

Gift and *Communio*: The Holy Spirit in Augustine's *De Trinitate*

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Abstract

This article traces the role of the Holy Spirit throughout Augustine's *De Trinitate*. After situating Augustine's treatise in terms of texts of Athanasius and Basil on the Holy Spirit, it treats the place of the Holy Spirit in his critique of the existing dogmatic terminology and the distinction between the economic and immanent Trinity. In contrast with the dominant Western and Eastern traditions, for Augustine the Holy Spirit comes to be thought of as God in a privileged sense, that is, as the person of the Trinity who is the most proper bearer of certain privileged names of God, most notably love. The notion of the Holy Spirit as eternal 'gift' proves to be especially troubling for Augustine, but also especially productive, and the present reading explicates the complex interrelationships that he is forced to develop among the concepts of love, *cupiditas*, gift, *communio* and enjoyment. The analysis of the concept of enjoyment in particular leads to the claim that the notion of property or ownership is completely foreign to God and that the Holy Spirit as *communio* must be thought as 'gift' only insofar as it is disruptive of the realm of ownership, that is, the realm of sin. The article finishes, as the *De Trinitate* does, with the implications of Augustine's treatment of the Holy Spirit for ethics and ecclesiology.

Augustine's *De Trinitate* represents a particularly pregnant moment in the formulation of trinitarian doctrine. On the one hand, he has an advantage that few theologians had before him: by 419, the time of the completion of the treatise, the basic outline of orthodox trinitarianism had already been established and could be treated as a given. Thus, although Augustine does devote a certain amount of attention to the arguments of the heretics, the primary thrust of his criticisms is actually directed towards the dogmatic language itself, from which he has a certain distance as a Latin writer. On the other hand, the established theology significantly underdeveloped the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, which opened up the space for Augustine's own creative theological work. Indeed, Augustine's approach to the Holy Spirit is decisive in giving his trinitarianism its distinctive shape, insofar as

it determines his conception of the unity of God, the relationship of God to creation and, most importantly, what it means for God to be love.

To understand its unique contribution, it is necessary to bring the *De Trinitate* into dialogue with certain texts of Augustine's immediate predecessors, Athanasius and Basil. What is perhaps most remarkable to readers approaching these texts from the point of view of later theology, either Western or Eastern, is the relative freedom the Nicene orthodoxy allows on the Holy Spirit at the time that Augustine is writing – that is, long before the controversy over the *Filioque*, which his trinitarian formulations helped to provoke. As is well known, the original version of the Nicene creed ended with the terse formula, 'And we believe in the Holy Spirit'. Certain members of the Nicene camp had treated the Holy Spirit thematically before Augustine, primarily in the midst of doctrinal controversy. Athanasius, for example, directs his *Letters to Serapion on the Holy Spirit* against the curiously named 'Tropici' heresy which he sees as repeating the error of the Arians, except this time with regard to the Holy Spirit.¹ So strong is Athanasius' association of the two heresies that, after an initial epistle laying out the basic arguments in favour of the Spirit's divinity, he devotes the entire second epistle to a rehearsal of the main points of the Arian controversy. Having closely tied the problem of the Holy Spirit with the problem of the Son, however, he runs into the same difficulty that Augustine will find so vexing: namely, how to understand the Spirit as not being another Son (or grandson).

Augustine does argue that the procession of the Spirit must be understood differently from the generation or birth of the Son: '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' (5.15).² Yet while many interpreters have regarded the theory of dual procession as a way of distinguishing between the Son and the Spirit, it would appear that Augustine is not so confident. In the final pages of the *De Trinitate* he reserves definitive knowledge for heaven stating that, in the meantime, 'So great has this difficulty been [of distinguishing the birth of the Son and the procession of the Spirit], that every time I wanted to bring out some comparative illustration of this point in that created reality which we

¹ See *The Letters of Saint Athanasius Concerning the Holy Spirit*, trans. C. R. B. Shapland (London: Epworth Press, 1951).

² Throughout this article, in referring to the *De Trinitate*, I will use only the book and paragraph numbers, in keeping with the notation in St Augustine, *The Trinity*, trans. Edmund Hill (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1991), whose translation I will follow unless otherwise noted. Any Latin citations will follow the text given in Sancti Aurelii Augustini, *De Trinitate Libri XV*, ed. W. J. Mountain, in the *Corpus Christianorum*, Series Latina, 50 and 50A (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001).

are . . . I found that no adequate expression followed whatever understanding I came to' (15.45). This position is not materially different from Athanasius' stance of blaming the Tropic party for presuming to dictate how the relations within the Trinity must be (cf. Epistle 1.18), but the rhetorical stance is appropriately quite different, given that Augustine is seeking primarily to understand rather than to defend trinitarian orthodoxy as it has reached him.

The most important treatment of the Holy Spirit between Athanasius' *Letters* and the *De Trinitate* is Basil's treatise *On the Holy Spirit*.³ It shares Athanasius' polemical tone, having been written to defend changes made to the doxology by Basil in order to emphasise the equality of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Facing heretical opponents, who took advantage of the prepositions of the traditional doxology to discern relationships of inequality, Basil sometimes replaced the varied prepositions with a simple 'with'. That is, instead of 'through the Son in the Holy Ghost', he said, 'with the Son together with the Holy Ghost' (ch. 1), and towards the end of the treatise he argues that 'with' is equivalent to 'and' in this case (ch. 25). Like Athanasius, he lays out fairly standard arguments in favour of the divinity of the Holy Spirit, situating the question firmly within the terms of the Arian controversy. While the question of the Holy Spirit as such continually threatens to be overshadowed by the procedural question of the relationship between liturgical usage and scriptural language, it is precisely this focus on prepositions which takes Basil's position beyond Athanasius', that is, beyond the mere question of equality within the Trinity and into the question of the specific role the Holy Spirit plays. Discussing the various senses of the preposition 'in', Basil says:

It is an extraordinary statement, but it is none the less true, that the Spirit is frequently spoken of as the place of them that are being sanctified, and it will become evident that even by this figure the Spirit, so far from being degraded, is rather glorified. . . . the Spirit is verily the place of the saints and the saint is the proper place for the Spirit, offering himself as he does for the indwelling of God, and called God's Temple. So Paul speaks in Christ, saying 'In the sight of God we speak in Christ,' and Christ in Paul, as he himself says 'Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me.' So also in the Spirit he speaketh mysteries, and again the Spirit speaks in him. (ch. 26)

³ St Basil, *Letters and Select Works*, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 2/8 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1895).

Basil, however, distinguishes sharply between what will come to be called the 'economic' and 'immanent' trinities:

In relation to the originate, then, the Spirit is said to be in them 'in divers portions and in divers manners,' while in relation to the Father and the Son it is more consistent with true religion to assert Him not to be in but to be with. For the grace flowing from Him when He dwells in those that are worthy, and carries out His own operations, is well described as existing in those that are able to receive Him. On the other hand His essential existence before the ages, and His ceaseless abiding with Son and Father, cannot be contemplated without requiring titles expressive of eternal conjunction. For absolute and real co-existence is predicated in the case of things which are mutually inseparable. (ch. 26)

Such an approach is necessary in Basil's case because the Arian view appears to be supported by a more or less 'common sense' reading of scripture, meaning that the Nicene camp is perpetually on the defensive with regard to the economy of salvation. This gives rise, for instance, to the oft-repeated hermeneutical rule that whatever seems to contradict the strict equality of the Father and the Son is to be referred to the human Christ – that is, to the economy – which Basil here extends to the biblical language regarding the Holy Spirit as well.

Yet, precisely because he is able to take the equality of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as an established dogma, Augustine is free to explore different ways that the distinction between what is said of God *ad se* and of God *ad aliquid* might map out. What necessitate this exploration are the difficulties he experiences, not only in distinguishing between the procession of the Spirit and the birth of the Son, but in coming up with an appropriate way of naming the Spirit when speaking of God *ad se*. First of all, in the passage already quoted, Augustine says, 'He comes forth, you see, not as being born but as being given . . . (*Exit enim non quomodo natus sed quomodo datus . . .*)' (5.15). Already, the verb used to describe the generation of the Holy Spirit, *exeo*, has strong implications of crossing boundaries – literally, it means to go out (as the English reader would immediately guess due to the homograph 'exit'). Augustine will again confess to confusion as to the difference between the birth of the Son and the procession of the Spirit (15.45), this time using the verb *procedo*, with different but significantly overlapping connotations. Nevertheless, it is likely that he is not thinking of the Spirit's procession in terms of going out across the border between creator and creation, just as the eternal birth of the Son is not conceived in terms of leaving the womb of Godhead to enter into the world. In the case of the Spirit, however, this

connotation cannot be as easily controlled. That is because the Holy Spirit is the ‘gift of God’ (5.10–17 *passim*), that is, ‘He is the gift of the Father and of the Son’. Augustine maintains that the Spirit is related to both the Father and the Son in all other descriptions as well, so if ‘gift of God’ is a synonym for ‘gift of the Father and the Son’ then one can logically conclude that when the Spirit goes out (*exit*) from the Father and the Son, the Spirit goes out (*exit*) from God – without, of course, ever ceasing to be God.

Indeed, while going out from God, one might even say that, in an unexpected way, the Holy Spirit comes to be regarded as God in a privileged sense. In the extended discussion of the propriety of using the word ‘substance’ to refer to God (5.3–11), a discussion in which the Father and the Son are primarily at stake, Augustine affirms the well-known principle that God does not have properties as an accident, but rather that, for example, ‘for God it is the same thing to be as to be great . . . he is his own greatness. The same must be said about goodness and eternity and omnipotence and about absolutely all the predications that can be stated of God . . .’ (5.11). Moreover, these names must apply equally to the three and to the Trinity: ‘So whatever God is called with reference to self is both said three times over about each of the persons . . . and at the same time it is said singularly and not plurally of this same trio (*et simul de ipsa trinitate non pluraliter sed singulariter dicitur*)’ (5.9, trans. altered). Although Augustine established very early on that ‘being’ and ‘immortality’ were privileged names of God (1.2), then, it would appear that all names of God are, in principle, equivalent to these privileged names, and are to be applied not simply to the Father who is the point of origin of the trinity (in accordance with the ‘monarchy of the Father’), but to the three. In the discussion immediately following, however, there comes to be a sense in which the names which are common to this same trio are, in a certain way, to be particularly said of the Spirit. While the Trinity cannot be called either the Father (‘except perhaps metaphorically with reference to creation’) or the Son, ‘in terms of the text “God is spirit” (Jn 4:24), the triad can as a whole be called [Spirit], because both Father and Son are also spirit’ – indeed, ‘the triad can be called both holy and spirit’. Those words are reserved in particular for the Holy Spirit, but this is precisely because the Spirit ‘is so called relationship-wise, being referred to both Father and Son, since the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Father and of the Son’ (5.12). Though the name ‘Holy Spirit’ does not have immediate connotations of relation, the name ‘gift’ helps to make this clear, where the giver is ‘God’ or ‘Father and Son’. What this clarifies is that:

the Holy Spirit is a kind of inexpressible communion or fellowship of Father and Son (*Ergo spiritus sanctus ineffabilis quaedam patris filiique communio*),

and perhaps he is given this name just because the same name can be applied to [or, can fit] the Father and the Son (*quia patri et filio potest eadem appellatio convenire*). 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. So to signify the communion of them both by a name which applies to them both, the gift of both is called the Holy Spirit. (5.12)

The first sentence of this quotation is particularly interesting. First of all, in the Latin text (at least in some manuscripts), there is no copula, as if to be absolutely certain to leave no space 'between' the Holy Spirit and this 'communion or fellowship'. Second, beyond the two possible meanings given by the translator, one could also offer *sharing* or *mutual participation*. That which comes to us as gift is not a property of God – after all, God does not have 'properties', but immediately shares among the three what human language would call the divine properties. Instead, what comes to us is a sharing – and a sharing which, 'properly', can be called some of the most privileged names of God, such as 'spirit', or 'holy'. The standard for this 'propriety' of names is, paradoxically, that such names should 'fit', should be sharable with, both Father and Son.

Although the Spirit is not the gift of the Father to the Son, nor even the gift of the Father and the Son to each other, Augustine is nonetheless convinced that the Spirit is in some sense *eternally* gift. This at first presents a problem, because Augustine starts off with the misleading parallel between the birth of the Son and the giving of the Spirit/gift: 'the Son by being born not only gets his being the Son but quite simply his being; does the Holy Spirit in the same way not only get his being gift by being given, but also quite simply his being?' Drawing on the distinction between *donatum* and *donum*, a given thing and a gift (5.16), Augustine concludes that this parallel does not hold. Here Augustine is clearly going beyond what Basil allowed in *On the Holy Spirit* – that is, he is going much further in using very similar terms to describe, on the one hand, the way that God enters into history and, on the other hand, the way God is in eternity. The decision that the Holy Spirit must always already have been gift, even when there was no one to receive it, opens the door for thinking of God as having somehow been eternally 'ready' for the economy of salvation. And so, while he rejects the idea that God was 'everlastingly Lord' before there was anyone to rule, Augustine argues that the case is different with regard to love: 'But it is unthinkable that God should love someone temporally, as though with a new love that was not in him before . . . So he loved all his saints "before the foundation of the world" (Jn 17:2; Eph 1:4), as he predestined them' (5.17).

This is because love is bound up intimately with what it means to be God – and here again, the Holy Spirit plays a decisive role. In a discussion of his reworked concept of substance, Augustine turns from the equality of the Father and the Son to the way that ‘the Holy Spirit too takes his place (*consistit*) in the same unity and equality and substance’:

For whether he is the unity of both the others or their holiness or their charity, whether he is their unity because their charity, and their charity because their holiness, 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. (6.7)

The Spirit takes his place in the unity of the Trinity as that unity, and perhaps one might even say that the Spirit is their unity because it is charity. It is distinguished from them precisely as what they share:

So the Holy Spirit is something common to the Father and Son, whatever it is, or is their very commonness or communion (*communio* [thus also sharing]), consubstantial and coeternal. Call this friendship (*amicitia*), if it helps, but a better word for it is charity. And this too is substance because God is substance, and “God is charity” (1 Jn 4:8, 16), as it is written. (6.7)

Thus God’s being substance is somehow bound up with God’s being charity, and the Holy Spirit, as that which is shared between the Father and the Son – their sharing itself – is, in a privileged sense, charity.

Here Augustine seems to be a hair’s-breadth from saying simply that the Holy Spirit is the divine substance *tout court*. The way he structures this argument seems to me to be an extremely effective way of avoiding what is probably the most natural initial formulation of the Trinity where, on the one hand, there are the three persons and then, on the other hand, the divine nature is conceived as some kind of fourth thing over against them. Typically, the East avoids this conceptualisation by insisting on the monarchy of the Father as the principle of unity, while the West has located unity in the divine nature and so always faces the temptation of thinking four things in the Trinity. Augustine charts a completely different course by locating the unity of the Trinity in the Holy Spirit. This is interesting for several reasons. First of all, it functionally displaces his initial emphasis on ‘being’ and ‘immortality’ as peculiar to God (1.2). This pair could (somewhat artificially) be mapped out on the opposition described above: for ‘being’, one could substitute the Western emphasis on the divine nature or substance as that alone which properly ‘is’; for ‘immortality’, one could substitute the Eastern emphasis

on the monarchy of the eternal and unoriginate Father. In both cases, the principle of divine unity is taken to be what separates creator from creation, in fact what often ends up making creation seem superfluous to the creator – God here being conceived first of all as the unoriginate, the unchanging, that which is utterly foreign to creation. Augustine does not let go of any of these ideas of God, but he does relativise them by finding God’s unity in that person of the Trinity whose origin is least clear to him and who, for Augustine, represents even more than the Son God’s eternal *readiness* for the temporal.

Just as the unity or unifying of God in the Holy Spirit is thought on the basis of love, so also is God’s readiness for the temporal. I have already noted above that Augustine thinks of love as being so central to what it means to be God that the very idea of God loving temporally – that is, being capable of increasing or diminishing his love – is unthinkable in a way that God’s temporal lordship is not. Thus God is said to have loved the saints from all eternity, so that one can think of God’s love as ‘conjoining Father and Son to each other and subjoining us to them’ (7.6). For Augustine, we are called to ‘cling to [God] in love’, so as to ‘enter into bliss’ (7.5), and in the eighth book of the *De Trinitate*, he implicitly sets up a twofold standard for recognising what true love is: first, true love is intimately tied up with ‘the trinity that God is’ (8.8), so that ‘you . . . see a trinity if you see charity’ (8.12); second, true love is equally intimately tied up with justice: ‘True love then is that we should live justly by cleaving to the truth, and so for the love of all men by which we wish them to live justly we should despise all mortal things’ (8.10).

Yet manifestly, for Augustine, we fail to love as we ought. In the attempt to understand what true love might mean, it may be helpful to turn, then, not first of all to God, for whom love never changes, but to the more familiar failures of human love, seeking a negative outline that will allow the positive content or structure of true love stand out more sharply. In the same section in which he lays out the standard of love as living justly in accordance with the truth, Augustine sets up an opposition – or more properly, a contrast – between love (*dilectio*) and *cupiditas*, which is translated by Hill as *covetousness* and can also mean *ambition*: ‘Only if it is true love does it deserve to be called love, otherwise it is covetousness; and thus covetous people are said improperly to love, and those who love are said improperly to covet’ (8.10). Rather than immediately positing *cupiditas* as the opposite of *dilectio*, Augustine is setting up a contrast between two terms which are easily confused. Instead of a rejection of love, then, one could conceive of *cupiditas* as an improper form of love, one that detaches love from the requirement to ‘live justly by cleaving to the truth’ (8.10).

Augustine explores the relationship between cupiditas and truth in the tenth book of the *De Trinitate*. In this passage, Augustine interprets the command for the mind to ‘know itself’ as follows: ‘I believe it means that it should think about itself and live according to its nature, that is it should want (*appetat*) to be placed according to its nature, under him it should be subject to and over all that it should be in control of; under him it should be ruled by, over all that it ought to rule’ (10.7). Yet in place of this true knowledge of itself, the mind ‘does many things as if it had forgotten itself through deformed desire (*Multa enim per cupiditatem pravam tamquam sui sit oblita sic agit*)’ (10.7; my translation). This same mind that is commanded to know itself instead acts as if it had forgotten itself, and what brings this about is precisely cupiditas. The phrase *cupiditas prava* could be considered redundant, since for Augustine cupiditas is in some sense constitutively crooked, deformed or perverse. Yet here it serves to emphasise that what is at stake in Augustine’s argument is not a negation of self-knowledge, since it is impossible for the mind truly to forget itself. Rather, it is a matter of a failure of the mind to correspond to its self-knowledge through thinking about itself and wanting to be placed according to its nature. When it is placed according to its nature, the mind ‘must stand still in order that it may enjoy them (beautiful things) (*ut eis fruatur*)’ (10.7; my translation), that is, to enjoy the benefits of beautiful things within God. When it quasi-forgets itself *per cupiditatem*, however, it wants ‘to attribute them (the beautiful things) to itself and not out of him (God) to be like him (God) but out of itself to be what he (God) is (*non ex illo similis illius sed ex se ipsa esse quod ille est*)’ (10. 7; my translation).⁴ To the covetous mind, being like God must mean having the beautiful things ‘within oneself’, and this is what the mind attempts and fails to achieve. In its attempt at possession, it misses the things themselves and derives its pleasure instead from images of them that have been formed out of ‘its own substance’ (10.7). In this way the mind becomes infinitely impoverished, losing not only God but also the beautiful things that it initially desired to have apart from God – though it never loses itself. The preservation of the mind itself, even in the situation of cupiditas, testifies to the fact that what is at stake here is not the destruction of the mind but a perversion of the mind’s proper state.

This structure of love’s perversion into cupiditas being established, we can now return to the definition of true love as ‘living justly by cleaving to the truth’ (8.10). To live justly means for the mind to ‘want to be placed according to its nature’, and cleaving to the truth means for it to

⁴ Hill has ‘rather than be like him by his gift it wants to be what he is by its own right’. This added reference to ‘gift’ is problematic, not only as a translation, but in terms of Augustine’s theological argument, as I hope will become clear in what follows.

‘think about itself’ in such a way as to understand its proper placement – that is, its necessary relation to God as that nature in which and out of which it has enjoyment of beautiful things (10.7). To attempt to usurp God’s position represents, however, not merely a misrecognition of oneself, but more fundamentally a misrecognition of God’s true relationship to the beautiful things. Here, it doesn’t (yet) make sense to speak of God as giving beautiful things to the human mind as a gift, as though God had previously ‘possessed’ those things and then hands them over to the mind. Rather, Augustine here says that the properly ordered mind ‘stands still in order that it may enjoy (*fruat*)’ beautiful things. The obvious reading here is to envision the properly ordered mind ‘enjoying’ in the sense of deriving joy or delight from the beautiful things. Yet in light of the contrast between enjoyment and acquisitive *cupiditas*, I think it is not out of place to hear in this passage the economic connotation of *fruo*, namely its relationship to the legal concept of *usus et fructus*: free use or ‘enjoyment’ without ownership, a connotation that is preserved in English. This connection is particularly tantalising because *usus* appears in a very compressed quotation of Hilary of Poitiers which Augustine comments on in the sixth book of the *De Trinitate*: ‘Eternity in the Father, form in the image, use (*usus*) in the gift’. Augustine explains the third part of this quotation as follows:

Then that inexpressible embrace, so to say, of the Father and the image is not without enjoyment (*perfruitione*), without charity, without happiness (*gaudio* [so also joy, gladness, delight]). So this love, delight, felicity, or blessedness (if any human word can be found that is good enough to express it) he calls very briefly ‘use (*usus*)’, and it is the Holy Spirit in the triad, not begotten, but the sweetness of begetter and begotten pervading all creatures according to their capacity with its vast generosity and fruitfulness, that they might all keep their right order and rest in their right places. (6.11)

Note that the first term Augustine employs to explain Hilary’s *usus* is derived from the verb *fruo*: *perfrutio* or, in some manuscripts, *perfructio*. While one might expect divine ownership to correspond to creaturely enjoyment, Augustine instead uses an intensive variation on *fructus* – thus, to creaturely enjoyment corresponds the divine *fullness* of enjoyment. To put it differently, in the Holy Spirit, God enjoys without ownership. This is because the Holy Spirit is, as we have seen, the *communio* or sharing of the Father and the Son, which can best be understood as *caritas* (6.7). This enjoyment is shared with creation, out of the ‘vast generosity and fruitfulness’ of God (6.11) – and it is shared first of all in the Holy Spirit. Returning to Augustine’s analysis of

cupiditas, we can now see clearly that the Holy Spirit in particular is the place – and here he follows up on Basil’s analysis – where the human mind ‘must stand still in order that it may enjoy’ beautiful things (10.7).

It is at this point that we can understand, then, why it is that the Holy Spirit is thought as ‘gift’, and above all in the economy of salvation. There have obviously been many ways of thinking the gift throughout history, but it seems that Augustine’s way of thinking the gift broadly corresponds to those strains of modern philosophy which consider the gift to be in some sense disruptive to economy, which means first of all an economy based on property. Beyond the simple question of property rights, Augustine also rejects the idea of a cycle of gift exchange, first of all in his refusal to think of the Holy Spirit as a reciprocal gift between the Father and the Son (5.16) – a possibility, I must emphasise, that he does not even consider – and then also in the impossibility that the creature might somehow give something back to God. As we have seen, the fall into sin is precisely the fall into desire as a fall into acquisitiveness or attempted ownership, and it is within this horizon that the Holy Spirit appears as a disruption – that is, as a gift in the strictest sense. Perhaps, then, one may understand the idea of the Holy Spirit as ‘everlastingly gift’ (5.17) to mean that the Holy Spirit as *communio* of the Father and the Son is eternally able to disrupt and undermine the human economy of property and regulated exchange, but that until such an economy arose within creation that potentiality remained, as it were, latent. This is not to say that the potentiality was somehow kept in reserve, but rather that before the advent of sin it (blessedly) lacked the object on which it could most properly operate qua gift.

Put differently: for the Holy Spirit to be gift within the horizon of sin and salvation is nothing other than for it to be the *communio* of Father and Son, generously shared with creation. Just as God’s coming to love his saints in time does not imply a change in God, but rather a change in the saints (5.17), so also the giving of the Spirit in the economy of salvation does not imply a change in God, but rather a change in the saints. This change is a pledge (5.13) of future blessedness, though the experience of that blessedness in this world always remains fragmentary – that is, the gift is always gift, is always only experienced as disrupting the horizon of human expectation. Augustine testifies to this in the experience of the church:

through the gift which the Holy Spirit is in common for all the members of Christ, many gifts which are proper to them severally are divided among them. They do not each have all the gifts, but these have some and those have others, although all have the gift by which their special gifts are distributed to each, that is the Holy Spirit. (15.34)

Just as the Holy Spirit was seen above to be the place where the mind should stand to enjoy beautiful things, so now in the economy of salvation the Holy Spirit is the gift in which God's gifts are shared and divided (or shared out). To underline his point, Augustine turns to the Book of Acts (15.35), first to Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost where he exhorts his hearers to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:37), and then the story of Simon the magician, who sought to purchase the power to bestow the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:18) – following exactly the path described by Augustine of the mind led astray *per cupiditatem* (10.7), and receiving the same perdition. Yet, as if to remove the possibility that the members of the church might feel superior to the outsiders (like Simon) who do not understand God's gift, Augustine turns immediately to the passage where the Holy Spirit falls on the Gentiles even without the mediation of baptism (Acts 10:44), disrupting even the expectations of the church, which was facing its own temptation to exercise proprietary rights over the gift of God. Augustine specifies that his broad goal in citing these passages is 'to prove that the Holy Spirit is the gift of God', but more specifically he seems to be defining his own use of the word gift as referring to that which disrupts the economy of ownership and exchange.

Much of the remainder of the final book of the *De Trinitate* is taken up with reviewing the conclusions Augustine has reached about the Holy Spirit, indicating that Augustine himself regards his approach to the Holy Spirit as his greatest contribution to trinitarian thought. As I have argued, Augustine's understanding of the Holy Spirit is central to his understanding of the unity of God, the relationship of God to creation, and the love of God as 'conjoining Father and Son to each other and subjoining us to them' (7.6). Yet, despite the decisive new insights he offers into the doctrine of God and specifically into the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, Augustine concludes by invoking his distance from the divine mystery of which he speaks, seeing his soul as being 'in that tavern to which that Samaritan brought the man he found half-dead from the many wounds inflicted on him by robbers' (15.50) – but in this case, one could argue, the soul itself is more than a robber, having instituted the very realm of property where previously there was freely shared enjoyment. Thus for now, the Holy Spirit can only be a gift, a surprising interruption of propriety, a pledge for the day when Augustine will fully enjoy God's sharing of God in the Holy Spirit.