

‘Where the Sanctification is One, the Nature is One’: Pro-Nicene Pneumatology in Ambrose of Milan’s Baptismal Theology

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ABSTRACT

Appeals to the Spirit’s baptismal function are a common strategy in pro-Nicene defences of the Spirit’s divinity. The role of these arguments in the eventual triumph of pro-Nicene theology has been well-documented by such scholars as R.C.P. Hanson, Christopher Beeley and Lewis Ayres. However, their influence on developments in sacramental theology is less well-documented. This article explores the influence of pro-Nicene trinitarian thought on fourth century sacramental theology by analysing Ambrose of Milan’s account of the Spirit’s sanctifying function in baptism. Building in particular on the work of Lewis Ayres, Michel Barnes and Kellen Plaxco, this article will identify two strands of pro-Nicene thought which shape Ambrose’s account of the Spirit’s sanctifying activity. The first of these is the argument from inseparable operations. In *De Spiritu Sancto* (*De Spir.*) 1.62-4, 66, 90-4 Ambrose describes sanctification as one inseparable act of divine sending, in which the Spirit is sent by the Father through the Son into the hearts of believers. Secondly, Ambrose’s account of the effects of sanctification is shaped by the doctrine of the Holy Spirit as undiminished giver. The Spirit’s sanctification enables believers to become partakers of the divine nature (*De Spir.* 1.79-80, 3.90-3). The love of God is also communicated to believers through sanctification by virtue of the Spirit’s unity with the divine nature (*De Spir.* 1.66, 92-4). By analysing Ambrose’s account of the Spirit’s sanctifying role in baptism this paper hopes to draw out an under-appreciated theological ramification of the trinitarian controversies of the fourth century.

Introduction

Appeals to the Spirit’s sacramental functions are a common strategy in pro-Nicene¹ defence of the Spirit’s divinity. The role of these arguments in the

¹ Throughout this article I use the term pro-Nicene to refer to a disparate selection of theologians thinking and writing in the 4th century whose thought demonstrates certain shared characteristics and arguments, focused on the defence of the full divinity of the persons of first the Son and (later) the Holy Spirit, as articulated in the articles of the Council of Nicaea. These thinkers shared similar, argumentative strategies, assumptions and scriptural reading practices; this shared theological culture provided the interpretive matrix within which new understandings of the

eventual triumph of pro-Nicene theology has been well documented by scholars such as R.C.P. Hanson, Christopher Beeley and Lewis Ayres (to name a few examples).² A number of scholars have demonstrated that these arguments also influenced developments in sacramental theology.³ Arguments for the Spirit's divinity which made use of the Spirit's sacramental function required more systematic and precise definitions of what this function actually was. As a result, the Spirit's baptismal role was re-interpreted in the light of pro-Nicene trinitarian logic.

This article contributes to this more sophisticated understanding of doctrinal development by exploring the way pro-Nicene trinitarian theology shapes Ambrose's account of the Spirit's sanctifying activity in his *De Spiritu Sancto*. I will focus on three dimensions of Ambrose's theology of sanctification which emerge from his appropriation of pro-Nicene reasoning. First, I will show how Ambrose engages with pro-Nicene arguments concerning the inseparable operations of the trinity in his reading of 1Cor. 6:11 in book three of *De Spiritu Sancto*. This reading establishes for Ambrose that sanctification is a single divine operation. The Father sanctifies through the Son in the Spirit. Secondly I will demonstrate that Ambrose reads several passages about the 'sending', 'giving' or 'pouring out' of the Spirit in light of pro-Nicene arguments which identify the Spirit with the doctrine of the undiminished giver (I shall henceforth refer to these as 'Spirit as undiminished giver' arguments). Ambrose's interaction with these arguments lead him to make the claim that the Spirit is not diminished or changed when sent by the Father to sanctify believers through its indwelling. In the final section of this article I will look at Ambrose's

Spirit's role in baptism developed. For a more complete definition of 'pro-Nicene' theology, see Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford, 2006), 236-40.

² Richard C.P. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God : The Arian Controversy 318-381* (Edinburgh, 1988); Christopher Beeley, 'The Holy Spirit in the Cappadocians, Past and Present', *Modern Theology* 26 (2010), 90-119; Lewis Ayres, 'Innovation and Ressourcement in Pro-Nicene Pneumatology', *Augustine Studies* 39 (2008), 187-205 and *id.*, *Nicaea and Its Legacy* (2006).

³ Rowan Williams, 'Baptism and the Arian Controversy', in Michel R. Barnes and Daniel H. Williams (eds), *Arianism after Arius* (Edinburgh, 1993), 149-81; Lewis Ayres, 'The Spirit as Undiminished Giver: Didymus the Blind's *De Spiritu Sancto* and the Development of Nicene Pneumatology', in D. Vincent Twomey and Janet E. Rutherford (eds), *The Holy Spirit in the Fathers of the Church: The Proceedings of the Seventh International Patristics Conference, Maynooth, 2008* (Dublin, 2010), 57-72; Kellen Plaxco 'Didymus the Blind and the Metaphysics of Participation', *SP* 67 (2013), 227-37; Adam Ployd, 'The Power of Baptism: Augustines Pro-Nicene Response to the Donatists', *JECS* 22 (2014), 519-40 and *id.*, *Augustine, the Trinity, and the Church: A Reading of the Anti-Donatist Sermons* (Oxford, 2015). Williams explores the development of liturgical interpretation in the trinitarian controversies. Plaxco, following Ayres, explores the philosophical background to Didymus' theology of sanctification as participation. Ployd argues for the importance of pro-Nicene understandings of *potestas* in Augustine's anti-Donatist sermons.

account of the effects of the reception of the sanctifying Spirit. Again Ambrose interprets the Spirit's sanctifying activity in terms of Spirit as undiminished giver arguments. The reception of the Holy Spirit enables the believer to participate in the divine nature, and thus to acquire the properties of goodness and holiness.

The sanctification of the Spirit and the argument from inseparable operations: *De Spir.* 3.4.23-8

The argument from inseparable operations is one of the several forms of argumentation which come together to form what Michel Barnes refers to as 'pro-Nicene consensus theology'.⁴ The logic of this argument is as follows: whenever the Spirit acts, the Father and the Son also share in his act; likewise, when the Father acts he acts in conjunction with the Son and the Spirit; and the Son with the Spirit and Father. The activity of the three persons is thus inseparable.⁵ This unity of activity reveals unity of power (*δυνάμεις* in Greek, *potestas* or *virtus* in Latin), which in turn indicates unity of nature.⁶

The influence of this argument on Ambrose's understanding of the Spirit's sanctifying activity can be seen in *De Spir.* 3.4. Here Ambrose discusses 1Cor. 6:11 ('You are washed, you are sanctified, in the name of the Lord Jesus and in the Spirit of our God'). Ambrose argues that the use of 'in' language in this passage indicates the single operation of the Father, Son and Spirit: the Father works *in* the Son and the Son works *in* the Spirit.⁷ Ambrose's concern with the term 'in' here seems to reflect an engagement with an older Latin trinitarian tradition in which 'in' has a technical trinitarian function. This tradition starts with Novation and Tertullian, who use 'in' language in anti-Monarchian context to highlight both distinct identity and equality of substance within the Godhead. In the fourth century 'in' language is deployed in an anti-Homoian

⁴ Michel R. Barnes, 'The Background and Use of Eunomius' Causal Language', in Michel R. Barnes and Daniel H. Williams (eds), *Arianism after Arius* (Edinburgh, 1993), 217-36; *id.*, "'One Nature, One Power': Consensus Doctrine in Pro-Nicene Polemic', *SP* 29 (1997), 205-23.

⁵ Similar to but distinct from the argument from inseparable operations is the argument from common operations. This argument works from the observation that the Spirit does the same *kind* of activity as the Father and the Son. For example: as the Father and Son create, so the Spirit creates. It then proceeds with the claim that this operation is the unique prerogative of the divine nature, and thus the Spirit must share in the divine power and nature. On the distinction between 'common' and 'inseparable' operations, see also L. Ayres, 'Innovation and *Ressourcement*' (2008), 192, footnote 14.

⁶ In a pro-Nicene context, 'power' is taken to indicate a certain causal capacity to act, stemming from a being's nature: see M.R. Barnes 'The Background and Use of Eunomius' Causal Language' (1993); *id.*, "'One Nature, One Power'" (1997).

⁷ Ambrose, *De Spiritu Sancto* 3.4.24. All translations are those of H. de Romestin, E. de Romestin and H.T.F. Duckworth, *Ambrose: Select Works and Letters*, NPNF 2.10 (Buffalo, 1896).

sense by, amongst others, the Western Creed at the Council of Serdica (c.343) and by Hilary of Poitiers, in order indicate the unity and mutual co-dependence of the Father and Son.⁸

Hilary of Poitier's use of 'in' language could provide the immediate background for Ambrose's in our passage. In *De Trinitate* 8.52 Hilary, like Ambrose in *De Spir.* 3.4.24 uses 'in' language is used to describe unity of operation: '[On *John* 10:30] what more fitting words, I ask, could have been employed in his teaching to suit the faculties of our reason, that we might believe in their [the Father and the Son] unity than those by which, through the truth of the birth and unity of nature, it is declared that whatever the Son said and did, the Father said and did in the Son.'⁹ Hilary argues that the claim in *John* 10:30 that the Son and the Father are 'one' refers to the unity of operation between the two: whatever the Son does, the Father does 'in' the Son. Similarly Ambrose uses 'in' to describe the Father working 'in' the Son and 'in' the Spirit to perform a single united operation of sanctification. Ambrose, it seems, is drawing of a distinctly Latin articulation of the pro-Nicene argument from inseparable operations in order to give an account of the Spirit's sanctifying activity in baptism.

In order to reinforce this account, Ambrose provides a series of scriptural quotations each of which describe the Father, Son and Spirit as sanctifying. First he quotes *1Thess.* 5:23 ('The God of peace sanctify you') and *John* 17:17 ('Father, sanctify them in the truth') as examples of the Father's sanctifying activity¹⁰. He then quotes *1Cor.* 1:30 ('Who was made unto us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption') to prove that the Son also sanctifies¹¹. Finally Ambrose refers to *1Thess.* 2:13 which has the Spirit sanctifying ('God chose you as first-fruits unto salvation, in sanctification

⁸ In favour of the view that Ambrose is engaging with this tradition, it may be noted that Lewis Ayres has demonstrated that earlier in book three of *De Spiritu Sancto* Ambrose draws on this tradition to describe the mutual indwelling of the divine persons. Ambrose is thus aware of the trinitarian connotations of 'in' language the Latin tradition. See Lewis Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity* (Cambridge, 2010), 49-50. Ayres is discussing Ambrose, *De Spir.* 3.1.6: 'For the Spirit is not upon Christ, according to the Godhead, but in Christ; for, as the Father is in the Son, and the Son in the Father, so the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ is both in the Father and in the Son, for He is the Spirit of His mouth' (H. de Romestin, E. de Romestin and H.T.F. Duckworth). For a further discussion of the history of 'in' language in Latin trinitarian thought, see Michel R. Barnes 'Latin Trinitarian Theology', in Peter C. Phan (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Trinity* (Cambridge, 2011), 71-4.

⁹ Hilary, *De Trinitate* 8.52, English translation by E.W. Watson and L. Pullan, *Hilary of Poitiers; John of Damascus*, NPNF 2.9 (1899); see L. Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity* (2010), 50, footnote 19 for a discussion of Hilary's use of traditional Latin trinitarian terminology in this passage.

¹⁰ Ambrose, *De Spir.* 3.4.25.

¹¹ Ambrose, *De Spir.* 3.4.26. For Ambrose, the Word 'becoming sanctification' refers to the sanctifying activity of the Word incarnate: 'Do you see that He was made sanctification? But He was made so unto us, not that He should change that which He was, but that He might sanctify us in the flesh' (H. de Romestin, E. de Romestin and H.T.F. Duckworth).

of the Spirit, and belief of the truth').¹² These passages are quoted as proof that "As the Father sanctifies, so, too, the Son sanctifies, and the Holy Spirit sanctifies".¹³ This discussion establishes for Ambrose that there is a common operation (sanctification) which is performed by the Father, Son and Spirit. Ambrose then notes that believers are baptised once and receive sanctification once, not three times.¹⁴ There is, therefore, one act of sanctification in threefold order: the Father sanctifies in the Son, and the Father and the Son both sanctify in the Spirit. Ambrose thus applies the logic of inseparable operations to a range of scriptural texts in order to establish that the Spirit's sanctifying activity is part of a single united operation of the Father, Son and Spirit.¹⁵

The Spirit as undiminished giver in Didymus the Blind

In a recent article Lewis Ayres documents the history of the doctrine of the undiminished giver, from its biblical and philosophical origins to its application to the Holy Spirit by Didymus the blind.¹⁶ The doctrine of the undiminished giver identifies God as the unlimited and immutable source of sanctification. By sanctifying creatures, God is able to bestow the goodness and holiness proper to his own nature, without himself undergoing change or division. In a pro-Nicene context this doctrine was applied to the Holy Spirit to argue that the Spirit must be divine.

Ayres locates the first clear expression of this doctrine in Philo, who, in *De gigantibus* 25-7, offers the doctrine as an interpretation of *Num.* 11:17 ('I will take of my spirit which is upon you, and I will pour it upon the seventy Elders'). According to Philo, the taking away of the spirit is not to be read as a sort of 'cutting off or separation', but instead is analogous to the acquisition and distribution of knowledge, which remains undiminished even as more and more

¹² Ambrose, *De Spir.* 3.4.27.

¹³ Ambrose, *De Spir.* 3.4.25 (H. de Romestin, E. de Romestin and H.T.F. Duckworth).

¹⁴ Ambrose, *De Spir.* 3.4.28: 'So, then, the Father sanctifies, the Son also sanctifies, and the Holy Spirit sanctifies; but the sanctification is one, for baptism is one, and the grace of the sacrament is one' (H. de Romestin, E. de Romestin and H.T.F. Duckworth).

¹⁵ While the argument from inseparable operations is one of the most common strategies adopted by pro-Nicene thinkers, Ambrose seems to be the first theologian to apply the logic of this argument to *1Cor.* 6:11. Athanasius quotes this passage in *Ad Serapionem* 1.6.8, but here he is quoting it as part of a discussion as to which Spirit passages are to be taken as referring to the divine Spirit, rather than human spirit or wind. He refers to it again in *Ad Serap.* 1.22.4, but here he uses it to establish that the Spirit sanctifies and does not receive sanctification. Didymus the blind uses it in his *De Spiritu Sancto* 2.15 to prove that the Spirit of God is identical with the Holy Spirit. Basil discusses it in his *De Spiritu Sancto* 27.68 as part of his attempt to demonstrate that the prepositions 'with' (μετά) and 'in' (ἐν) are synonymous. However, none of these readings utilises the logic of inseparable operations.

¹⁶ L. Ayres, 'The Spirit as Undiminished Giver' (2010).

people obtain it.¹⁷ The precise origins of this doctrine are unclear, although hints of it are to be found in *Wis.* 7:27, as well as in Plato's later works. In a Christian context, the doctrine appears briefly in Justin and Irenaeus, and is first used in a trinitarian context by Clement of Alexandria, who uses it to distinguish the Son from angels. Origen follows Clement in this regard, but both fail to mention the Spirit.¹⁸

Athanasius and Didymus are the first Christians to apply the doctrine to the Spirit. Through them 'the Spirit as undiminished giver' became a popular pro-Nicene strategy for defending the Spirit's divinity. A clear expression of this argument is found in Didymus the Blind's *De Spiritu Sancto*:

If the Holy Spirit is the sanctifier, then it is evident that his substance is not mutable but rather immutable. Now the divine discourses report in the clearest possible way that the immutable substance belongs to God alone and to his only-begotten Son, even as they proclaim that every creaturely substance is changeable and mutable. Therefore, since it has been shown that the substance of the Holy Spirit is not changeable but unchangeable, he will not be *ὁμοούσιος* [the same in substance] with a creature.¹⁹

Kellen Plaxco has located the background to Didymus' argument in discussions of participatory metaphysics in contemporary Neoplatonism.²⁰ The Spirit's indwelling is analogous to causal participation in the forms: the believer in whom the Spirit dwells participates in the Spirit; this causes the believer to take on the property of holiness. Plaxco notes the specific parallel of Porphyry's doctrine of participation. Porphyry uses the language of 'containment' to speak of the ability of a substance to transform another substance by its presence without itself being changed: 'Porphyry stresses the ability of one substance to be contained by another substance even as that substance maintains the ability to "transmute those things into which it comes so that they gain its activity by its presence".'²¹ Plaxco has identified a similar logic in Didymus' argument that the Spirit who fills creatures in sanctification is that which is 'participated in', whilst that which is filled in that which participates.²² To be filled is to participate in another substance, whilst to fill is to be participated in. Didymus makes the same argument regarding scripture's use of the language of 'pouring forth' the Spirit. To be poured forth means to be participated in.²³ For Didymus,

¹⁷ *Ibid.* 59.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* 61-2.

¹⁹ Didymus, *De Spir.* 16. English translation by Mark DelCogliano, Andrew Radde-Gallwitz and Lewis Ayres, *Athanasius and Didymus the Blind: Works on the Spirit* (New York, 2011).

²⁰ K. Plaxco, 'Didymus the Blind and the Metaphysics of Participation' (2013).

²¹ *Ibid.* 235.

²² *Ibid.* 234-5; see also *id.*, "'I Will Pour Out My Spirit': Didymus against Eunomius in Light of John 16:14's History of Reception", VC (Forthcoming); Didymus, *De Spir.* 31-3.

²³ *Id.*, "'I Will Pour Out My Spirit'" (Forthcoming); Didymus, *De Spir.* 34.

a substance being participated in entails its being both immutable and the source of that which it bestows on the participator, and (therefore) divine.²⁴

The Spirit as undiminished giver in Ambrose

Ambrose's understanding of the Spirit's sanctifying activity reflects the influence of Didymus' Spirit as undiminished giver arguments in a number of ways. Ambrose follows Didymus in arguing that the Spirit's sanctifying activity is to be understood in terms of participation. Scriptural passages which speak of the 'pouring out' and 'filling' of the Spirit refer to the Spirit's being participated in by creatures. The Spirit, when he is participated in, does not undergo change. By being participated in, the Spirit is able to transform that which is participating in him by his presence.

The final section of this article will trace this influence by looking at two claims regarding the Spirit's sanctifying activity which emerge from Ambrose's engagement with Spirit as undiminished giver arguments. First, Ambrose argues that the Spirit does not undergo change or division when it sanctifies believers. Second, Ambrose claims that the sanctification of the Spirit enables believers to become partakers of the divine nature, and so to receive divine attributes such as goodness and holiness.

The influence of the undiminished giver arguments can be seen in several passages in book one of *De Spiritu Sancto*, in which Ambrose applies its logic to a range of scriptural passages which refer to the Spirit being 'sent' or 'poured out'. Although these scriptural texts appear to imply change or separation, Ambrose is able to use the logic of the doctrine of the undiminished giver to give an alternative reading, according to which these passages refer to the Spirit sanctifying creatures without undergoing any change or division. In *De Spir.* 1.5.62-4 Ambrose begins an analysis of the Spirit's sanctifying activity with a discussion of *Gal.* 4:6-7 ('God sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts crying, Abba, Father; so that thou art now not a servant but a son'). Ambrose argues that this passage refers to the Spirit's sanctifying activity, whereby the Spirit, through his indwelling, changes believers from being servants to being Sons of God.

²⁴ Plaxco observes that this aspect of Didymus' doctrine of participation moves against the speculation of some neo-Platonic philosophers regarding the possibility of the forms participating in one another. Iamblichus is a paradigmatic representation of this view, which states that some forms both participate in other forms, and are themselves participated in by sensible entities. As Plaxco notes, Didymus' understanding of participation entails a rejection of the view that something can both participate and be participated in. Instead, Didymus proposes an absolute distinction between that which is participated in (God), and that which participates (creatures). Thus, Didymus is able to argue that the Spirit is God by identifying the Spirit as that which is participated in by creatures. See K. Plaxco 'Didymus the Blind and the Metaphysics of Participation' (2013), 235-6.

The Spirit does this without undergoing change himself: '[The Spirit], by sanctifying, works in others a change to grace, but is not changed Himself'.²⁵ The logic of Ambrose's interpretation is the same as we saw earlier in Didymus: the Spirit, as sanctifier, changes creatures, and therefore cannot be susceptible to change; God alone is immutable; therefore the Spirit is God.

Ambrose makes a similar argument in *De Spiritu Sancto* 1.8. Here Ambrose gives a reading to *Joel* 2:28 ('I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh'), arguing that the Spirit, in being 'poured out' by the Father, is not separated from the Father's divinity, nor diminished in any way. Ambrose begins with a philological argument.²⁶ According to Ambrose, the presence of the particle *de* (of) in *Joel* 2:28 indicates that the pouring out of the Spirit refers to the Spirit's economic self-accommodation to human beings: 'He said not Spirit, but "of [*de*] My Spirit", for we are not able to receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit, but we receive as much as our Master divides to us of His own according to His will'.²⁷

Ambrose then uses this philological argument to compare the description of the Spirit as 'poured out' to the self-emptying of the Son at the incarnation described in *Phil.* 2:6: 'He emptied Himself not that He was void of His own fullness, but in order that He, Whose fullness I could not endure, might infuse Himself into me according to the measure of my capacity, in like manner also the Father says that He pours out *of* the Spirit upon all flesh; for He did not pour Him forth wholly, but that which He poured forth abounded for all'.²⁸ Here Ambrose interprets the *Philippians* kenosis hymn in terms of the doctrine of the undiminished giver. The incarnation does not diminish the Son's fullness, but rather the Son is able to infuse himself to human nature whilst still transcending it. Likewise the Spirit is partaken of by creatures without being 'poured out fully' (that is, without being diminished). Ambrose thus argues that the Spirit does not undergo change when poured out by the Father for the sanctification of creatures.

Spirit as undiminished giver arguments also shape Ambrose's understanding of the effects of sanctification. Ambrose argues that the Spirit must possess the divine nature, since he bestows to creatures that which is proper to the divine nature through sanctification. In *De Spiritu Sancto* 1.5.74 Ambrose argues that the Spirit's sanctifying activity demonstrates that the Spirit possesses the goodness proper to the divine being according to his own nature. His argument is based on the Spirit's role in sanctification: 'Good, then, is the Spirit, but good not as though acquiring but as imparting. For the Holy Spirit does not receive

²⁵ Ambrose, *De Spir.* 1.5.64 (H. de Romestin, E. de Romestin and H.T.F. Duckworth).

²⁶ Ambrose's argument here relies on a Latin variant of *Joel* 2:28 which includes the particle '*de*' ('of'). This variant reading seems to reflect a literal translation of the Septuagint text, which uses *ἀπό* with the genitive (ἐκχέω ἀπὸ τοῦ πνεύματος μου).

²⁷ Ambrose, *De Spir.* 1.8.92 (H. de Romestin, E. de Romestin and H.T.F. Duckworth).

²⁸ Ambrose, *De Spir.* 1.8.92 (H. de Romestin, E. de Romestin and H.T.F. Duckworth).

(*accipit*) from creatures but is received (*accipitur*); as he is not sanctified but sanctifies; for the creature is sanctified, but the Holy Spirit sanctifies'.²⁹ The Spirit, by sanctifying, imparts divine properties to creatures, whilst simultaneously transcending the creatures which receive its sanctification. The Spirit imparts goodness to creatures, but does not receive it; is received by creatures without receiving.³⁰

Similarly, when scripture refers to creatures as being 'holy', it is referring to the holiness imparted by the Spirit's sanctifying activity: 'For both the man who receives and God Who gives sanctity are called holy, as we read: "Be ye holy, for I am holy" (*Lev. 11:44*)'.³¹ The Spirit must possess these attributes by nature in order to impart them. Thus the Spirit must possess the divine nature. The fundamental logic is that of the doctrine of the undiminished giver: the Spirit, by sanctifying, enables participation in the divine nature, and thus imparts the properties of goodness and holiness to creatures.

The same understanding of the Spirit's sanctifying activity is expressed once more in Ambrose's interpretation of the 'spiritual seal' (the *spiritalis signaculum*; part of the Milanese postbaptismal rite³²) in *De Spiritu Sancto* 1.6.79-80. Ambrose states that the Spirit is received in the post-baptismal seal, and that the reception of the Spirit results in the restoration of the divine likeness through participation in the divine nature:

We are sealed with the Spirit that we may possess his brightness and image and grace, which is undoubtedly our Spiritual seal. For although we were visibly sealed in our

²⁹ Ambrose, *De Spir.* 1.5.74; see *De Spir.* 1.5.69 (H. de Romestin, E. de Romestin and H.T.F. Duckworth).

³⁰ The receiver-received distinction Ambrose is employing here again suggests the influence of Didymus, who, following Platonic tradition, uses these terms to denote that which participates and that which is participated in respectively. Plaxco has shown that Didymus identifies the Spirit as that which is received in order to counter a Eunomian argument that the Spirit is ontologically inferior to the Son, because the Spirit receives from the Son. This Eunomian argument is derived from an anti-monarchian reading of *John* 16:13-5 ('When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you'), which understands Spirit's receiving from the Son in terms of the metaphysics of participation: the Spirit is distinct from the Son, because the Spirit participates in ('receives from') the Son. See K. Plaxco, "I Will Pour Out My Spirit" (Forthcoming).

³¹ Ambrose, *De Spir.* 1.5.74 (H. de Romestin, E. de Romestin and H.T.F. Duckworth).

³² The exact content of this rite is unclear, and a number of studies have attempted to clarify what Ambrose means by the *spiritalis signaculum*. It seems to consist of a liturgical prayer for the Spirit based on *Isaiah* 11:2. This prayer may have been accompanied by a hand-laying rite or postbaptismal anointing. For further discussion see Craig Satterlee, *Ambrose of Milan's Method of Mystagogical Preaching* (Collegeville, 2002), 176-9. See also Maxwell E. Johnson, 'The Post-christian Structure of Apostolic Tradition 21, the Witness of Ambrose of Milan, and a Tentative Hypothesis Regarding the Current Reform of Confirmation in the Roman Rite', *Worship* 70 (1996), 16-34.

bodies, we are in truth sealed in our hearts, that the Holy Spirit may portray in us the likeness of the heavenly image. Who, then, can dare say that the Holy Spirit is separated from the Father and the Son, since through him we attain the image and likeness of God, and through him, as the Apostle says, are partakers of the divine nature?³³

Athanasius anticipates Ambrose's application of 2*Peter* 1:4 to the Spirit in his *Ad Serapionem*, in which he argues that 'we become sharers of the divine nature by partaking of the Spirit'.³⁴ Thus Ambrose's argument may reflect his dependence on Athanasius' use of undiminished giver traditions at this point in *De Spiritu Sancto*. If so, Ambrose is also developing on Athanasius' argument by linking 2*Peter* 1:4 to the reception of the Spirit in baptism, as an interpretation of the *spiritalis signaculum* of the Milanese baptismal rite.

Conclusion

In this article I have used Ambrose as an example of the way in which pro-Nicene trinitarian theology influenced sacramental theology in the late fourth century. The examples we have looked at are typical of the manner in which pro-Nicene arguments are used to create what Lewis Ayres calls 'a new Scriptural matrix, a set of relationships between texts that shape how each is read and create new possibilities for links to further texts and ideas.'³⁵ Ambrose draws on the arguments from inseparable operations and Holy Spirit as undiminished giver in order to create a new scriptural matrix of readings within which to understand the Spirit's sanctifying activity. Ambrose thus extends pro-Nicene trinitarian logic to the Spirit's sanctifying activity at baptism.

³³ Ambrose, *De Spir.* 1.6.79-80 (H. de Romestin, E. de Romestin and H.T.F. Duckworth).

³⁴ Athanasius, *Ad Serap.* 1.24.4. English translation by Mark DelCogliano, Andrew Radde-Gallwitz and Lewis Ayres, *Athanasius and Didymus the Blind: Works on the Spirit* (New York, 2011).

³⁵ L. Ayres, 'Innovation and *Ressourcement*' (2008), 192.