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**Hermanin de Reichenfeld, Giovanni: *The Spirit, the World and the Trinity. Origen's and Augustine's Understanding of the Gospel of John.*** – Turnhout: Brepols 2021. 276 S. (Studia Traditionis Theologiae, 40), pb. € 65,00 ISBN: 978-2-503-58991-6

This book, derived from the author's doctoral diss. at the Univ. of Exeter, is an ambitious comparison between Origen (hereafter O.) and Augustine (hereafter A.) on Trinitarian theol. through their engagement with the Gospel of John. Hermanin de Reichenfeld contends that the two authors' interpretation of the fourth Gospel provides a key to distinguish the "Origenian" and the "Augustinian" as distinct trajectories of Trinitarian thought. Given this ambitious scope, H. wisely proceeds on the basis of a specific comparison between O.'s *Commentary on John* and A.'s *Tractates on the Gospel of John*. In what follows, I shall attempt a panoramic overview of H.'s approach to O. and A. respectively, before offering a brief remark on the importance of the study.

The heartbeat of O.'s Trinitarian theol. is found in Joh 1,1–3. The Father is the unapproachable one and simple source of divinity. The Son is divine through his perfect participation in his Father's divinity. The nature of this perfect and unmediated participation sets the only-begotten (Joh 1,14 & 1,18) apart from the rest of creation. One of H.'s contributions is to supply a razor sharp vocabulary that gives precision to the Origenian account of intra-Trinitarian relations. On the basis of the Son's participation in (and hence dependence upon) the Father, H. argues for an *ontological subordination of priority* in O. This relation must be distinguished from an *ontological subordination of superiority* (a term that aptly describes the status of creatures except the Holy Spirit) since the Son possesses all the divine attributes in their full perfection as the Father does, albeit in a different mode through participation. This distinction captures O.'s insistence that the only-begotten is like the rest of creatures in his dependence on the Father, but unlike them in his position as one eternally "with God" (Joh 1,1). Extending this vocabulary to the Holy Spirit, O.'s pneumatology is summed up by an *ontological subordination of double priority*. The Holy Spirit is dependent on his participation in both the Father and the Son for the possession of all the divine attributes in their full perfection. This double dependence explains H.'s choice of terms and captures O.'s exegesis of Joh 1,3, according to which the Holy Spirit belongs to "all things" that came to be in the Logos. The term *priority* again indicates that the Holy Spirit, despite his subordination, still occupies a status supremely above the rest of creation.

H. is to be applauded for the precision and consistency in reconstructing O.'s Trinitarian thought as thoroughly subordinationist, a position rarely followed through systematically in previous scholarship. Chap. IV reveals why this thoroughgoing subordinationist interpretation sheds important light on O.'s account of the Trinity's relationship with the world. O. took full advantage of the Johannine dualism between light and darkness, mapping it onto the Platonic distinction between the

noetic cosmos and the perceptible cosmos. In the Fall, rational creatures (λογικοί), though made in the image of the Logos in their possession of a rational nature, were “cast down” to the perceptible cosmos, a “downfall” (καταβολή, Joh 17,24 & Eph 1,4). The return of rational creatures is facilitated by a pedagogy of the Logos through his various ἐπίνοιαι. This intervention by the Son is necessary for the restoration of all things because the Spirit cannot bear the burden of this task (ComJn 2,83). Instead, the Holy Spirit is administered by the Son to play a preparatory and subordinate role to the Son’s soteriological work. The Spirit provides the saints the spiritual substratum – the matter of salvation, as it were – necessary for becoming “spiritual” (πνευματικός), a state perfectly open to the growth of noetic knowledge in the Son-Logos. Subordinationism is therefore an important and yet essential structural element of O.’s Trinitarian economy of salvation.

If the key structural principle of O.’s account of intra-trinitarian relations is *participation*, then the corresponding principle in A. is *identity*. The absolute simplicity of the divine essence (*essentia*) is the metaphysical principle that permeates A.’s Trinitarian thought. “To be” is identical for the simple God as “to know” and vice versa. This self-sameness (*idipsum*) that flows out of divine simplicity regulates A.’s Trinitarian grammar: each divine person must be identical to the same divine essence. Chap. III convincingly shows that A. applied divine simplicity consistently as a hermeneutical principle to interpret Johannine language. The key passage that illustrates this is Joh 5,26. The Father, who has “life in himself”, grants the privilege to have “life in himself” to the Son. The Son, though needing to receive this as gift, is himself *idipsum* inasmuch as the Father is *idipsum*. Hence, the Son and the Father are one in essence though relationally distinguishable. Here A. diverges from O. by giving greater weight to the *idipsum* over the fact that in Joh 5,26, the Son stands not as source but as recipient of “life in himself” (a point A. also recognised; see *TrIoh* 54,7 on 97).

But it is the privileged position of the Holy Spirit in relation to the unity in the Trinity that marks out A.’s greatest difference from O., who preferred to identify this unity in the Father. For A., the Holy Spirit is properly said to be the Spirit of both the Father and the Son. This is due to the Augustinian insistence that the Holy Spirit instantiates that which is common between the Father and the Son, namely, spirit (Joh 4,24). On this basis, A. advanced the well-known thesis that the Holy Spirit is sent by both the Father and the Son (*filioque*) into the world. The *filioque* is important as it reflects A.’s logic that the Father not only gifts the Son the possession of having “life in himself” but also his very own *generative nature*. Accordingly, the Holy Spirit is the very hypostatisation of the unity between the Father and the Son, namely, the very essence of being eternally generative. The Holy Spirit thereby completes the Trinity by being one in identity with the Father and the Son, preserving the simplicity of the divine essence. Readers familiar with the contrast between “Western-Augustinian essentialism” and “Eastern-Cappadocian relationalism” will find H.’s reading of A. controversial and intriguing. For H. is claiming that divine simplicity led A. to assert an identity between the divine essence and the relational processes within the Trinity (begetting and procession). If this is right, then A.’s simple Trinity in actual fact is able to reconcile identity and relationality (93).

The thrust of A.’s Trinitarian soteriology lies in his Johannine dualism between God and the world. Unlike O., who tended to conceive the Trinitarian economy of salvation as *transformation*, A. instead spoke of salvation in terms of *separation out* of the world. Furthermore, while O. preferred to see the Holy Spirit as playing a preparatory and subordinating role in fashioning the saints into spiritual and rational perfection, A. again grants in his soteriology a privileged role to for the Holy Spirit due to his status as the hypostatisation of the unity of the Trinity. The Spirit’s nature as the

bond of love makes him the unique agent of the re-creation of fallen creatures in his act of uniting the saints together and with God, bringing them into the intra-Trinitarian unity.

One important insight of the book is that the role and status of the Holy Spirit constitutes the greatest difference between O. and A. on the Trinity. For O., the Spirit is certainly divine. But would O. affirm that the locus of that which is common in the divine life is the third divine hypostasis? This is unlikely given O.'s insistence on the Father alone as  $\acute{\omicron}$  Θεός. But for A., the Spirit is God in a very privileged sense: as love which constitutes divinity itself (1 Joh 4,8) and as the communion that unites the Trinity. Not only is the Spirit divine but the Triune God is such because of the Holy Spirit. This is a new paradigm of thinking the Trinity that was unavailable in the Origenian trajectory, fettered by its Platonic prepositional metaphysics (the Father = "by whom"; the Son = "through whom"; the Holy Spirit = "in whom") which endows a linear causal and hierarchical structure to O.'s Trinity. His book opens up the potential of considering pneumatology as an important source that led to the rise of a new patristic phil. in the fourth century.

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