how exactly the Spirit is understood to be spirit. While, on the one hand, Origen’s interpretation of the Gospel’s passage allows the interpreter to affirm that “the Spirit is God”, it still does not allow him to say that “God is the Spirit”. On the contrary, according to Augustine, not only the Spirit is God, but God is such because of the Spirit.

To conclude this comparative section on the immanent Trinity in Origen and Augustine’s interpretation of the Gospel of John, it is worth returning to the article by Slotemaker quoted at the beginning of this section. On the one hand, I would agree with him in considering both Origen’s and Augustine’s Trinitarian logic as deeply engaged with the relational and scriptural language of Father and Son, thus rebuking accusations of “essentialism” or “personalism” in their theology.<sup>59</sup> On the other hand, by contrast with him, I do not think it is possible to ‘bracket the procession of the Spirit from the Father and the Son’ off from the

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<sup>57</sup> See: *supra*, II.2.1; IV.2.1 and IV.2.3.2.

<sup>58</sup> See: *supra*, II.1.3 and II.2.1.

<sup>59</sup> J. T. Slotemaker, ‘The Primacy of the Father in Origen of Alexandria and Augustine of Hippo’, p. 871.

discourse on the primacy of the Father.<sup>60</sup> Indeed, the question of the priority of the Father cannot be properly understood if it is not put in relation with the question of the procession of the Spirit.<sup>61</sup> In the same footnote, Slotemaker quotes Ayres' claim that Augustine's doctrine of the procession of the Spirit from Father and Son is 'at its core a restatement of the Father's *principium* within the Trinity'.<sup>62</sup> My analysis has shown that, while I agree with both on the consideration of the Father's *principium* as one of the most important markers of Augustine's Trinitarian doctrine, the real difference between Origen and Augustine is found in their understanding of the procession of the Spirit. While the paradigm of *participation* propounded by Origen understands the Father as an utterly inaccessible being, in which the Son participates by generation and in which the Spirit participates only by participation in the Son, the paradigm proposed by Augustine postulates the identity of the three hypostases, thus making the Spirit the "privileged" hypostasis of God, for only in him the perfect communion of the Trinity is instantiated. For this reason, Origen has been accused over the years to be a crypto-Arian before the letter, Augustine of being a "modalist" or "essentialist".<sup>63</sup> My analysis has shown that none of these accusations have been proven to survive when put in the face of the Johannine exegesis at the heart of the two authors' Trinitarian systems.

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<sup>60</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 857 n. 8.

<sup>61</sup> Among scholars who still consider the primacy of the Father as the most important difference between Greek and Latin tradition see the two volumes by John Behr, *The Way to Nicaea*, New York 2001; John Behr, *The Nicene Faith: formation of Christian Theology*, New York 2004. Particularly about the primacy of the Father in Augustine, and the influence of the dogmatic pronouncement of the council of Nicaea on his thought see: John Behr, 'Calling on God as Father: Augustine and the Legacy of Nicaea', in G. E. Demacopoulos and A. Papanikolaou (eds), *Orthodox Readings of Augustine*, p. 153-165.

<sup>62</sup> L. Ayres, 'Sempiternus Spiritus Donum: Augustine's pneumatology and the metaphysics of Spirit', p. 147, n. 5.

<sup>63</sup> For an extensive bibliography on the accusation of Arianism against Origen see: R. Williams, *Arius: Heresy and Tradition*, p. 131-157. On Augustine, see: A. von Harnack, *History of Dogma* IV. On Augustine's alleged essentialism see: Jean Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church*, New York 1985.

### **VI.3 The Spirit and the World: The Relationship between the Trinity and the World in Origen and Augustine**

The previous section has shown that the main difference between Origen's and Augustine's understanding of the Trinity in their interpretation of the Gospel of John is to be found in two different paradigms for understanding the relation of the hypostases: one based on the concept of *participation*, the other on the concept of *identity* of the three hypostases existing together in reality only as a unity.

While the previous section has analysed the implication of the two paradigms for the understanding of intra-Trinitarian relationships, this section will show what consequences they have for the two authors' soteriologies. Before starting, however, it is worth freeing the field from a frequent misunderstanding regarding the relation between the interpretation of the Trinity "in-itself" and the Trinity "in the economy of salvation". By making this distinction, I do not want to assert that the two authors believe in a rigid distinction between the two. On the contrary, both authors derive their soteriology from the exegesis of the Gospel, where the intra-divine relation between Father and Son – and, at least to some extent Holy Spirit – is not rigidly divided from their works of salvation. Consequently, we must understand Origen's and Augustine's theological constructions with regard to the immanent Trinity and to the economic Trinity as intertwined. In other words, the distinction between the immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity is a scholarly distinction, which helps one to understand Origen's and Augustine's Trinitarian theology, especially their pneumatologies. Hence, I will show that the paradigm of *participation* described by Origen in regard to the immanent Trinity stresses how salvation is to be considered as a gradual process of *transformation* of what is now evil – that is, the world – through its gradual participation in the goodness of God, that is, through its participation in the economic Trinity. The Son and the Spirit work in this process of transformation, each according to his own nature. On the other hand, the paradigm of *identity* in Augustine's immanent Trinity – a Trinity which is understood as an eternal process of generation and procession – is essential to



his understanding of salvation as the *separation* of good from evil when one considers the work of the economic Trinity. It is then necessary for modern scholars to interpret the two aspects of the Trinity – both immanent and economic – together, in order to understand the theological motivations that guide the two authors in their speculations. If one does this, one can see that the main theological difference between the two soteriologies stands in the two authors' interpretation of evil.<sup>64</sup> On the one hand, Origen asserts the relativity of evil and the transitory nature of this world, which eventually result in the transformation of *this* world into the *noetic* world. On the other hand, Augustine's theology is built on his stunned dismay at the presence of evil in the world, which leads to a soteriology where the salvation of the elect, understood as the entering into the very Trinitarian communion of the Holy Spirit, is achieved only through the separation between what is "of God" and what is "of the world". The Trinitarian paradigms of *participation/transformation* and *identity/separation* rest, ultimately, on the two authors' metaphysical and existential understanding of this problem, expressed by the Johannine contraposition between the Jesus (and his holy community) and the world. Therefore, before analysing the *proprium* of the Spirit in the two authors' soteriology, this section will start with their interpretation of the Johannine concept of "the world".

### **VI.3.1 'He Was in the World; yet the World did not Know Him'**

According to an expression first coined by Bultmann, one of the main characteristics of the Gospel of John is that of presenting a 'dualism of decision' which contrasts with the 'cosmological dualism of Gnosticism'.<sup>65</sup> In other words, the message at the core of John's Gospel urges its listeners to a radical decision according to which one could either be 'born again' or remain in the grip of the demonic and corrupted world to which one naturally belongs.<sup>66</sup> This expression of dualism has been generally accepted by scholars although some, like Michaels, have questioned the idea that the main point of the Gospel should be found in "conversion", arguing that the accent of the Gospel is rather found in

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<sup>64</sup> In this regard I agree with G. Lettieri, 'Origene, Agostino e il mistero di Giuda', p. 130.

<sup>65</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, New York 1951, Vol. 2 p. 21.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 25.

“revelation”: ‘the coming of Jesus into the world simply reveals who belongs – and who does not belong – to his Father’.<sup>67</sup> In this regard it is particularly worth noting Pétrement’s opinion, according to which John’s Gospel is voluntarily contradictory in this regard, thus affirming both does in fact teach both the importance of free will for salvation, *and* the existence of a radical difference in nature between God and the world. In this sense, the world ‘is the principle opposed to God, even though it is not an absolutely first principle’, and such a contradiction in John’s Gospel should be interpreted as a testimony of a kind of dualism which is ‘nothing more than an extreme accentuation of transcendence’, where a ‘profound distinction between God and the world is found’.<sup>68</sup> Regardless of the scholarly discussion on the room left to free will by the fourth Gospel, scholars of both Jewish and Christian extraction have recognised the dualistic framework ruling the fourth Gospel, as well as the urgency of the choice that the believer is called to make. According to Reinhartz ‘the beloved disciple, takes his offer with utmost gravity and urges the reader to do the same. It is a matter of life and death, good and evil’.<sup>69</sup> In calling them to this choice, the author of the Gospel necessarily divides human beings into two groups: the believers and the “others”. This quite sectarian attitude has been recognised by many scholars who have in turn described the fourth Gospel as “countercultural”, “sectarian” and dominated by the radical contraposition between Jesus and the world. Gundry describes this attitude in a very lucid paragraph:

John not only leaves the world outside the scope of Jesus’ praying and loving and of believers’ loving. He also describes the world as full of sin; as ignorant of God, God’s Son and God’s children; as opposed to and hateful of God’s Son and God’s children; as rejoicing over Jesus’ death; as dominated by Satan; and as subject to God’s wrath.<sup>70</sup>

Although Bauckham and other scholars – such as Carson – point to the fact that there was hardly a Christian community in the first century which was not

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<sup>67</sup> J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, p. 42.

<sup>68</sup> S. Pétrement, *A Separate God*, p. 175, 172, 171.

<sup>69</sup> A. Reinhartz, *Befriending the Beloved Disciple*, p. 24-25.

<sup>70</sup> R. H. Gundry, *Jesus the Word according to John the Sectarian*, p. 63-64.

“countercultural” and “sectarian”, the point of Gundry’s analysis remains intact.<sup>71</sup> The fourth Gospel is utterly dominated by the contraposition between the goodness of the celestial Saviour, who comes “among his own” to save them, and the utterly perverse world which refutes his message and actively works for the death of Jesus and his disciples.

This radical dualism between the elect and the world has been the object of my research, which has unfolded Origen’s and Augustine’s interpretation of such dualism in their exegesis of John. As evidence of both authors’ high level of commitment to the text, my analysis has shown that in both Origen and Augustine the theological concept of ‘the world’ has a huge importance. In this regard, it is first worth underlining that both authors interpret the concept of the world as a *theological* category rather than as a strictly cosmological one. In other words, both authors are fully aware that the Gospel’s use of this category should not only be interpreted as referring to the physical structure of the universe, but also as the ethical marker of the distinction between God and sinners. This consideration is valid for both Origen and Augustine.

Despite the fact that Origen’s interpretation of the difference between the *perceptible* cosmos and the *noetic* cosmos is based on the equation of the physical or perceptible world with the cosmological one, this should not be taken as a denial of the Gospel’s idea of “the world” as a theological concept; rather the difference between the *perceptible* cosmos and the *noetic* cosmos depends on Origen’s metaphysical principles according to which, as rightly pointed out by Hengstermann, ethical choices ultimately result in cosmological

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<sup>71</sup> Richard Bauckham, ‘John for Readers of Mark’, in Richard Bauckham (ed), *The Gospel for All Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences*, Edinburgh 1998, p. 147-171. Arguing that the four Gospels were not written for distinctive communities, but for a wide circulation among all Christians, Bauckham claims that the Gospel of John was written by an author who was already in possession of the written version of the Gospel of Mark. Therefore, the text of John should be considered to be complementary to the Gospel of Mark. Against Bauckham’s interpretation see: Wendy E. Sproston North, who challenges Bauckham on the basis of his interpretation of *Jn.* 3:24 and *Jn.* 11:2. See: Wendy E. Sproston North, ‘John for Readers of Mark? A Response to Richard Bauckham’s Proposal’, in *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 25 4 (2003), p. 449-468. Regarding Carson’s interpretation of the “sectarian” attitude of John’s Gospel see Carson’s claim that the sermon on the mountain in Matthew’s Gospel is no less sectarian than John’s attitude. Donald A. Carson, ‘The Challenge of the Balkanization of Johannine Studies’, in Paul N. Anderson, Felix Just, Tom Thatcher (eds), *John, Jesus, and History, Volume 1: Critical Appraisals of Critical Views*, Atlanta 2007, p. 133-164.

positions.<sup>72</sup> In this regard, Origen's interpretation differs radically from that of his Valentinian gnostic opponents. In his rebuttal of Gnosticism, Origen has particularly Valentinian Gnosticism in mind.<sup>73</sup> While Origen's perceptible world presents different degrees of perfection according to each creature's use of free choice, gnostic cosmologies understand the difference between the world and the elect as referring to the difference in nature between those who are spiritual, psychic or hylic. In this sense, the anti-gnostic concerns of Origen are configured as a struggle for the defence of free choice against Valentinian determinism expressed by the fixity of the three natures.<sup>74</sup> Therefore, on the one hand, the Valentinian interpretation of the world results in a *cosmological* dualism, where the difference in cosmological degrees are interpreted as differences *in kind*. On the other, Origen proposes an ethical dualism, where differences in cosmological degrees are the result of different choices.

In this regard, Origen's concern to deny a *cosmological* dualism is similar to Augustine's anti-Manichaean interpretation. Although Augustine does not present a metaphysic where cosmological positions and ethical choices are mutually related, he still has to fight a heterodox dualism according to which the difference between world and elect is identified in the difference in nature between the two. Accordingly, one of the most important outcomes of this thesis has been the identification a deep anti-Manichaeanism in Augustine's interpretation of the Johannine concept of "the world". This contrasts with BeDuhn's opinion.<sup>75</sup> For as "dualistic" as Augustine's interpretation is, this dualism is never displayed in the form of a cosmological dualism, like Manichaean dualism. On the contrary, for Augustine, "the world" is a mere theological concept, while the original creation of God is always depicted as good. In this sense, there is no need for scholars to look for deep Manichaean influences on Augustine's psyche in order to explain his dualism, for his dualism is utterly Johannine, rather than Manichaean. Neither there is any need of a *cosmological* dualism to deny free choice.

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<sup>72</sup> Christian Hengstermann, *Origenes und der Ursprung der Freiheitsmetaphysik*, Münster 2016.

<sup>73</sup> In this regard see: *supra*, IV.2.3.1.

<sup>74</sup> Whether Valentinian determinism was the position held by Heracleon or whether Origen is imposing on Heracleon's text the opinion of the Valentinian Gnostics of his own time is not important here. In both cases, Origen felt that the best way to undermine his opponents' idea was to show the insanity of the three natures' idea. For this debate see: *supra*, IV.2.3.1.

<sup>75</sup> See: J. D. BeDuhn, *Augustine's Manichaean Dilemma*. See *supra*, V.2.1.

The Johannine provenance of Augustine's dualism is also proved by the various significations of the term "the world" which Augustine allows. Augustine understands the term "world" to mean both the physical world, that is, the good creation originally made by God, and *lovers of the world*, that is, those who live in the world according to their own *love*, and not according to the love of God. To these two categories, Augustine adds the existence of a *spiritual* world, that is, the world consisting of the elect pulled out from the wretched world by the redeeming action of God. However, Augustine almost always uses the term "world" in his exegesis to refer to the wicked world, that is, the collection of the lovers of the world.

Quite differently, my analysis has shown that, although Origen allows many meanings of the term "world", the most significant interpretation is established in the difference between the perceptible (αἰσθητὸς) and the noetic (νοητὸς) world.<sup>76</sup> The former is the system of heavens and earth and all their inhabitants, while the latter is completely immaterial and bodiless, representing the ultimate state of perfection that a creature can attain by the perfect participation in all the *epinoiai* – that is, the attributes – of the Son. This interpretation of Origen's conception of the world greatly differs from the one given by Tzamalikos. My interpretation perfectly mirrors Origen's interpretation of the perceptible Gospel as reflecting the noetic realities of the spiritual Gospel written in heaven. Both worlds (and both Gospels) exist in reality, but the latter perfectly exists according to the full participation in God, while the former only exists thanks to the ontological participation in the intellectual principles of the latter. Accordingly, the perceptible world is "below" in an absolute sense, as it is transitory and will eventually be saved by the redeeming action of the 'lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world'.

In this regard, it is worth noting, following Ludlow's argument, that Origen's and Augustine's reading of the concept of "the world" does not come from an alleged difference between a hermeneutical reading – that of Origen – and a

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<sup>76</sup> See: *supra*, IV.5.

theological or soteriological reading – that of Augustine.<sup>77</sup> On the contrary, in both authors it is possible to appreciate a strong connection between hermeneutics and theology. In Origen, the difference between the two worlds corresponds to the transformative power of biblical interpretation. Just as the capacity of the reader is able to transform the visible Gospel into the noetic, so the perceptible world becomes the figure of the noetic when the reader acquires the spiritual capacity to understand the hidden meaning of the text. In Augustine, the concept of the world is a sign which acquires theological significance thanks to the visitation of the grace of God that gives to the elect the understanding of the wickedness of the world and, consequently, pulls them out of the world.

While both authors understand the world as a hermeneutical and theological concept, their radically different readings of John start to emerge more clearly in their interpretation of “the world” as a negative concept. According to Origen, the “sin” of the perceptible world derives only from its imperfect participation in the fullness of the noetic world. Consequently, Origen shows an interpretation of evil as something which not only does not belong to the structure – that is, the substance – of the world, but is in-itself something that is alien to the deep rational nature of the created order. In other words, evil is a transient affection which will not affect the world forever; rather, it can be considered as an accident which will be eventually resolved. On the contrary, Augustine’s understanding of the culpability of the world is inherently inscribed both in the ontological essence and, most of all, in the irredeemably perverse will of the world’s inhabitants. On the one hand, the world is depicted as ontologically weak insofar as it lacks the marker of the true being. While God represents

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<sup>77</sup> See: M. Ludlow, ‘Spirit and Letter in Origen and Augustine’. Ludlow’s article does not take the concept of “the world” as its focal point of research, rather focusing on Origen’s and Augustine’s interpretation of Spirit and Letter (2 Cor. 3), showing that the common allegation according to which Origen read this opposition in an hermeneutical sense, while Augustine returned to its theological or soteriological interpretation is misplaced. On the contrary, she proves that ‘Origen’s approach is theological (not just hermeneutical), but his theology is much more focused on the text of Scripture. There is a sense in which, for him, scripture contains all of salvation-history and that beyond it there is nothing else that needs to be said. In Augustine, on the other hand, the signs of which scripture is composed are potent examples among others that exist outside the text’. The present comparison shows that a similar consideration can be done with the concept of “the world”. This theological concept is burdened in both cases with soteriological implications, although Origen’s exegesis is more focused on the *transformative* power of the text, while Augustine’s one on its role as a *sign* of the coming grace. In any case, Ludlow’s article is much more concerned with the hermeneutical and exegetical problem than my thesis.

perfect Being, the *idipsum* always identical to itself, the world, by its own finitude, is ontologically in need of being supported and kept in place by the will of God. Therefore, the world is able to exist only because of the good will of God who, through an act of grace, allows the world to subsist.<sup>78</sup> Nevertheless, the metaphysical weakness is not the core focus of Augustine's reflection on the world. Rather, the world is mainly depicted as *massa peccati* because of its inexcusable sins. The most important fault of the world is therefore found in its act of *will*. This will is irredeemably perverted since the sin of Adam, thus marking the radical separation between God and the world.

In this sense, Origen's and Augustine's interpretations could not be more different: on the one hand, Origen proposes an exegesis that aims at smoothing out the radical dualism of the Gospel, by focusing his attention on the redeeming action of the Saviour. If evil is not structural, it can be eliminated. In Johannine terms, Origen focuses more on the fact that the Saviour came to the world to save it, rather than on the hate that the world feels toward the Saviour. Consequently, he boldly affirms the eventual universal salvation of the entire world – including Judas and the Devil. On the other hand, Augustine's focus on the perversity of human will makes the world's sin inexcusable. In this sense, Augustine's dualistic theology accentuates the binary oppositions found in the Gospel (spirit/flesh; darkness/light; sinner/chosen; Saviour/world).

Origen's paradigm of *participation/transformation* is particularly visible in his interpretation of *Jn. 8:23* – 'You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world' – and *Jn. 17:24*.<sup>79</sup> The difference between those who are 'below' and those who are 'above' is taken by Origen to be the qualitative difference between those who live perfectly in the *noetic* world and those who are still part of the perceptible world. This same concept is expressed by the difference between κτίσις and καταβολή. While the first

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<sup>78</sup> However, the ontological weakness of the created order does not imply the idea that the world is *ontologically bad*. On the contrary, insofar as the world exists, it is good, for everything that has being, even if it is not true Being, is good. For this reason, from a mere metaphysical point of view, the world could not be said to be *wicked*, but only to be *weak*. Nevertheless, after the original sin, the ontological weakness of the world has become a *sign* of its corruption. This distinction is one of the main markers of difference between Augustine's and the Manichaeic cosmologies. See: *supra*, V.2.1.

<sup>79</sup> *Jn. 17:24*: 'Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the throwing down (καταβολή) of the world'.

represents the undefiled creation, born from God before sin and participating perfectly in the noetic world, the second is the ‘throwing down’ of that very creation after the fall. Creation as it is now is therefore identified with the καταβολή. It is worth noting here that, through the distinction between noetic and perceptible, κτίσις and καταβολή, Origen’s exegesis seeks to maintain the dualistic structure of the Gospel through an intellectualistic relativizing of its pivotal concepts. In this sense his exegesis is driven by, nor imposed on the fourth Gospel. A qualitative distinction between the noetic and the perceptible world is maintained, but the internal structure of Origen’s system understands this difference as merely temporal, as the perceptible world is eventually going to be saved by its participation in the noetic. In other words, the world is not deemed to be evil in its fundamental principles, but only in its imperfect participation in the noetic world, which in turn furnishes the principles (λόγοι) on which the perceptible world subsists. Therefore, it is the world *as a whole* which is the object of God’s salvific mission, as the entire world shall be eventually transformed and shall participate perfectly in the immaterial and bodiless life of the noetic world, that is, in all the perfect *epinoiai* of the Son.

By contrast, Augustine strongly opposes the idea that the world could now be considered to be the image of God in any respect, since his exegesis tends to distance the absolute gratuity of God’s grace from the world. Therefore, the “life” and “light” brought by the Saviour in *Jn.* 1:4 cannot in any way be understood by the world, as the world is no longer the image of God, but only the image of itself. In this regard, this thesis has shown that Augustine makes a sharp distinction between the world *in Sapientia Dei*, that is, in the original creative knowledge of God, and the world as it is now, that is, ruled by sin and pride. In this sense, I have also shown the difference between the two kinds of *salutes* that Augustine allows for creatures. On the one hand, there is physical *salus*, that is, the gift of being. This is given to the whole world, and it is a grace from God. On the other hand, there is the *salus* of salvation, which is not given to the world, but only to the few who are chosen *out of the world*. Against the opinion of some influential scholars such as Harrison, Ortiz and Guardini, my research has shown that this grace is identified by Augustine with the grace of re-creation, and it is deemed to be very different from the grace of creation



given to the whole world.<sup>80</sup> This is for two reasons: first, the grace of re-creation is exclusive; secondly, it marks the *separation* of the saved from the world. The Johannine logic which radically opposes the “few” elect from the “many” of the world is the ground on which Augustine builds his theory of salvation as the separation from the world of the few who are chosen by God and choose to follow Jesus.

Ultimately, Origen understands the world as formed by *rational creatures* hierarchically disposed according to their level of participation in the *epinoiai* of the Son. As such, the work of salvation is not represented by the estrangement of the saved from the sinning world, but rather as the universal salvation of *the whole world*. In this regard, it is safe to affirm that Origen’s dualism is much less dualistic than the fourth Gospel. Nevertheless, the dichotomies between elect and the world are mirrored in his idea of the relation between noetic and perceptible world. As the noetic world is described as completely immaterial and incorporeal, Origen understands salvation as purely a *noetic* movement of *participation* and *transformation*. Salvation is achieved by immaterial and bodiless means and consists in a purely noetic and intellectual understanding of the mysteries of God by participating in the noetic and bodiless world.<sup>81</sup>

On the other hand, Augustine’s speculation is focused on his stunned recognition of the omnipresent pervasiveness of evil in the world and in human affairs. Therefore, the world does not have the good characteristics of God’s creation, but is rather depicted as the place where *vitium pro natura inolevit*. Therefore, the very idea of re-creation implies a slight depreciation of creation. Creation itself is interpreted as an act of grace, a miracle, and an act of mercy. Nevertheless, the grace of creation is considered to be a route less than the grace of salvation. Through the latter grace one is separated from the world and becomes a sharer in the Holy Spirit. Augustine’s very interpretation of what being a “Christian” means is focused on the idea that the Christian is the one

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<sup>80</sup> These scholars believe that no substantial gap between grace given for creation and that given for salvation is detectable in Augustine’s thought. Consequentially, grace given for existence and that given for redemption is the same. See my discussion in *supra*, V.2.3.

<sup>81</sup> Of course, this does not mean that Origen is denying or undermining in any way the importance of incarnation. Indeed, it could not have been possible to undertake this noetic path without the incarnation of the Lord. Nevertheless, the path the believers are called to undertake is, in its higher level, entirely noetic.

who is *separated* from the many and brought out of the world. In this sense, Augustine plainly affirms that being a Christian, that is, being separated from the world and joined in the perfect *identity* with the Holy Spirit, is more important than being human. In other words, re-creation is more important than creation.

The difficulty of fully grasping the “deeper meaning” of the Gospel of John – that is, of presenting a coherent and unbiased exposition of the Johannine theology – makes it almost impossible for the modern interpreter to express a definitive judgment of which “paradigm” presented by the two authors is more faithful to the text of the Gospel. Such a judgment is irredeemably biased by each scholar’s understanding of the text according to the different trends of interpretation of the text which arose in the twentieth century and are still living today.<sup>82</sup> Ultimately, a clear answer to this question implicates a strong statement on what *Christianity itself* is about. As the analysis proposed in this thesis aims only at furnishing scholarship with a heuristic comparison of the two paradigms in order to further our understanding of Origen and Augustine, it is not my intention here to furnish a precise answer to this question. Nevertheless, it is worth saying that, if, with Gundry’s words, ‘what comes out [of the Gospel] is the magnitude of God’s love, not a partly positive view of the world’, it is possible to present some reflections on the two different paradigms.<sup>83</sup>

On the one hand, through the paradigm of *participation/transformation*, Origen is mainly concerned with building a theological system where the “good news” of the Gospel is interpreted as the universal gift of life and salvation to all creatures. Christianity itself and the very incarnation of the Saviour is therefore interpreted as the rational movement which allows creatures to better themselves through a process of constant transformation to the better, that finally ends in the universal salvation of all rational beings. A universal faith in reason and progress marks this system with the stigmata of a rational faith which is able eventually to overcome evil. The light which shines in the darkness is the core of the message, while the meanness and wickedness of the world is relativized as mere temporal phases for a cosmos which is

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<sup>82</sup> For a short introduction on these trends, from the patristic era to the modern interpretations see: M. Edwards, *John Through the Centuries*, p. 1-14.

<sup>83</sup> R. H. Gundry, *Jesus the Word according to John*, p. 64.

ineluctably marching on to eternal salvation. The 'magnitude of God's love' is the Johannine concept that drives Origen's speculation, and it is expressed in this universality which does not leave behind even the most wretched of all creatures. The weakness of this paradigm can be summarised in two points: First, it results in a certain reductionist idea of evil, which is no longer seen – as it was in the Gospel – as the pervasive and tragic condition ruling the whole world, but as a mere step to overcome. Secondly, the universal salvation *of the world* – rather than *out of the world*, as the Gospel would suggest – might result in the loss of the *urgency* of the choice the believer has to make. Following Jesus and renouncing to the world is thus no longer 'a matter of life and death', but a rational choice that can, as it were, be postponed without harming the final condition of the deciding subject.<sup>84</sup> In this regard, it would probably be unfair to accuse Origen to be utterly *oblivious* of the problem of evil, as his whole system is built to give a rational explanation to this problem. In other words, Origen's faith in rationality allows him to reflect on evil without being overwhelmed by it. However, it is for the reader of this thesis to decide whether or not reflecting on evil and not being overwhelmed by it is in itself a sign of obliviousness.

On the other hand, Augustine's paradigm of *identity/separation* is mainly concerned with building a theological system which accounts for the distressing and all-pervading presence of evil in the world. In this sense, his faithfulness to the text stands in considering the world as the utterly dark maze which is ruled by the Devil and is only capable of hating and murdering. Rather than considering evil as a transient accident, Augustine's reflection is completely focused on the horrified contemplation of the mystery of evil. Therefore, Augustine's solution does not aim at giving a reassuring answer to the reason for the presence of evil, but rather at proclaiming the incomprehensible love of God for those human beings which he came to save by descending into the world. In this sense, salvation is intended as *separation* because it is in no way the salvation of the world, but rather salvation *out of the world*. This salvation is then interpreted as the removal of a few elect from the world. The 'magnitude of God's love' – that is, the main theme of the Gospel of John – shines, therefore, exactly in the absolute gratuity of salvation, which is given to human beings only because of God's incomprehensible love. Contrarily to Origen, the descent of

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<sup>84</sup> A. Reinhartz, *Befriending the Beloved Disciple*, p. 25.

the saviour cannot be justified with a partially positive view of the world, but only as an act of pure love.<sup>85</sup> Augustine's system is therefore built to urge human beings to recognise the wickedness of their hearts and the perversity of the world. In this sense, the choice that human beings are called to make is as *urgent* as it is *decisive*. On the other hand, the corruption of world makes it impossible for the world itself to be saved by its own strength – or rationality.

While some would accuse Origen of holding the problem of evil in low regard, Augustine has to respond to the charge of not presenting any reason for the choice God makes of saving some human beings over others.

### **VI.3.2 The Spirit in the World**

The comparative analysis I have carried on so far has shown points of difference and of convergence between Origen's and Augustine's ways of understanding of the Trinity, with a particular focus on the Spirit, and their interpretation of Johannine dualism between God and the world. Before starting the last comparison on the proper role of the hypostasis of the Spirit in the world, it is worth reminding the reader, once more, that the structure of this thesis, which divides its analysis into an examination of the "immanent" and the "economic" Trinity does not entail a rigid separation of the two in Origen's and Augustine's theology. On the contrary, my analysis has shown that, on the one hand, understanding the ontological role and function of the Spirit in the "immanent" Trinity is crucial to understanding his soteriological agency; on the other, the very understanding of the "immanent" Trinity by the two authors is closely related to their soteriological concerns. This is true both for Origen and for Augustine, although in very different ways. In the thesis, I have argued that the link between Trinitarian thought and soteriology is particularly visible in the two authors' pneumatologies. In this last section, I will therefore carry on the comparison on the relation between the Son, the Spirit and the world.

In an article published in the last year of the past century, O'Leary proposed a comparison between the "invisible mission of the Son", that is, the works of the

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<sup>85</sup> See: *supra*, V.1 and V.2. See also: R. H. Gundry, *Jesus the Word according to John*, p. 64.

Son in the world as a result of his sending from the Father, in Origen and Augustine. O’Leary identifies different activities of the Son in the world. In particular, he focuses on four: illumination of rational creatures, appearance to the Patriarchs, indwelling in the prophets and incarnation. Then O’Leary states that, while Origen interprets these activities of the Logos as reflecting different *degrees* of presence of the Son in the world, Augustine understands these activities as different *modes of presence* of the Son.<sup>86</sup> Accordingly, while Origen understands the different presence of the Son in these activities as a difference *in degree*, Augustine understands it as a difference *in kind*. Therefore, Origen is the proponent of a Christology of continuity, since his soteriology is based on the level of participation of the soul in the very Logos. The link between mission of the Son in the world and his procession from the Father is therefore very tight. As such, the difference between the activities of the Logos, just as the difference between rational beings, depend only from a different degree of participation (or presence) of the Logos. Contrariwise, Augustine presents a tension between two opposing possibilities: the understanding of the Son’s mission as reduced to a mere external *apparition*, or an appraisal of his mission as the external *manifestation of the procession* of one person to another in the immanent Trinity.<sup>87</sup> The latter possibility is the one that O’Leary declares to be the “Origenian” solution. Anyway, O’Leary believes that this tension is resolved, in Augustine’s account, in favour of the former. Thus, O’Leary accuses Augustine’s soteriology of denying a strong connection between mission and procession.<sup>88</sup>

In this regard, O’Leary fits into a debate that has torn Augustine scholarship apart for at least a century. On the one hand, scholars like Schindler (and O’Leary himself) maintain that there is only an analogical relationship between mission and procession in Augustine’s thought. Therefore, the mission of the Son and the Spirit in the world ought to be understood as a mere indicator and

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<sup>86</sup> J. O’Leary, ‘The Invisible Mission of the Son’, p. 605.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 612.

<sup>88</sup> Although O’Leary recognises that Augustine once presents – in *On the Trinity* IV.27-29 – the idea of the *mitti est cognosci*, which the author defines an Origenian theme, he still thinks that this theme does not have in Augustine the same strength that it had in Origen, due to the dogmatic constraint of his pro-Nicene theology.

signifier of the intra-Trinitarian theology.<sup>89</sup> On the other, the opposite accounts firstly proposed by Schmaus,<sup>90</sup> then updated and developed (albeit with some differences) by Arnold<sup>91</sup> and Studer,<sup>92</sup> interpret Augustine's account of mission to be closely connected to that of procession. As a consequence, in Schmaus' words, 'the sending is not only an eternal procession, but an eternal procession with external manifestation'.<sup>93</sup> In addition to fitting into the first line of scholarship, O'Leary also backs the criticism proposed by Harnack<sup>94</sup> and Scheffczyk,<sup>95</sup> according to whom, by differentiating between the immanent and the economic Trinity, Augustine's Platonist worldview irredeemably de-potentiates the relational value of biblical revelation. Therefore, O'Leary states that Augustine 'fails to close the gap created by the sign-signified, image-archetype pattern to biblical relationship between God and his creatures'.<sup>96</sup> Finally, O'Leary assumes that Augustine's inability to back the 'Origenian continuity between immanent and economic Trinity', identified with the *mitti est cognosci* theme, is due to his strong commitment to Nicæan orthodoxy and to his own Platonist schema of image-archetype.<sup>97</sup> However, all these accusations follow from the first one, directed toward both Origen and Augustine, of being subjugated to 'the governing constraint of a metaphysical framework in which the dyads of sensible/intelligible, temporal and eternal, intervened as supreme explanatory principles at every moment, scarcely allowing the phenomena

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<sup>89</sup> See: Alfred Schindler, *Wort und Analogie in Augustins Trinitätslehre*, Tübingen 1965, p. 144-145.

<sup>90</sup> Schmaus is one of the boldest assertors of the strict connection between mission and procession in Augustine. See: Michaël Schmaus, *Die Spannung von Metaphysik und Heilsgeschichte in der Trinitätslehre Augustins*, in Frank Leslie Cross (ed), *Studia patristica* 6, Berlin 1962, p. 503-518.

<sup>91</sup> J. Arnold, 'Begriff und heilsökonomische Bedeutung der göttlichen Sendungen in Augustinus' *De Trinitate*'. Arnolds builds on Schmaus' works but, differently from the latter, does not interpret mission and procession as the very same thing, but rather sees the former as depending and existing together with the latter.

<sup>92</sup> Studer understands the 'temporal economy', that is, the soteriological role of the Trinity in the world, as a symbol of the 'eternal theology', that is, of Trinitarian relations. See: B. Studer, 'History and Faith in Augustine's *De Trinitate*'. Regarding Augustine's interpretation of the Trinity see also: B. Studer, *Augustins De Trinitate. Eine Einführung*; Basil Studer, 'Augustins De Trinitate, eine christliche Botschaft', in *Augustinianum* 45 2 (2005), p. 501-517; Basil Studer, 'Augustins De Trinitate in seinen theologischen Grundzügen', in *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie Und Theologie* 49 (2002), p. 49-72.

<sup>93</sup> M. Schmaus, *Die psychologische Trinitätslehre des hl. Augustinus*, p. 164.

<sup>94</sup> A. von Harnack, *History of Dogma* II.

<sup>95</sup> See his remarks in Johannes Feiner and Magnus Lohrer (eds), *Mysterium Salutis Grundriss Heilsgeschichtlicher Dogmatik. Band II. Die Heilsgeschichte vor Christus*, Einsiedeln 1967, p. 204.

<sup>96</sup> J. O'Leary, 'The Invisible Mission of the Son in Origen and Augustine', p. 620.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 620.

behind *Jn.* 1:14<sup>98</sup> to unfold their significance freely'.<sup>99</sup> Despite such sharp criticisms of Augustine's Trinitarian construction, O'Leary recognises *passim* the presence of the idea of an intra-Trinitarian sending and the idea that mission reveals procession precisely in Augustine's *Tractates on John*, but he states that 'the full Origenian resonance of the *mitti est cognosci* motif are absent'.<sup>100</sup>

This consideration is, I think, of the utmost importance for my argument. First, my analysis of Origen's and Augustine Trinitarian thought in their interpretation of the Gospel of John reveals the intimate Johannine logic which governs the construction of their theological systems. For this reason, the accusations cast against Augustine by Harnack, Rahner, O'Leary and others, of creating an unbridgeable gap between immanent and economic Trinity fails to see the main point of his theological construction. Something similar can be said of the accusation thrown against Origen that he does not allow enough difference between God and creation. The paradigms of *participation/transformation* and *identity/separation* respond, in both cases, to a genuine Johannine concern to understanding the relation between Father, Son and Spirit and, most of all, to connect this relation with the overwhelming problem of tackling evil. Secondly, even if some truth could be found in the accusation of interpreting the Gospel of John according to metaphysical categories derived from Greek philosophy, rather than from the Bible itself, I think it is more important to recognise the intellectual effort that the two authors took in harmonising their understanding of the immanent Trinity with the economic one. Nor it would be fair to ask these authors to interpret the text according to the intellectual categories developed at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Thirdly (and most importantly), regarding the problem of the mission – that is, of the connection between the intra-Trinitarian relationship and the soteriological agency of each hypostasis in the world – my analysis has shown how reductive it would be to interpret the soteriology of both authors without taking into full account their pneumatologies. O'Leary's argument barely considers the role of the Spirit in the relation between the Trinity and the world. In this regard, I think

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<sup>98</sup> 'The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth'.

<sup>99</sup> J. O'Leary, 'The Invisible Mission of the Son in Origen and Augustine', p. 621.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibidem*, n. 79 p. 619.

the lack of emphasis on their pneumatologies results in overstating the two authors' metaphysical concerns without taking full account of their relation to soteriology. On the contrary, the close study of their doctrine of the Spirit in the living context of Johannine exegesis has shown that it would not be fair to accuse Origen of divinising creatures – and, in turn, of making God a creature – or to accuse Augustine of separating God too much from creation, as his interpretation of the role of the Spirit in the *Tractates* is mostly based precisely on the relation between internal procession and external manifestation.<sup>101</sup> The main difference between the two authors is that, while Origen understands the connection between intra-Trinitarian relationships and the world as a matter of *transformation* by the creatures' *noetic* participation *subsisting* in the Holy Spirit, Augustine identifies in the Holy Spirit himself both the immanent and economic means by which creatures are *separated* from the world and enter in the *unity* of God's contemplation.

The first point of coincidence between the two authors stands in the affirmation that the works of the Trinity are inseparable. According to the canons of Nicaea, Augustine deems this trope to be a firm catholic teaching which cannot be challenged, but only explained. Similarly, though for different reasons, Origen's affirmation in *On First Principles* I.3.7 that *nihil in Trinitate maius minusve dicendum est* ought to be interpreted in the sense that all three hypostases cooperate in the work of salvation. The Trinity works together in the salvation of the world. Therefore, the difference between the two authors ought to be found in the fact that, while Augustine explains this common work as resulting from the unity of the Trinity in reality, Origen understands it as depending on the very substance of each person. In other words, according to Origen, every person exists on his own and has a distinctive essence. According to their essence, each person performs a different soteriological role. Quite differently, according to Augustine, the Trinity works as a unity because it *exists in reality* only as a unity. In such a Trinity, each person has a different role only in relation to the other persons. Therefore, while both authors think that each person of the Trinity has a different role in salvation and yet the Trinity works together as a unity, Augustine states that every person performs a different work only because of the immanent relations between the hypostases. Origen, on the

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<sup>101</sup> See *supra*, II.2.2; III.5; IV.2.4.



other hand, differentiates the works of the various hypostases by their own ούσίαι.

Regarding the work of the Father and Son, Origen postulates the idea that the Father can have no relationship to the world which is not mediated by the Son. This fact depends on his ineffable and meta-ontological nature, which is beyond-essence. Therefore, the Father is the source of divinity and divine *energeia* which is known only through the Son. According to the passage of *ComJn*, II.77, Origen deems every hypostasis to have a different soteriological role according to his own nature. Therefore, the Father is the one providing divinity and *energeia*, the Son administrates the gifts (through his *epinoiai*), the Spirit is the one in whom the elect subsist. This division resembles that in *On First Principles* I.3, where the Father provides being, the Son rationality and the Spirit holiness. As noted by Ziebritzky, this division implies a certain degree of subordinationism.<sup>102</sup> Nevertheless, my analysis has shown that this subordinationism ought to be intended as a mere *ontological subordinationism of priority*, as both the Son and the Spirit participate perfectly in the will and attributes of the Father, differently to the creatures, for whom an *ontological subordinationism of superiority* is detected. With regard to the Son, Origen understands his very hypostasis to be instantiated in the *epinoia* of Wisdom, which represents the perfect participation of the Son in the Father. As such, the Son is Wisdom in himself and Logos to the world. Consequently, Origen considers salvation to be the perfect noetic participation in the higher *epinoiai* of the Son, particularly the Logos. This noetic participation allows the saved to attain a certain unity with God. Nevertheless, this unity is always attained *through* the Son, as it is possible for no creature – including the Holy Spirit – to gaze directly on the Father. As the *logikoi* are generated through the Son and have their name according to the natural participation in his rationality, so their salvation is a matter of the Son's agency.

While in Origen the Father is merely known by the Son, thus establishing a mutual relationship which is merely epistemic, in Augustine the Father exists with the Son and the Spirit as a unity. Therefore, the actions of the Trinity are

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<sup>102</sup> H. Ziebritzki, *Heiliger Geist und Weltseele: Das Problem der dritten Hypostase bei Origenes, Plotin und ihren Vorläufern*, p. 207-215.

inseparable insofar as they are performed by the one God. Regarding the role of the Son, my analysis has shown that, in the *Tractates*, Augustine is mainly focused on the very act of the incarnation and on the unity of the persons in Christ. While the act of re-creation is attained through the human part of Christ, which makes it possible for human beings to be saved, Augustine focuses a lot on the unity between the Son of man and the Son of God. Such unity exists by grace, that is, by predestination before the constitution of the world. This unity is therefore obtained in the Holy Spirit and, as such, it is the prototype for the unity that the elect will obtain *in* and *by* the Holy Spirit. Hence, in the person of Christ, the separation between chosen human beings and the world is shown by the grace of the Holy Spirit.

One of the main differences between Origen's and Augustine's soteriology is therefore found in the relation between Christology and pneumatology. In Origen, incarnation is a matter of participation of Jesus' soul in the Son – thus also representing his full participation in the noetic world. For human beings, this noetic participation is obtained only by participating in the spiritual substance of the Holy Spirit. In Augustine, on the other hand, the act of incarnation reveals the relational nature of each hypostasis: the Son is the one in whom the unity of the persons happens, but this unity is possible only because of the relational nature of the Holy Spirit, which is unity itself.

These considerations are crucial for understanding the relation between the Holy Spirit and the world. In my analysis, I have shown that the principle guiding Augustine's Trinity is operative both for the economic and for the immanent Trinity, and can be summarised in the formula: *si individuum caritatem, perfectam unitatem*.<sup>103</sup> The Spirit is the same agent in God and in human beings, as he is the agent of perfect unity for both. Accordingly, Augustine understands the Spirit's *proprium* in soteriology as being the agent of salvation itself, because, just as he furnishes the ontological means through which the Trinity is one, so he instantiates the unification between God and the elect. The

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<sup>103</sup> Trloh, XVIII.4. *Quare, inquit? et tu non duos deos dicis aequales sibi? Hoc ego non dico: aequalitatem enim istam sic intellego, ut ibi intellegam etiam individuum caritatem; et si individuum caritatem, perfectam unitatem. Si enim caritas quam misit hominibus Deus, de multis hominum cordibus facit cor unum, [...] quanto magis Pater Deus et Filius Deus in fonte dilectionis Deus unus est?* In this regard see *supra*, V.3.3.

so-called “unbridgeable gap” evoked by some scholars is therefore filled by the very procession of the Holy Spirit. In this regard, Augustine explicitly criticises any conception according to which the Spirit proceeds from the Father into the Son and then from the Son to sanctify the creatures. In other words, Augustine cannot accept any Trinitarian doctrine according to which the Spirit is only an agent of sanctification of creatures with no role in the Father-Son relationship. Therefore, he affirms that the name “Spirit” is due to his Trinitarian procession and is perfectly mirrored in his soteriological agency. This conception is reflected in Augustine’s pervasive use of the language of love. The Spirit is *love* insofar as he is the *bond*, unity for the chosen and separation from the world. As such, the Spirit is love insofar as he gives to the chosen the knowledge of the Father, the Son and their common unity. Augustine’s denomination of the Spirit as *love* should, therefore, be taken *literally*. As love, both in the immanent and economic Trinity, he is the ontological means that reconciles God with his creatures.

On the other hand, Origen presents a system where the Spirit proceeds from the Father through the Son. The Son is then responsible for the administration of the hypostasis of the Spirit which, in turns, proceeds to sanctify the creatures. In this sense, Origen’s account could be said to be closer to the Gospel of John. According to the different characteristics of Son and Spirit, Origen presents a soteriology which firmly distinguishes the role of the Spirit from that of the Son. Participation in the Spirit is therefore described as an ontological participation in the substance of the third hypostasis, but such participation is not permanent, in the sense that it can be lost. Nevertheless, this participation is absolutely necessary in order to attain salvation, as it instantiates the cosmological change for each and every creature which obtains a higher – or lower – understanding of the noetic aspects of the Son. By postulating the existence of a human spirit which works as the ontological capacity of the soul for participating in the Holy Spirit, human beings become “one spirit” with God. Thus, the human spirit is only capable of good things because of its close connection with the Holy Spirit, through which the elect *subsist* in God. Nevertheless, while the elect attain a *substantial* participation in the Spirit, participation in the Son is described as the *noetic/rational* understanding of his different aspects. Consequently, the lack of reference to participation in the Spirit in Origen’s eschatology should not be

taken as proof of the irrelevance of the Holy Spirit in his soteriology, as Hauschild and others took it to be.<sup>104</sup> On the contrary, Origen describes the eschatological union with God as a participation in the Son, not in the Spirit, because this participation requires a perfect – or, at least, more perfect – knowledge of all the aspects of God. These aspects are apprehended by creatures in the Son, not in the Spirit. Nevertheless, the Spirit plays a crucial role, as he gives to the creatures the spiritual substance through which they become able to understand God.<sup>105</sup>

Ultimately, this thesis has shown how the differences between Origen's and Augustine's conceptions of the Spirit, his role in the intra-Trinitarian relationship and his role in soteriology are greatly influenced by their exegesis of John. The paradigms of *participation/transformation* and *identity/separation* which I have spotted in this thesis have been shown to be derived from, not imposed on, each author's reading of the text. In both cases, the focus on the Johannine concept of the world in its connection with the Father-Son-Spirit relation signals a driving soteriological concern at the ground of the two authors' theological constructions. In this regard, this thesis has also shown the close link, in both Origen and Augustine, between Trinitarian theology and soteriology. Therefore, the *ontological subordination of priority* presented by Origen, just as the double procession of the Spirit as the basis of the Trinitarian communion for Augustine do not represent mere "metaphysical technicalities", but they are both the basis and, as it were, the consequence of the two authors' driving soteriological concerns. It's all about saving souls, not about toying with complex logical concepts. In both cases, the exegesis of the Gospel has been shown to be not only legitimate, but extremely coherent as well. While Origen understands the sending of the Spirit as a *gift* coming from God *to the world*, Augustine interprets it as the *gift of love*, which separates the elect – who love in a different way – *from the world*. This work of separation, which is not seen in this life, is intended as a judgment of separation operated in the Holy Spirit by the coming of Christ. Therefore, while Origen sees the gift of the Spirit as the transformation of the world which ultimately leads the elect to the contemplation

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<sup>104</sup> W. D. Hauschild, *Gottes Geist und der Mensch*, p. 86-150; W. D. Hauschild and V. H. Drecoll, *Pneumatologie in der alten Kirche*.

<sup>105</sup> In this regard see *supra*, IV.2.3 and IV.2.4.

of God, Augustine understands it as death to the world and life in God. In this sense, the Spirit is never mingled with the world, and the world will never see nor understand the Spirit, as in order to understand the Spirit one must possess the grace of the Spirit. Ultimately, Augustine understands the Spirit as the agent of unity, that is, the person who reveals unity and relation of God and in God. Being the agent of unity, the Spirit is also the marker of separation.

Rather than being taken as representatives of the “eastern” and “western” paradigm of Christianity, these two authors’ doctrines and “paradigms” have been analysed as two theological trajectories of Christian thought that, driven by the spiritual Gospel, deal with some of the most important Christian theological concerns of all time: how to interpret the dualism between God and the world, how to tackle the problem of evil, how the Spirit of God is present in the world and, ultimately, how to attain salvation.



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