

Introduction and Commentary

The Twelfth Century Milieu and the Victorine School

Without doubt, in the history of the Middle Ages, the twelfth century shines for its intellectual vitality and decisive originality. Gilson writes, “If considered in its entirety, the intellectual movement of the twelfth century presents itself as the preparation of a new age in the history of Christian thought.”¹ It was a time of progress and cultural renaissance² of arts and letters, bringing to full maturity a number of positive tendencies that had originated in the previous century. In many ways, this period constitutes “the high peak of the Middle Age . . . therefore, a prolific and dynamic time, which does not oppose the Renaissance-Humanism,³ but which rather leads up to it.”⁴ In society the economic

1. “Envisagé dans son ensemble, le mouvement intellectuel du xii^e siècle se présente comme la préparation d’un âge nouveau dans l’histoire de la pensée chrétienne.” Gilson, *Philosophie*, 337.

2. See Benson, et al., *Renaissance and Renewal*. See Paré, et al., *Renaissance du xii^e Siècle*. From a historical perspective, it is important to mention that the first extensive analysis of the twelfth century, which recognised the importance of this century as a moment of Renaissance of arts and letters, was carried out by Haskins at the beginning of the twentieth century. See Haskins, *Renaissance*.

3. In spite of any inherent difficulty encountered in formulating an all-encompassing definition of Humanism as the cultural tendency of the Quattrocento, and in light of more recent studies (See: Celenza, *Lost Italian*; Nauert, *Humanism*; Trinkaus, *Scope*; Adorno, *Arte*), it might be helpful to clarify that for the sake of this present commentary, the term Renaissance-Humanism should be understood as indicating simply the particular activity of cultural, political, educational, and artistic reform carried out primarily during the course of the fifteenth century in Italian centers of culture such as Florence (and exported throughout the Italian peninsula and the rest of Europe to the end of the sixteenth century) and which originated from a renewed interest in classical literature, art, and philosophy.

4. “Il culmine del Medioevo . . . un’età, quindi, florida e dinamica che non si oppone, bensì prelude, all’Umanesimo-Rinascimento.” Spinelli, *La Trinità*, 12.

rebirth produced new wealth and facilitated the spread of knowledge. New centres of learning were established in cathedral schools to counterbalance the *scholae abbatiarum*—the centres of learning associated with abbeys—creating a greater audience for new ideas and engaging a wider public in new debates. While Plato's, Augustine's, and Boethius' works continued to be studied with attention, John Scot Eriugena's translations of the writings of Greek fathers⁵ attracted increasing appreciation. Latin translations of Aristotle's works also started making their first appearance. In summary, in Dumeige's words, the twelfth century "is . . . the dawn, which announces a great brightness."⁶ Indeed, this is the century of Abelard and Bernard of Clairvaux, Innocent II and Alexander III, Roscelin of Compiègne and Gilbert Porreta.⁷

In such a time, William of Champeaux founded the Abbey of Saint Victor on the banks of the river Seine. The Victorines were to follow the rule of Saint Augustine, whose demands are considerably less restrictive than those of other monastic orders. They were to uphold the ideal of a contemplative life dedicated to studying the sacred books, the writings of the church fathers, and works of pagan authors. Immediately, the newly organised monastery became the see of one of the most prestigious schools of its time; a leading centre in academic discussions.⁸ The theological influence of the Victorines is undeniable.⁹ Hugh, a very prolific author, was known amongst his contemporaries as, "the most important theologian of our time"¹⁰—the second Augustine.¹¹ Adam was a very famous liturgical poet who perfected the *Sequentiae* meters and their use as liturgical hymns recited in Eucharistic celebrations.¹² Yet, as Spinelli argues, "the one who displays the most genius is certainly Richard of Saint Victor."¹³

5. For Eriugena's translations of the works of Maximus the Confessor, Gregory of Nyssa, and Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, see Migne, *Joannis Scoti*, 1023D–1222A.

6. "Il [le xiiie siècle] est . . . l'aube annonciatrice d'une grande clarté." Dumeige, *Richard de Saint-Victor*, 1.

7. For a more in depth analysis, see Gilson, *Philosophie*, 259–343.

8. See Spinelli, *La Trinità*, 15. Dumeige, *Richard de Saint-Victor*, 6ff.

9. See Dumeige, *Richard de Saint-Victor*, 16.

10. Richard of Saint Victor, "Benjamin Major," I.4.

11. Spinelli, *La Trinità*, 18.

12. *Ibid.*, 17.

13. "Il più geniale è certamente Riccardo di San Vittore." *Ibid.*, 17.

Richard was a Scottish monk who joined the monastery some time between 1120 and 1135¹⁴ and became Prior in 1162.¹⁵ He was a profound thinker and a passionate teacher, a devout believer whose worldview found “its profound inspiration in a theological life intensely lived out.”¹⁶ He was primarily a mystical author, a “Doctor of Contemplation,”¹⁷ as Spinelli calls him, and a model of spiritual devotion to his contemporaries. About a century later, Dante would commend Richard’s mysticism, pointing out the Prior of Saint Victor among the other *Spiriti Sapienti*—the souls of the wise of Paradise—who brought spiritual light to the world. According to him, “Richard . . . was in contemplation more than man.”¹⁸

Studies on Richard’s theology are today regrettably very few in number: the twelfth-century Prior of Saint Victor is almost exclusively renowned for his spiritual and allegorical treatises;¹⁹ as a “theologian of the spiritual life.”²⁰ Yet, he is also the author of one of the most significant mediaeval works on the dogma of the Trinity—the only purely dogmatic treatise that he produced.²¹

This masterpiece awakened profound admiration in Richard’s contemporaries. Latin codices of the *De Trinitate* are found scattered throughout Europe, and the work held a key place of influence at least until the end of the sixteenth century,²² becoming a *must-read classic* of dogmatic literature.²³ Quite surprisingly, its fortune slowly declined and today it is hardly ever included in average, theological curricula.

14. Ibid., 66. The chronology offered by Spinelli has been preferred to those presented by Ottaviano and Dumeige, as this seems to be the most accurate.

15. For further biographical information, see Fritz, “Richard de Saint-Victor,” 13:2676–95.

16. “Trouve son inspiration profonde dans une vie théologale intensément vécue.” Ethier, *Le “De Trinitate,”* 7.

17. “Doctor Contemplationis.” Spinelli, *La Trinità*, 27.

18. “Riccardo/ . . . a considerar fu più che viro.” Dante, *Paradiso*, X, 131–32.

19. In addition to the anthology edited by Zinn [see below], modern versions of some of Richard’s mystical compositions can be found in Richard of Saint Victor, *Benjamin Minor*; and Richard of Saint Victor, *Sermons et Opuscles*.

20. “Un théologien de la vie spirituelle.” Ethier, *Le “De Trinitate,”* 8.

21. Spinelli, *La Trinità*, 30.

22. Ibid., 59.

23. See Ribaillier, *Richard*, 71.

Nonetheless, in recent times, there have been clear signs of a renewed interest in Richard's dogmatics, especially within the English-speaking academia. Scholars of the likes of Colin Gunton have seen the Victorine's trinitarianism as a corrective source to certain Augustinian tendencies.²⁴ More recently, Dennis Ngien has dedicated a significant portion of his study on the *filioque* clause in mediaeval theology to Richard of Saint Victor's use of *condilectio*,²⁵ while Matthew Knell has used Richard's defence of the *filioque* to insert Victorine trinitarianism into a broader discussion of Western, mediaeval developments in Pneumatology.²⁶ It is all the more disheartening, then, to see how such genuine renewal of interest towards Richard's dogmatics shown by these astute academics is at the same time tragically hampered by a limited—and ultimately very superficial—knowledge of Richard's *De Trinitate*. Due to the lack of a clear and available English translation, these recent studies are mostly confined to the analysis of Book III, condemning serious enquiry to an understanding of Richard's argument which is only partial. As a thoroughly scholastic masterpiece, the *De Trinitate* can be truly understood only if it is analysed in its entirety. Never before has the enthusiasm of the academia in its eagerness to develop a more enlightened understanding of Richard of Saint Victor's theology, together with the serious lack of availability of primary sources in English, made the present work more urgent and needed.

The Need for a Modern, English Translation of Richard of Saint Victor's *De Trinitate*

The heavy prose of the Victorine's Latin and his sometimes excessively analytical approach to the topic have probably discouraged more than one attempt at translation. Richard's style is indeed prolix; his verbosity and repetitions are at times difficult to follow, and his mysticism is pervaded by a mannerism of a very mediaeval gusto. All these factors can probably explain why translations of the *De Trinitate* into modern languages have been very limited, often condemning Richard's dogmatics to oblivion.

24. Gunton, *Promise*, 42–55 and *passim*.

25. Ngien, *Apologetic for Filioque*.

26. Knell, *Holy Spirit*.

The first, full, modern version of the work has been completed in French by Salet, during the second half of the twentieth century.²⁷ The only other full translation existing today is that completed in Italian by Spinelli, and published in 1990.²⁸ The *De Trinitate* has never been translated into English or German.²⁹ Currently, only brief excerpts are available in:

- The English anthology, *The Twelve Patriarchs, The Mystical Ark, Book Three of the Trinity*. Edited by G. A. Zinn. New York: Paulist, 1979.
- The English anthology, *A Scholastic Miscellany: Anselm to Ockham*, LCC 10. Edited by Eugene R. Fairweather. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961.
- The German anthology, *Die Viktoriner Mystische Schriften*. Edited by P. Wolff. Leipzig: Hegner, 1936.

The sharpness of Richard's achievement, however, is such to reproach the current lack of any type of full, English version of *De Trinitate*. And, as has already been noted, in spite of the recent renewal of interest in Richard's dogmatics, the absence of a translation is a key factor in explaining the regrettable lack of serious critical studies emerging from the English-speaking academy on the wealth and value of Victorine, trinitarian theology. The situation certainly demands that at least an attempt be made at filling the gap, so that the Victorine's accomplishments might be enjoyed by a wider theological public.

The translation offered here is based on the Latin text published by Salet, which represented an edition of Jean de Toulouse's codex (as transcribed by Migne), improved on the basis of the *Mazarienus Codex*. My goal has been to offer an English edition of Richard's work that is as literal a translation of the original Latin as possible, without appearing pedantic. Priority has obviously been given to faithfulness to the original intention and even formal style of the mediaeval author. Particular

27. Salet, *La Trinité*.

28. See above, Spinelli, *La Trinità*.

29. In truth, Ribailier writes in 1958 that an English translation edited by J. Bligh was due to be published soon (Ribailier, *Richard*, 8). However, this translation has never appeared, and Book Three is the only portion that has ever been available in English.

care has also been taken to maintain the most solid basis of faithfulness in rendering Richard's tight, technical, theological language. Yet, the needs of modern English also require a clear and flowing text and I have endeavoured to produce such.

The State of the Question: General Overview of the History of Trinitarian Thought

The dogma of the Trinity is certainly the central doctrine of the Christian faith. It developed from the Church's need to account for Christ's unity with the Father and it constitutes the basic tenet to present justification as a fully objective act of God's grace.³⁰ Yet, while the cause of a Trinitarian definition of faith, enshrined in the Creeds, is to be sought in deep christological concerns, its consequences also show radical, ontological effects. In Christian understanding, God—the supreme and only fountain of being—presents in himself both oneness and plurality.

The image we receive from the New Testament is that of God revealing himself in the economy of salvation in Christ (God as he is *in relation to creation*). Yet, the Trinity in its immanence (God as he *in himself*) remains by definition *totally other* to the human being, whose knowledge of divine essence cannot but ultimately result in being incomplete, as Augustine, quoting from Paul, notes.³¹ Only an infinite intellect could ever entirely comprehend infinity, thus in order to fully understand God one must be God himself. Nonetheless, the needs of a sound soteriology are met only by a continual attempt to understand the being of God *in se* (God as he is *in himself*). The development of

30. See Athanasius, *Incarnation*, III.14–17 and *passim*. If the Son, who becomes incarnate, is not God himself—one with the Father—then he cannot carry a vicarious redemption for humanity. Indeed, if the Son does not share the very same substance of the Father, then he becomes simply another enlightened creature, who has happened to achieve goodness. Salvation, therefore, would be the product of human works of righteousness, obtained by an imitation of the work of Christ. Christ would become humanity's prophet without being humanity's representative redeemer, failing to carry humanity with himself. Such was the necessary consequence of Arian theology, for example, against which Athanasius fought his entire life, and which must be kept in mind in order to understand the reasons behind Athanasius' strong, trinitarian positions.

31. Augustine, *Trinity*, XV.8.14–10.18. See also Dante, *Paradiso*, XXXIII, 124–26.

models to “account for who . . . these three [are],”³² then, have remained through history the constant effort of Christian Trinitarian theology.

Athanasius

This present overview is not the appropriate place where one should attempt to provide a detailed analysis of pre-Nicene formulations made by theologians such as Origen, Irenaeus, and Tertullian. For the sake of this study, it will be sufficient to mention that one of the oldest properly trinitarian models developed in the Christian tradition was that presented by Athanasius in his theology. In recent decades, it has received renewed attention by a certain group of Reformed theologians, led by Thomas F. Torrance, who have tried to revive it.³³ According to Athanasius, the Trinity itself cannot be explained outside the *ousia* (being) of God, and that *ousia* is *one*. The perichoretic relationship—the mutual indwelling of the divine persons—then, is based on the divine *ousia*, which becomes also the source and origin of the procession of the Son and the Spirit.³⁴ In truth, Athanasius did not actually write a treatise on the Trinity to describe his model in a detailed way; rather, his views are to be extrapolated out of his anti-Arian writings and the Nicene Creed he endorsed. Maybe this factor is one reason why a trinitarian model based on the *ousia* as the source of the persons seems never to have been re-elaborated or re-used after Athanasius’ attempt.³⁵ The main trinitarian models of West and East that have had a permanent impact on theological speculations are to be found in the accomplishments of Augustine and the Cappadocian fathers.

32. Augustine, *Trinity*, V.8.10.

33. Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*.

34. While this model might overcome the whole dispute regarding the *Filioque* clause and the issue of double procession in the Trinity, as Torrance notes (Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 231–47.), it also presents the great disadvantage of not being able to describe the specific office of the Father. In fact, while the Cappadocians could speak of monarchy as the unity of the Trinity, in which the Father is the origin of the Son and the Spirit (see Basil of Caesarea, “Holy Spirit,” XVIII.44–47.), by the identification of the *ousia* with the fountain of divine procession, Athanasius does not seem able to describe any *specific* role of the Father in the divine relationship.

35. See Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 241.

Augustine started with a simple observation on dogmas that are revealed to us by faith. He noticed that divine truths can generally be based on fundamental principles of which we, as humans, have some notion.³⁶ For example, we can believe that Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary because we know what we mean by “virgin” and what we mean by “birth,” although we have never seen a virgin giving birth.³⁷ Likewise, we have a generic understanding of “nature,” “species,” and “gender,” so although we have never seen the apostle Paul, we believe about him that which we believe about the entire human race, i.e., that he was a human being like us and that his soul lived united to his body.³⁸ Indeed, it is only because we possess these analytical notions in ourselves that we can articulate in our minds a broad understanding of things that we do not know or that we have never encountered and these notions offer us a basis on which to formulate our faith convictions.

In the same manner, experience can also offer a helpful substrate on which to base our beliefs of faith concepts that in general terms are alien to us. Although the resurrection of our Lord is an unrepeatable act, which we have never seen, we can believe in it because we have experience of life and we have seen people dead and dying. Such experiences of death and life allow us to express our understanding of resurrection as the act of coming back to life from death.³⁹

Lastly, according to Augustine, absolute concepts—which we cannot explain analytically, but which we know intuitively—can also offer a foundation to our beliefs. For example, we immediately know what the concept of Truth is, if someone asks, although it becomes almost impossible to define it in its most spiritual terms, without relapsing into corporeal images. Yet, our intuition of Truth provides us with a medium by which we can associate God with Truth.⁴⁰ Ultimately, every accent

36. Remember that according to Augustine, revealed truth only *invites* one to faith (Augustine, *Trinity*, IX.12.17.) so a firm foundation on which to base our faith is essential.

37. *Ibid.*, VIII.5.

38. *Ibid.*, VIII.5.8.

39. *Ibid.*, VIII.5.8.

40. *Ibid.*, VIII.2.3. Besides having an experiential knowledge of human nature, we also possess an innate understanding of the concept of human being (*Ibid.*, VIII.4.7).

of our faith, which elicits belief, is communicated through and rests on a foundation of which we have some notion. However, Augustine's dilemma consisted of wondering how we as people can believe in the Trinity if we have no mediating concepts on which to base our faith.⁴¹ Indeed, how can we believe if we do not have any idea of what it is that in which we should believe?

His is a reformulation in a Christian, trinitarian fashion of the question of knowledge, as raised by Plato. To the Greek philosopher, knowledge was recognition of the Ideas seen by the soul in the Hyperuraniun—the Ideas' metaphysical dwelling place—which by being literally "beyond the heavens," transcended reality in its perfection of static immutability.⁴² In order to understand Augustine's position, it might be helpful to examine Plato's theory of knowledge in a little more detail. As the philosopher expounds in great depth, in order to investigate something, one must first identify the object of his/her investigation. Yet, this means that the seeker must already know which object he/she is to identify and indeed he/she already must *know* such object in a certain way. In fact, if the seeker were to lack any kind of knowledge of the object sought, he/she would not be able to find it or even to identify it, even though the sought object might very well be in the seeker's plain sight. Indeed, as Plato has Meno wonder, "How will you enquire . . . into that which you do not know? What will you put forth as the subject of enquiry? And if you find what you want, how will you ever know that this is the thing which you did not know?"⁴³ This is often referred to as Meno's paradox: if enquiry of what is known is implausible—as the object to know is already known—enquiry of the unknown is utterly impossible—as the object sought can never be identified. Thus, Plato's answer to Meno is that knowledge is not *acquired* but rather *recollected*. As the immortal soul has been in contemplative contact with the Ideas in the company of the gods⁴⁴ and has passed through a series of embodied reincarnations,⁴⁵ it is now capable to bring

41. Ibid., VIII.5.8. "What then do we know, whether specially or generally, of that most excellent Trinity?"

42. Plato, *Phaedrus*, 247c; 249d. See also Reale and Antiseri, *Pensiero*, 1:100–101, 106–8.

43. Plato, *Meno*, 80d.

44. Plato, *Phedrus*, 249d.

45. Plato, *Meno*, 81d.

back the latent knowledge, which it already possesses in itself.⁴⁶ Indeed, his specific understanding of the acquisition of knowledge constituted the primary reason why Plato seems to endorse belief in reincarnation and metempsychosis.⁴⁷ Although Augustine was quick to reject Plato's conclusions on souls' re-embodiments and transmigrations,⁴⁸ he still accepted the philosopher's starting point as valid: knowing had to be equivalent to recognizing.⁴⁹ In summary, if the capacity of knowledge is inborn in humans, its presence testifies that *in some way* full knowledge of the unknown is already potentially existing in each human being.

The solution Augustine presented to the question is then remarkable: if knowing means recognizing, it is necessary to make an effort and find a *vestigium Trinitatis*, a trace of the Trinity, a clear image on which we can establish our faith so to believe. He found that which he

46. Ibid, 81d. Masterfully, Plato gives an empirical demonstration of his theory of knowledge as *anamnesis* by describing Socrates in an experiment of maieutics. Indeed, Socrates is able to lead an illiterate slave to the solution of a geometrical demonstration, which requires knowledge of the Pythagorean Theorem. Ibid, 82-86b. As Reale and Antiseri comment, "Since the slave had not previously learnt geometry, and since nobody had provided him with the solution . . . one cannot but conclude that he has drawn it from within himself . . . i.e., that he has remembered it . . . Every human . . . can . . . derive from him/herself truths, which he/she did not know before and which nobody has taught him/her." ("Poiché lo schiavo non aveva prima imparato geometria, e poiché non gli era stata fornita da nessuno la soluzione . . . non resta che concludere che egli l'ha tratta dal di dentro di se stesso . . . ossia che se ne è ricordato . . . Ogni uomo . . . può . . . ricavare da se medesimo verità che prima non conosceva e che nessuno gli ha insegnato.") Reale and Antiseri, *Pensiero*, 1:107.

47. Indeed, the mention of reincarnation and its association with knowledge as the product of the soul's recognition of the Ideas in the "world beyond" appears several times in Plato's works (Plato, *Phaedrus*, 246-54; Plato, *Republic*, 614-21; Plato, *Phaedo*, 106E-15). Although through history some commentators have disputed the fact that Plato himself held to a doctrine of reincarnation (Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, 17.4; for a discussion on how myth and allegory are used in Plato's thought see also Brisson, *How Philosophers, passim*), most of the Neoplatonists and virtually all of the Church Fathers read into Plato's myths a clear narrative of soul reincarnation and transmigration, also defined as metempsychosis (Plotinus, *Enneads*, 1.1.11; 3.4.2; 4.3.8-9; 4.3.12; 5.2.2; 6.7.6-7; Augustine, *City*, X.30; Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 2.33; Tertullian, *On the Soul*, 1.28ff).

48. Augustine, *Trinity*, XII.15.24.

49. Ibid., X.1.3. "And unless he knew what knowing means, no one could say confidently, either that he knew, or that he did not know."

considered to be the best image of this in the analysis of the human mind (memory, understanding, and will).⁵⁰

The Trinitarian model Augustine preferred clearly emphasises God's unity. From that, one moves on to describe God's plurality. Augustine's understanding of the Trinity can ultimately be summarized by saying that God is three persons *ad intra*, and one essence *ad extra*,⁵¹ utterly one in will and action.⁵²

The Cappadocian Fathers

The Cappadocian fathers, instead, followed a pattern that seems opposite to the one that Augustine employed in his *De Trinitate*. Their major concern was not primarily that of responding to the question of knowledge, as it had been set out by Plato, but that of fighting the Sabellians, the Arians, and the Semi-Arian Pneumatomachi—the endemic problems of the Eastern Church.⁵³ By analyzing the *hypostaseis*—the “persons” in the Trinity—and by redefining the meaning of the terminology they employed, the Cappadocians began their speculations by developing a social model of the Trinity as persons-in-relationship. From this basis they moved on to describe divine unity.⁵⁴

The emphasis of this kind of theological approach clearly lies on plurality. The Father is seen as the only source of the divine *monarchy*, the fountain of the other two persons' procession. In Cappadocian understanding, then, the Trinity is described as three persons in relationship, in the unity of will.

Comparing Augustine and the Cappadocians

Both the psychological (Augustinian) and the social (Cappadocian) trinitarian models present disadvantages. The first seems almost to

50. Ibid., X.11.17—12.19.

51. Ibid., V.8.10.

52. Ibid., II.10.18. “The Trinity works indivisibly.”

53. See Basil of Caesarea, “Holy Spirit,” *passim*.

54. Gregory Nazianzen, “Holy Spirit,” XXXI.3, 7:318. See also Gregory Nazianzen, “On Holy Baptism,” XL.41, 7:360. It is important to note that the Cappadocians were able to follow this scheme because they re-defined the significance of the word *person*, as will be argued later in this commentary.

encourage the *I* to turn towards itself⁵⁵ and to present three different manifestations of the same mind, which remains standing behind memory, understanding, and will.⁵⁶ Augustine, who preferred to use this model, as it has been said, was indeed conscious of its dangers and justified his choice by saying that the Trinity is not *in* one God, but it *is* one God. He specified that his was just an image, and as such it was imperfect.⁵⁷ On the other hand, the social model presents the opposite inconvenience: by highlighting plurality it seems almost to describe three gods. Gregory of Nyssa, in fact, felt compelled to write the oration “On Not Three Gods.”⁵⁸

This is perhaps the reason why ultimately both Augustine and the Cappadocians did not deliberately contrast the two models, but whilst demonstrating preferences for one over the other, they ended up making use of both of them. Augustine, in fact, offered one of the most vivid exegetical applications of the social trinitarian image, basing it on a paradigm situation of persons-in-relationship, united by the Spirit.⁵⁹ On the other hand, both Gregory of Nyssa and Gregory Nazianzen made brilliant uses of psychological imagery.⁶⁰

The Development of Eastern and Western Trinitarian Thought

Unfortunately the Cappadocian relational *eikōn* and the Augustinian psychological *vestigium* became crystallized with time in a very rigid manner. Later developments in the traditions treated them as two almost incompatible frameworks of analysis. Increasingly Greek theology turned towards doctrinal positions that assumed God’s triunal relationship *a priori*, and tried to study it in light of the Trinity’s activity and involvement with creation. God’s essence (*ousia*)—the “inef-

55. Augustine, *Trinity*, VIII.6.9. See also Augustine, *Religione*, XXXIX.72.

56. See Gunton, *Promise*, 42ff.

57. Augustine, *Trinity*, XV.22.42–23.43.

58. Gregory of Nyssa, “Quod non Sint,” 115–36.

59. Augustine, *Lectures or Tractates*, XIV.9. In light of passages such as this, Gunton’s judgment, which sees in Augustine an exclusive use of the psychological, trinitarian analogy, appears to be ultimately quite superficial (Gunton, *Promise*, 42–55).

60. Gregory Nazianzen, “To His Father,” XII.1; Gregory of Nyssa. “Oratio Catechetica,” II, 13.

fable being of God in Godself,”⁶¹—started to be contrasted with God’s energy (*energeia* or *dynamis*)—“the characteristic activity of God in relation to creation.”⁶² While the Trinity had to remain ineffable, the doctrine of God also had to include, at the same time, the reality of human divinization understood as participation in the perichoretic life of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.⁶³ This was the point of view that was to culminate in the thirteenth-century Byzantine theology defended by Gregory Palamas at the Synod of Constantinople in 1341. Yet, while Christology could clarify the Trinity’s involvement with creation,⁶⁴ the constant challenge of this system, based as it was on the exclusive use of a relational understanding of the Trinity, remained that of avoiding charges of tritheism.

Latin, mediaeval theology, on the other hand, progressively tended to start from the consideration of the immense abyss between creation and God’s being, emphasising God’s simplicity and unity *ad extra*. “The radical difference between creator and creation was taken for granted, and the task was to clarify how God could be trinitarian.”⁶⁵ In fact, rather than distinguishing between God’s essence and his energy, like the Greeks, Latin theologians preferred to identify God with *pure actuality*, in whom there could be no difference between *substance* and *attributes*, since everything coincides with supreme fullness.⁶⁶ Under this perspective, the Trinity of persons appears to be almost an independent issue that concerns only God *within himself*, with hardly any practical application at all. This position, stemming from an overemphasis of God’s unity, would also receive its most elaborate formulation in the

61. Reid, *Energies*, 26.

62. *Ibid.*, 26.

63. As Maximus the Confessor had already argued, we will be transformed into everything that God is, except his being God (*ousia*). See Maximus the Confessor, “Ambiguorum,” 1308B.

64. Reid, *Energies*, 21.

65. *Ibid.*, 21.

66. This is also the reason why a doctrine of divinization has always remained foreign to Western theology. If there is no real difference between God’s being and his energy, then we cannot be simply transformed into *anything that God is except for his being God* (See Maximus the Confessor, “Ambiguorum,” 1308B.), as “anything that God is” also corresponds necessarily with his very substance.

thirteenth century in the works of Thomas Aquinas, during the debate over the relationship between *essence* and *existence*.⁶⁷

It would be quite inaccurate, however, to say that Eastern and Western theology in the Middle Ages developed in parallel ways without influencing each other. Ethier is right in stressing that, particularly in the West, the attention of the Latin world towards the Greeks increased at a rapid pace following the events of 1204, often with contradictory effects.⁶⁸ Yet, embryonic signs of thirteenth-century theological tendencies were already detectable in earlier authors. In the ninth century, John Scot Eriugena had already made the writings of Gregory of Nyssa, Maximus the Confessor, and Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite available in Latin. With his translations he became, to later theologians, the archetype and inspiration⁶⁹ of that portion of academia which increasingly showed its preference for Greek patristic tradition, considering it to be much more meaningful in its expressions than Latin theology.⁷⁰

However, in this work it is probably sufficient to limit ourselves to the acknowledgment that at the dawn of the twelfth century, the theological milieu presented quite a composite situation. It is true that the West was experiencing a growing interest in Greek perspectives, but Eastern authors continued to be generally interpreted through a markedly Western perception. Numerous Greek ideas imported by Eriugena had been misused and revealed to be potentially dangerous,⁷¹ while the ostentatious, escalating use of Greek technical terms did not always communicate much in a Latin context.

67. Reale and Antiseri, *Pensiero*, 1:423–25, 427–28.

68. See Ethier, *Le “De Trinitate,”* 12–13.

69. A “Chef de file,” as Ethier describes him. *Ibid.*, 12.

70. “Graeci, autem, solito more res acutius considerantes expressiusque significantes.” (“On the other hand, the Greeks, as usual, analyze the matter in a sharper manner and express it in a more meaningful way.”) Eriugena, *Divisione*, V.35, 955. Other sectors of the Western theological world had indeed acquired familiarity with the Greek heritage but had preferred to take a non-critical stance before it. This is the case with Peter Lombard, who limited himself to juxtaposing the Greek Fathers to the Latin ones, without interpreting or critiquing them (See Ethier, *Le “De Trinitate,”* 13). Lastly, a third position is that represented by Peter Abelard, who read authors from both Latin and Greek traditions and elaborated them according to a very personal criterion (see *ibid.*, 13).

71. See Spinelli, *La Trinità*, 9.