The Gift of God is Love: Augustine’s Thoughts on the Holy Spirit and their relation to the *filioque* Controversy

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# Introduction

In this book, I set out to understand St. Augustine’s thoughts on the Holy Trinity

and, more specifically, his understanding of the Holy Spirit. Augustine is credited as the inspiration for the Western Church’s addition to the Nicene Creed which has furthered the divisions between Eastern and Western Christianity for more than a millennium.

I will first set out the doctrinal controversy as it stands now. It will then go to the source of this controversy (Augustine) in orderto determine whether the foundation of the ­doctrine of the *filioque* supports or clashes with the claims of its most vocal critics. That means looking at Augustine of Hippo’s pneumatology (study of the Holy Spirit) in greater depth than has previously been done.

Augustine’s creedal and ecclesiastical debts, along with his consistent defense of the monarchy of the Father, compose both the initial foundation upon which his pneumatology can develop and the bounds within which he articulates the Holy Spirit’s identity and procession. *De fide et symbolo* (On Faith and Creed) and the early books of *De Trinitate* provide us this foundation. The center of Augustine’s pneumatology is the Holy Spirit’s designation as: the Gift of God, the Communion of Father and Son, and Love. These three names are at the heart of why the Holy Spirit would proceed from Father and Son; one first finds this clearly in *De fide et symbolo*.

However, for this these ideas to blossom into Augustine’s robust pneumatology found in the latter books of *De Trinitate* (On the Trinity), both the concept of Divine Simplicity and the Relational Trinity must be applied to the pneumatology found in *De fide et symbolo*. For this reason, this thesis will take time to discuss these two topics in some detail. Having discussed at some length both divine simplicity and the relational trinity, the investigation will move to see what effect they have had on Augustine’s initial pneumatology.

Augustine’s robust pneumatology, seen through the lens of divine simplicity and the relational Trinity, demands that the Holy Spirit proceed from the Father and the Son. This thesis will then move on to accounts of the procession of the Holy Spirit and how the Holy Spirit proceeds from Father and Son. The “how” is shaped by the boundaries of the monarchy of the Father and divine simplicity and this thesis will show how Augustine shapes his accounts of procession within these bounds.

This thesis will, after examining Augustinian pneumatology directly from the pen of Augustine, answer the claims made by Vladimir Lossky, who stands in for the “hawk” camp of Eastern Orthodoxy as it concerns the *filioque*. It will conclude by postulating about the potential results of this fresh reading of Augustine’s pneumatology could have on other positions of the “hawks”.

## 1. The Trinity: East and West

The Holy Trinity is essential to the Christian life. Christians believe that God exists and has revealed himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is into this name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit which Christians are baptized, a practice which has its basis in Jesus’ words in Matthew’s The Gospel of Matt (Matt. 28.19). As Metropolitan

Kallistos Ware writes, “Non-Chalcedonians and Lutherans, members of the Church of the

East and Roman Catholics, Calvinists, Anglicans, and Orthodox: all alike worship One

God in Three Persons…”[[1]](#footnote-1) In short, whether acknowledged or not, the doctrine of the Trinity is of the utmost importance for Christians.

For much of the Church’s history, the foundation and framework of belief in this

Trinity has been the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed of 381 which added to the Nicene Creed of 325. The Nicene Creed of 325 primarily defended the Son against the errors of the Arians who held that he was not fully God. The Council of Constantinople in 381 CE (which produced the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed) expanded the language about the Holy Spirit which reads thus:

And we believe in [one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.](http://orthodoxwiki.org/One_Holy_Catholic_and_Apostolic_Church) We acknowledge one [baptism](http://orthodoxwiki.org/Baptism) for the remission of [sins.](http://orthodoxwiki.org/Sin) We look for the Resurrection of the dead, And the life of the age to come. Amen.[[2]](#footnote-2)

In its final form, while being one of the most ecumenical documents in the Church (it is confessed by Catholics, Orthodox, and Protestants alike), the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed is a major source of disunity and schism. The document which was intended to stand as a unifying force has been the cause of division within Christendom for nearly a millennium.

## 1.1.The *filioque*

This disunity results from the Western addition of the *filioque* (Latin for, “and from the Son”). The *filioque* addition augments the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed to read that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son instead of saying that the

Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father (as the original creed did). Instead of saying that the

Holy Spirit “proceeds from the Father”, the altered creed reads that the Holy Spirit “proceeds from the Father and the Son”.

The doctrinal concerns that many Eastern Christians have with the *filioque* are either that it posits two origins of divinity (fundamentally postulating two gods) or that it implies an outside essence that unifies the three persons of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This charge is best seen in the words of Vladimir Lossky, the pre-eminent twentiethcentury Russian Orthodox theologian, who writes that:

…one is either forced to destroy the unity by acknowledging two principles of Godhead, or one must ground the unity primarily on the common nature, which thus overshadows the persons and transforms them into relations within the unity of the essence.[[3]](#footnote-3)

The Holy Spirit’s procession from Father and Son creates two options: either two origins of divinity (a functional ditheism) or a common nature or essence that overshadows the personsand reduces them to only unifying relationships within the essence. Instead of a Son and Spirit that are directly from the Father, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit all relate to each other within an exterior divine essence from which their unity is found. This thesis will address these two challenges against the *filioque* and “double-procession”.

But first, we turn to the history of the *filioque* and its resulting controversy.

### 1.2. The History of the *filioque* Controversy

Beginning in the 6th century, the *filioque* emerged in the West, specifically in

Visigothic Spain. Its purpose was to counter Arianism, which no longer troubled eastern

Christianity to any great extent but survived among Gothic and Frankish peoples into the 7th century.[[4]](#footnote-4)

This augmented creed slowly divided the Eastern and Western halves of

Christianity. In reaction to Constantinople’s refusal to recognize him as Holy Roman Emperor, Charlemagne accused the Eastern churches of heresy for omitting the *filioque* from the Nicene Creed. Faced with the heavy resistance from Pope Leo III,

Charlemagne’s charges did not go anywhere.[[5]](#footnote-5)

However, almost seventy years later, conflict between Eastern and Western (German) missionaries among the Slavic peoples again brought the issue of the *filioque* to a head. In Bulgaria, the papacy gave support to the German missionaries who were using the *filioque*.[[6]](#footnote-6)This conflict (coupled with the question of Papal authority) led Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople (c.810-c.893 CE), to condemn the addition of the *filioque* by Western Christians. He wrote an Encyclical Letter to the other Eastern Patriarchs denouncing the *filioque* as a heresy and summoned a council to Constantinople which excommunicated Pope Nicolas I. Photius was then deposed in 867 CE by the Byzantine emperor; a new patriarch, Ignatius, was put in place and Rome was restored to communion with the East. From 869 to 870 CD, an anti-Photian council was held at Constantinople, which condemned Photus. However, Photius and Ignatius were reconciled to each other and Photius was reinstated as Patriarch in 877 upon the death of Ignatius. He held a new council that overturned the previous one which had condemned him[[7]](#footnote-7) The papacy accepted this final state of things, marking a victory for Photius and, by implication, against the *filioque*.

However, in 1014 CE, the Papacy showed that it embraced the *filioque* when the augmented creed was recited at the papal coronation of Emperor Henry II and finally, in

1054 CE, Bishop Humbert of Silva Candida, a papal legate sent to Constantinople, issued a Bull of Excommunication against the Eastern Church. Among the charges against the

East was the omission of the *filioque*. Unlike Charlemagne’s attempt to condemn the

East using the *filioque* issue, this charge had papal support rather than papal push-back.

This schism on paper was solidified for all practical purposes during the Crusades which introduced friction between Western and Eastern Christians on a more popular level and culminated in the sack of Constantinople by crusaders in 1204 CE during the

Fourth Crusade. As Bishop Kallistos Ware writes, “After 1204 there can be no doubt that

Christian east and Christian west were divided into two.”[[8]](#footnote-8)

The first attempt to reunite East and West took place in 1274 CE at the council of

Lyons. The resulting reconciliation, which was approved on paper, was rejected by Christians back in the East. The rejection was because the Eastern delegates to the council had agreed to both recognize the claims of the Papacy and to recite the Niceno-

Constantinopolitan Creed with the addition of the *filioque*. [[9]](#footnote-9)

The second reunification attempt at Ferrara-Florence (1438-1439CE) went just as poorly as the first. The issues diving East and West were: “the *Filioque,* Purgatory, ‘azymes’, and the Papal claims…”[[10]](#footnote-10) Although it was agreed to by Byzantine rulers, the results from the council again were rejected by the majority of Eastern Christians[[11]](#footnote-11) East and West continued to be divided with the *filioque* serving as a chief cause of the division.

### 1.3. Eastern Orthodox Presentations of the *filioque*

This controversy continues to divide Western and Eastern Christians. Its contours are clearest in the work of Vladimir Lossky. He writes, “Whether we like it or not, the question of the procession of the Holy Spirit has been the sole dogmatic grounds for the separation of East and West.”[[12]](#footnote-12) Lossky himself represents the faction within Eastern Orthodoxy that Bishop Ware refers to as hawks. The hawks see the *filioque* as not only an improper addition to Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed because it violates Canon Seven of the Council of Ephesus (431 CE) not to augment the creed, but also as a heresy in its own right. This faction differs from the “doves” who believe the *filioque*, “…may be accepted as a *theologoumenon*, a theological opinion, although not as dogma.”[[13]](#footnote-13) However, these doves still consider the *filioque* to be an unacceptable addition in the Nicene Creed and potentially misleading.

Lossky’s doctrinal critique of the *filioque* is primarily concerned with defending the monarchy of the Father. He writes that:

The Greek Fathers always maintained that the principle of unity in the Trinity is the person of the Father. As principle of the other two persons, the Father is at the same time the Source of the relations whence the hypostases receive their distinctive characteristics.”[[14]](#footnote-14)

Lossky locates the unity of the Trinity in the Father because of the Father’s role as the source of the relationships of origin ascribed to the Son and the Holy Spirit (generation and spiration/procession, respectively). He alone is the source of all godhead or divinity from which are the Son and the Holy Spirit. Lossky believes that the *filioque* directly subverts this.

His actual critique of a Western Trinitarian theology begins with his presupposition that they “…express the mystery of the Trinity by starting from the one essence in order to arrive at the three persons.”[[15]](#footnote-15) This first premise is consciously taken from Theodore De Regnon who constructed a paradigm for distinguishing Eastern and Western approaches to Trinitarian theology for which he is seldom credited, but which is assumed to be operative by most scholars in the Anglophone world.[[16]](#footnote-16) Lossky believes that emphasizing the one essence can be orthodox if and only if it does not attribute to the essence supremacy over the three persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). That is, the divine nature cannot be apart from or outside of the persons, even logically.

Enter the doctrine of the *filioque* (or rather, Lossky’s presentation of it). He writes that, “[the] Greeks saw in the formula of the procession of the Holy Spirit from Father and Son a tendency to stress the unity of nature at the expense of real distinctions between the persons.”[[17]](#footnote-17) Greek theologians held this view because if Trinitarian relationships are not relationships of origin that bring the Son and Holy Spirit “…back directly to the unique source, the Father…”[[18]](#footnote-18), then they became, “…a system of relations within the divine essence.”19 For Lossky, if the relationships (unbegotten, begotten, proceeding) are not relationships of origin, they must be relationships inside of an overshadowing divine essence which would obscure and subvert the persons, in favor of an abstract essence outside of or apart from the persons of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

His account of the implications of the *Filioque* is as follows:

…the Father and the Son cause the Holy Spirit to proceed, inasmuch as they represent the one nature while the Holy Spirit, who, for western theologians, becomes the bond between the Father and the Son, stand for a natural unity between the two persons.”[[19]](#footnote-19)

The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and Son as from one origin. Lossky presents the idea that the Holy Spirit is the bond between Father and Son as only a by-product of his procession from them both. He lays out the implications of this approach in the following statement:

The hypostatic characteristic (paternity, generation, procession), find themselves more less swallowed up in the nature or essence which, differentiated by relationships—to the Son as the Father, to the Holy Spirit as the Father and Son— become the principle of unity within the Trinity.21

Intra-divine relationships and not the monarchy of the Father become the unifying factor for the Trinity. And it is this presentation of the *filioque* that leads Lossky to conclude that the *filioque* results in two problems: either two origins without origins or an exterior divine substance which unites the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit who are in relation with each other. We now turn from the critiques of the *filioque* to its originator: St. Augustine of Hippo.

### 1.4. Augustine and the *filioque*

The writings of St. Augustine provide this investigation with a good way to address the challenges against the *filioque* by going *ad fontes* and exploring the

Trinitarian thought found in the writings of the originator of this doctrinal innovation.

For, whether “hawk” or “dove”, Eastern Orthodox positions locate the theological underpinnings of the *filioque* in the theology of Augustine of Hippo (354-430 CE).[[20]](#footnote-20) These writings have had incredible influence upon Western Civilization as evidenced by both his *Confessiones* and *De Civitate Dei* being, “…regularly listed among Western civilization’s greatest literary achievements.”[[21]](#footnote-21) However, greater influence is seen in the role Augustine has been given with the Western Church as “…the chief patristic source for many of [its] central teachings…”[[22]](#footnote-22) For this investigation, his Trinitarian works are of most importance for, “…Augustine’s writings on the Trinity… became the foundation for subsequent Latin Trinitarian theology and later served as the basis for the doctrine of the *filioque*.”25 Further proving this point, an agreed statement between Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox representatives concluded that, “…a strong current in the patristic tradition of the West, summed up in the works of

Augustine…”[[23]](#footnote-23) was one of the main factors responsible for the insertion of the *filioque* in the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed. Not only did Augustine function as a central originator of the doctrine, but also, “…would eventually become the most quoted Latin father supporting the *filioque*…”27 Augustine’s writings directly provided both the inspiration for and justification of the insertion of the *filioque* into the creed. This alone shows that Vladimir Lossky is at least correct in treating the *filioque* as a dogmatic issue and not merely a historical or ecclesiastical one.

Along with the direct involvement of Augustine’s writings in the creation and support of the *filioque*, his writings have had indirect influence through their use in the creation of the Athanasian Creed which helped justify of the *filioque*. Until the seventeenth century, Western Christians thought that Athanasius (303-373 CE), a fourth century bishop of Alexandria, wrote this creed which confessed the Holy Spirit’s procession from Father and Son. Since the authorship for this pro-*filioque* creed was assumed to be from the hand of an Eastern bishop, Western Christians were able to use the Athanasian Creed to argue for universal acceptance of the *filioque*. The presumed catholicity of the *filoque* explains why the Western Church would condemn the East for their omission of the *filioque* (as the actions of both Charlemagne and Bishop Humbert demonstrate). However, the Athanasian Creed far more likely originated from an Augustinian origin in the Latin West[[24]](#footnote-24) The presence of Augustinian theology in the Athanasian creed solidifies the point of his indirect inspiration in its origination.

Augustine’s entire Trinitarian thought is couched within an apophatic approach to theology. Apophatic theology recognizes the complete transcendence of God and his inability to be known by material creatures; the divine is beyond space, time, and even existence.[[25]](#footnote-25) For Augustine, systematic coherence is less important than encounter with the living God. When subjected to the criteria of system, Augustine’s thought appears often imprecise or unclear. But this imprecision actually serves the greater purpose of drawing his readers into an apophatic encounter with the Trinity. Augustine’s apophatic theology contextualizes his many names and titles for the Holy Spirit which do not always fit perfectly together. We now turn towards the foundation of Augustine’s pneumatology in *De fide et symbolo*.

## 2. *De fide et symbol* and the Foundations of Augustinian Pneumatology

Augustine’s *De fide et symbolo* (On Faith and Creed)provides the background for this investigation by setting up several important foundations of Augustine’s presentation of the Holy Spirit’s procession from Father and Son. First, this text establishes the creedal bounds and scriptural debts that drive Augustine’s investigation of the Holy Trinity. Second, Augustine definitely posits the Father’s *monarchia* or status as ultimate origin of divinity in the Trinity. Third, Augustine argues that the Son is both *from* and *equal to* the Father. Fourth, Augustine argues that the Holy Spirit is the bond or *communio* between Father and Son. This discussion on the Holy Spirit as *communio* in *De fide et symbolo* provides a transition into Augustine’s mature articulation of the concept in *De Trinitate*.

### 2.1. Scripture and Tradition

Written in 393 CE, Augustine’s *De fide et symbolo* is based on a presentation made to a gathering of African bishops and is an explanation of the creed. The creed Augustine unpacks is likely the Old Roman Form or Apostle’s Creed[[26]](#footnote-26) which, concerning the Holy Spirit, only confesses to belief “…in the Holy Spirit…” and is too pneumatologically vague to be at odds with the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed; it certainly says nothing about the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son.

In light of his audience and subject matter, Augustine composes *De fide et symbolo* as an account of the Holy Trinity consciously worked out within the bounds of creedal and ecclesiastical orthodoxy, specifically that Niceno-Constantinopolitan orthodoxy mentioned above. This is evidenced both by the recitation of the creed of Nicaea at the beginning of the council[[27]](#footnote-27) and by Augustine’s reference to the Son as “God from God”[[28]](#footnote-28) which resonates with the language of Nicaea. This is why, as Lewis Ayres suggests, “…we see Augustine’s pro-Nicene debts emerge with far greater clarity in *de fide et symbolo*...”[[29]](#footnote-29) than in prior works which were mainly concerned with writings against the Manicheans.[[30]](#footnote-30) Manicheans belonged to a dualistic religion that Augustine adhered to before his conversion to a Neo-Platonic Christianity.[[31]](#footnote-31)

Along with the creedal bounds within which Augustine puts himself as evidenced by *De fide et symbolo*, the work also reveals his debts to both scripture and its interpreters. When discussing the tradition he has received in respect to the Holy Spirit, Augustine refers to the creators of that tradition as, “Those learned and eminent exponents of sacred scripture…”[[32]](#footnote-32) Augustine specifies the tradition he has inherited in terms of exegesis, at least as it pertains to the investigation of the Holy Trinity. This is again observed in the opening book of Augustine’s *De Trinitate*. He writes:

The purpose of all Catholic commentators I have been able to read on the divine books of both testaments, who have written before me on the trinity which God is, has been to teach that according to the scriptures Father and Son and Holy Spirit in the inseparable equality of one substance present a divine unity[[33]](#footnote-33)

Exegesis begets dogma. Along with the creedal and ecclesiastical bounds that he sets himself within,Augustine develops his investigation of the Holy Trinity from his understanding and interpretation of Sacred Scripture.

### 2.2. The Father’s Monarchy

In *De fide et symbolo*, Augustine presents the Father as the origin of the Son because, “…the Father is not from the Son, but rather the Son is from the Father; the Father is the origin of the Son.”[[34]](#footnote-34) This line of thought does not lead Augustine to conclude that the Son is subordinate to the Father as it did for earlier Latin theologians.[[35]](#footnote-35) Rather, he holds that, “as a natural Son, he was born the only-begotten Son from the substance of the Father, sharing the same life as the Father, God from God, light from light.”[[36]](#footnote-36) Drawing heavily from the terminology of the Nicene Creed, Augustine insists that the Son is from the substance of the Father and is, one can assume, of one substance with the Father.[[37]](#footnote-37)

Augustine expands upon both these ideas—that the Father is ultimate origin of divinity and that the Son is from, yet equal to, the Father—in his *De Trinitate.* In Book II of *De Trinitate*, Augustine continues his hermeneutic for understanding passages concerning the Father and the Son when he writes:

We call the Son God from God, but the Father we simply call God, not from God. Thus it is clear the Son has another from whom he is and whose Son he is while the Father does not have a son from who he is, but only whose Father he is.[[38]](#footnote-38)

The Father is not from anyone while the Son is born of and is from the Father. The Son being from God and the subordination of the Son to the Father went hand-in-glove for the 3rd century Latin tradition which Augustine was aware of. Theologians such as Tertullian were tasked with responding to the heresy of modalism which taught, “…the equivalence of Father, Spirit, and divinity, and that the divinity in Jesus was the Father-Spirit.”[[39]](#footnote-39) To defend against this ideology which dismantled the distinctions between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Tertullian emphasized them. He did this, while affirming the divine unity, by talking about the “economy” of the Trinity. The economy of the Trinity deals with the roles played by Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in creation, redemption, and sanctification. In Tertullian’s formulations, the Son and Holy Spirit are all under the divine monarchy which is embodied in the Father. He sees this Trinitarian economy taking place in both the Son being sent in the Incarnation and the Holy Spirit being sent at Pentecost.

Unfortunately, while affirming the divinity of both Son and Holy Spirit along with the distinctions between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, this formulation subordinated both the Son and the Holy Spirit to the Father, because, “…[Tertullian’s] idea of the divine substance was such that it admitted of extension, and of gradations within it, differences of degree though not of kind."[[40]](#footnote-40) This is how the Son could both be divine and distinct from the Father, as he is not quite as divine as the Father.

Furthermore, a more explicit and forceful subordinationist interpretation was also common among Arians. Despite the Councils of Nicea and Constantinople and the apparent victory of pro-Nicene theologians in the East, the Western church was inundated with Arians. As Gerald Bonner writes, “Now, while in the east, the Fifth Century saw Arianism virtually a dead issue…in the West the Latins were having the unwelcome experience of dealing with an aggressive Arianism on their own ground.”[[41]](#footnote-41) Augustine personally would encounter Arianism after 410 CE when, “…subsequent to the fall of Rome, there arrived in Africa men and women fleeing before the barabarain invaders and bring with them a form of Arian theology.”[[42]](#footnote-42)

In order to both combat the heresies of his day and to rectify the foibles of his Latin predecessors, Augustine defends against a subordinationist interpretation:

This then is the rule which governs many scriptural texts, intended to show not that one person is less than the other, but only that one is from the other. Yet some people have extracted from it the sense that the Son is less than the Father... To avoid this, we should apply this other rule, which tells us not that the Son is less than the Father, but that he is from the Father. This does not imply any dearth of equality, but only his birth in eternity.[[43]](#footnote-43)

For Augustine, the Son’s being from the Father only implies a relationship of origination and not one of subordination; this relationship of origination serves the goal of bringing

Christians into communion with God.[[44]](#footnote-44)

Augustine continues this theme of the Father as ultimate origin in Book IV:

If, however, the reason why the Son is said to have been sent by the Father is simply that the one is the Father and the other the Son, then there is nothing at all to stop us believing that the Son is equal to the Father and consubstantial and coeternal, and yet the Son is sent by the Father… For the Son is from the Father, not the Father from the Son.[[45]](#footnote-45)

As was the case in Book II, the Father’s sending of the Son does not imply superiority over the Son. This point about the Father as ultimate origin is cemented by Augustine’s statement that, “…he [the Father] has not got anyone else to be from or to proceed from. Wisdom says, ‘I went forth from the Most High’ (Sir 24.5). And of the Holy Spirit he says, ‘He proceeds from the Father’, but the Father is from no one (Jn 15.26).”[[46]](#footnote-46)

Furthermore, the Father is not only the origin of the Son, but also of the Holy Spirit.

Again, in Book V, Augustine distinguishes the Father as ultimate origin. He explains that the Father can be called origin relationship-wise for he is the origin of the Son and all that is from Himself. The Son, however, is only called origin in respect to creation, “but surely not the origin of the Father…”[[47]](#footnote-47) They are together one origin of creation, “just as they are one creator, one God.”[[48]](#footnote-48) Also, “…we cannot deny the Holy Spirit the right to be called origin either, because we do not exclude him from the title of creator.”[[49]](#footnote-49) This statement puts the Holy Spirit on an equal footing with the Son as origin with respect to creation, while the Father alone is given the title of origin of all things.

The “all things” as opposed to creation is likely meant to include the Son and the Holy Spirit since they are the only things outside of creation; this establishes the Father as the origin of divinity. And it is now towards the Holy Spirit’s origination from the Father that this investigation turns.

### 2.3. The Holy Spirit in *De fide et symbolo*

In *De fide et symbolo*, Augustine’s assertion that the Father is the sole origin of the Holy Spirit is of particular interest, because Augustine would consistently follow the parameters set there throughout *De Trinitate*. Concerning the conclusions and thoughts of the “learned and eminent exponents of sacred scripture” as they pertain to the Holy Spirit’s origination, Augustine writes:

…they do insist that the Holy Spirit is not begotten as they assert of the Son, from the Father, for Christ is the only-begotten Son, nor is he begotten from the Son, the grandson, as it were, of the Almighty Father, nor that he is indebted to no one for his existence…the Holy Spirit owes his existence to the Father, from whom everything comes, lest we should find ourselves postulating two principles of origin without an origin, an assertion which would be totally false, utterly absurd, and contrary to the Catholic faith… [[50]](#footnote-50)

The Father is unequivocally presented as the sole origin of the Holy Spirit and is here most clearly described as ultimate origin since all things come from him. However, to further understand origination of the Holy Spirit, one must examine the preceding statements about how the Holy Spirit does not originate.

First, the Holy Spirit’s manner of origination differs from that of the Son; he is not begotten or generated from the Father. This is to safeguard the uniqueness of the

Son’s mode of origination from the Father. While the term is not found within this work, Augustine will settle on *procedere* (procession) to describe how the Holy Spirit originates from the Father, as opposed to *generatio*, which he uses ofthe Son. Augustine most clearly lays this distinction out in *Contra Maximinum* in which he is arguing against Arianism. He writes:

In speaking of that most excellent nature, who can explain the difference between being born and proceeding? Not everything that proceeds is born, though everything that is born proceeds, just as not every biped is a human, though every human is a biped. These things I know; I do not know, I cannot, I am unable to distinguish that generation and this procession. The reason is that both of them are ineffable.*[[51]](#footnote-51)*

Augustine sees being born as a subset of procession. Therefore, he would be able to say that the Son proceeds from the Father. However, in the particular cases of the Son and the Holy Spirit, he seems unable to distinguish them. “That generation” refers to the birth of the Son from the Father while “this procession” refers to the procession of the Spirit since this quote is picking up immediately on the prior phrase, “He [the Holy Spirit] is, therefore, the Spirit of both by proceeding from both.”[[52]](#footnote-52)

Although Augustine is incapable of distinguishing between procession and generation, he strictly uses them to refer to the Holy Spirit and the Son, respectively. As he writes prior to this section in *Contra Maximinum*:

The Son comes from the Father; the Holy Spirit comes from the Father. The former is born; the latter proceeds. Hence, the former is the Son of the Father from whom he is born, but the latter is the Spirit of both because he proceeds from both.57

Augustine likely insists upon this as a hard distinction because both are scripturally applied to the Son and Holy Spirit and it enables him to distinguish in some way as to how the Son and Spirit originate from the Father despite the whole affair being ineffable. Augustine again exhibits this attitude in his comment that, “…It is enough, then, for us that the Son does not come from himself, but from him from whom he is born; the Holy Spirit does not come from himself, but from him from whom he proceeds.*”[[53]](#footnote-53)* Augustine will consistently follow this distinction in his Trinitarian writings.

Second, the Holy Spirit is not begotten from the Son. This argument is more than simply another iteration of the condemnation of the Holy Spirit proceeding from two origins without origins, for Augustine claims that the Holy Spirit would be “the grandson…of the Father” in this scheme of generation. This would introduce a spaciotemporal hierarchy within the Trinity which would undermine the simplicity, equality, and unity of the divine substance. Augustine picks up this train of thought in *De Trinitate* as he seeks to explain his presentation of the Holy Spirit’s procession from Father and Son; it is important to note that the germ of this important argument was already presented over a decade before.

Finally, the Holy Spirit is “not indebted to no one for his existence” or, put more plainly, he is indebted to someone for his existence: that is, the Father. The reason for this caveat against the Holy Spirit owing his existence to no one is the *proprium* or distinguishing property that Augustine associates with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit’s distinguishing property is that he is the divinity of Father and Son which Augustine understands to be the bond between them both. Since Augustine believes the Holy Spirit to be that by which the Father and Son are connected, he needs to preempt any speculation that the Holy Spirit is outside of or above or before the Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

However, before we explore this further, a short explanation of *proprium* is needed.The need to distinguish between the persons of the Trinity reflects the Latin Church’s struggle against modalism. One of the ways of defending the distinctions between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit was to highlight the distinguishing characteristics or names of each of the three. This concept of *proprium* is found in the writings of both Marius Victorinus[[54]](#footnote-54) (fl. 4th century) and Hilary of Poitiers[[55]](#footnote-55) (c.300-c.368 CE). In respect to the Holy Spirit, Augustine defines *proprium* as, “...what property is unique to him, what constitutes him as he is, so that we are able to state that he is neither the Father nor the Son but the Holy Spirit only.”[[56]](#footnote-56)

As will become clear, the multiple propria of the Holy Spirit are all facets of his distinguishing role in the Trinity. One of the Holy Spirit’s *propria* is the gift of God according to “those learned and eminent exponents of sacred scripture.”[[57]](#footnote-57) Another *proprium* Augustine uses to designate the Holy Spirit is *communio* (communion) which he introduces with the following line: “Some have ventured to believe of the Holy Spirit that he constitutes the very communion between the Father and the Son, which I may thus describe as the Godhead, and which the Greeks call the θεòτης.”[[58]](#footnote-58) The ‘some’ refers back to “Those learned and eminent exponents of sacred scripture…”[[59]](#footnote-59) The inspiration for this terminology comes from Augustine’s own mentor, St. Ambrose of Milan (c. 340 CE-c.

397 CE), as well as the Latin Christian tradition more broadly.

The Holy Spirit’s designation as divinity is found within the tradition Augustine inherited even before the time of Ambrose. Lewis Ayres writes that, “Latin theologians…contended with a long history of treating *spiritus* as a synonym for divinity.”[[60]](#footnote-60) Most responsible for this connection is Tertullian who, in his work *Adversus Praxean*, not only used the term spirit as synonymous with divinity, but also equated the spirit of God with the Word and attributed to the spirit that overshadowed Mary in Luke

1.35 the identity of the Word.[[61]](#footnote-61)

Although Ambrose designates the Holy Spirit as “Godhead”, he avoids the tendency toward the subordinationism of Tertullian and 3rd century Latin theologians. As a Pro-Nicene theologian, Ambrose affirms the total divinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit which ought to contextualize what he writes in *De Spiritu Sancto*:

...[Paul] adds: ‘His eternal power also and Godhead’ [Rom. 1.20] of which one thing seems to be said of the Son, and the other of the Holy Spirit; that in the same manner that the Son is called the eternal Power of the Father, so, also, the Spirit, because he is divine, should be believed to be his eternal Godhead.[[62]](#footnote-62)

Later in Book 3 of the work, he writes, “Nor does the Scripture in this place alone bear witness to the θεòτης, that is, the Godhead of the Holy Spirit; but also the Lord Himself said in the Gospel: ‘The Spirit is God,’[Jn. 4.24].[[63]](#footnote-63)

While it is the terminology of Ambrose that is used by Augustine in *De fide et symbolo*, the explanation he gives to this *proprium* shows his debts to Marius Victorinus. Two sections of Marius Victorinus’ hymns form the foundation of Augustine’s pneumatology in *De fide et symbolo* and his later Trinitarian writings. A section of Hymn 1 reads, “...binding all in one, you are the Holy Spirit.”[[64]](#footnote-64) And a larger section of Hymn 3 reads:

You, Holy Spirit, are a bond (*conexio)*; but a bond is whatever unites two; In order to unite all, you first unite the two;

You, the third, are the embrace of the two; embrace identified with the one, since you make the two one.[[65]](#footnote-65)

Augustine begins to flesh out in *De fide et symbolo* two important pneumatological concepts which are found within these selections. The first is that the Holy Spirit unites the Father and the Son (the ‘two’ referred to in Hymn 3). The second is that the Holy Spirit’s work of uniting Father and Son is an inseparable prerequisite of the Holy Spirit’s work to unite humanity to God as seen in the statements “binding *all* in one” and, most especially, “In order to unite *all*, you first unite the two.” Augustine will not only continue to speak of the Holy Spirit as the one who joins Father and Son, but will continue to tie this activity within the eternal Trinity with the temporal work of joining humanity to God; Unlike Victorinus, he will usually start with the temporal work and then extrapolate to the eternal role of the Holy Spirit.

Having noted how *communio* is articulated in the theological tradition Augustine is working with one can see why he preemptively condemns any notion that the Holy

Spirit pre-exists the Trinity. One could infer that if the Holy Spirit is that which unites Father and Son, and if he is the Godhead of them both, then he existed before or is outside of both Father and Son. This would demolish the unity, equality, and total simplicity of God along with the Father’s position as origin without an origin. Augustine, therefore, begins his discussion on the Holy Spirit as *communio* by rejecting any idea of the Holy Spirit existing before Father and Son.

In Augustine’s explanation of the Holy Spirit as divinity, the debts he owes to Marius Victorinus begin to emerge. Augustine writes in *De fide*:

…because the Father is God and the Son is God, the divinity itself is equal to the Father, that is, the divinity by which they are joined to each other, both the Father by begetting the Son and the Son by being united to the Father, by whom the Son has been begotten.[[66]](#footnote-66)

The Holy Spirit who is ‘the divinity itself’ is the means by which Father and Son are joined together; this language hearkens to the *connexio* language of the hymns of Victorinus. However, Augustine goes farther than Victorinu by stating that the Father is joined to the Son by begetting him and the Son is joined to the Father by being united to him who has begotten the Son. By putting the Holy Spirit’s joining of Father and Son within the context of the Father’s generation of the Son, Augustine sets the frame-work for his mature pneumatology.

Augustine comments on Romans 11.36: “For everything is from him, and through him, and in him is everything.” This passage was especially important to his earlier Trinitarian writings.72 He interprets it as follows:

‘from him’, meaning the One who is indebted to no one for his existence; ‘through him’, meaning through the mediator; ‘in him’, meaning in him who holds together, that is, joins together in unity.”[[67]](#footnote-67)

We find another example of the Father’s monarchy in this passage. Of more importance is the Holy Spirit’s role of joining together in unity. This language again hearkens back to Marius Victorinus, but does not clearly describe the Holy Spirit’s unifying work as eternally uniting Father and Son. However, Augustine leaves the door open for such a description and builds upon this framework when Augustine refers to the Holy Spirit as,

“...the mutual love and charity of each to the other…”[[68]](#footnote-68) These thoughts will most clearly come together and find their fulfillment in Augustine’s “Lover, Beloved, Love” formulation found in *De Trinitate.*

To support his claim that the Holy Spirit is the mutual love and charity of Father and Son, Augustine cites Romans 5.5 :“For the love of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.” Just as Marius Victorinus did in Hymn 3, Augustine sees the work of the Holy Spirit in and for believers as providing (at least some) insight into the role of the Holy Spirit within the Trinity. This again gives readers a hint that Augustine will use the temporal work of the Holy Spirit to better understand his eternal role and designation within the Trinity.

That eternal designation is gift, divinity, communion, and love. But as has been shown above, Augustine fills the latter three with the meaning of connection and bonding drawn from the hymns of Marius Victorinus. In order to see how Augustine expands upon these concepts in *De Trinitate*, we now turns to “Divine Simplicity” and the “Relational Trinity”. Augustine will understand the Holy Spirit’s desginations of love, gift, and communion through both of these ideas.

## 3. Divine Simplicity

At the conclusion of *De fide et symbolo*, Augustine answers potential objections to his designation of the Holy Spirit as *communio*. He writes, “Those who would maintain that the communion of which we are speaking is not a substance, whether we call it divinity, love, or charity, contradict the preceding point of view.”[[69]](#footnote-69) The preceding view relates to 1 John 4.16 (“God is love”) and concerning it, Augustine writes that, “John does not say that love is God but that God *is* love, so that the divinity itself it understood to be love.”[[70]](#footnote-70) This view is implying that things attributed to God (such as love) are attributed substantially. Augustine explains how when physical bodies are joined together, the bond or union itself is not a body and does not last if the physical bodies are separated. He rejects the idea of applying this observation to God when he writes, “Let those who hold this opinion cleanse their hearts as best they can, in order to perceive that where the divine substance is concerned there cannot be anything of this kind…” 77He presents God as a ‘simple substance’ and shows how this means that the Holy Spirit can substantially be the communion of Father and Son. While Augustine had been working with the conceptualization of the divine as a simple substance prior to the writing of *De fide et symbolo*, the language used here, “is distinct and appears here for the first time in his corpus.”[[71]](#footnote-71) By the time *De Trinitate* is completed, divine simplicity will be the main underlying logic of Augustine’s Trinitarian theology in general and his accounts of the Holy Spirit’s procession from Father and Son in particular.

One of Augustine’s clearest articulations of simplicity of substance occurs in *De Civitate Dei* (completed after *De Trinitate)* where he writes, “There is, then, a good which alone is simple and therefore is immutable, and this is God.”[[72]](#footnote-72) A simple substance is defined as, “….that [which] has nothing it can lose,”[[73]](#footnote-73) and something where, “[there] is no difference between what it is and what it has.”[[74]](#footnote-74) Things that are not simple, “…can be deprived of what they have and can be altered or changed in their characteristics or qualities.”[[75]](#footnote-75) Bodies can change in color and size, souls can increase and decrease in wisdom, and the air may turn from hot to cold or from cold to hot. With God it is not like this, and so Augustine writes:

Accordingly, then, it is the things that are originally and truly divine that are called simple, because in them there is no difference between quality and substance, nor are they divine or wise or blessed by virtue of their participation in something else.[[76]](#footnote-76)

In short, the substance of God is thoroughly simple and, therefore, cannot change and is not dependent on something exterior. This is the most basic and clear articulation of Augustine’s thought on the matter.

We should keep in mind, however, that divine simplicity does not refer to an abstract divinity, but to God who is Trinity. Augustine writes, “For what is begotten of the simple good is itself equally simple, and it is what its begetter is. We call these two the Father and the Son; and both together, with their Spirit, are one God.”[[77]](#footnote-77) The simple substance of the Divine is begotten from Father to Son and the two together with the Holy Spirit are one God who is a simple substance. It is this idea that allows Augustine to uphold both divine simplicity and divine diversity.

We find the rationale for how the simple Father generates the simple Son who is “God from God” in Book VI and VII of *De Trinitate*. Lewis Ayres neatly summarizes the overarching logic:

The Father generates the Son who is light from light, wisdom from wisdom, and essence from essence. The son is an essence in himself, not just a relationship: to talk of the person of the Son is to talk of the Son’s essence. And yet, because the Father’s and the Son’s essence are truly simple, they are of one essence.[[78]](#footnote-78) Because, “the Father generates the Son’s essence…”[[79]](#footnote-79) the Son is God of God in the fullest sense possible because of the nature of the divine substance as previously described. This is why Augustine is able to conclude in Book VII of *De Trinitate* that, “…Father and Son together are one wisdom, because they are one being, and one by one they are wisdom from wisdom as they are one being, there where to be is the same as to be wise...”[[80]](#footnote-80) The Father and Son are both one wisdom as they are one essence, but in such a way that the Son is still “wisdom from wisdom” as the Father is the “wisdom” which the Son is from. Even when run through the logic of divine simplicity, the Father is still the ultimate origin of the Son although he is the origin of the Son in a way that involves neither temporal succession nor spatial extension since the Son as “God from God” is both fully God and still one God with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the Sons eternal generation from the Father does not refer to a *process of emergence* that can be understood in any material, temporal, or spatial sense; rather, Augustine envisions eternal generation as a relationship with logical contours.

Concerning the Holy Spirit, Augustine writes in *De Civitate Dei*, “…the Spirit is other than the Father and the Son, for it is neither the Father nor the Son. But I said ‘other,’ and not ‘something other,’ because it is equally simple and is equally the immutable and co-eternal good.”[[81]](#footnote-81) This designates the Holy Spirit as a distinct, but equal person within the Holy Trinity. The union of the Holy Spirit with the Father and the Son is seen in *De Trinitate* when he writes:

And so the Father is wisdom, the Son is wisdom, the Holy Spirit is wisdom; and together they are not three wisdoms but one wisdom; and because in their case to

be is the same as to be wise, Father and Son and Holy Spirit are one being. Nor with them is to be anything else than to be God. So Father and Son and Holy Spirit as one God.[[82]](#footnote-82)

While the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all called wisdom and God, they nevertheless are only one wisdom and one God because Augustine views simplicity of substance in numerical terms. He shows this when he writes in *De moribus* that, “…simple things are by themselves because they are one.”[[83]](#footnote-83) He goes on to explain that non-simple substances still try to imitate truly simple substance by a harmony of parts. Therefore, the divine simple substance is not a harmony of parts where the whole is distinct from the parts. Since God is a simple substance, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit could never be a harmony of parts but must each be fully God and yet there must only be one God, not three gods working in harmony. Augustine formalizes this rule based on the wording of the Nicene Creed when he writes:

…such is the force of the expression ‘of the same substance’ in Father and Son and Holy Spirit, that whatever is said with reference to self about each of them is to be taken as adding up in all three to a singular and not to a plural.91

As has already been demonstrated but now has been formalized as a *regula* of Trinitarian theology for Augustine, whatever is predicated of the divine substance is predicated of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. However, because the divine substance is completely simple and singular, the three things predicated upon Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are still thought of singly. Augustine continues by demonstrating this rule with the following statement:

Thus the Father is God and the Son is God and the Holy Spirit is God, and no one denies that this is said substance-wise; and yet we say that this supreme triad is not three Gods but one God. Likewise the Father is great, the Son is great, and the Holy Spirit too is great; yet there are not three greats ones but one great one.”[[84]](#footnote-84)

This language, drawn from Augustine’s interpretation of the Nicene Creed, will be reflected in the Athanasian Creed, whose popoularity and perceived antiquity served as one of the main factors in the propagation of the *filioque*. The following selection from the Athanasian creed offers a striking example of the similarity in language:

…the Father is Almighty; the Son Almighty; and the Holy Ghost Almighty. And yet they are not three Almighties; but one Almighty. So the Father is God; the Son is God; and the Holy Ghost is God. And yet they are not three Gods; but one God. So likewise the Father is Lord; the Son Lord; and the Holy Ghost Lord. And yet not three Lords; but one Lord.[[85]](#footnote-85)

Augustine’s account of divine simplicity informs his understanding of the Nicene terminology (of one substance). This application allows him to maintain the Father’s monarchy, the full divinity and consubstantial nature of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and the utter unity of the divine substance. It also allows Augustine to emphasize the full divinity and personhood of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

For Augustine, the simplicity of the divine nature is beyond human understanding. We see this clearly when he writes:

“God however is indeed called in multiple ways great, good, wise, blessed, true, and anything else that seems not to be unworthy of him; but his greatness is identical with his wisdom (he is not great in mass but in might), and his goodness is identical with his wisdom and greatness, and his truth is identical with them all; and with him being blessed is not one thing, and being great or wise or true or good, or simple being, another.”[[86]](#footnote-86)

As already stated, God simply *is* these attributes (great, good wise, etc.) and he is these attributes in an immaterial way, as suggested by Augustine’s curious statement, “he is not great in mass but in might.” But, furthermore, these attributes are identical with each other. God’s goodness is his greatness is his wisdom is his truth. This language exhibits how Augustine is aware that he is speaking of a concept which is not entirely effable or expressible. And this inability to nail down the substance of God is part and parcel of Augustine’s apophatic approach to Trinitarian theology. His understanding is best summarized in his own words which read, “For God is more truly thought of than spoken of, and more truly is than thought of.”[[87]](#footnote-87) While Augustine can speak about the divine, he is aware that such speech will break down and fall short of this kind of substance. We now turn towards how Augustine distinguishes the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit who are a single, simple substance.

# 4.Three What? Naming the Distinctions in the Relational Trinity

For Augustine, as has been demonstrated above, anything predicated of the divine is predicated substantially of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit singly. Things that are said of the divine in respect to another are relational and are not substantial (as will be further explored in the next section).

In keeping with this logic, Augustine finds it hard to use the phrasing of “one substance, three persons” or three “anything”s for that matter. This is primarily because, as has been demonstrated in the previous section, that which is predicated of God is predicated of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit singly. The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, but there are not three gods. Since Augustine cannot see *persona* as a relational term, he finds it difficult to say that there are three persons. If there are three persons, why are there not three gods?

Neverthless, Augustine must find a term in order to distinguish the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He writes:

Rather, one being or substance, three persons [*personae*] is what many Latin authors, whose authority carries weight, have said when treating of these matters, being able to find no more suitable way of expressing in words what they understood without words.[[88]](#footnote-88)

Despite his aforementioned reservations about *persona*, Augustine settles on this term because of its traditional use in the Latin Church as an anti-modalist polemic. The usage of *persona*, as Augustine presents it, originates with Tertullian. In *Adversus Praxean*, Tertullian writes concerning the Father and the Son, “But how you must understand

‘another’ I have already professed, in the sense of person, not of substance.”[[89]](#footnote-89) Lewis Ayres says of this terminology that, “…in the third and fourth centuries [*persona*] is primarily used to distinguish, in the course of argument, between ways of speaking about unity and distinction in God.”[[90]](#footnote-90) This is why Augustine finds in the anti-modalist usage of *persona* by Tertullian and others a common logic and goal with his desire to distinguish the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Furthermore, Augustine’s use of divine simplicity prevents a subordinations interpretation of the distinctions between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit which plagued prior Latin theologians.

Since Latin tradition used *persona* for the purpose of distinguishing Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Augustine naturally employs the term when left with no other suitable word to describe the distinctions between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The following statement shows this clearly:

In very truth, because the Father is not the Son and the Son is not the Father, and the Holy Spirit who is also called ‘the gift of God’ (Acts 8.20; Jn 4.10) is neither the Father nor the Son, they are certainly three…Yet when you ask ‘Three what?’ human speech labors under a dearth of words. So we say three persons, not in order to say that precisely, but in order not be reduced to silence.[[91]](#footnote-91)

Since Augustine has the same concerns as his Latin predecessors to distinguish the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, he settles on *persona* if only to act as a defense against error. Its predigree within the Latin tradition would only strengthen the motive to retain the language since Augustine evidently holds those creators of the tradition “…whose authority carries weight…”[[92]](#footnote-92) in high regard. Augustine’s use of *persona*, however, is carefully qualified to preserve the relational reality of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. To that relational reality we now turn.

## 5. The Relational Trinity

In the foregoing summary statements concerning divine simplicity, we have already observed the distinction between two types of predication about the Trinity. First, there are things predicated of the divine nature in reference to itself; these are spoken of substantially. Second, there are things predicated with reference to another person; these are spoken of relationally.

In Book V of *De Trinitate*, Augustine walks his readers through the reasoning behind the relational Trinity. After presenting the divine substance as simple, Augustine answers a possible critique to such an idea. The critique is as follows: If all things that are spoken of the divine are substantial, then how can the Father be spoken of as unbegotten while the Son is spoken of as begotten? If both begotten and unbegotten refer to the divine substance, then that substance cannot both be begotten and unbegotten. Therefore, the Father and Son must be of different substances.[[93]](#footnote-93) This is, in summary, the claim levied by Eutyches (c.380-c.456 CE), and commonly referred to as the heresy of

“Eutychianism.”

Augustine answers this objection by saying that the terms: Father, Son, unbegotten, and begotten neither refer to substances nor to accidents (that is, modifiable or changeable qualities). Rather, the terms refer to relationships. When predicating something relationally, the predicate refers the subject to some other thing. The claim being made about the subject puts it in reference to something or someone else. The Father is only the Father as he is Father *of the Son*. Likewise, the Son is only the Son as he is the Son *of the Father*. “Unbegotten” and “Begotten,” because they too presume a third term besides subject and predicate, are, for Augustine, also relational terms, and not substantial.

Augustine believes these relations to be eternal and unchanging. Augustine claims that relational predicates are not modifications or accidents of the divine substance. This is because, “…what is signified by calling them Father and Son belongs to them eternally and unchangeably.”102 Augustine’s description of divine relationships would classify them as simple, although that are not substantial as shown above.

## 5.1.The Holy Spirit as the Gift of God

After establishing the Father’s relationship to the Son and the Son’s relationship to the Father, Augustine examines the Holy Spirit’s relationship to Father and Son. As the

name “Holy Spirit” fails to provide Augustine with an apparent relationship, he chooses to call him “the gift of God” who, “…is the gift of Father and Son because on the one hand ‘he proceeds from the Father’ (John 15.26), as the Lord says; and on the other

[hand] the apostle’s words, ‘Whoever does not have the Spirit of Christ is not one of his’

(Romans 8.9), are spoken of the Holy Spirit.”[[94]](#footnote-94) Augustine scripturally supports the Holy

Spirit’s designation as the gift of the Father by referencing a passage where the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father. However, Augustine scripturally supports the Holy Spirit designation as the gift of the Son by referencing a passage where the Holy Spirit is a possession of the Son (the Spirit of Christ). Augustine’s choice to use Romans 8.9 instead of John 16.7 or John 20.22 (where Jesus gives or breathes out the Holy Spirit) as a scriptural reference to the Holy Spirit’s relationship to the Son supports the interpretation that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and is possessed by the Son. This interpretation is constrained by the bounds of God as a simple substance and will be fleshed out when this investigation examines Augustine’s accounts of the Holy Spirit’s procession. Regardless of how the Holy Spirit is given by Father and Son, it is clear that he is given by both which the ambiguous name “gift of God” allows for.

One can say, “the Father of the Son” and “the Son of the Father.” These names evidence the relationship between the Father and Son. This, however, does not work for the Holy Spirit. One can say, “the Holy Spirit of the Father” and, “the Holy Spirit of the Son.” However, one cannot say, “the Father of the Holy Spirit” for it would imply that the Holy Spirit is begotten of the Father as the Son is (which Augustine previously condemned in *De fide et symbol*o). One also cannot say, “The Son of the Holy Spirit” for this would imply that the Holy Spirit was the originator of the Son. This is another reason for speaking of the Holy Spirit as the gift of God, for, as Augustine writes, “…when we say ‘the gift of the giver’ and ‘the giver of the gift’, we say each with reference to the other.”[[95]](#footnote-95) The Holy Spirit as the gift of God has, then, a name that denotes a reflexively reciprocal relationship, just as the names “Father” and “Son” do.

The Holy Spirit is eternally gift, existing as gift before there was anyone for him to be given to. Along these lines, Augustine poses the following:

Or is the answer that the Holy Spirit always proceeds and proceeds from eternity, not from a point of time; but because he so proceeds as to be givable, he was already gift even before there was anyone to give him to?[[96]](#footnote-96)

This is the option Augustine chose as he immediately continues to say, “The Spirit, to make myself clear, is eternally gift…”[[97]](#footnote-97) This means that the Holy Spirit’s relation to Father and Son as gift to giver is eternal, just like the relationship between Father and Son.

The other option Augustine gives is that the Holy spirit ‘is’ by being given; his being is predicated on his being given. Since the Holy Spirit is given at a point in time (most notably, for Augustine, at Pentecost107), then his being would have a beginning. The phrase “…before there was anyone to give him to…” further substantiates the interpretation that Augustine is talking about a temporal, and not an eternal, giving. This goes against Augustine’s articulation of the divine as a simple substance. If the Holy

Spirit is a simple substance, then this conjecture must be wrong. Augustine asks, “How could he already be that divine substance, if he only is being being given…”[[98]](#footnote-98) And the answer to the question is that he could not already be that divine substance since he is given at a point of time. This idea about a gift without a giving presents a problem for Augustine. However, this concept of giving likely forces him to consider the Father’s giving to the Son, since that would be an eternal event and allow the Holy Spirit to be eternally gift. This idea will be expounded upon as this thesis examines Augustine’s accounts of the Holy Spirit’s procession in Books V and XV.

Augustine crucially qualifies his claims about the Holy Spirit as the gift of God in Book XV of *De Trinitate*. Here he writes:

Nor is he less than they because they give and he is given. He is given as God’s gift in such a way that as God he also gives himself. You can scarcely say he is not his own master, the one of whom it is said, ‘The Spirit breathes where he will’( Jn 3:8)…[[99]](#footnote-99)

Not only do the Father and the Son give the Holy Spirit, but the Holy Spirit gives himself. The rationale for this likely comes from Augustine’s concept of inseparable operations. This concept is drawn from the Latin Tradition[[100]](#footnote-100) and is seen in Sermon 52 where Augustine concludes that, “you have the persons quite distinct, and their working inseparable.”[[101]](#footnote-101) Another reason for this could be that the Holy Spirit as gift is primarily related with his work in time and space, as Augustine’s worrying about the implications of the Holy Spirit’s title of gift makes clear. Another important reason is to highlight the agency of the person of the Holy Spirit as we see in Augustine’s statement that one “can

scarcely say he is not his own master…”[[102]](#footnote-102) Since the Holy Spirit gives himself, his title of gift of God cannot alone account for the eternal relationship he has with Father and Son as it implies a temporal aspect to the giving. We now turn to how Augustine adds to his account of the Holy Spirit’s relationship with Father and Son by positing him as their love or communion.

### 5.2. The Holy Spirit as Love, Communion, and Unity

As all this demonstrates, the Holy Spirit’s title as the gift of God is a likely incomplete way of speaking of him within the relational Trinity. It seems not to go far enough in showing how the Holy Spirit relates eternally to the Father and the Son, given the spatio-temporal baggage the term carries. The problem is that “gift” implies not only “giver” but “recipient.” If God is the giver, the recipient would be a creature and, thus, the giving would be temporal.

Therefore, Augustine turns to the terms love and communion/unity to better understand the Holy Spirit. Augustine writes: “According to the holy scriptures this Holy Spirit is not just the Father’s alone nor the Son’s alone, but the Spirit of them both, and thus he suggests to us the common charity by which the Father and the Son love each other.”[[103]](#footnote-103) Augustine carefully explains the logic behind this conclusion. First, he argues to show that love or charity is not only a gift that comes from God (as is patience), but is his very substance. Second, having briefly established on Scriptural grounds that God is substantially love, Augustine investigates which person of the Trinity is properly called love. Augustine’s claim that one person of the Trinity can be peculiarly given the title of

“Love” is founded upon each of the divine persons sufficiently having attributes such as wisdom, will, and love in themselves without relying on the other two persons. Finally, Augustine reiterates the interchangeability of divine attributes when he writes:

Nor do these three differ in them, as in us memory is one thing, understanding another and love or charity yet another; but it is all one thing which has all these values, like wisdom; and it so possessed in the nature of each that each one who possesses it is what he possesses, an unchangeable and simple substance.[[104]](#footnote-104)

The logic of divine simplicity is now being directly applied to discussion about the Holy Spirit as love and allows Augustine to conclude:

I do not know why Father and Son and Holy Spirit should not all be called charity and all together be one charity, just as Father and Son and Holy Spirit are all called wisdom and are all together not three wisdoms but one wisdom. In the same way the Father is God and the Son is God and the Holy Spirit is God, and they are all together one God.[[105]](#footnote-105)

Because the persons of the godhead are a simple substance, they are unequivocally equal and unified. Augustine then unpacks what it means for the Holy Spirit uniquely to be spoken of as love. I think that Augustine, at least in this section of Book XV, treats love as a *proprium* of the Holy Spirit. Take, for example, the following:

If therefore any of these three can be distinctively named charity, which could it more suitably be that the Holy Spirit? What is meant is that while in that supremely simple nature substance is not one thing and charity another, but substance is charity and charity is substance, whether in the Father or in the Son or in the Holy Spirit, yet all the same the Holy Spirit is distinctively named Charity.116

Affirming the divine simplicity which applies to Father and Son and Holy Spirit, Augustine states that all three simply are love. He is not saying that the Holy Spirit is the only one of the three that is “substantially” love. He is not even saying here that the Holy

Spirit is “relationally” love. Rather, he is saying that the Holy Spirit is best “called” Love.

Augustine explains the distinction by recourse to an analogy, when he writes that, “Just as we distinctively call the only Word of God by the name of wisdom, although the Holy Spirit and the father are also wisdom in a general sense, so the Spirit is distinctively called by the term charity, although both Father and Son are charity in a general sense.”[[106]](#footnote-106) The Son is distinctively termed “Wisdom” because of the words of the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 1:24 (along with Proverbs 8.22) and, likewise, the Holy Spirit’s distinction as Love is found,”…if we carefully examine the words of the apostle John.”118 These words that Augustine examines are the context surrounding the passage, “God is love” (1 John 4.8). Being unable to fully explain what he is talking about, Augustine shows the *proprium* of both the Son and the Holy Spirit to be drawn from the testimony of Sacred Scripture, heavily relying on its exegesis to support his point. Thus begins Augustine’s exegesis 1 John 4. He writes:

After saying, ‘Beloved, let us love each other because love is from God’ (1 John 4.7), he went on to add, ‘and everyone who loves is born of God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because love is God’ (1 John 4.8). Here he made it clear that he called that love God which he has just said was from God; love therefore is God from God.[[107]](#footnote-107)

In *De fide et symbolo,* Augustine incorporated 1 John 4.16 (“God is love”) in his discussion of the Holy Spirit as divinity of the Father and the Son. There he defined that divinity as love. He wrote, “…John does not say that love is God but that ‘God is love”, so that the divinity itself is understood to be love.”[[108]](#footnote-108)Augustine now sharpens the connection made in *De fide et symbolo* by showing not only that God *is* love, but that this love is *from* God. This additional point excludes the Father from being distinctively

called Love for, “The Father alone is God in such a way that he is not from God.”[[109]](#footnote-109)

Augustine has brought readers back to the language of the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed, and so this leaves the Son who is born of the Father and the Holy Spirit who proceeds from the Father.

Augustine opts, unsurprisingly, for the Holy Spirit. He writes:

But in the next few lines, after mentioning the love of God, not the one we love him with, but the one with which ‘he himself loved us and sent his Son as an atoner for our sins (1 John 4.10), and going on from there to urge us to love one another and so have God abide in us, because of course he had already called love God, he now wished to say something a little more plainly about this matter, and so he said, ‘In this we know we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us his Spirit’ (1 John 4.13).

Since the love being spoken of in this passage is that love with which God, “…sent his

Son as an atoner for our sins…”[[110]](#footnote-110), then that love could not be the Son. Positively, Augustine sees in this passage the giving of the Holy Spirit from God causing believes to abide in God. Augustine concludes this when he writes, “So it is the Holy Spirit of which he has given us that makes us abide in God and him in us.” Augustine then defines one of the functions of love as abiding when he continues his argument saying, “But this is precisely what love does.” This finally allows him to conclude that, “He [the Holy Spirit] then is the gift of God who is love.” This train of thought comes together clearly and succinctly with the following: “So it is God the Holy Spirit proceeding from God who fires man to the love of God and neighbor when he has been given to him, and he himself is love.”[[111]](#footnote-111) A little later in Book XV, Augustine designates the abiding of God in the believer as a result of love when he writes, “So the Love which is from God and is God is distinctively the Holy Spirit; through him the charity of God is poured out in our hearts and through it the whole triad dwells in us.”[[112]](#footnote-112)

With this extended discourse, Augustine has demonstrated that love and the gift of God are not simply two names for the Holy Spirit but are rather two different ways of attempting to understand the *proprium* of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the gift of God which is love (as the repeated references to the Holy Spirit as “given” ought to indicate). As Augustine writes, “This is the reason it is most apposite that the Holy Spirit, while being God, should also be called the gift of God. And this gift, surely, is distinctively to be understood as being charity which can bring us through to God.”[[113]](#footnote-113) In short, Augustine views love as the content of the gift of God which the Holy Spirit is. The result of this given love is an abiding in God. This notion of love leading to abiding in another can rid the term gift of its problematic temporal baggage if applied to the Father giving to the Son in eternity.

This is precisely what Augustine begins to lay the ground for when he posits the Holy Spirit as the love or the communion or the unity of Father and Son. In Book V of *De Trinitate*, he writes:

So the Holy Spirit is a kind of inexpressible communion or fellowship of Father and Son, and perhaps he is given this name [of Holy Spirit] just because the same name can be applied to the Father and the Son. He is properly called what they are called in common, seeing that both Father and Son are holy and both Father and Son are spirit.[[114]](#footnote-114)

The Holy Spirit is the communion of Father and Son because the attributes that compose his name (holy and spirit) are attributes that are predicated of both the Father and the Son.

Of the most importance to this discussion is that this communion is described as “inexpressible”. This word sets the obscurity and lack of cohesion with which Augustine will go on to present the Holy Spirit as communion. It also points to the fuzziness of the terms Holy and Spirit which comprise the name of the Holy Spirit.

From here, Augustine makes the bold move of defining this communion of Father and Son as love when, in Book VI, he writes:

So the Holy Spirit is something common to Father and Son, whatever it is, or is their very commonness or communion, consubstantial and coeternal. Call this friendship, if it helps, but a better word for it is charity. And this too is substance because God is substance together with the Father and the Son...[[115]](#footnote-115) The commonness or communion of Father and Son which is the Holy Spirit is best spoken of as love. And since God is love and God is substance and for God as a simple substance it is, ”…not a different thing to be, and to be great good, etc,”[[116]](#footnote-116) then the Love of Father and Son is a fully simple divine substance which is the Holy Spirit.

Augustine plays out the implications of this bold statement with an even bolder one. Not only is the Holy Spirit the love and communion of the Father and the Son, but he also appears to, in some way, be their essence or being. As Augustine writes, “Thus they keep unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, not in virtue of participation but of their own very being, not by gift of some superior but by their own gift.”129 This not only discredits any opinion that would put a unifying substance outside of or above the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but also provides insight into how the Holy Spirit works as communion. The Holy Spirit is the unity of Father and Son which is formed from their essence (“their own very being”). With all predications of God interchangeable and

ultimately equivalent to the divine simple substance, the Holy Spirit can be the essence or substance of the Father and Son, since he is the love or communion of them and that love is substantial.

However, the Holy Spirit, as this shared essence, is also distinguished in the Trinity, just as the Father is distinguished from the Son and the Son from the Father. We should step back for a moment. Prior to saying that the Holy Spirit is the essence of the Father and Son, he writes that, “the Son is equal to the Father in every respect, and is of one and the same substance.” and continues on to say:

Therefore, the Holy Spirit too takes his place in the same unity and equality of substance. For whether he is the unity of both the others or their holiness or their charity… it is clear that he is not one of the two, since he is that by which the two are joined each to the other, by which the begotten is loved by the one who begets him and in turn loves the begetter.[[117]](#footnote-117)

The Holy Spirit is the love or holiness or unity of Father and Son. But he is yet a distinct person within the Trinity as “he is not one of the two.” Rather, he is the *agent of unity* between Father and Son. This role of unifier is best seen outside of *De Trinitate* and in Augustine’s tractates on the Gospel of John. He writes that the Father and the Son are not spoken of as two gods because:

…so great is the love of the Holy Spirit…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’. For if the spirit of man is one spirit when it cleaves to God…how much more is the Son as equal, cleaving to the Father, one God together with him….[[118]](#footnote-118)

The love of the Holy Spirit forces human speech simultaneously into two channels concerning the divine. When speaking of “God”, we must speak of the Father and Son and Holy Spirit all together as ‘God,’ even as each person is spoken of as ‘God’. He is that which unifies the Father and Son into a single simple substance. Just as the spirit of man is one when it cleaves to God, so are the Father and Son one when the Son cleaves to the Father who has begotten him. This cleaving, this bound, indeed this love given by the Father in the eternal begetting of the Son is the Holy Spirit who maintains this unity of love as love itself. This hearkens back to the work of Marius Victorinus who wrote, “In order to unite all, you [Holy Spirit] first unite the two [Father and Son]…”[[119]](#footnote-119) If Augustine is following the logic that Marius Victorinus presents in his hymn, it is safe to assume that the Holy Spirit’s work of uniting believers to God expresses extrinsically and temporally the Holy Spirit’s eternal work of uniting Father and Son. In short, the temporal mission of the Holy Spirit to unite believers to God reflects his eternal role of uniting the Son to the Father.

The Holy Spirit as the love between the Father and Son is most clearly expressed in Book VIII of *De Trinitate* where Augustine writes:

Now love means someone loving and something loved with love. There you are with three, the lover, what is being loved, and love. And what is love but a kind of life coupling or trying to couple together two things, namely lover and what is being loved?[[120]](#footnote-120)

We have now returned to relational terms. The lover is the Father, the beloved is the Son, and the love is the Holy Spirit (as has already been demonstrated). And the function of this love is the coupling of two things. The Father is the originator or initiator of this love while the Holy Spirit is the bond of love that ties together the Father and Son in the love originally from the Father. It is here that the link Augustine made between love and the believer abiding in God is most clearly transferred into the divine sphere. The love that is the Holy Spirit joins both Father and Son together. It is how they abide or adhere in each other. As Augustine writes:

…if the charity by which the Father loves the Son and the Son loves the Father inexpressibly shows forth the communion of them both, what more suitable than he who is the common Spirit of them both should be distinctively called charity?[[121]](#footnote-121)

### 5.3. Conclusion: Love as the glue of the Trinity

This quote from Book XV concludes the discussion began earlier in respect to the Holy

Spirit being distinctively called charity or love. That this love between Father and Son “shows forth” their communion is a given in this particular passage and shows that the love of Father and Son, which the Holy Spirit is, if nothing else, is the descriptor of the communion of Father and Son which Augustine most strongly prefers to describe the Holy Spirit as. It is as the love between lover and beloved that the Holy Spirit find his place in Augustine’s relational Trinity. Furthermore, Divine Simplicity prevents us from speaking about these relations as occurring within an external essence since the divine essence is from the Father who generates the Son and from the Father and the Son whose own essence or love is substantially the Holy Spirit. We now turn to how this conception of the Holy Spirit informs Augustine’s accounts of his procession from Father and Son.

## 6. Accounts of the Procession of the Holy Spirit

### 6.1. Summary

The love and bond between Father and Son is the Holy Spirit. Since he so intimately ties Father and Son together, it would not make sense for the Son to not have a role in the procession of the Holy Spirit along with the Father. This is why Gerald Bonner wrote, “It is this concept of the Holy Spirit demonstrating the mutual love of Father and Son which conditions Augustine’s doctrine of the procession of the Spirit.”[[122]](#footnote-122) As I have demonstrated, Bonner is certainly correct. But more needs to be said. The question now is, what role does the Son play in Augustine’s presentations of the procession of the Holy Spirit? Is it, as Bonner suggests, analogous to the Greek phrasing διὰ τοῦ Υἱοῦ (through the Son)?[[123]](#footnote-123)

I will argue this is not the case in light of the bounds and constraints through which Augustine presents the procession of the Holy Spirit. The first constraint is the monarchy of the Father; he alone is the one from whom all things are. The second constraint is that of divine simplicity; the substance of God is immaterial and beyond space and time. One observes an increased negotiation of both the Father as ultimate origin and the simple substance of the divine as accounts of the Holy Spirit’s procession develop from Book IV to Book V to Book XV. This will crystalize the Son’s general role in the procession of the Holy Spirit and offer hints of the specifics of this role. In short, both the idea of a “double procession” and the Father and Son sending the Holy Spirit

“inasmuch as they represent the one nature…”[[124]](#footnote-124) are ultimately shallow readings of Augustine that break down in light of careful examination.

### 6.2. Book IV: Establishing an Eternal Procession

Before discussing Augustine’s account of the Holy Spirit’s procession from Father and Son in Book IV of *De Trinitate*, a short discussion on the missions or sendings of the Son and Holy Spirit must take place. This is because Book IV provides the

conclusion to Augustine’s discussion on the topic and the relevant quotes on the procession of the Holy Spirit in Book IV are a part of the discussion

An excellent explanation of the purpose of the missions of Son and Holy Spirit is found near the end of Book IV. Augustine writes:

There you have what the Son of God has been sent for; indeed there you have what it is for the Son of God to have been sent. Everything that has taken place in time in “originated matters” which have been produced from the eternal and reduced back to the eternal, and has been designed to elicit the faith we must be purified by in order to contemplate the truth…[[125]](#footnote-125)

The missions of Son and Holy Spirit originate from eternity, take place in time, and then “reduce back to the eternal.”139 Augustine likely means to imply that the historical missions of the Son (in the Incarnation) and Holy Spirit (at Pentecost), although they draw the eternal into the temporal, in no way make Son and Spirit anything less than eternally God with the Father. The missions of Son and Holy Spirit elicit the faith which, for Augustine, initiates the Christian into a life contemplation that will be fulfilled at the Last Day.

Augustine addresses precisely what the temporal missions of Son and Spirit say about their eternal relationship with the Father when he writes:

But just as the begetter and the begotten are one, so are the sender and the sent, because the father and the Son are one; so too the Holy Spirit is one with them, because ‘these three are one’. And just as being born means for the Son his being from the Father, so his being sent means his being known to be from him. And just as for the Holy Spirit his being the gift of God means his proceeding from the Father, so his being sent means his being known to proceed from him.[[126]](#footnote-126)

The temporal missions of Son and Holy Spirit bespeak the eternal reality of their origin from the Father. The Son is known to be from the Father by his sending. Likewise, the Holy Spirit being the gift of God who proceeds from the Father is revealed in his sending. Just as generation and origination from the Father are attributed to the Son as eternal realities revealed by his sending, so too are the Holy Spirit’s designation as gift of God and procession eternal realities revealed by his being sent from the Father in time. The historical manifests the eternal, and points believers’ gaze back to eternity. This designation of procession as eternal makes the following passage from Augustine relevant. Augustine writes:

Nor, by the way, can we say that the Holy Spirit does not proceed from the Son as well; it is not without point that the same Spirit is called the Spirit of the Father and the Son. And I cannot see what else he intended to signify when he breathed and said ‘Receive the Holy Spirit’. Not that the physical breath that came from his body and was physically felt was the substance of the Holy Spirit; but it was a convenient symbolic demonstration that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son as well as the Father[[127]](#footnote-127)

Even with such a short explanation, it is interesting to note that Augustine is already tying the Holy Spirit’s procession from Father and Son to his identity as “the Spirit of the Father and the Son…”[[128]](#footnote-128) The breathing out of the Holy Spirit is a symbol pointing towards the reality of his procession from the Son. This caveat Augustine gives follows his conception of divine missions that temporal actions signify but do not encompass eternal realities.

Along with running on the rationale or “why” of the Holy Spirit’s procession (as previously discussed), this initial account of the Holy Spirit’s procession from Father and Son is set within the bounds of the Father as ultimate origin. Augustine writes:

… By saying then, ‘Whom I will send you from the Father’, the Lord showed that the Spirit is both the Father’s and the Son’s. Elsewhere too, when he said, ‘whom the Father will send’, he added, ‘in my name’. He did not however say, ‘whom the Father will send from me’ as he had said ‘whom I will send from the Father’, and thereby he indicated that the source of all godhead, or if your prefer it, of all deity, is the Father. So the Spirit who proceeds from the Father and the Son is traced back, on both counts, to him of whom the Son is born.[[129]](#footnote-129)

Not only is the Son not the ultimate origin of the Holy Spirit as the Father is, but he actually functions as something like a secondary cause, or intermediate term, of the Holy Spirit’s procession since even the Holy Spirit’s procession from the Son, “…is traced back…to him of whom the Son is born.”[[130]](#footnote-130)

Along with maintaining that the Father is the only origin without an origin, Augustine posits that the Holy Spirit’s procession does not subjugate him to Father and Son. He concludes Book IV with the following:

For the moment, however, it has been sufficiently demonstrated, so I think, that the Son is not less than the Father just because he was sent by the Father, nor is the Holy Spirit less simply because both the Father and the Son sent him.[[131]](#footnote-131)

The reason that the missions of Son and Holy Spirit do not imply subordination is that they rather, “…bring home to us that the Father is the source and origin of all deity.”146 Thus, the temporal missions and manifestations of the Son and the Holy Spirit point to the Father’ds monarchy. This account in Book IV begins to draw implications concerning the eternal procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son. Accounts of this procession will deepen as we turn to examines Book V of *De Trinitate*. 6.3. Book V: Postulating an Eternal Giving

Concerning origins and the relational Trinity, Augustine writes:

But to return to mutual relationships within the Trinity: if the producer is the origin with reference to what it produces, then the Father is origin with reference to the Son, because he produced or begot him.[[132]](#footnote-132)

Augustine relationally distinguishes the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit within the Trinity by means of origination. The Son’s mode of origination from the Father is that of begetting.

This makes the Father origin. He continues:

But whether the Father is origin with respect to the Holy Spirit because it is said that ‘He proceeds from the Father’ (John 15.26), this is quite a question. If it is so, then he will be origin not only for what he begets or makes but also for what he gives.

Before examining this passage, the reader ought to see that Augustine assumes that the Father is origin of the Holy Spirit which fits within his previously established bounds of the Father’s monarchy. If “what he begets or makes”[[133]](#footnote-133) refers to the Son—and I believe it can based on Augustine’s immediately previous statement that the Father “…produced or begot him [the Son].”[[134]](#footnote-134)—then the reader is presented with a distinction between how the Father is origin of the Son and how the Father is origin of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit *proceeds from* the Father according to John 15.26 and, Augustine infers, is *given by* the Father as well. The relationship between the Holy Spirit’s procession and his status as the gift of God were previously established in Book IV when Augustine spoke concerning the difference between temporal missions and eternal processions. It also hearkens back to Augustine’s discussions on the Holy Spirit as gift which he defined as love and communion. With this gift language, Augustine begins to solve a vexing issue. He writes:

And here perhaps some light begins to dawn as far as it is possible on a problem that often worries many people, namely why the Holy Spirit is not a son, seeing that he too comes from the Father, as it says in the gospel. He comes forth, you see, not as being born but as being given, and so he is not called son, because he

was not born like the only begotten Son, nor made and born adoptively by grace like us.[[135]](#footnote-135)

In addition to again affirming the Father as the origin of the Holy Spirit, this passage makes explicit the implicit distinction drawn out previously. Here, Augustine makes the mode of the Holy Spirit’s origination that of being given just as the Son’s mode of origination is being born. Augustine fleshes out the Holy Spirit as being given:

What has born of the Father is referred to the Father alone when he is called Son, and therefore he is the Father’s Son and not ours too. But what has been given is referred both to him who gave and to those it was given to; and so the Holy Sprit is not only called the Spirit of the Father and the Son who gave him, but also our Spirit who received him.[[136]](#footnote-136)

Augustine highlights the flexibility allowed by the Holy Spirit’s being given. Whereas the Son can only be the Son of the Father, the Holy Spirit may be the gift of the Father, the gift of the Son (since he is included in the line, “…the Spirit of the Father and the Son who gave him…”[[137]](#footnote-137)), and the gift of Christians who have received him as well.

This passage also opens up a possible role for the Son in the procession of the

Holy Spirit. If the Holy Spirit can be given by God and received by believers, does the Father eternally give the Holy Spirit to the Son from whom the Holy Spirit proceeds as well? Augustine hints at this when he writes:

If therefore what is given also has him it is given by as its origin, because it did not receive its proceeding from him from anywhere else, we must confess that the Father and the Son are the origin of the Holy Spirit…[[138]](#footnote-138)

This passage warrants untangling. One infers that “what is given” refers to the Holy

Spirit, the eternal gift of God. The origin of this gift is “also…him it is given by”. The “also” precludes us from suspecting that “him” refers to the Father. Rather, who the Spirit is given by must refer to the Son since to suggest that the origin of the Holy Spirit would be something outside of the godhead is absurd for Augustine. But Augustine goes further: “…the Holy Spirit is not only called the Spirit of the Father and the Son who gave him, but also our Spirit who received him.”[[139]](#footnote-139) The quote shows that Augustine believes only the Father and the Son to give the Holy Spirit and this excludes any other giving the Holy Spirit. In the next sentence, if we are to take “it” as the Holy Spirit and “him” as the Son, then the meaning is, “because the Holy Spirit did not receive its proceeding from the Son from anywhere else…” This interpretation makes sense in light of the following statement: “we must confess that the Father and the Son are the origin of the Holy Spirit”.

We can imply that “anywhere else” refers to the fact that the Spirit’s proceeding from the Son doesn’t come from anywhere else other than from the Father.

An alternative understanding of the passage is possible. It rests on an alternative construal of the Latin. Thus, instead of “…because it did not receive its proceeding from him from anywhere else…”[[140]](#footnote-140) we would have “…because the recipient did not receive what proceeds from him from anywhere else… [ Si ergo et quod datur principium habet eum a quo datur quia non aliunde accepit illud quod ab ipso procedit…].“[[141]](#footnote-141) The recipient mentioned in the alternate translation most likely refers to the Son, since the Father, as ultimate origin, does not receive from any of the persons of the Trinity. What proceeds from him must mean the Holy Spirit since the context of this passage is dealing with the Holy Spirit being given or originating from the Son. More importantly, Augustine uniquely identifies the Holy Spirit with procession in order to distinguish him from the Son. Finally, “from anywhere else” best means “from anywhere else other than the Father”, as it meant in the standard translation of the passage examined previously.

With this in mind, the text can be interpreted to read, “…because the Son did not receive the Holy Spirit who proceeds from him anywhere else other than the Father…” More plainly, we could render it thus: “…because the Son receives the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from him, from the Father…” Since “because” logically functions as the protosis of a conditional sentence (the “if” in an “if…then” construction), it is the first premise Augustine sets up in order to reach his conclusion that, “we must confess that the Father and Son are the origin of the Holy Spirit…”[[142]](#footnote-142) To be more specific, it is the claim that informs the phrase, “what is given also has him it is given by as its origin” which then, according to Augustine, leads to the conclusion that the Father and Son are one origin of the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, we would best construe Augustine’s intended meaning as follows: “the

Son receives the Holy Spirit who proceeds from him from the Father. Therefore, the Holy

Spirit also has the Son as its origin. If the above is true, then we must confess that the

Father and Son are the origin of the Holy Spirit.”[[143]](#footnote-143)

What falls out of reading the passage this way? First, we see clearly that it builds upon the idea that the Holy Spirit, as the gift of God, can be given and received. Although Augustine only mentions the Holy Spirit being received by Christians, the Holy Spirit could be received by the Son. Therefore, it is possible to say that the Son is both the recipient and giver of the Holy Spirit which the word “gift of God” allows. Second, The Father giving the Holy Spirit to the Son who then proceeds from them both reconciles

Augustine’s claim that the Holy Spirit proceeds from both Father and Son and that the Father is the origin of the Holy Spirit. Augustine shows how the Son can play a role in procession that neither infringes upon the Father’s monarchy nor asserts an overshadowing divine essence over the reality of the persons.

However, this account of procession ends with a passage that would seem to support Vladimir Lossky’s reading of Augustine that, “…the Father and the Son cause the Holy Spirit to proceed, inasmuch as they represent the one nature…”[[144]](#footnote-144). That passage states that the Holy Spirit does not proceed from Father and Son:

…as two origins, but just as Father and Son are one God, and with reference to creation one creator and one lord, so with reference to the Holy Spirit they are one origin; but with reference to creation, Father, and Son, and Holy Spirit are one origin, just as they are one creator and one lord.”[[145]](#footnote-145)

This passage is an outlier in Augustine’s pneumatology (as this kind of language is not used anywhere else) whose rationale is found in the concept of inseparable operations.[[146]](#footnote-146) This particular train of thought is not taken any farther than this quotation. Instead, “…we see [Augustine] develop the formulae… that the Father gives it to the Son and to the Spirit that the Spirit proceeds also from the Son.”[[147]](#footnote-147) And it is towards this development found in Book XV of *De Trinitate* that we now turn.

### 6.4. Book XV: Eternal Giving and Eternal Procession Come Together

Augustine formalizes and clarifies his account of the Holy Spirit’s procession in

Book V although he remains aloof in respect to nailing down precisely what (or who) the Father give to the Son. Regardless, the overall logic of giving that Augustine crystalizes in Book XV provides this investigation with its most solid answer to claims made about the *filioque* and “double procession.” Augustine’s argument in Book XV begins when he writes:

…it is not without point that in this triad only the Son is called the Word of God, and only the Holy Spirit is called the gift of God, and only the Father is called the one from whom the Word is born and from whom the Holy Spirit principally proceeds.[[148]](#footnote-148)

The Holy Spirit is spoken of as the gift of God and the Father monarchy is maintained. Unique to Book XV is the term “principally” affixed to the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father. Before continuing on, one should note that, even with the modifier, the Father is still uniquely referred to as origin, conforming what follows to Augustine’s principle of the Father’s monarchy. Augustine clarifies this adverb:

I added ‘principally,’ because we have found that the Holy Spirit also proceeds from the Son. But this too was given the Son by the Father—not given to him when he already existed and did not yet have it; but whatever the Father gave to his only-begotten Word he gave by begetting him. He so begot him then that their common gift would proceed from him too, and the Holy Spirit would be the Spirit of them both.164

The adverb “principally” accords with the Holy Spirit’s procession from the Father for the Father is the principal, the source of this procession. The Holy Spirit’s procession from the Son, however, is from a caused cause. The line that this, “…too was give the Son by the Father…”[[149]](#footnote-149) shows that the Holy Spirit’s procession from the Son is not wholly like the Holy Spirit’s procession from the Father. The Holy Spirit’s procession from the Son could not be principal or primary for the Holy Spirit only proceeds from the Son as the Son receives from the Father. This logical priority of the Holy Spirit’s procession from the Father is further clarified when the Holy Spirit’s procession from the

Son is tied not only to his receiving from the Father, but his being begotten from the Father. As has already been noted, this begetting implies not subordination but origination. Therefore, the Father is *entirely the originator* of the Holy spirit’ procession—both as the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and as the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son.

The caveat, “…not given to him when he already existed and did not yet have it…” sets up the rest of this investigation in Book XV. Hinted at here are the boundaries and constraints of divine simplicity within which Augustine articulates his account of the procession of the Holy Spirit.

This is why, although the Father is given primacy in the procession of the Holy

Spirit, it is not one that involves time. The Father’s giving to the Son in order that the Holy Spirit would proceed from the Son is an aspect of the generation of a simple substance from another simple substance (as mentioned earlier).

This is again seen when Augustine unpacks the simple, non-material procession of the Holy Spirit from Father and Son later in Book XV. There he writes, “Therefore anyone who can understand the generation of the Son from the Father as timeless should also understand the procession of the Holy Spirit from them both as timeless.”166

In respect to the timeless procession of the Holy Spirit, Augustine continues:

…as the Father has it in himself that the Holy Spirit should proceed from him, so he gave the Son that the Holy Spirit should proceed from him too, and in both cases timelessly; and thus that to say that the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Son is something which the Son has from the Father. If the Son has everything that he has from the Father, he clearly has from the Father that the Holy Spirit should proceed from him.[[150]](#footnote-150)

To contextualize this passage, it is important to realize that Augustine has said almost the exact same thing about the Son’s generation. Working, as we saw above, by analogy, Augustine clarifies his thinking on the Spirit by his more readily accessible thinking on the Son. Of the latter he writes:

…when the Son said, ‘As the Father has life in himself, so he has given the Son to have life in himself’, he did not mean that the Father gave life to the Son already existing without life, but that he begot him timelessly in such a way that the life which the Father gave the Son by begetting him is coeternal with the life of the Father who gave it…[[151]](#footnote-151)

One finds that the two passages parallel each other. The Father has life within himself and gives this life to the Son via begetting him and this life was given in such a way that it is beyond time and coeternal between Father and Son. The Father, as ultimate origin, does not rely on another for procession of the Holy Spirit, but rather “has it in himself”169 The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son as has been given by the Father. In both cases, procession occurs outside of time and is eternal. The Holy Spirit proceeding from the Son is itself from the Father because all the Son has, he has from the Father.

Augustine again hints at what is given to the Son by the Father so that the Holy Spirit would proceed from him as well when he writes:

So if the Holy Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son, why did the Son say, ‘he proceeds from the Father’? Why indeed, do you suppose, unless it was

the way he was accustomed to refer even what was his very own to him from whom he had his very self?[[152]](#footnote-152)

“…what was [the Son’s] very own…” could be interpreted to be the Holy Spirit as a possession that the Son received from the Father. The rationale for this interpretation is the same as the rationale for the interpretation of Book V’s account of the Holy Spirit’s procession. The Holy Spirit, as the gift of God which is the love and essence of Father and Son, could be given by the Father and received by the Son so that the Holy Spirit would proceed from the Son as well. Augustine develops this thought further, writing:

He from whom the Son has it that he is God—for he is God from God—is of course also the one from whom he has it that the Holy Spirit proceeds from him as well; and thus the Holy Spirit too has it from the Father that he should proceed from the Son as he proceeds from the Father.[[153]](#footnote-153)

While there is no evidence in this statement that the Son possesses the Holy Spirit as gift, the general logic is present which makes such an interpretation likely. The Son’s divinity and the Holy Spirit’s procession from the Son are all “from the Father”. The Father’s monarchy is maintained and defended consistently and constantly as Augustine presents the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Son. Indeed, it is where such a defense is most necessary, namely, where the Holy Spirit is being presented as proceeding from the Son in addition to proceeding from the Father.

Augustine specifies this general logic when he explains why the origination of the Holy Spirit is spoken of as procession and not generation.:

Here we begin to see some sort of reason, as far as people like us can understand it, why the Holy Spirit is not said to be born but rather to proceed. For if he too were called the Son he would be called the Son of them both, which is the height of absurdity. The only two that anyone is the son of are father and mother.[[154]](#footnote-154)

The identity of the Holy Spirit as communion or love or unity of the Father and the Son points towards a presentation of the Holy Spirit being from the Father and the Son. It is a given for Augustine that if the Holy Spirit were begotten, he would be “the son of them both”. This is how fundamentally the Holy Spirit’s relationship with Father and Son as their love and the active agent of unity in the Trinity informs his origination from Father and Son, for the Son must also (within the constratints of divine simplicity and the Father’s monarchy) play a role.

However, the form of the Holy Spirit’s origination cannot be that of generation for it, “…is the height of absurdity…”[[155]](#footnote-155) This is because, as Augustine will explain, the hypothetical generation of the Holy Spirit would cross the bounds established by divine simplicity. He presents the scenario of a material, human generation:

for in any case a son of human beings does not proceed from his father and mother simultaneously, but when he proceeds from his father into his mother he does not proceed from his mother, and when he proceeds from his mother into the light of day he does not proceed from his father.[[156]](#footnote-156)

This scenario fails to meet two essential components to the bounds of divine simplicity as expressed in Augustines’ Trinitarian theology: immateriality and timelessness.

Conversely, Augustine now lays out how the Holy Spirit proceeds in a timeless, immaterial manner in which Father and Son act jointly and inseparably. He writes:

But the Holy Spirit does not proceed from the Father into the Son and then proceed from the Son to sanctify the creature. He proceeds simultaneously from them both, even though the Father gave the Son that the Spirit should proceed from his as he does from himself.[[157]](#footnote-157)

This passage is concerned with upholding the timeless and immaterial nature of God. The rejection of the Holy Spirit’s procession “into” the Son implies a materiality in which the Holy Spirit can be moved from point A to B and that the Father and Son can be spatially identified with a point A and point B. This is why, contrary to Gerald Bonner’s conclusions, the Holy Spirit cannot proceed through the Son within Augustine’s theology for such language would carry spacial baggage that is not appropriate to use in respect to a divine substance.

The “then” refers to a time in which this process of procession occurs.

Augustine’s affirmative statements clarify that, for the Holy Spirit proceeds simultaneous from them both; there is no distinction in terms of space and time. This means that, if my theory is true, the giving of the Holy Spirit from Father to Son happens in a timeless and immaterial manner.

In short, Augustine’s account of the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son is constrained by the Father’s monarchy and divine simplicity. We see this in Augustine’s formulation that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son which is given by the Father in his begetting of the Son. This giving not only maintains the Father’s role as the origin of Son and Holy Spirit, but is presented as a timeliness, non-material giving that accords with divine simplicity. And we now conclude this investigation but turning back to the challenges which began this investigation.

# Conclusion

We now return to the challenges of Vladimir Lossky. The first is his charge that the *filioque* presents two origins of divinity. Augustine’s own words show this to be false.

From *De fide et symbolo* to the latter books of *De Trinitate*, Augustine maintains the Father’s monarchy, especially when discussing the Holy Spirit’s procession from Father and Son. The only divergence from this pattern is when Augustine claims that the Holy Spirit proceeds from Father and Son as from *one* origin, not two. Although this investigation has already accounted for and contextualized this outlier, it segues into the second and weightier critique from Lossky that the *filioque* implies an external divine essence that is the basis for Trinitarian unity.

Augustine’s insistence on God as a simple substance excludes any interpretation of his theology that would involve a divine essence that is (even logically) external to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The origin of this simple substance is the Father who begets the Son as a simple, single substance; the Holy Spirit, as the love and essence of Father and Son, proceeds from the Father and the Son (as it has been given by the Father) as a simply substance. In short, the divine essence originates from the Father. Furthermore, the Trinitarain relationships that Augustine posits are not inter-divine relationships within a divine substance, but are relationships of origin. The Son is begotten *from* the Father and the Holy Spirit, as the unifying love of the Father and the Son, proceeds *from* Father and Son.

Finally, in Augustine’s thought, it is only the Holy Spirit who could be misinterpreted to be outside of the Father and the Son, and not an impersonal, overshadowing divine essence. This is because of the Holy Spirit’s role of unifying the Father and Son in love which, therefore, could be seen as an outside thing. However, divine simplicity and the Father’s monarchy constrains such an interpretation. This unifying work of the Holy Spirit should not be confused with the Trinitarian unity that is located in the person of the Father and his monarchy. For Augustine, the Father acts as the *originator* of Trinitarian unity while the Holy Spirit acts as the *maintainer* of

Trinitarian unity. He ties together the divine essence that comes from the Father alone.

Related to this charge is that Augustine’s relational Trinity depersonalizes the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Eastern Orthodox would hold that Trinitarian relations designate the persons, but do not exhaust the mystery of the Holy Trinity.[[158]](#footnote-158) Augustine’s theology strives against depersonalization of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as he constantly shows one person distinct from the other two while being a single, simple substance; in this respect, he is in agreement with the Eastern Orthodox. Furthermore, Augustine’s statements that God can be spoken of as Father and Son, along with his myriad of names and titles to describe the Holy Spirit, show that he is in agreement with Kallistos Ware and other Orthodox theologians. The names and relations of the persons of the Trinity can never fully exhaust the mystery of who they *are*.

In sum, the ecumenical significance of this investigation is two-fold. First, modern debates about the *filioque* focus on the ambiguity and flexibility of the Latin term *procedere*.[[159]](#footnote-159) I believe that this debate could be shifted, in light of a flexible use of *procedere*, to discussion on how the Father’s monarchy can play out in the eternal Trinity. Second, in light of Augustine’s own thought, it could be helpful to frame the issue of the *filioque* not as an arbitrary addition to the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed, but rather as a natural interpretation of what it means for the Holy Spirit to proceed from the Father.

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132. 5.14.15 (Hill, 1991: 199). [↑](#footnote-ref-132)
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135. Augustine, *De Trinitate* 5.14.15 (Hill, 1991: 199). [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
136. Augustine, *De Trinitate* 5.14.15 (Hill, 1991: 199).

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137. Augustine, *De Trinitate* 5.14.15 (Hill, 1991: 199). [↑](#footnote-ref-137)
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141. Hill, Edmund, The Trinity in *the Works of St. Augustine Part I*, vol.5 (New City Press, 2012), 201, footnote 30. [↑](#footnote-ref-141)
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143. It is for this reason that the alternate translation given by Edmund Hill is, in fact, the more likely translation of the text (although Hill disagrees). [↑](#footnote-ref-143)
144. Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 57. [↑](#footnote-ref-144)
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146. Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity*, 265. [↑](#footnote-ref-146)
147. Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity*, 265. [↑](#footnote-ref-147)
148. Augustine, *De Trinitate* 15.17.29 (Hill, 1991: 419). 164 15.17.29 (Hill, 1991: 419). [↑](#footnote-ref-148)
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150. Augustine, *De Trinitate* 15.26.47 (Hill, 1991: 432). [↑](#footnote-ref-150)
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157. Augustine*, De Trinitate* 15.27.48 (Hill, 1991: 433). [↑](#footnote-ref-157)
158. Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 215. [↑](#footnote-ref-158)
159. Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity*, 265. [↑](#footnote-ref-159)