

Carmen Angela Cvetković  
University of St Andrews - UK

## RE-INTERPRETING AUGUSTINE: SELF-KNOWLEDGE AND INWARDNESS IN RICHARD OF SAINT-VICTOR'S TEACHING ON THE SOUL'S ASCENT TO GOD

**Abstract:** *The recent studies dedicated to the writings of Richard's of Saint-Victor create in my opinion an artificial gap between Richard's theological works where the influence of Augustine can be sensed and his spiritual treatises, where the majority of the scholars see him as following Denys the Areopagite. While my intention in this study is not to deny the latter influence, I would like to prove that Richard's indebtedness to Augustine could not be limited to his theological speculative writings. The present paper proposes an analysis of Richard's main spiritual treatises, The Twelve Patriarchs and The Mystical Ark in the light of the Augustinian teaching on the ascent of the soul to God.*

**Key words:** *Self-knowledge, inwardness, contemplation, excessus mentis, alienatio mentis, ecstasis.*

Richard of St. Victor must be counted as one of the major mystical writers of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, whose writings had a significant impact on the later western tradition. He was the disciple of Hugh "the fountainhead of the Victorine mysticism"<sup>1</sup> but he proved to be a more profound and more original thinker than his master in the practice and theory of contemplation or what is called today mysticism. That his spiritual writings were very popular and highly regarded in the Middle Ages is evident from Dante's praise in *Paradiso*. He considers Richard to be "in contemplation more than human" (*Paradiso* 10: 131-32). Another overwhelming medieval figure, the Franciscan Bonaventure recognizes him as the "modern" master of contemplation and places him in the lineage of Denys the Areopagite, the greatest contemplative writer among the ancient fathers<sup>2</sup>. On the other hand, in an epitaph from the 14<sup>th</sup> century written by William of Saint-Lô, who mentions Richard's work *De Trinitate* (1348), he is acknowledged as a worthy follower of Augustine and his dependence on the writings of the bishop of Hippo is reckoned as indicative of Richard's contribution to Christianity<sup>3</sup>.

From the way in which medieval intellectuals related to Richard's work one is able already to distinguish two main streams in the understanding of his thought. These streams are a consequence of the gradual separation between mysticism and scholasticism in the

---

1 Bernard McGinn, *The Growth of Mysticism*, (New York: Crossroad, 1994) 394.

2 St. Bonaventure's *On the Reduction of the Arts to Theology*, trans. Zachary Hayes O.F.M (New York: Franciscan Institute, St. Bonaventure University, 1996) 44: *Anselmus sequitur Augustinum, Bernardus sequitur Gregorium, Richardus sequitur Dionysium, quia Anselmus in ratiocinatione, Bernardus in predicatione, Richardus in contemplatione.*

3 The epitaph is mentioned by John of Toulouse in *Patrologia Latina*, vol 196, XI –II (Turnhout-Paris: Brepols, 1855).

second half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century<sup>4</sup>. According to these attitudes, which present sequels in recent scholarship as well, there is a gap between Richard's mystical writings, where the influence of Denys the Areopagite might be sensed and his theological writings, especially his treatise *De Trinitate*, written in harmony with Augustine's work bearing the same title. Stephen Chase is a representative of the former stream and in his book *Angelic wisdom: The Cherubim and the Grace of Contemplation* he increases the gap between Richard's *De Trinitate* and *De Arca Mystica* arguing for a dionysian methodology in the latter work and totally ignoring the Victorine's reliance on Augustine in the scaffolding of his teaching on contemplation: "It is my thesis that with regard to the synthesis of positive and negative theology, Richard of Saint Victor did manage a striking imaginative and fully integrated balance of Denys the Areopagite's fundamental dialectic"<sup>5</sup>. At the other extreme, Nico Den Bock in his book *Communicating the Most High*, which is a recent study of Richard's *De Trinitate* denies any trace of dionysian influence upon the Victorine's writings<sup>6</sup>.

This tendency to read Richard either as a Trinitarian theologian indebted to Augustine or as a mystical writer, follower of Denys the Areopagite might produce an artificial and inaccurate schism of his thought in which the mystic and the scholastic element are bound up together. The novelty and the originality of Richard's writings reside in his systematic approach of the theory and practice of contemplation<sup>7</sup>. The spiritual material is ordered in the scholastic manner in vogue at that time. At the level of content, Gervais Dumeige has pointed out that the link between *De Trinitate* and Richard's mystical works is love. The human accomplishment will be achieved only when the human being gives up to the love of the mutable world and embraces instead the love of the unchangeable reality. Love is also the main epistemological tool, which enables the human being to come close to God and to have access there where the reason is too weak to penetrate. It is not by chance that Rachel, the reason has to die in order to give birth to Benjamin, the contemplation. The knowledge is not ignored and it has its role up to a certain level, but the love is the highest principle<sup>8</sup>. More recently, Dale Coulter argues that the continuity between Richard's theological and spiritual works articulates at the methodological level in terms of the soul's ascent to God, ascent resumed in the words of the apostle: *Invisibilia Dei per ea quae facta sunt intellecta conspiciuntur* (Rom 1: 20).

My intention in this paper is to demonstrate that in both his doctrine of love and in his doctrine of the soul's ascent to God, Richard is indebted to Augustine or to the Augustinian tradition. Secondly I will attempt to counter the one lens interpretations of Augustine as being primarily a Dionysian follower in his teaching of contemplation. This demonstration would be another argument that the sharp cleavage between theology and mysticism, based on the sources that fueled apparently Richard's schismatic thought does not hold together.

---

4 Dale Coulter, *Per visibilia ad Invisibilia: theological method in Richard of Saint Victor*, PhD. Thesis (Oxford: Oxford University, 2002).

5 Stephen Chase, *Angelic Wisdom: The Cherubim and the Grace of Contemplation in Richard of Saint Victor*, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995) 28.

6 Nico den Bock, *Communicating the Most High: A Systematic study of Person and Trinity in the Theology of Richard of Saint Victor*, Bibliotheca Victorina VII (Turnhout: Brepols 1996).

7 Clare Kirchberger, trans., *Richard of Saint Victor: Selected Writings on Contemplation*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1958) 37: "Richard of Saint-Victor's title of distinction lies in this, that he was the first writer to systematize mystical theology"

8 Gervais Dumeige, *Richard de Saint-Victor et l'idée chrétienne de l'amour*, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1952) 157-158.

## Cultural context

In the 12<sup>th</sup> century the Christians were confronted with the dilemma of being monks or scholars. Beryl Smalley observes that a gulf separates the one from the other and that the role of the former was to mourn and to pray while the role of the latter was to learn and to teach. The canons regular of the rich Parisian Abbey of Saint Victor dismissed this dilemma, uniting both ideals in their spiritual program. They were unique in Paris as being both *scholares* and *claustrales*.<sup>9</sup> As *claustrales* they adopted *The Rule of Saint Augustine*, while the educative program was shaped by Hugh in his work called *Didascalicon*. The *Rule of Saint Augustine* stressed the importance of love in the religious community. The educative program insisted on the attentive study of the *Old and New Testament* which provided the material for the literal sense of any exegesis and also encouraged the reading of the patristic authorities for developing the allegorical and tropological interpretations. Hugh insisted that his students should read directly the works of the ecclesiastical authors and not rely on the so popular but superficial glosses to the patristic texts<sup>10</sup>. The Augustinian texts recommended for the tropological or moral interpretation are *De Doctrina Christiana* and *De Civitate Dei*. The biblical texts should be also read in parallel with Augustine's *Quaestiones*<sup>11</sup>.

From the observation of the spiritual and scholarly dimension of the Victorine program, there is no doubt that the canons regarded Augustine both as their spiritual father and their *magister*, yet the bishop of Hippo was by no means the only *magister* that they acknowledged. Among the Latin writers Jerome, Ambrose, Cassian, Gregory the Great and Boethius are the most important. From the East, Denys the Areopagite exercised beginning with 12<sup>th</sup> century and especially in the 13<sup>th</sup> century a huge influence in the West. In the recent scholarship the influence of Denys the Areopagite in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and especially on the Victorines was frequently discussed<sup>12</sup>. However, the impact of the Areopagite on Richard's writings continues to generate controversy<sup>13</sup>.

Richard is generally accepted as a disciple of Hugh and although there is no conclusive evidence that they had ever met<sup>14</sup>, the hugonian influence is obvious throughout

---

9 Beryl Smalley, *The study of the Bible in 12<sup>th</sup> century*, Electronic book, (Notre Dame: University Press Notre Dame 1964 ) 84-85.

10 Smalley (1964) 86.

11 Smalley (1964) 89.

12 Paul Rorem, *Pseudo-Dionysius: A Commentary on the Texts and an Introduction to Their Influence* (New York, Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1993), Jean Leclercq "Influence and Non-Influence of Dionysius in the Western Middle Ages" in *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete works* (London: SPCK, 1987) 25-33, Andrew Louth, *Denys the Areopagite*, (Wilton: Morehouse-Barlow, 1989) 120-126.

13 Jean Leclercq (1987) 28, claims that although Richard knew Denys through Hugh's commentary, he owes him very little. Clare Kirchberger (1957) 52 admits an impact of Denys' doctrine of darkness but she denies that Richard embraced the apophatic way. Stephen Chase (1996) 28 advances the thesis that not only was Richard influenced by Denys in regard to his symbolic theology, but also that Richard fully incorporated to his thought the dialectic of positive and negative theology.

14 Jean Chatillon, "Richard of Saint Victor" in *DS*, vol. 13, 596 considers that Richard arrived at Saint Victor before Hugh's death in 1141 and that therefore he could learn directly from the Victorine Master. He bases his argument on the testimony of Jean de Toulouse (*Liber Antiquitatum*, PL 196, ix). On the other hand Clare Kirchberger (1957) 15, calls the relations between the two a "discipleship of study" claiming that Richard arrived at Saint Victor after Hugh's death. Dumeige recognizes the hugonian influence on Richard but he concludes that there is not enough evidence for claiming that they met each other. For a detailed analysis of the relation between Hugh and Richard see Stephen

Richard's works. Thanks to his master's work most probably, he was introduced to the writings of the eastern author, Denys the Areopagite. The writings of the Greek ecclesiastical writer were accessible in the West from the 9<sup>th</sup> century through the Latin translation of John Scotus Eriugena, who also translated Gregory of Nyssa, *De opificio hominis* and *Maximus the Confessor, Ambigua ad Johannem* and the *Quaestiones ad Thalassium*<sup>15</sup>, but the modern scholars cannot prove the extent of the impact that the Dionysian corpus exercised on Richard. There is sure evidence that he has known the Dionysian treatise, *On The celestial Hierarchy*, which was commented at Saint Victor by Hugh, Richard's master. Richard mentions Denys by name in his treatise *In apocalypsim Joannis* and he quotes extensively from his master's *Commentariorum hierarchiam coelestem S. Dionysii* but all other claims of dyonisian reception in his works are purely speculative<sup>16</sup>.

In spite of his popularity at St. Victor, Denys still had, as signaled by his Victorine commentator, the reputation of being an unclear author<sup>17</sup>. To this must be added the reticence of a writer such as Richard towards the Greek Christian tradition and his simple observation in *De Trinitate: Graeci non sumus*<sup>18</sup> functions as a justification for using primarily Latin terminology and therefore Latin sources.

On the other hand, Richard could not have avoided the influence of the bishop of Hippo, since Augustine's presence was pervasive at the abbey of Saint Victor, which placed the *Rule of Saint Augustine* at the heart of its quotidian life. Our author wrote twenty thoughtful "solutions" on questions about the *Rule*<sup>19</sup>. The canons were celebrating with great fast the feast of St. Augustine on 28<sup>th</sup> of August and the Victorine sermons collection preserves some of the sermons written for this occasion. There is evidence of a direct exposure to Augustine's writings, through extensive reading from *Enarrationes in Psalmos* and *In epistolam Ioannis ad Parthos tractatus* during the meals Richard like other of his contemporaries had access to the works of the past masters through the numerous and popular collections of opinions of the patristic authorities, called *flores*, *defflorationes* or *sententiae*. In the XII century these opinions on a particular subject were grouped together and the subjects followed in a logical order. Froelich argues that the Victorine Augustinianism was fueled "by a limited number of standard stories, stock phrases and theological common places known through excerpt collections, canon law texts or though the biblical *Glossa ordinaria*"<sup>20</sup>. However, Richard could also have had access to the entire works of the Latin ecclesiastical authors, since the library of the abbey of Saint Victor sheltered right from the first half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century a great number of Augustinian manuscripts together with the manuscripts of other ecclesiastical writers from the West such as Jerome, Ambrose and Cassian<sup>21</sup>.

---

Chase (1996) 142 – 147.

15 Robert D. Crouse "What is Augustinian in 12th century Mysticism ?" in *Augustine Mystique or Mystagogue*, ed. F. van Fleteren, J. Schnaubelt, J. Reino (New York: P. Lang, 1994) 403.

16 Stephen Chase, (1996) 29-30.

17 Hugh of Saint Victor, *Expositio in Hierarchiam coelestem S. Dionysii*, I, 5. P.L. 175-931.

18 Richard de Saint Victor, *De Trinitate*, (Paris: Cerf, 1999) L, iv, 4.

19 Regarding the influence of Augustine at the Abbey of Saint Victor, I am indebted to the article of Karlfried Froehlich, "Victorines" in *Augustine through the Ages*, ed. A. J. Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. 1999) 867.

20 Froelich (1999) 867.

21 Froehlich (1999) 867.

## Terminology and sources

The difficulty in finding Richard's sources lies in the flexibility of his vocabulary and in the lack of quotations from the authors he used. Jean Chatillon mentioned "la grande élasticité du vocabulaire ricardien"<sup>22</sup> arguing that the Victorine may use the same term to designate one after another different realities depending on what he considers convenient for his own purposes. He uses the terms he borrows from other authors freely not always with the meaning attributed to them originally and not even consistently within his own treatises. His use of theological terms is not systematic. There seems to be a consensus among scholars that Richard is a writer who uses the truth where he recognizes it without any indication of the sources. Sometimes he can make use of the words and ideas of a controversial figure, such as Abelard, in other cases he does not hesitate to criticize a respectable doctor, such as Pierre Lombard. The very few quotations of ancient authors that can be encountered in his works have been explained by his originality and independence of spirit as well as by a completely different attitude towards authorship than that of the modern scholars.<sup>23</sup>

In spite of all these obstacles some of the terms used by Richard in his work allow us to speculate on his indebtedness to Augustine. Ribailleur in his introduction to Richard's treatise *De Trinitate* considers that an Augustinian reader of the homologue work will not feel at all estranged reading the work of the 12<sup>th</sup> century author. Words such as *freneticus* and *ordinata dilectio*, or expressions such as *quid tres, tres aliqui, esse alius et alius, esse aliud et aliud, procedere principaliter, procedere cum generatione, procedere sine generatione* they all go back to Augustine<sup>24</sup>. Moreover, the French scholar observes that none of the biblical quotations from *De Trinitate* is original, in spite of the Victorine program that puts a strong emphasis on the study of the Bible. He argues that all these quotations were used previously by Christian authors, especially by Augustine when developing a similar subject<sup>25</sup>. Of all the biblical quotations that Richard borrowed from his predecessors, one is particularly important for our argument as it appears both in *De Trinitate* and in the mystical treatises. This is Rom 1: 20 *Invisibilia Dei, a creatura mundi, per ea quae facta sunt intellecta conspiciuntur*. The phrase of the Apostle Paul is used by Richard to indicate the way of the soul's ascent to God. He describes the ascent as a movement *de visibilibus ad invisibilia* and *de corporalibus ad spiritualia*<sup>26</sup>. On the other hand, Augustine himself uses the phrase of the Apostle in the context of the soul's quest for God, in one of his most famous account of the soul's ascent to God in *Enaratio in Psalmum 41*<sup>27</sup>.

Other possible borrowings from Augustine, relevant this time to Richard's spiritual writings, seem to be the terms used for describing the highest kind of contemplation. Augustine described the elevation of the mind above itself more often in

---

22 Jean Chatillon, « Richard de Saint Victor » in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, (Paris : Beauschesne, 1937-) vol. 13, 628.

23 Dumeige (1952) 11-12. Dumeige observes that Augustine is the patristic authority that Richard cites by name most often. The name of the bishop of Hippo is invoked almost 20 times. Gregory the Great follows with lesser quotations, Boethius is cited four times in *De Trinitate*, Denys the Areopagite is mentioned in relation with contemplation and Jerome regarding exegesis.

24 Jean Ribailleur, « Introduction » to *Richard de Saint Victor: De Trinitate*, (Paris : Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1957) 22.

25 Ribailleur (1957) 18.

26 Richard de Saint Victor, *De Trinitate*, (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1957) 82.

27 *en. Ps 41*, VII, 4. Rom 1: 20 is cited very often by Augustine throughout all his works.

terms of *ecstasis*. Richard never uses the term *ecstasis*, instead he prefers other two Augustinian expressions *excessus mentis* and *alienatio mentis* for describing the highest experience achieved by the human mind<sup>28</sup>. Richard's preference for *excessus mentis* and *alienatio mentis* instead of *ecstasis*, may be justified through his reticence towards adopting Greek terminology<sup>29</sup>. He may also have known *Quaestiones in Leviticum*, a work probably frequently consulted by the Victorine students<sup>30</sup>, where Augustine explains that the Latin correspondent for the Greek ἔκστασις is *excessus mentis*<sup>31</sup> or *Enaratio in Psalmum 103* where the bishop of Hippo translates the Greek term with *alienatio mentis*<sup>32</sup>.

Finally, the introductory psalmic quotation *Beniamin adulescentulus in mentis excessu* (Ps. 67, 28) associated to contemplation in Richard's work *De duodecim Patriarchis* may be encountered in Augustine as well, in a slightly different version: *Beniamin adolescentior in ecstasi*.<sup>33</sup>

### **Richard's spiritual treatises: *De duodecim Patriarchis* and *De arca mystica*.**

In this chapter more attention will be directed to Richard's most significant spiritual writings *De duodecim Patriarchis* and *De arca mystica*. These titles mainly used by medieval authors refer to the biblical narratives interpreted in each work. The first treatise is a tropological exegesis of the biblical episode relating the birth of the twelve sons and a daughter to Jacob as a result of his marriages to the two sisters Leah and Rachel and to their handmaids Zelpha and Bala. The second treatise is a moral interpretation of the Ark of the Covenant and the cherubim placed within Moses' tabernacle. The subtitles offered by the Migne edition are also significant and offer the moral equivalent of the biblical episodes. Thus, *De duodecim Patriarchis* is also named *De preparatione animi ad contemplatione*, while *De arca mystica* is referred as *De gratia contemplationis*. And indeed Richard makes use of the biblical narrative of Jacob in order to describe the preparatory stage to contemplation which consists of the practice of the virtues symbolized by Jacob's sons. The second treatise explores in detail the different kinds of contemplation and the Ark of the Covenant and the cherubim is the symbol for the soul's successful ascent to God by means of contemplation. In the modern period the treatises circulated under new titles, *Beniamin minor* and *Beniamin major*, which, like the subtitles from the Migne edition, indicate the continuity existing between these two works.

### **The senses of the Scripture: *Historia*, *Allegoria*, *Tropologia***

The main difficulty encountered by the modern reader when approaching these medieval treatises is represented by the method of interpretation of the biblical meaning, very popular in the Middle Ages, as it is rare today. Although the goal of this chapter is not an account of the exegetical theory in vogue in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, it may be useful to draw the

28 For *excessus mentis* in Augustine see *en. Ps.* 30, 2, *en. Ps.* 34, 6, *en. Ps.* 67, 36, *ep.* 80, 3. For *alienatio mentis* see, *div. qu.*, II, 1, 1, *en. Ps.* 103 s. 3, 2, *qu. In Genesim*, 80.

29 See note 17.

30 Augustine's *Quaestiones* were indicated by Hugh in his *Didascalicon* as complementary reading of the Scripture. See Smalley (1964)

31 *qu.* III, 29: *Quod alii interpretes dixerunt, expavit, conantes transferred de graeco quod dictum est ἐξέστη, unde ἔκστασις dicitur qui saepe in scripturas Latinis legitur mentis excessus.*

32 *en. Ps.* 103 s. 3, 2: *Illo igitur orante facta est illi mentis alienatio quam Graeci ecstasis dicunt.*

33 *en. Ps.* 67, 36.

main lines of the medieval biblical hermeneutic, since this is the wider context within which Richard's teaching on contemplation must be understood.

In his *Didascalicon*, Hugh of Saint-Victor continues the tradition of the biblical interpretation as developed by the great ecclesiastical writers of the Late Antiquity, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Augustine, and claims that the sacred text is liable to a threefold interpretation: historical, allegorical and tropological or moral. However he brings his own contribution to the biblical exegesis through the emphasis on the literal or historical meaning. This stress on *historia* as representing the ground of the other types of interpretations represents the distinctive mark of the school of Saint Victor. Even a writer such as Richard whose writings seem to favor the tropological sense cannot ignore the importance of the literal meaning of the Bible, which is seen as the necessary foundation for the developing of the spiritual interpretations. In order that the tropological and allegorical senses to be considered valid they must be rooted in the literal ground otherwise they are worthless<sup>34</sup>.

Sometimes an anagogical meaning can be added to the traditional triad. In his treatise *De arca mystica*, Richard gives an illuminating definition for each of these spiritual senses:

It often happens that one and the same passage of Scripture says many things to us in one thing when it is expounded in several ways: Expounded morally it teaches us what our Beloved (i.e. Christ) wishes us to do; taken allegorically, it reminds us what He has done for us through Himself; interpreted anagogically it proposes what He plans to make for us in the future<sup>35</sup>.

To summarize, the literal sense conveys the proper meaning of the text, the allegorical meaning sense interprets in a Christian way events or persons from the Old Testament, the tropological sense teaches the moral conduct that leads the soul to God and finally the anagogical sense offers a taste of the eschatological life.

Both his spiritual treatises, *De Duodecim Patriarchis* and *De Arca Mystica* are tropological interpretations of the Old Testament narratives, but only in the latter work Richard confirms his method explicitly:

The mystical meaning of the ark in the allegorical sense, that is, as it represents Christ, has been articulated by learned persons and investigated by more penetrating minds before. Despite this we do not presume to be guilty of carelessness by now saying something in the moral sense<sup>36</sup>.

---

34 Richardus S. Victoris, *In visionem Ezechielis*, prologus PL 527 B-D.

35 For Richard's spiritual treatises I have used the translation of Grover A. Zinn, trans. *Richard of Saint Victor: The Twelve Patriarchs, The Mystical Ark, Book Three of the Trinity*, (London: SPCK) 283. *De Arca Mystica*, IV, xiv: *Et saepe fit ut una eademque Scriptura, dum multipliciter exponitur, multa nobis in unum loquatur, moraliter nos docens quid dilectus noster facere velit, allegoriter admonens quid pro nobis per semetisipsum fecerit, anagogice proponens quid adhuc de nobis facere disponit.*

36 *De Arca Mystica*, I, i; 151: *Quid juxta allegoricum sensum haec arca mystice designet, vel quomodo Christum significet, a doctoribus fuit jam ante nos dictum et a perspicacioribus pertractatum. Nec idcirco tamen temeritatis incuriam incurrere nos suspicamur, si aliud in eadem adhuc materiam moraliter loquamur.*

## Self-knowledge and Interiority

In his first work as a Christian, Augustine brings together the knowledge of God and the knowledge of self when he boldly affirms: *Animam et Deum scire cupio*<sup>37</sup> and when he prays “O God who are ever the same, let me know myself and let me know you”<sup>38</sup>.

Also in this early work already the self knowledge is connected with the description of the human being as image and likeness of God: “Who has made the human man according to the image and likeness, which he who know himself, recognizes”.<sup>39</sup> This aspect of the self knowledge will be of maxim importance for Augustine’s later work *De Trinitate* whose entire methodology relies on the idea that the human mind being created according to the image and likeness of God offers the best place where the Creator can be looked for and known.

Gerald Bonner remarks that the necessity of self-knowledge as a requisite for the knowledge of God is implicit throughout the *Confessions*. However in Book X of the same work Augustine will analyse in more depth the dialectic of these two inseparable kinds of knowledge. The book opens with Augustine’s prayer that he may know God as he himself is known by God: “May I know you, who knows me. May I “know as I also am known” (1 Cor. 13: 12)<sup>40</sup>. The desire for knowing God springs from the love for God, which pushes the soul to search for its Creator. Looking for God in the visible and mutable things of Creation and not finding him, Augustine turns to himself and discovers that he has a body and a soul. As the soul and the mind are superior (*melius*)<sup>41</sup> and govern the body, the search for God is pursued within in a paradoxical climbing step by step in the depths of the soul and leads to the “fields and vast palaces of memory”<sup>42</sup>. In his description of memory Augustine follows Plato. All the ideas are already in memory and everything we learn does not come from outside, instead it is a reminiscence or a discovery of what is already in the self. Wondering at the power of his memory he understands that is beyond his capacity to encompass the totality of what he is<sup>43</sup>. No matter how great the power of memory, in his search for understanding himself and in knowing God the soul must leave behind all mutability and continue to climb up at the command of the sweet light which is above:

I will transcend even this power which is called memory. I will rise beyond it to move towards you, Sweet light. What are you saying to me? Here I am climbing up through my mind towards you who are constant above me. I will pass beyond even that power of mind which is called memory, desiring to reach you by the way through which you can be reached and to be bonded to you by the way in which it is possible to be bonded.<sup>44</sup>

Therefore it is through an inward turn that the soul struggles to know both the self and God. This method of searching for God within is a method of Neoplatonic inspiration, applied by Augustine after discovering the *Libri Platonici*:

---

37 *sol.* I, ii, 7.

38 *sol.* II, 1,1: *Deus semper idem, noverim me, noverim te. Oratum est.*

39 *sol.* I, I, 4.: *qui fecisti hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem tuam, quod qui se ipse novit agnoscit.*

40 *conf.* X, I, 1.

41 *conf.* X.vi, 9.

42 *conf.* X, viii, 12.

43 *conf.* X, viii, 15.

44 *conf.* X, xvii, 26: *Transibo et hanc vim meam, quae memoria vocatur, transibo eam, ut pertendam ad te, dulce lumen. Quid dicis mihi? Ecce ego ascendens per animum meum ad te, qui desuper mihi manes, transibo et istam vim meam, quae memoria vocatur, volens te attingere, unde attingi potes, et inhaerere tibi, unde inhaereri tibi potest.*



By the Platonic books I was admonished to return into myself. With you as my guide I entered into my innermost citadel and was given the power to do so because you had become my helper<sup>45</sup>.

Adopting the Plotinian technique, Augustine describes the itinerary of the soul to God in three broad stages. Normally the ascent begins with a careful consideration of the creation, which is followed by an inward movement into the depths of the soul and it ends with a movement above the soul. In the pursuit of the knowledge of God, the soul follows this itinerary and learns how to know itself first apparently, but at the highest level the two kinds of knowledge are interchangeable. As Henry Chadwick has pointed out: "Like Plotinus and Porphyry, Augustine understood the Delphic maxim "Know yourself" as the path to knowing God; conversely, knowing God is the way to self knowledge."<sup>46</sup>

The result of the interior turn in pursuing the knowledge of self and the knowledge of God opens two new dimensions which are intimately connected: introversion and ascension. Augustine considers God to be *interior intimo meo et superior summo meo*.<sup>47</sup> The journey of the soul to God corresponds to this divine characteristic, taking the form of introversion and ascension which are metaphysically equivalent<sup>48</sup>.

These themes are at the core of Richard's teaching on the soul's ascent to God. In the last section of his treatise *De duodecim Patriarchis*, the Victorine portrays Joseph, the first son of Jacob, the rational soul with Rachel, the reason and he claims that Joseph represents the virtue of discretion or self-knowledge. Unlike Augustine, Richard considers that Joseph or the self knowledge must know both the infirmities of the soul and of the body:

This Joseph of ours ought to know fully- insofar as it is possible- the total state and quality of the inner and outer person and to seek out skillfully and to investigate carefully not only what sort he is but also even what sort he ought to be<sup>49</sup>.

The other son that Jacob receives from Rachel is called Benjamin and he represents the knowledge of God. The intimate connection between self knowledge and the knowledge of God is expressed through the brotherly relationship. Both Joseph and Benjamin are the sons of Rachel. Joseph is born first because the self-knowledge is needed in order to attain to the knowledge of God. This is the only possible way for the soul to see God:

Benjamin is born long after Joseph because the soul that has not been practiced over a long time and educated fully in knowledge of self is not raised up to knowledge of God. In vain he raises the eye of the heart to see God when he is not yet prepared to see himself. Let a person first learn to know his own invisible things before he presumes that he is able to grasp at invisible divine things.<sup>50</sup>

---

45 *conf.* VII, x, 16: *Et inde admonitus redire ad memet ipsum intravi in intima mea duce te et potui, quoniam factus es adiutor meus.*

46 Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 180, note 1.

47 *conf.* III, vi, 11.

48 Paul Henry, "Introduction. Plotinus' Place in the History of Thought" in Plotinus *The Enneads*, trans. by S. MacKenna (London, n.d.) xlv-xlviii.

49 *De duodecim Patriarchis*, LXX: *Et ut totum breviter concludam, debet hic noster Joseph totum interioris et exterioris hominis statum et habitum in quantum possibile est, plene cognoscere, nec solum qualis sit, verum etiam qualis esse debeat subtiliter quaerere, diligenter investigare.*

50 *De duodecim Patriarchis*, LXXI: *Longe post Joseph Benjamin gignitur, quia animus qui in sui cognitione diu exercitatus, pleneque eruditus non est, ad Dei cognitionem non sustollitur? Frustra cordis oculum erigit ad videndum Deum, qui nondum idoneus est ad videndum seipsum. Prius discat*

After emphasizing the interconnection between the two types of knowledge by means of personification, Richard introduces the Augustinian idea which connects self knowledge with the description of human being created according to the image and likeness of God. The rational soul considers itself the mirror which helps to see God since it was created in the image and likeness of God and since it is the only created thing that was entitled to this dignity. Richard is here in full agreement with Augustine, summarizing the program of his *magister's De Trinitate*.

The rational soul discovers without doubt that it is the foremost and principal mirror for seeing God. For is the invisible things of God are seen, being understood by the intellect by means of those things which have been made (Rom 1: 20), where, I ask, have the traces of knowledge been found more clearly imprinted than in His image? We read and we believe that regarding the soul, humans have been made in the likeness of God (Gen. 1: 26) and therefore as long as we walk by faith and not by sight (2 Cor. 5: 7) as long as we still see by mirror and in an enigma (1 Cor. 13: 12) we cannot find, as I have said a mirror more apt for imaginative vision of Him than the rational spirit<sup>51</sup>.

Richard continues his investigation of different types of knowledge with the distinction between the knowledge of earthly things and the knowledge of the spiritual things. Those who choose the latter ascend to high things<sup>52</sup>. The spiritual things refer both to self and Creator. And Richard repeats what he has affirmed in previous chapters that: "The first and principle thing for the soul that strives to ascend to the height of knowledge must be the effort to know itself. The great height of knowledge is to know the self perfectly"<sup>53</sup>.

Richard introduces the idea of ascension, representing the full self knowledge as it were a high and great mountain<sup>54</sup>. Exactly like Augustine, Richard equates ascension with introversion: "O man, learn to know; learn to think about yourself and you have ascended to a high heart"<sup>55</sup>. In a passage from *De Arca Mystica* he develops this idea in the following way:

Therefore just as we understand the supreme point of the mind by the peak of the mountain, so we understand the innermost part of the human mind by the Holy of Holies. But in the human soul the supreme point is undoubtedly the same as the innermost part and the innermost part the same as the supreme point. And so we understand the same thing by the peak of the mountain and the oracle of the tabernacle of the covenant<sup>56</sup>.

---

*homo cognoscere invisibilia sua, quam praesumat posse apprehendere invisibilia divina. Prius est ut cognoscas invisibilia spiritus tui, quam possis esse idoneus ad cognoscendum invisibilia De.i*

51 *De duodecim Patriarchis*, LXXII: *Praecipuum et principale speculum ad videndum Deum, animus rationalis, absque dubio invenit seipsum. Si enim invisibilia Dei per ea quae facta sunt, intellecta conspiciuntur, ubi, quaeso, quam in ejus imagine cognitionis vestigia expressius impressa, reperiuntur? Hominem secundum animam ad Dei similitudinem factum et legimus, et credimus, et idcirco quandiu per fidem, et non per speciem ambulamus, quandiu adhuc per speculum et in aenigmate videmus, ad ejus, ut ita dixerim, imaginariam visionem aptius speculum, quam spiritum rationalem invenire non possumus.*

52 *De duodecim Patriarchis*, LXXV.

53 *De duodecim Patriarchis*, LXXV.

54 *De duodecim Patriarchis*, LXXV.

55 *De duodecim Patriarchis*, LXXV.

56 *De Arca Mystica*, IV, xxiii: *Sicut ergo per verticem montis intelligimus mentis summum, sic per sancta sanctorum intelligimus humanae mentis intimum. Sed in humano procul dubio animo idem est summum quod intimum, et intimum quod summum. Idem itaque intelligimus per verticem montis et per oraculum tabernaculi foederis.*

We have seen that the return to itself represents the entrance of the soul into the first tabernacle. The second tabernacle, which shelters the Holy of Holies is reserved for the highest kind of contemplation. This is the peak of the mountain and the innermost point of the soul at the same time. This represents perfect self knowledge and fullness of knowledge being symbolized by the cherubim. The etymological meaning of cherubim is “fullness of knowledge”. In two early interpretations of the tabernacle, exposed in the *Liber exceptionum*, one can already discern the link between ascension and introversion. In one of his sermons in which Richard allegorically depicts the tabernacle of the Lord, that is the church, he interprets the walls as the contemplatives, the roof as the actives, the altar as Christ. This description of the tabernacle oddly enough does not project upwards but downwards toward the earth. The reason for this, says Richard is that this is a spiritual edifice and the rules of its construction do not obey the rules of building a material edifice. In another sermon he equates even more explicitly the tabernacle of the Lord with the soul, placing again Christ at the foundation of the tabernacle. According to this spiritual architecture God or Christ dwells in the innermost part of the human soul, representing the foundation which is accessible by means of action- the building of the roof- and contemplation- the construction of the walls.

Richard will discuss again these themes especially in the Book III and Book IV of his treatise *De Arca mystica*, dedicated to the different kinds of contemplation. According to Richard there are six kinds of contemplation that can also form three groups depending on the place where they happen: in imagination, in reason and in understanding. The first two types are concerned with visible things and they can take place in imagination and according to imagination only or in imagination but according to reason. The following two types concern invisible things and take place in reason and according to imagination and in reason but according to reason. Finally the highest kinds of contemplation take place in understanding. The fifth kind of contemplation is above reason but not beyond reason. The sixth kind of contemplation is above reason and contrary to reason. The former corresponds to the understanding of God as unity, the latter deals with the understanding of God as unity and trinity at the same time.

These six kinds of contemplation can also represent three broad stages in the soul’s ascent to God, which present similarities with the threefold Neoplatonic pattern of the soul’s return to the One, used by Augustine as well in his accounts of the experience of God:

For in the first two stages we are instructed with regard to awareness of exterior and corporeal things. In the middle stages of contemplation we are advanced with regard to knowledge of invisible things and spiritual creatures. In the last two stages we are raised up to the understanding of supercelestial and divine things<sup>57</sup>.

Richard begins by discussing the fourth type of contemplation “which is with respect to incorporeal and invisible essences, namely angelic spirits and human spirits”. The material of this contemplation is important for this is that noble creature created according to the image and likeness of God. With the fourth type of contemplation we are again in front of the problem of self knowledge. This contemplation represents the second stage of the soul’s ascent to God when the soul turns inwardly in order to look for its Creator. The self knowledge is considered the necessary exercise which leads the human being to a real understanding of his condition and place in the order of creation and in

---

57 *De Arca Mystica*, IV, v: *In duobus namque primis erudimur ad scientiam rerum exteriorum et corporalium. In duobus autem mediis promovemur ad notitiam rerum invisibilium et spiritualium creaturarum. In duobus novissimis sublevamur ad intelligentiam supercoelestium et divinorum.*

relation with his Creator. Without reflection on his own spirit, the human being cannot know anything properly. Without inward knowledge the spiritual things that are above the soul cannot be examined:

Therefore if you prepare to examine thoroughly even the depths of God, examine first all the depths of your own spirit. For indeed the heart of man is deep-nay, rather it is perverse and inscrutable (Jer. 17: 9). Inscrutable yes, except perhaps to one who is spiritual.<sup>58</sup>

Therefore in order to ascend to the fourth contemplation, first the soul must return to itself (*prius redi ad te*)<sup>59</sup>, or in other words, it must enter into the first tabernacle. The second tabernacle is represented by the Holy of Holies and, as we have already seen, it represents the peak of the mountain and at the same time the innermost part of the soul, being reserved for the highest kind of contemplation. A person enters into the second tabernacle when he goes beyond himself. When going beyond himself, surely a person is elevated to God<sup>60</sup>.

The same wonder and amazement are to be found in the investigation of the self in Richard like in the exploration of memory in the *Confessions*, Book X. Moreover, the search for God in the depths of the souls seems to end with the discovery of memory, depicted in images that go back to Augustine:

Then you will begin to be struck with amazement and to faint from excessive wonder. So if you pay attention to the capacity of memory and its breadth, undoubtedly you will discover what you ought to marvel at worthily. How great, I ask is that chamber of such immense breadth, that comprehends, conceals and preserves so many substances of things, so many forms of substances, so many kinds of things, so many species or kinds, so many individuals of species- indeed so many particular natures, so many qualities, so many quantities, actions and passions, conditions, positions and places of individuals during the revolution of its extent of time, and after having preserved them for a long time, it brings them forth in the midst of all? Think if you are able how great, how wide, how large, how deep how high, those treasures are that are able to collect from all sides and to preserve without confusion so many treasures of knowledge and jewels of wisdom. Without doubt the capacity of memory is marvelous, but the liveliness of understanding is no less marvelous.<sup>61</sup>

The emphasis on self knowledge and interiority are a clear Augustinian legacy. Richard could not have inherited this idea of introspective scrutiny from the Greek ecclesiastical authors, whose mystical theology “has an atmosphere of objectivity”<sup>62</sup>. On the contrary, this dimension of inwardness is characteristic for the Augustinian thought and it was inherited by his western followers, Richard being just one of them.

The threefold scenario of the soul’s journey to God follows the main lines of the Augustinian ascent, exposed in the *Confessions* and in his preaching. The soul is admonished to turn from the external world to the inward self in a way that reminds us again of Augustine (*redi ad te*) so that it ascends above itself in what Richard calls, like his

---

58 *De Arca Mystica*, III, viii: *Si ergo et tu scrutari paras profunda Dei, scrutare prius profunda spiritus tui. Profundum siquidem, imo et pravam est cor hominis et inscrutabile. Inscrutabile sane, nisi ei forte qui spiritualis est.*

59 *De Arca Mystica*, III, vi.

60 *De Arca Mystica*, III, vi.

61 *De Arca Mystica*, III, xxi.

62 Andrew Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981) 133.

patristic master, *excessus mentis* or *alienatio mentis*.

Although Richard depended on Augustine's authority, he does act by no means as being enslaved by his master and in drawing upon Augustine's writings he did more than just to summarise his thought. This original 12<sup>th</sup> century writer integrates the bishop's ideas to his own teaching, sometimes following close his master, but most of the times without hesitating to innovate creatively on the very solid patristic foundation provided by Augustine's thought and without hesitating to bring to completion ideas that were never extensively or thoroughly discussed by his predecessor. In other words, Richard offers in his writings a perfect example of how one succeeds to innovate creatively within the limits of tradition.

**Кармен Анђела Цветковић**

**РЕИНТЕРПРЕТАЦИЈА АВГУСТИНА: САМО-САЗНАЊЕ И УНУТРАШЊОСТ  
У УЧЕЊУ РИЧАРДА ОД СЕНТ-ВИКТОРА О УЗНОШЕЊУ ДУШЕ КА БОГУ**

Скорије студије посвећене списима Ричарда од Сент-Виктора, стварају, по мом мишљењу, вештачки јаз између Ричардових богословских дела у којима се може видети Августинов утицај и његових расправа о духовности, у којима га мноштво научника препознаје као следбеника Дионисија Ареопагита. Моја намера у овој студији није у томе да порекнем утицај потоњег, колико да докажем да Ричардово ослањање на Августина не може да се ограничи само на његове спекулативне списе. Чланак доноси анализу Ричардових главних расправа о духовности, *Дванаест патријараха* и *Мистична барка* у светлости августиновског учења о узношењу душе ка Богу.

плѣть въ ѿрауѣннѣ. у нечюти  
ютъ евоушенъ въ жамѣ брага :  
нны гла. ѿ. с а л л о г л а н о :

Потѣще се раи плѣть сеи. ѿ  
постымы ехоуе. разрѣ  
шнѣ въ асевоуѣ беззаконны  
развѣтъ елѣтъ плѣть на  
путьныхъ прѣни въ асопнѣ  
ни беззаконъ на развѣтъ  
даднѣ а аюушнѣхъ лѣтъ.  
нищенъ на рнѣ въ едѣтъ въ а  
да прнмѣлъ ѿ хъ а вѣ а н ѣ м а т ѣ :  
с а . н н н ѣ . б о . г л а . ѿ :

У н т ѣ а д ѣ с л о в о у д ѣ р н . б а в ы ш ѣ  
на голѣтъ ннѣ пѣтъ нѣ а м ѣ :  
прѣ. в ѣ р ѣ . г л а . ѿ . н ѣ ѿ в р а т н л ѣ  
ца т ѣ о н ѣ ѿ ѿ т р о и с а т ѣ о н ѣ  
пѣ н н ѣ т ѣ о н ѣ ѿ п р н ѣ т ѣ а ѣ :  
п о п р о с ѣ н ѣ . ѿ т р а в ѣ т о у н а г л ѣ .  
с а л л о г л а н о . р ѣ ц н ѣ п о д а ѣ ш ѣ :  
П р и д ѣ т ѣ ѿ у н ѣ т ѣ м ѣ с е р а и ѣ .  
м ѣ с т ѣ н н ѣ л н ѣ ѿ е д р о т а м ѣ  
пѣ н н ѣ ш ѣ . н ѣ т р ѣ т о у ѣ ѿ е н ѣ  
ѿ а н ѣ ѿ ѿ ѿ е н а ш ѣ г о в ѣ г о д ѣ ѣ



П

